

## APPENDIX J DARROCH-EAGLE CREEK TIMBER SALE EA

### Supplemental Effects Disclosure – Unroaded Areas

#### Introduction

After the Darroch-Eagle Creek Environmental Assessment (EA) was released in January 2004, the interdisciplinary team was made aware of a new issue that should be considered in evaluating the potential effects of this harvest proposal. The issue concerns what potential effects, if any, the proposed timber harvest and temporary road construction could have on “unroaded” resources. National Forest Management Act regulations define “unroaded” areas as any area without the presence of classified roads, and of a size and configuration sufficient to protect the inherent characteristics associated with its roadless condition. “Unroaded” areas do not overlap with Inventoried Roadless Areas. Inventoried Roadless Areas (or IRA’s) were identified and delineated in the EIS for the Gallatin Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan, Appendix C, 9/87). During forest planning the IRA’s were those areas considered for possible recommendation to Congress to be included in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The IRA’s also were included in the Roadless Area Conservation Final Rule (January 12, 2001).<sup>1</sup>

Some have defined “unroaded” areas to include smaller strips and chunks of land that lie between roads. These strips and chunks are not of a sufficient size or configuration and do not contain “unroaded” resource values.

#### Affected Environment

The value of lands for wilderness or official “roadless” designation is appropriately considered at a broader context and is evaluated at the forest planning scale. These determinations have been completed previously through the 1976 RARE II Inventory and the 1987 Gallatin Forest Plan and are not appropriate for reconsideration at the project level. However, the site-specific parameters used to make these broader scale determinations are closely related and useful in assessing the effects of site-specific projects on unroaded resource values. For this analysis, we have combined the wilderness features considered in Forest planning (FSH 1920) and the roadless characteristics identified in the Roadless Policy (36 CFR 294.11).

#### Wilderness Characteristics include:

- **Natural Integrity** (the extent to which long-term ecological processes are intact and operating)
- **Apparent Naturalness** (means the environment looks natural to most people)
- **Remoteness** (perceived condition of being secluded, inaccessible, and out of the way)
- **Solitude** (personal, subjective value defined as the isolation from the sights, sounds, and presence of others and the development of man)
- **Special Features** (unique geological, biological, ecological, and cultural or scenic features)

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<sup>1</sup> On January 12, 2001, the Department issued a final rule accompanied by a FEIS and Record of Decision (published as part of the final rule, 36 CFR 294, Special Areas, Roadless Area Conservation, on January 12, 2001, at 66 FR 3244). On May 10, 2001, the Idaho District Court enjoined the Forest Service from implementing all aspects of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

- **Manageability and Boundaries** (ability to manage a roadless area to meet the minimum size criteria, which is 5,000 acres for wilderness)
- **Special Places** (what it is about the area that causes one to visit for pleasure or their livelihood)

**Roadless characteristics include:**

- High quality or undisturbed soil.
- Sources of public drinking water
- Diversity of plant and animal communities
- Habitat for threatened and endangered species
- Primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized classes of dispersed recreation
- Reference landscapes
- Natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality
- Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites
- Other locally defined unique characteristics

“Unroaded” lands that would be entered for harvest and road development with the Darroch-Eagle Creek Timber Sale (i.e. the strips and chunks that lie between existing roads and existing harvest units) do not have the features that would make them suitable for wilderness recommendation in Forest planning (FSH 1920). The fact that they are small parcels under 40 acres in size, interspersed within past harvest units and existing roads means that they don't provide apparent naturalness, remoteness, or solitude.

Proposed harvest Units 7, 8, 9 and 10 included in alternative B, and Units 8 and 9 in alternatives C, D and D-modified lie just to the east of past harvest units and existing roads. No human development has occurred between these units and the contiguous roadless inventory boundary. However, because of their spatial arrangement, eligibility for roadless status is not considered to be likely.

The effects of harvest and road development in “unroaded” stands on their roadless characteristics (as defined in 36 CFR 294.11) are addressed as follows:

- 1. High Quality or Undisturbed Soils.** Refer to issue 24 on pages A-19 through A-21. In summary, the conclusion was that the application of the mitigation measures listed in Chapter 2 would prevent a measurable decrease in soil productivity. Alternatives B through D will permanently remove varying amounts of land from production (Alternative B = 9.7 acres, Alternative C = 4.4 acres, Alternative D = 2.9 acres).
- 2. Sources of Public Drinking Water.** The Bear Creek drainage is not a municipal watershed. The effects of the harvest alternatives on water quality, water yield and stream condition are discussed on pages A-12 through A-16. In summary, the alternatives would meet Gallatin National Forest sediment standards, State of Montana Water Quality standards, Montana Forestry BMP's, and SMZ rule provisions. The proposed harvest would comply with all of the B-1 numerical standards and not conflict with downstream beneficial uses (agriculture, irrigation, domestic and cold water fishery).
- 3. Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities.** The potential effects of the harvest alternatives on plant and animal species are discussed throughout Chapter 3, Appendix A, and Appendix C of the EA. Early analysis identified habitat for the threatened grizzly bear and ungulates (elk, deer and moose) as the key issues with this proposal. Suitable foraging habitat for grizzly bears is found in the analysis area however specific concentrations of food are not present where timber harvesting would occur. Opportunities for foraging on various graminoids and forbs are prevalent and berry producing shrubs are common. The biomass is not sufficient

for this to be considered a major food source. Old growth habitat, an important component for the grizzly bear is abundant. The lower elevations of the analysis area, several miles from the proposed harvest units, are winter and spring range for ungulates. Although few in number, moose are probably the prey species for grizzly bear most consistently found at or near the proposed harvest units. They may be found at any time of the year. Grizzlies forage in the whitebark pine forests in the analysis area however forests with sufficient cone crops are not present at the project site. Fisheries are not a significant food source for bears in the analysis area. There are no known tussock (army cut worm) moth sites. There are no known concentrations of vegetative food sources (such as Lomatium cous) at the project site that would qualify as an important food source for bears (EA, pages 3-3 to 3-16).

**4. Habitat for threatened and endangered species.** The potential effects of the harvest alternatives to threatened and endangered species is addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA and the Biological Assessment in Appendix C. The project is located in grizzly bear situation 1 habitat. Grizzly bear is listed as a threatened species. Bald eagles and lynx are also threatened and endangered species that may be present in the analysis area. Gray wolf is a nonessential, experimental population. In summary the conclusion is that the proposed harvest will not cause departures from positive trends towards meeting population recovery.

**5. Primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized and semi-primitive motorized classes of dispersed recreation.** The potential effects of harvest alternatives on recreational use is discussed on pages A-22 through A-23 of the EA. The Bear Creek drainage supports a mix of recreation opportunities, from primitive backcountry opportunities to sightseeing from motor vehicles. The largest share of recreationists come from the local area. Proposed harvest would affect these recreationists through additional truck traffic during the weekdays and the noise created by sawyers, yarders, and loaders during the normal operating season of each year through the three year contract period.

**6. Reference landscapes.** Reference landscapes are the body of knowledge about the effects of management activities over long periods of time and on large landscapes. Reference landscapes of relatively undisturbed areas serve as a barometer to measure the effects of development on other parts of the landscape. The proposed harvest units are located in areas that have had previous harvest and road development and because of this influence would not be a good choice to use as a reference landscape.

**7. Natural appearing landscapes with high scenic quality.** The potential effects of the harvest alternatives on visual quality are discussed on pages A-21 and A-22 of the EA. In summary the alternatives would not be very discernible from any key observation point or corridor.

**8. Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites.** The potential effects of the harvest alternatives on cultural resources are discussed on page A-24 of the EA. In summary, surveys of the project area found no cultural resource sites.

**9. Other locally defined unique characteristics.** There are no other characteristics in the proposed project areas that would be considered unique relative to the rest of the Bear Creek drainage and the Gallatin National Forest.

## **Direct and Indirect Effects**

Stands entered for harvest and/or road development would be left with evidence of human entry and development for at least 40 or 50 years.

**Alternative A** is the no action alternative. No timber harvest or road development would occur and there would be no effect on “unroaded” lands.

\*Note that total “unroaded” land within the Bear Creek drainage was calculated by taking the total national forest acreage and then subtracting wilderness, developed or cutover land, road acres, and land within the inventoried roadless area (Appendix C of the FP EIS).

Using this formula, there is determined to be approximately 10,189 acres (5% of the total acres) of possible “unroaded” lands within the Bear Creek Drainage (timber compartments 305 & 306). “Unroaded” land and the Inventoried Roadless Areas do not overlap.

**Alternative B** would harvest 449 acres of timber and an additional 9.7 acres would be affected by the construction of road to access timber to be harvested. Of these only 88 acres would be eligible for consideration into the forests’ roadless inventory. Consequently through development under this alternative, .008% of the existing lands available for such consideration would be removed.

**Alternative C** would harvest of 383 acres of timber and an additional 4.4 acres would be affected by the construction of road to access timber to be harvested. Of these only 62 acres would be eligible for consideration into the forests’ roadless inventory. Consequently through development under this alternative, .006% of the existing lands available for such consideration would be removed.

**Alternative D** would harvest of 266 acres of timber and an additional 2.9 acres would be affected by the construction of road to access timber to be harvested. Of these only 53 acres would be eligible for consideration into the forests’ roadless inventory. Consequently through development under this alternative, .005% of the existing lands available for such consideration would be removed.

**Alternative D-Modified** would harvest of 195 acres of timber and an additional 2.9 acres would be affected by the construction of road to access timber to be harvested. Of these only 33 acres would be eligible for consideration into the forests’ roadless inventory. Consequently through development under this alternative, .003% of the existing lands available for such consideration would be removed.

None of the action alternatives contain “unroaded” areas “of sufficient size or configuration to be eligible for wilderness consideration nor do they contain the inherent characteristics necessary for inclusion in the inventoried roadless system. Thus, there would be no effect on “unroaded” resource values associated with any of the action alternatives in the Darroch-Eagle Creek Timber Sale.

## **Cumulative Effects**

Due to past timber harvest, mining, and roading activities approximately 1,973 acres of national forest land within the Bear Creek drainage currently shows evidence of human entry and development. This is about 4% of the total national forest land base in the area. None of the action alternatives display any additional direct or indirect effects on “unroaded” resource values within the drainage. Thus, there can be no cumulative effects.

## **Applicability of the Forest Plan, Laws, Regulations, Policies, and Other Direction**

There are no laws, regulations, policies or Forest Plan direction applicable to “unroaded” areas.