

# **BLACKFOOT TRAVEL PLAN**

## **New Conceptual Alternatives**

In response to public comment to the proposed action mailed in April of 2003, the Blackfoot Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) has developed three additional conceptual alternatives for public review. These following alternatives are specific to the Blackfoot area and are displayed on the attached maps.

Public comment, field reconnaissance, mapping, and analysis may result in changes to these maps as the IDT continues to further develop the three conceptual alternatives. In addition, single track trail riders (motorcyclists) could be accommodated as the concepts are further developed through discussion with the Forest Service and other Forest users to identify routes that would be most suitable as single track motorized trails. Following are brief descriptions of these conceptual alternatives:

### **Conceptual Alternative 3**

Conceptual Alternative 3 was designed to meet requests from the public to increase motorized access beyond that presented in Proposed Action - Alternative 2. Guidelines used to develop Conceptual Alternative 3 include not allowing motorized use on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) in areas where it did not exist prior to designation in 1985. Motorized use on roads and trails where improvements, re-routes, or timing restrictions would be required to avoid negative effects to water quality and fisheries habitat was considered. Additionally, new road/trail construction within defined Forest Plan Inventoried Roadless Areas would not be allowed.

If chosen for implementation, Conceptual Alternative 3 would address the following key issues:

- Open more roads and trails for increased motorized access than would be open in Alternative 2.
- Increase snowmobile trail and play area opportunities over those that would be open in Alternative 2.
- Increase hunter access opportunities.
- Increase opportunities for motorized vehicles less than 50" (OHVs or ATVs).
- Expand loop trail systems for motorized use.
- Add some user-created trails to the Forest Service system of trails.
- Expand upon the motorized trail system to provide for differing levels of difficulty.
- Dual-use routes would be maximized. Designating additional dual-use routes would expand opportunities for motorized vehicles less than 50". These routes would be open to dual-use by both licensed vehicles (automobiles) and non-licensed vehicles (ATV's and motorcycles).
- Retain access on existing routes within defined Forest Plan Inventoried Roadless Areas.
- Close the Red Mountain RNA to motorized travel, including snowmobiles, to be in compliance with our Forest Plan.
- The portions of Copper Bowls that are outside the Red Mountain RNA would be open to snowmobiling from 12/2 to 6/30.

- Retain current levels of motorized access on the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.
- Retain motorized access on the Helmville-Gould trail.

If chosen for implementation, Conceptual Alternative 3 would not address the following key issues:

- Some winter range areas would be open to off-route snowmobiling. A Forest Plan amendment may be needed to allow for snowmobiling in winter range beyond designated routes for this alternative.
- Area closure boundaries for snowmobiling would not be adjusted to fit topography and landform and would remain difficult for users to identify on the ground.
- No new non-motorized trails would be added.

### **Features common to Conceptual Alternatives 4 and 5**

To prevent resource damage, Conceptual Alternatives 4 and 5 would both include the following restrictions to use of motorized roads:

Vehicle access within 300 feet of an open, designated road is allowed primarily to access dispersed camping sites but also other uses as long as it does not result in resource damage such as rutting, crossing of wet meadows, new user-created routes/hill climbs, or noxious weed spread. The fording of streams is restricted to designated roads and trails.

Where resource damage occurs in local situations, motorized use will be restricted as necessary in the 300-foot allowance corridor to protect resources.

Where critical habitat for bull trout and other highly sensitive stream segments overlap with the 300-foot travel corridor, motorized use is restricted to designated roads and designated roads and trails leading to designated, dispersed campsites. This applies to the entire stream side length of open designated roads that pass through the sensitive area. For the Blackfoot Travel Plan Area, such sensitive areas include the Copper Creek drainage.

### **Conceptual Alternative 4**

Conceptual Alternative 4 was designed to meet requests from the public to increase non-motorized access. Increased motorized use on roads and trails where improvements, re-routes, or timing restrictions would be required to avoid negative effects to water quality and fisheries habitat was not considered. Additionally, new road/trail construction within defined Forest Plan Inventoried Roadless Areas would not be allowed.

If chosen for implementation, Conceptual Alternative 4 would address the following key issues:

- Use road, trail, and area restrictions to maximize habitat for grizzly bears, lynx, bull trout, and wolverines as well as habitat for big game fawning and calving.
- Use dual-use routes to increase opportunities for motorized vehicles less than 50". These routes would be open to dual-use by both licensed vehicles (automobiles) and non-licensed vehicles (ATV's and motorcycles).

- Maximize snowmobile area closures by eliminating some currently designated groomed routes.
- Designate additional winter quiet areas.
- Snowmobile use in winter range would be allowed only on designated routes.
- Provide only non-motorized access on the trail portions of the CDNST.
- Designate the Helmville-Gould trail non-motorized.
- Close the Red Mountain RNA to motorized travel, including snowmobiles, to be in compliance with our Forest Plan.
- The portions of Copper Bowls that are outside the Red Mountain RNA would be open to snowmobiling from 12/2 to 4/1.
- Re-delineate area closures for snowmobiling to better fit the topography and landform, making it easier for users to identify closure boundaries on the ground.
- No new motorized or non-motorized trails would be added.

### **Conceptual Alternative 5**

Conceptual Alternative 5 was designed to balance ecological needs with recreation and other social needs. Allowing motorized use on roads and trails where improvements, such as bridges or re-routes, would be required to avoid negative effects to water quality and fisheries habitat was not considered. Conceptual alternative 5 is similar to Alternative 2 - Proposed Action, but incorporates key issues from public comments received since Alternatives 1 and 2 were presented to the public.

If chosen for implementation, Conceptual Alternative 5 would address the following key issues:

- Expand opportunities for motorized vehicles less than 50" by designating additional dual-use routes. These routes would be open to dual-use of both licensed vehicles (automobiles) and non-licensed vehicles (ATV's and motorcycles).
- Expand loop trail systems for motorized use by both adding user-created trails to the Forest Service system and using existing routes.
- Expand upon motorized trail system for differing levels of difficulty.
- Close motorized access on current road systems within defined roadless areas.
- Provide only non-motorized access on the CDNST.
- Retain a portion of the Helmville-Gould trail as motorized.
- Close the Red Mountain RNA to motorized travel, including snowmobiles, to comply with our Forest Plan.
- The portions of Copper Bowls that are outside the Red Mountain RNA would be open to snowmobiling from 12/2 to 6/30.
- Provide more quiet trails and quiet areas in the winter for non-motorized use than would be provided in Alternative 2.
- Re-delineate area closures for snowmobiling to better fit the topography and landform, making it easier for users to identify closure boundaries on the ground.