

USDA FOREST SERVICE REGION 1

YEAR IN REVIEW



The Northern Region at a glance



The Northern Region of the Forest Service covers 13 national forests and grasslands from northern Idaho and across Montana to parts of South Dakota and all of North Dakota. The Forest Service manages more than 25 million acres on these units with an operating budget of about \$267 million. Within the managed forest lands are more than a dozen Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas comprising about five million acres.

The diversity of landscapes, natural resources and wildlife across the region draws millions of tourists each year. The recreational opportunities across the region include the widest range of winter and summer activities, from skiing and snowmobiling, to rock and mountain climbing, backpacking and Wilderness exploring. The region is known as the Crown of the Continent, and is one of the largest, most intact ecosystems remaining

across the lower 48 states.

Of primary concern for forest supervisors and regional leadership is the management and restoration of watersheds. One of the largest watersheds in the country, the Missouri River that feeds into the Mississippi River watershed running east and south, has its headwaters here. The Columbia River that feeds west for most of Washington state and Oregon has its beginnings in Region 1. Nationally the Forest Service manages lands that provide

some 60 percent of the nation with its fresh drinking water supplies, both surface and aquifer sources.

The Northern Region hosts one of the most intact wildlife species assemblages in the Forest Service, with relatively widespread populations of large and small mammals, game birds and fish. Visitors

will find herds of elk, pronghorn antelope, mule and whitetail deer, black and grizzly bears, gray wolves, plus smaller mammals and a wide range of game birds. Moose, bighorn sheep, migratory birds and prairie dogs populate wide areas of the region, and anglers will find more than 600 species of fish that thrive here.



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A message from the Regional Forester

Thank you for taking time to review the outstanding accomplishments and contributions that the forests and grasslands of the Northern Region have made to the natural resources and the quality of life across north Idaho, Montana and North & South Dakota. I am proud to have led such a strong cadre of leaders, staff members, resource specialists and myriad support professionals in our 2011 accomplishments and successes.

I want to stress how collaborative groups, partners and volunteers have helped us in virtually every step of the way across our 13 forests and grasslands. We are fortunate in the Northern Region to have such experienced, knowledgeable and capable groups with whom to work – education partners; forest service retirees; resource specialists and researchers from non-profit

organizations; state natural resource departments; plus willing and capable volunteers in many management areas. Without the willing and forward-thinking efforts of many collaborators, we would not be able to feature the results and accomplishments portrayed in this publication.

And there is really not enough room to highlight the many outstanding projects, programs and information that we completed and delivered throughout the year. For every accomplishment, highlighted project or program, there are literally dozens of others with equal success and acclaim.

The bottom line is that the collective planning and implementation efforts across the Northern Region exemplify the Forest Service mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and

grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. I feel confident that our 2011 accomplishments have set the stage for even greater results, improved natural resource settings, and more local opportunities for improved quality of life, increases in economic potential, and a more diverse future for our region.

It has been a tremendous opportunity for me to have served as the Regional Forester through the end of 2011. But while I begin 2012 in a new position in Washington as the Deputy Chief for all National Forest System lands, I take with me the richness of these successes with the hopes of seeing similar results across national forests and grasslands nationwide. I encourage you to make a difference on a national forest or grassland in your community or area. One person can be the



Leslie A. C. Weldon

difference between success and failure on any project, event or issue. Be involved, be informed, and be the difference that you desire to see in managing and enjoying your natural resources today.

All the best to you in 2012,
Leslie A. C. Weldon

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Safety - from a journey to an engagement

Safety has been a paramount focus and consideration throughout the history of the Forest Service. But through the first decade of the new millennium the agency experienced safety issues that gave Forest Service and USDA leadership cause for concern that our safety consciousness was not as thorough or ingrained as it could be. In 2010 Forest Service leadership embarked on a Safety Journey, making pointed visits to major industries with highly effective safety programs.

The goal was to take safety from a stand-alone program attached to our mission, and make it part of the fabric, the walk and attitude, of our mission, in order to improve the safety and health of employees and the effectiveness of our accomplishments. This is the approach the agency took in 2010 for its national Safety Journey initiative. Over the past two years the agency has taken its safety program and integrated it to the point that it is not a stand-alone program or objective, but it is integral to the mission in every way.

Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell sent a message to all employees then that included the following:

"We are committed to dramatically different safety outcomes, but recognize that commitment isn't enough. We have had that for a long time. In a spirit of humility we have magnified our focus and engaged in a "journey" to discover what else it will take. Although we know there is much we don't know, we are confident that it is indeed a journey more than a destination – one that will require our sustained effort. We are also confident that each of you must be part of that journey. Finally, we are confident that together we can make a big difference in the safety outcomes we experience."

In developing these safety engage-

ments, the National Leadership Council developed five 'bases' upon which the agency would reinforce its safety attitude:

1. Safety as a core value & identity
2. Unified and corporate safety system
3. Learning system & process
4. Leadership engagement & behavior
5. Employee engagement/empowerment

The employees for the Northern Region forests and grasslands responded in bold fashion, with more than 90% of all employees participating in group safety engagement sessions. Each session was designed to more actively engage and recognize the experiences, thoughts, concerns and ideas of individual employees. This shared introspective gave each session more meaning, and helped to develop a more personal ownership of safety.

Within the sessions held at both the Regional level and individual forests and grasslands, employees came together with an attitude of expectation. Just as the national leadership had expectations for the journey process, each unit and the regional office held expectations for improvements, ideas, and a more personal level of ownership than in previous years.

Regionally, according to Safety Officer David Goodin, the Region lowered its personal accident rate by 26% over previous fiscal years – evidence that the safety engagement is taking hold and showing positive results across the workforce.

Chief Tidwell expressed the sentiments of leaders at all levels in his safety letter from 2010 to all employees by saying:

"In the coming months we will have meaningful discussions about reducing hazards and improving safety. Therefore, we ask you to join us on this journey to ensure we are not only the world's premier conservation agency but world class in being safe."

Rich in history

Creation of Northern Region goes back to the earliest days of the Forest Service

Born almost 100 years ago in the midst of massive destruction of our Nation's natural resources, the Forest Service represents a grand experiment to assure that the country's forests and grasslands would always be protected.

Congress took the first step toward that goal in 1891 when it passed the Forest Reserve Act.

In 1897, President Grover Cleveland proclaimed three forest reserves in what is now the Northern Region. They were the Bitterroot Forest Reserve in Montana and Idaho, the Flathead in Montana, and the Lewis and Clark in Montana. Today the region consists of 12 forests and one grassland spread over 4 states: Montana, north Idaho, western North Dakota and a small area in eastern Washington.

In those days, field employees had to know woodcraft and horsemanship. Its field officers were called "forest rangers." For the Ranger exam, men had to shoot, ride, use an axe, throw a diamond hitch, lash freight on a mule or horse, and take a written test. Rangers cleared forest trails, strung telephone wire, and built lookout towers as well as their own residence. Additionally, one of the duties of early forest rangers was to assure that the multiple use idea did not compromise forest, stream or range health.

In August 1910, three million acres in the Northern Rockies were engulfed in flames. The Forest Service quickly assembled all available manpower, but it was not enough. A total of 87 people lost their lives battling the horrific blazes. As a result, an aggressive fire suppression policy was put in place. Hundreds of fire towers were built in the 1920s, '30s and '40s.

During the 1940s, the Northern Region saw the development of a cadre of firefighters who parachuted into fire zones. This method of firefighting was called smokejumping. The program became concentrated in the Northern Region because its vast roadless areas were more inaccessible to firefighters. One of the first bases was established near the Ninemile Ranger District on the Lolo National Forest. Later the program expanded to other locations outside the Region.

Historically, National Forest System lands always, by law, have been managed for multiple use. After World War II, with the return of veterans, the country experienced a baby boom that launched massive new home construction. Timber harvesting in the 1950s increased dramatically from previous years. In the 1960s, some timber harvesting practices, particularly clearcutting, precipitated national debate. Out



of that debate came new regulations and a heightened awareness to assure that Forest Service lands and resources were not abused by overuse.

For over 100 years, regional employees have managed vast stretches of public lands on behalf of the American people. Today that area totals 25 million acres. Of that total, 40 percent (or 10 million acres) is unroaded backcountry, of which half, or 5 million acres is within Congressionally designated Wilderness areas.

Back then ...



... and Today



The Bull River Guard Station

The Bull River Guard Station was built in 1908 as the Ranger's house and office. This structure was a primary ranger station from 1908 to 1920, surviving the 1910 fire. The cabin was home to Granville "Granny" Gordon (District Ranger), his wife and three daughters. When the 1910 fires roared thru the country, Mrs. Gordon prepared for the worst by soaking gunny sacks in a tub of water. If they had to escape the fire, they would wrap themselves in the gunny sacks and race to the Bull River to wait out the fire. As the fire closed in on the ranger station, it shifted direction and swept up Pilik Ridge sparing their home.

The cabin is a 700 square-foot, two-story building. It is equipped with period furniture including three full beds and two single beds with mattresses. It has a sitting room with chairs, a kitchen /dining room with a hutch, table and chairs, and electric range. It is heated with a forced air, electric furnace, and contains cleaning supplies. The cabin has an outdoor toilet, but is not plumbed for water. In the winter the road to the cabin is normally plowed within one mile.

Recreation cabin and lookout tower rentals

One of the unique recreation experiences we have in the Northern Region is the opportunity to rent some of our historic fire lookout towers and backcountry cabins. These rustic cabins and lookouts are often located in remote, yet spectacular settings.

To make a Cabin Reservation, you can either: Check on availability and reserve over the Internet at Recreation.gov, 7 days a week, 24 hours/day (profile setup is required) or, check availability and reserve toll-free at 1 (877) 444-6777, or International (518) 885-3639. More information is online at http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r1/recreation/?cid=fsp5_030855

Renewable Resource Management and success

An Integrated Vision for Renewable Resource Management

Two primary concepts anchored the core of the inception of the Forest Service more than 100 years ago: sustaining trees as a renewable and cultivated resource to help feed a growing nation; and the need to safeguard, restore and improve the supply, quality and functions of our nation's watersheds and water resources. Across the Northern Region this core set of concepts provides the basis for Renewable Resource Management, incorporating vegetation, air, soil, mineral, wildlife, aquatics, range and grasslands programs in an integrated resource approach.

The agency mission is for the sustainable management of these renewable resources, and covers a broad range of products and services they provide: wildlife habitat and fisheries; timber products; clean water and clean air functions; recreational opportunities, and support to the local economies of surrounding communities across north Idaho, Montana, and parts of North and South Dakota.

More than half of our Nation's freshwater flows from public and private forestlands, and approximately 66 million Americans rely on drinking water that originates from the National Forest System. Rivers, lakes, and streams enable recreational opportunities that generate economic returns and serve as habitat for fish and wildlife. Forests and grasslands are important filtration mechanisms for freshwater.

Protecting and improving our Nation's water resources is a high-priority performance goal of the Department and the Forest Service. The goals and objectives of the Northern Region strategy embodies these ideals, working with state and private land owners, communities and other engaged partners to implement high-impact targeted practices across the Region. Part of the consideration includes climate change and its potential impacts to the natural resources. Climate change poses a real and significant threat to America's forests and grasslands, and jeopardizes many of the benefits the natural resources provide across the Region. Management problems caused by wildfires, changing rain patterns,

| Natural Resource Actions | Planned Goal | Accomplishment | Comments |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| Watershed Restoration | 155,080 acres | 266,369 acres | 172% of Target |
| Soil and Watershed Improvements | 13,463 acres | 17,147 acres | 127% of Target |
| Wildlife Habitat Improvements | 91,455 acres | 257,428 acres | 282% of Target |
| Lake Habitat Improvements | 6,450 acres | 3,186 acres | 49% of Target - Spring flooding is identified as a potential impact to the actual number of acres treated. |
| Stream Habitat Improvements | 315 miles | 405 miles | 129% of Target |
| Forest Vegetation Improvements | 14,973 acres | 16,836 acres | 112% of Target |
| Rangeland Vegetation Improvements | 303,833 acres | 257,734 acres | 84% of Target |
| Range Grazing Lands Managed to Standard | 4,142,600 acres | 3,276,648 acres | 79% of Target |
| Invasive Noxious Weeds (Non-Native and Other Invasives) | 51,484 acres | 68,291 acres | 133% of Target |
| Timber, Volume Sold | 260.8 MMBF* | 213.7 MMBF* | 82% of Target |
| * MMBF = million board feet. | | | |

and expanding forest insect infestations have been driven in part by a changing climate; future impacts are projected to be more severe.

As part of the integrated resource approach planned into our projects of work for 2012 and beyond, the Region's forests and grasslands will incorporate the Department's goal to "Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources."

A number of elements within the Region will have direct bearing on our future successes. These include community-based stewardship, and engaging volunteers and youth in natural resource projects and programs; efforts directed at improving local and regional economic potential for growth and sustainability; and recreation and tourism-based opportunities.

To measure progress in moving toward the Department's goal, the Re-

gion's forests and grasslands have begun to implement the Climate Change Performance Scorecard. The scorecard includes measures of progress made by each national forest and grassland, supported by the regional offices, stations, and national programs. The scorecard will address agency capacity (training and program guidance); partnerships (alliances, integrating science and management); adaptation (assessing and monitoring key resource vulnerabilities and priorities); and mitigation (assessing and managing carbon stocks and flows, reducing our environmental footprint).

This successful overall approach to renewable resources integrates the varied program-specific objectives (rangeland management, fisheries and wildlife, forest management, etc.) to produce the types of forests and landscapes that more than 170 million visitors to national forests and grasslands expect each year.

New Sioux Ranger District office

A new office and multiple site improvements across the Sioux Ranger District in the Custer National Forest were funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Almost \$3 million was set aside to build a new office, along with upgrades to employee housing and replacing the Sioux Ranger District Compound water distribution system. The District also received funding to renovate the Reva Gap Campground and the Jessie Elliot Historic Ranger Station.



The existing office was built in 1935 by members of the Civilian Conservation Corp. In its place now stands a single story, energy-efficient, LEED certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), and handicap accessible building. The office is also shared with BLM fire crews.



Region One Wilderness Program: Meeting the challenge

The Northern Region was the first Region in the Nation to meet the Chief's Ten Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication from wilderness personnel on the Forest Service Ranger Districts and assistance from key partners. The Northern Region has primary stewardship responsibility for 13 Wilderness areas, totaling approximately five million acres.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 states that wilderness areas, "shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness." With improving technologies and ever-increasing demands from a growing population, Forest Service wilderness program responsibilities and complexities have increased while the agency's wilderness workforce has decreased.

The 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act (2004) provided the opportunity for reflection and evaluation of the "state of the Wilderness resource" and found areas that needed improvement. Because of this evaluation, in 2005, the Forest Service challenged itself to improve the consistency and accountability of wilderness stewardship by

setting a goal to bring each of the 407 wilderness areas under Forest Service management to a "minimum stewardship level" by the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act, in 2014.

This 10-Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge is based on achievable, measurable outcomes. In the past, defining programs of work to achieve better wilderness stewardship has been difficult. The Challenge provides clear guidelines that managers can use to set tasks, priorities and objectives for each fiscal year, and monitor results.

Ten critical elements of the wilderness management job are defined as core tasks, directly tied to specific results, such as the completion of the task or measurable improvement. Tasks are built around fire management; non-native, invasive plants; air quality; wilderness education; opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation; recreation site inventories; outfitters and guides; prevention of degradation of the wilderness resource; data collection, storage, and analysis; and workforce.

Partners:

The Bob Marshall Foundation was established nearly 15 years ago to restore and preserve the trail system and wilderness values in the Bob



Marshall Wilderness Complex. Over the past 15 years they have contributed to the Challenge by inventorying and monitoring recreation sites (camp-sites, trails, picnic and overlook sites) and inventorying and treating noxious weeds.

The newly formed Selway-Bitterroot Foundation is committed to connecting citizens and communities to assist in the stewardship of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness (SBW) and surrounding wildlands. Since 2009, the Foundation has worked to provide support to the SBW meeting the challenge by inventorying and monitoring recreation sites (campsites, trails, picnic and overlook sites) and inventorying and treating noxious weeds.

In 2005, the Wilderness Institute at the University of Montana approached the Forest Service Northern Region about how they could engage citizens in wilderness monitoring and stewardship. Since that time, they have completed recreation site inventories and inventories of noxious weeds in the Rattlesnake, Welcome Creek, Cabinet Mountains, Anaconda Pintler, Gospel Hump, and Gates of the Mountains Wildernesses.

Volunteers staff historic St. Mary Peak Lookout



At 9,351 feet, the lookout tower atop St. Mary Peak just west of Stevensville boasts one of the best views anywhere on the Bitterroot National Forest.

This summer, hikers visiting the popular fire lookout were greeted by community volunteers serving in the new volunteer lookout host program. The program is a partnership between the Forest Service and the Selway-Bitterroot Frank Church Foundation. When word went out last winter that the two organizations were looking for volunteers to staff the lookout, the response was overwhelming. More than 60 people applied for just a few positions.

Volunteers Mark Brown, Patrick McCarron and Clare O'Connell staffed the lookout throughout the summer, serving as fire lookouts, educators, and facility maintenance staff. A variety of additional volunteers assisted the three lookouts with tasks throughout the summer. Over the course of three months, the volunteers interacted with 1,113 visitors to the lookout. The Foundation also assisted the Forest with numerous other projects in 2011 including trail maintenance, campsite monitoring, and repairs totaling an impressive 1,839 volunteer hours.

Growing partnership with Missoula Children's Theatre

In 2011 the Region's partnership with the Missoula Children's Theatre saw an increase in the number and frequency of performances and residency weeks they conducted or planned into the 2012 school year.

This long-term partnership promotes the general physical and mental health of America's children by creating awareness of America's great outdoors while encouraging regular outdoor activity. This program was launched in the fall of 2009. MCT has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region, nature resource professionals and educators to develop interactive and engaging school assembly/workshops presented as a complement to the MCT International Tour programs.

Starting in the fall of 2011, the engaging, interactive 45-minute assembly based on International Year of Forests made its scholastic debut. The newest assembly creation

focusing on grades 1-5 is called *If Forests Could Talk*. This quick educational opportunity seizes the moment to impart important social themes and life skills, while carrying a delicate balance of education, entertainment and social responsibility. This past fall also featured the debut of the newest MCT tour show title, *The Secret Garden*.

MCT also conducts a weeklong Residency "starring" 50-60 local students in a full-scale musical. This weeklong residency begins with an open group audition and culminates in two public performances. All of the shows are original adaptations of children's stories and fairytales—a twist on the classic stories that you know and love.

The first of the fall Residency programs was delivered to schools in the Washington DC metro area in early November. The troupe also conducted a Residency workshop in Missoula in mid-December at the Target Range school.

A guide to your Northern Region National Forests and Grasslands

Each of the National Forests and Grasslands in the Northern Region has a distinct personality. For more information, contact your local Forest or Grassland office directly for more detailed and personalized tips on how to make your visit a great one.

Idaho Panhandle National Forest

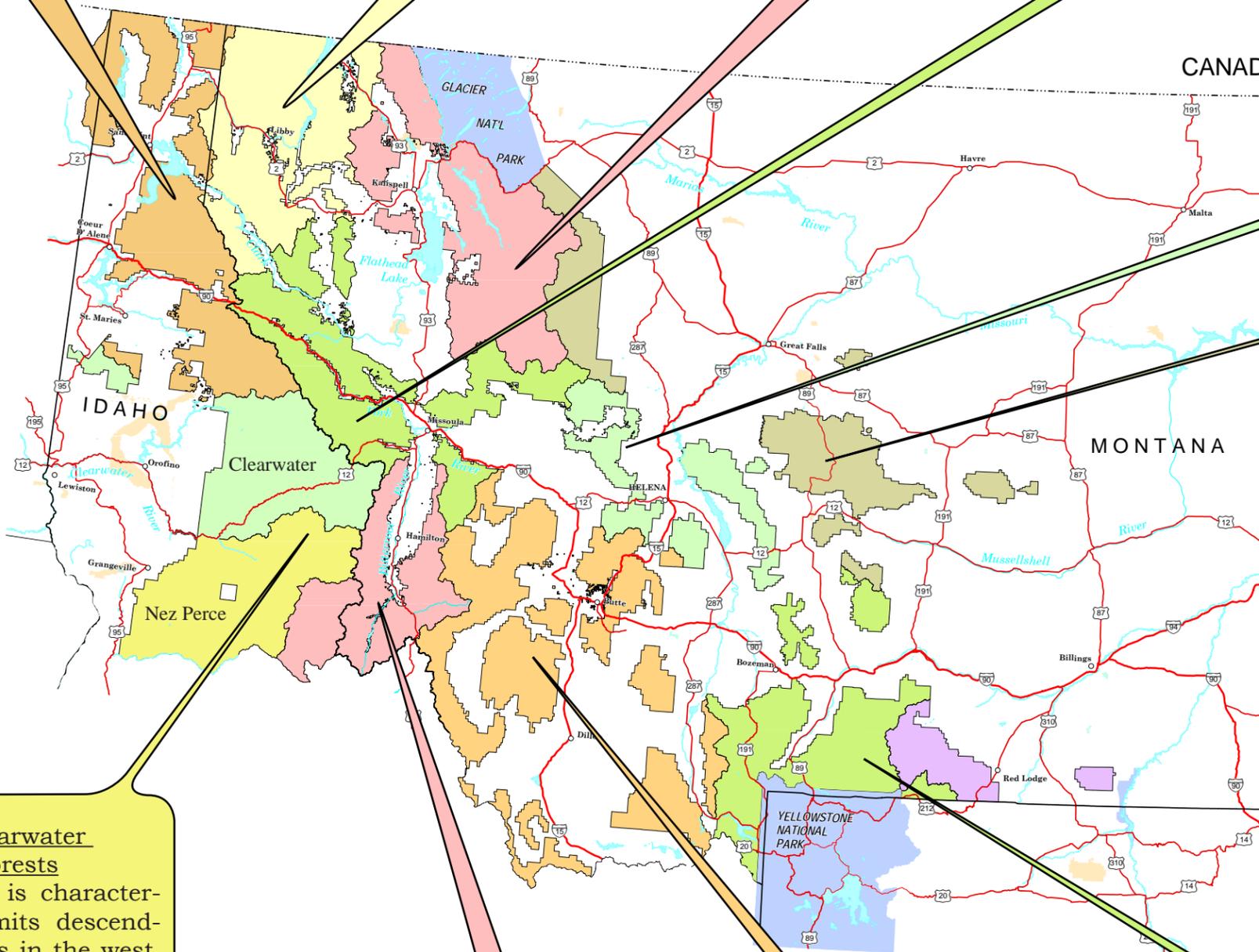
The IPNFs of North Idaho host backcountry trails that guide travelers through evergreen forests to remote lakes and spectacular views. Quiet country lanes take the motorist by abandoned mining towns, and trace Civil War era military wagon roads. Over 4,000 miles of rivers and vast lowland lakes combine with high mountain slopes for year-round recreational opportunities.

Kootenai National Forest

The high craggy peaks, deep canyons and mixed conifers of the Kootenai National Forest stretch from the Canadian border to the Clark Fork valley. The forest's scenic treasures include the Purcell Mountains, the Yaak River, Ross Creek Scenic Area Giant Cedars, the Kootenai River, Lake Koocanusa, and Libby Dam. The heart of the Kootenai is the Cabinet Mountain Wilderness, where majestic peaks tower over the surroundings.

Flathead National Forest

The Flathead's spectacular, rugged terrain lies adjacent to Glacier National Park and west of the Continental Divide. The vast expanse of the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex offers forest visitors primitive recreational opportunities. Glaciated peaks and alpine lakes provide year-round recreational opportunities.



Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

The Clearwater NF is characterized by high summits descending to fertile prairies in the west, with miles of tumbling whitewater punctuated with quiet pools and deep canyons. The ridges between the canyons have provided travel corridors for centuries. The Nez Perce is marked with rugged peaks, deep canyons, dense forests, and remote wildernesses. Lewis and Clark followed Indian routes through the area on their way to the Pacific. The Snake, Salmon, and Selway Rivers mean adventure. The Seven Devils Area of the Hells Canyon National Recreation is on the Nez Perce National Forest.

Bitterroot National Forest

The Bitterroot is home to two major mountain ranges separated by the Bitterroot River valley in southwestern Montana and into Idaho. Most of this rugged range is wilderness. To the east, the Sapphire range presents a gentler horizon. The forest has plentiful big game, high quality water, and backcountry recreation opportunities including wild rivers.

Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

The B-bar-D straddles the Continental Divide in southwestern Montana. Elevations range from 4,500 feet to more than 11,000 feet. Lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir forests, interspersed with large grassy parks, providing excellent habitat for elk and great year-round recreation.

and Grasslands

Each has special places waiting to be discovered. Contact the visit memorable.

Each of the National Forests and Grasslands in the Northern Region has a distinct personality. Each has special places waiting to be discovered. Contact the Forest or Grassland office directly for more detailed and personalized tips on how to make your visit memorable.

Lolo National Forest

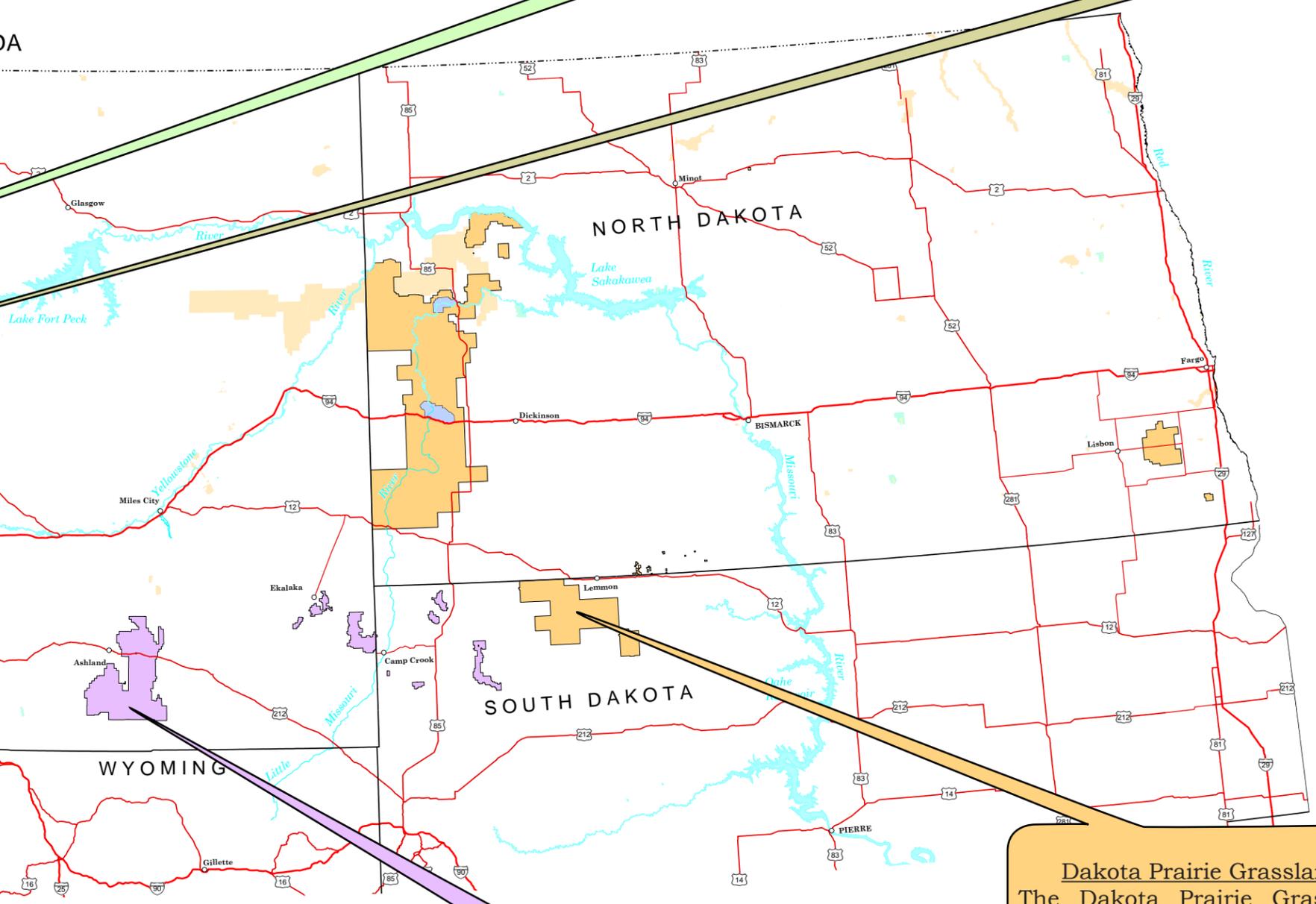
The Lolo surrounds the western Montana community of Missoula. The crest of the Bitterroot Mountains divides Montana from Idaho and serve as the forest's western boundary. The Continental Divide through the Scapegoat wilderness defines the forest's eastern boundary. Four major rivers and their streams offer some of the best fishing in the Rocky Mountains. The Rattlesnake National Recreation Area offers many recreation opportunities right on the edge of Missoula, Montana.

Helena National Forest

Montana's "Capitol City Forest", the Helena National Forest, provides many grassy parks interspersed amidst lodgepole pine and Douglas fir forests. The Gates of the Mountains Wilderness remains as impressive a sight as when Lewis and Clark described them on their journey up the Missouri River. Montana's rich mining and ranching history are an important part of the Helena National Forest.

Lewis & Clark National Forest

Situated in west central Montana, the Lewis and Clark has two distinct divisions. The rugged mountain peaks of the Rocky Mountain Division often hold snow for 10 months of the year. This long backbone of a mountain range stretches south of Glacier National Park with seemingly endless paralleling ridges and valleys. The six mountain ranges of the Jefferson Division appear to be islands of forest dotting expanses of wheat and ranch lands.



Gallatin National Forest

The headwaters of the Yellowstone Gallatin and Madison rivers - world-renowned for "blue ribbon" trout fishing, flow through the heart of the Gallatin National Forest. Located just north of Yellowstone National Park, the forest is rich in wildlife, scenic alpine vistas, rugged wildlands, and a spectrum of recreation opportunities.

Custer National Forest

Covering some 400 miles of southeastern Montana and northwest South Dakota, the landscape of the Custer changes from expansive prairies and rugged badlands to densely wooded forests, and carpets of alpine wildflowers. It is host to the Beartooth Plateau, near Granite Peak, the highest in Montana at 12,799 feet elevation.

Dakota Prairie Grasslands

The Dakota Prairie Grasslands sprawl across wide open spaces of North and South Dakota in four distinct units. Remnants of tall-grass prairie cover rolling hills on the Sheyenne National Grasslands in significant contrast to the stark badlands found in the Little Missouri National Grasslands.

Whitebark Pine Restoration Program: Contribution to a species in peril

The Whitebark Pine is declining dramatically and has actually disappeared from many parts of its historic range.

The dwindling numbers are caused by an introduced fungus called the white pine blister rust, pine beetle attacks, and competition from other species.

The urgency of the situation spiked recently due to large outbreaks of mountain pine beetle, which may kill 90 percent of mature Whitebark Pine trees – including those that may be resistant to white pine blister rust, according to Forest pathologist John Schwandt.

Whitebark Pine grows in high elevation areas and at timberline, where it is a keystone species. It's the only tree species that can get started along the tree line, and

enables other plant species to get a foothold. Many animals depend on these plants for protection and sustenance. Whitebark pine also protects soil from eroding in the harsh subalpine environment. Without it, high elevation ecosystems would be in great jeopardy.

In the past four years the national Whitebark Pine Restoration Program has been able to contribute a total of \$3.5 million restoration projects throughout the West. More than 120 projects have received funding so far. All the activities supported by the Whitebark Pine Restoration Program and Forest Health Protection are efforts to help this critically important species persevere under pressure from disease, insects, and competition.



Funds aid fight against aquatic invasive species

The Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) approved by Congress in 2010 is helping set the stage for restoring and improving habitat across large areas of interconnected habitat on the three national forests that comprise most of what is known as the Southern Crown of the Continent.

The CFLRP is tailored to achieve broad restoration goals across thousands of acres of wildlife and fish habitat, always with the overarching intent of working on a large landscape scale. Much of the work is related to habitat and water quality improvement – but the legislation is also aimed at supporting local economies and protecting communities from wildfire.

Supporting the Region's CFLRP efforts are partners involved in the Crown Management Partnership (CMP), which formed in 2001. The CMP's mission is to demonstrate leadership in analyzing and seeking resolution to the environmental management challenges in the Crown region. This effort focuses along an all-lands across-boundaries collaborative approach to environmental management. The effort mirrors the USDA focus of management across boundaries for the restoration and sustainability of the natural resources, making this a natural partnership.

One aquatic threat knocking on the door of the Seeley and Swan ecosystems in west-central Montana is aquatic invasive species (AIS) that can have devastating effects on native species – sometimes out-competing them for food and habitat. They also can change the aesthetics and character of a lake. Eurasian water milfoil, for example, is a weed-like plant that

grows so thick on shallow lake bottoms that it can make swimming nearly impossible. Zebra mussels often leave behind a blanket of razor-like shells along water edges.

This year the Seeley district helped fund an AIS check station at Clearwater Junction operated by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MT-FWP) where watercraft are inspected for AIS that pose a threat to the lakes of the Clearwater and Swan ecosystems. The \$38,000 check station provides for mandatory inspection of all watercraft. This preventive effort was funded in part with \$20,000 in CFLRP money.

In addition to the MTFWP check station, approximately \$6,900 in CFLRP funds went to help map aquatic vegetation in the Seeley-Swan lakes, establish routine monitoring programs for Zebra Mussels, and support an education and awareness campaign by the Clearwater Resource Council (CRC). The mapping will provide biologists and other resource specialists with data regarding the nature and extent of native aquatic vegetation, establishing important baseline data in the event AIS begin to appear in lakes.



Local residents discuss aquatic invasive species mitigation with Joann Wallenburn of the Clearwater Resource Council at the Holland Lake boat launch during recent public education outreach.

Protecting forests from mountain pine beetle

The Bitterroot National Forest implemented numerous projects in 2011 aimed at slowing the spread of the mountain pine beetle epidemic, using a varied approach to make progress against the infestations and its effects. In May, the Forest sprayed more than 1,800 susceptible lodgepole and ponderosa pine trees in popular campgrounds and high-use recreation areas with the insecticide Carbaryl.

The Forest combined the use of Carbaryl with Verbenone, a pheromone which communicates via smell with the beetles and discourages them from attacking trees. The purpose of protecting trees in selected high-value sites was to maintain aesthetic quality and recreation value, and reduce public safety hazards. Mountain pine beetles are currently killing trees within the treatment areas at a rate of 14:1; meaning that for each tree successfully attacked this year, fourteen trees will likely be attacked next year.

The Forest also applied \$2.1 million in Recovery Act funds for the Middle East Fork Hazardous Fuel Reduction project, completed in 2011 on the Sula Ranger District of the Bitterroot.

The projects employed many in the local community and helped keep three logging firms in business during tough economic times. It also involved the removal of fuel – dead and dying Douglas fir – from 10,000 acres of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) helping to protect private property and improve firefighter and public safety.



Photo courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Tenderfoot Creek and Swift Creek projects:

Partnering with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

The U.S. Forest Service has been working with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and a coalition of partners in several restoration and sustainability projects. One of these projects involves acquiring private lands in the Tenderfoot Creek watershed that would help protect access to thousands of acres of National Forest Service lands.

This acquisition will protect approximately 461 acres of wetlands, 40 miles of streams, and 300 acres of floodplain area. It will also result in a net reduction of overall NFS/private lands boundary, plus fewer survey corners and section subdivisions. The acquisitions are expected to result in an estimated long-term cost savings to the Forest Service of \$495,200.

The lands and waters of the Tenderfoot Creek drainage provide high quality habitat for west slope cutthroat trout, elk, moose, mule deer, black bear, and a multitude of other

species; scenic views; and extraordinary opportunities for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, ATV use, snowmobiling and other uses.

A second project, the Swift Creek project, was designed to leverage Recovery Act funding in a first-of-its-kind thinning project. The \$140,000 project removed small diameter trees planted in a 1966 ponderosa pine plantation. Thinning smaller trees improved the health and vigor of the pine stand, reducing future risk of pine beetle mortality. The primary benefits of this effort included improved soil conditions, wildlife habitat and a reduced risk of wildland fires in the project area.

The Ravalli County Resource Advisory Committee partnered with the Elk Foundation and the Forest on this important restoration project.

Forest Service collaborates on “The Wild Life of Elk”

The long-standing partnership between The US Forest Service and The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) led to the development of a first-of-its-kind, beautifully-illustrated conservation primer on the life, behaviors, and habitat of elk in North America.

The children’s book, “The Wild Life of Elk”, was released in 2004 and is targeted to students in grades 3 through 6. It was written by noted children’s book author Donna Love, and il-

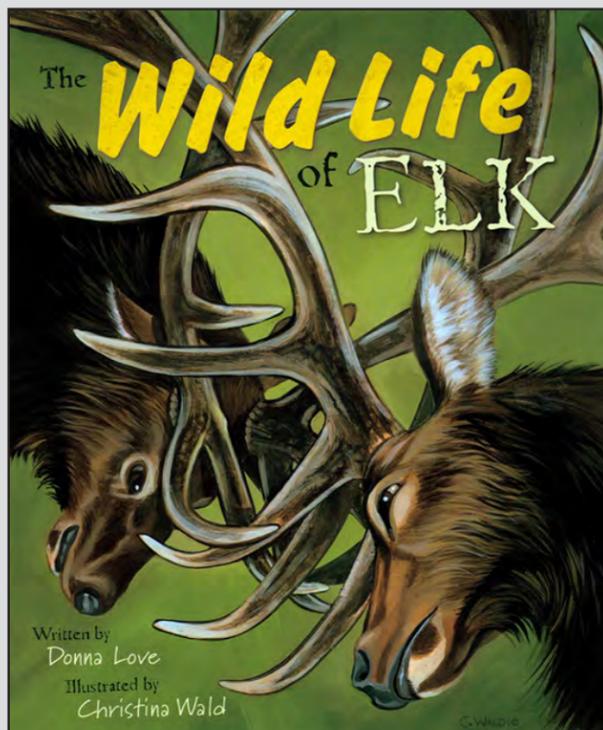


Photo courtesy of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

lustrated by Christina Wald, a recognized leading illustrator of children’s books.

“The Wild Life of Elk” is now available for purchase from RMEF or Mountain Press of Missoula, MT. The Forest Service is providing a limited number of free copies for teachers through Project Wild and other venues. Contact Jim McGowan, the Forest Service’s designated Liaison with RMEF, at jemcgowan@fs.fed.us for more information.

Forest Legacy Project supports wildlife habitat

The Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program helped permanently protect Montana forestland for wildlife habitat and future generations of Americans.

Almost \$6 million in Forest Legacy funding allowed the State of Montana to purchase 10,000 acres of the 24,300 acre area known as the Marshall Block about seven miles northwest of the Seeley Lake community. The project is part of a partnership among many private and public entities to purchase and conserve 310,000 acres of Plum Creek Timber Company lands using matching private funds to complement federal dollars.

These lands provide critical habitat for Canada lynx, grizzly bears, and bull trout – all federally listed endangered species. It’s also a destination for thousands of hunters, snowmobilers, fishermen, and hikers every year.



A Forest for Every Classroom connects teachers to outdoors

In April, 12 Montana teachers packed their snow boots and sleeping bags to begin their outdoor adventure in the Elkhorn Mountains to participate in the Forest for Every Classroom place-based education program.

A *Forest for Every Classroom* is a professional development workshop series for educators to learn how to develop and apply place-based curriculum for their classes. At the heart of the program is the belief that students are more successful in school and life; become more engaged in their communities; and appreciate their “place” more through place-based education than through traditional textbook learning.

Throughout the yearlong program, teachers improve their outdoor skills and knowledge; enhance service learning projects, develop place-based and standard-compliant curriculum to promote community-oriented stewards of our natural resources in their classes.

The Helena National Forest and its partners listed below have hosted the Forest for Every Classroom program in and around the Elkhorn Mountains since 2009. The next program to be offered to educators is planned for the Missoula area in early spring 2012.



Summer camp builds cross-cultural relationships, understanding



Last summer the Bitterroot National Forest hosted a unique summer camp with tribal partners who received funding from the national “More Kids In the Woods” program.

Several years ago Nez-Perce and Salish tribal elders developed a vision of a cross-cultural experience that would connect the young people now living here and the youth who historically lived here, the Bitterroot Salish, around the cultural and natural history of the land and surrounding mountains. For four days, 21 seventh-graders from the Bitterroot and Flathead valleys came together and participated in traditional Native American games and ceremonies, took lessons in traditional drumming, respect for the land, beading and photography. They camped and completed stewardship projects together at Fales Flat Campground on the Bitterroot NF, a traditional meeting place for the Salish and Nez Perce Tribes.

“It took time to develop the relationships to make this program happen,” said camp organizer and Bitterroot RC&D director Becki Koon. “But now the Tribes want it to be an annual event to connect their kids to their historical lands and heritage.”

Other partners included Montana State Parks, Salish-Pend d’Oreille Culture Committee, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (Tribal Council and Tribal Education Department), Salish Kootenai College, Traveler’s Rest State Park, Merging Waters Educational Center and others.

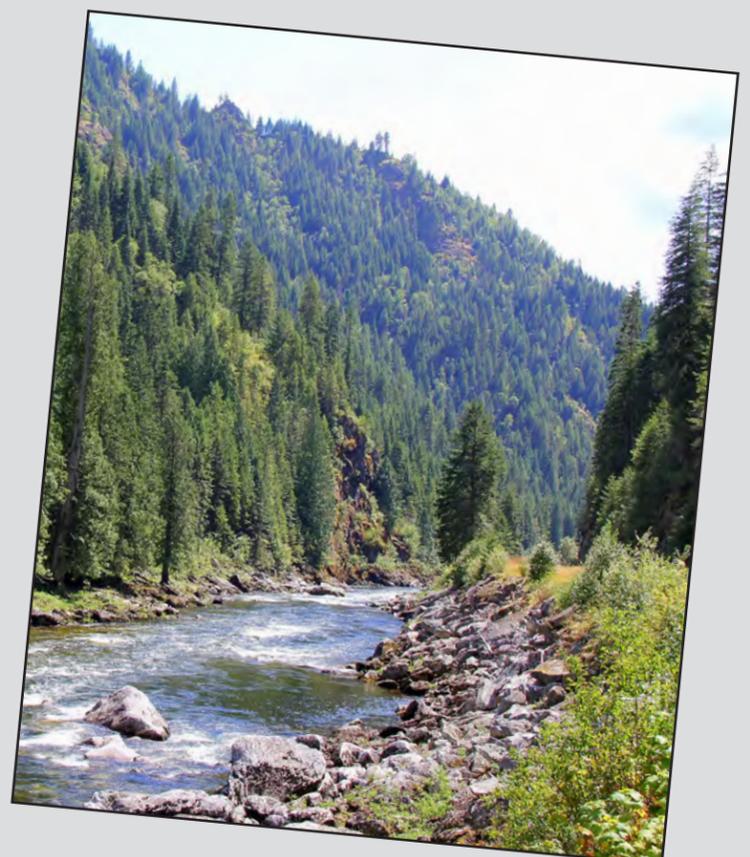
Tribes work with the Forest Service to restore habitat

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and the Nez Perce Tribe have been working together since 1996 to improve conditions for fish in North Central Idaho. This partnership is the cornerstone of an \$8 million watershed restoration program on the Forests.

In 2011 the Nez Perce - Clearwater National Forests decommissioned 73.2 miles of road and set aside another 19.3 miles. Natural bottom culverts or bridges replaced seven culverts that were blocking fish passage, and another 5 culverts were replaced using stimulus funds obligated in previous years. Twenty-five miles of upstream habitat were opened up and more than 30 miles of downstream habitat protected.

Several large channel restoration projects were also completed in partnership with the Nez Perce Tribe, including the Newsome Creek Instream Restoration where 2 miles of mined channel and floodplain were restored. At Mill Creek Instream, a channel was rebuilt and a road that had been impacted by catastrophic flooding in 2008 was reconstructed.

Other restoration projects on the Forests included riparian protection through fencing, native vegetation plantings, stream adjacent road surfacing and drainage improvement, slide and road repairs along streams and ATV trail stream crossing improvements.



Costly floods hit forest lands

By late June when the floods of 2011 finally receded from National Forest System lands in Montana and the Dakotas, the damage and debris left behind gave supervisors, district rangers and resource specialists a completely unexpected set of issues to address. The Forest Service began to issue warnings from the Regional office in early May that the melting record snowpack and rain in Montana, Idaho and portions of North and South Dakota increased the potential for flooding across all of the national forests and grasslands in the Region.

High temperatures and rain at high elevations caused the near-record depth of the snowpack to melt at much faster rates than normal. Combined with streams already at high spring runoff rates, the fast-melting snowpack produced flooding across the region. Floods are one of the most common hazards in the United States. Flood effects can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states.

The forests and grasslands in Region 1 reported significant damages that required road closures from washed out bridges, culverts and roads and delayed campground and recreational area openings. The repairs and restoration necessary includes work on all types of affected trails and trailhead areas; campgrounds, facilities and access roads; day use facilities such as picnic shelters and water access areas; plus damage to Forest Service roads and bridges necessary for recreation access, local community road systems, and for use in natural resource projects, monitoring and access for wildfire; and the removal of hundreds of hazard trees from these same areas and other roadways for visitor and employee safety.

The estimated costs for these repairs and renovations

ranged from \$83,500 to as high as \$1.5 million across the Region's 13 units. The majority of the expenses was for road and bridge repairs, and for trail and culvert reconstruction and replacement. Final total damage costs ran just slightly more than \$6 million. The states of Idaho, Montana and North & South Dakota spent an equal or greater amount on repairs to their damages across the region, making this one of the region's costliest floods in recent history.



Forest Service teams of resource specialists visited numerous wash-outs and other damaged roads, bridges and trails when the floodwaters receded. While not all damage has been repaired due to limits in funding, the Region continues to coordinate with the Federal Highway Administration for support. A number of damaged sites were repaired, however, including sites repaired through cooperation with public road agencies with matching fund and in-kind contributions.

Abandoned Uranium Mine Clean-up in North Dakota

Riley Pass Abandoned Uranium Mines on the Dakota Prairie Grasslands are located in the North Cave Hills portion of the Sioux Ranger District, approximately 25 miles



north of Buffalo, South Dakota. The 250-acre site includes 12 bluffs that were strip mined for uranium in the 1950s.

During this era, there were no reclamation standards and sites were left "as is." Now, there's increased sedimentation, erosion and residual onsite mine wastes. Onsite contaminant concentrations have ranged up to 10 times higher than normal levels for the area. Arsenic, molybdenum, thorium, and uranium are specific contaminants of concern and are being treated and stabilized through this project.

The Forest Service has been working at the Riley Pass site (commonly known as a Superfund site) since 1996 to protect human health and the environment. This year the Forest Service clean-up actions continued, consisting of consolidating, compacting, and burying contaminated materials. Buried contaminants and remaining erosive spoils are re-graded, covered with clean borrow and re-vegetated. A recent bankruptcy settlement from Tronox, LLC will provide a minimum of \$7 million in clean-up funds likely to commence in Fall 2012.

Oil & gas growth brings boom to Dakota Prairie Grasslands

The Dakota Prairie Grasslands (DPG) is experiencing its share of the oil and gas boom of western North Dakota. Because of the growth of this program, the DPG now oversees the largest oil program in the Forest Service. And the program has enormous impact on local, state, regional and national economies.

North Dakota is breaking oil production records on a monthly basis, and the pace of development is increasing across private lands that border the DPG. Wells and production are expected to move onto the public lands

(DPG) as the industry and the profits grow. At the end of 2011 there were more than 650 active wells in the state, generating in excess of \$154 million annually. In addition, the forecast is for increases in both throughout 2012.

The Bakken/Three Forks formation, which underlies portions of the National Grasslands, is one of the hot spots in the northern hemisphere. One of the top producing horizontal wells for the Three Forks, and Upper and Middle Bakken formation is located on the DPG (operated by Petro-Hunt).

The volume of new special uses ap-

plications is exceeding the DPG staff capacity to renew expiring permits, process new applications, and administer existing permit sites. There are 320 permits associated with the minerals program that make up 80 percent of the special use permits for the DPG.

But while there are growing pains associated with any emerging process, industry, or economic opportunity, the DPG staff is working closely with their local community officials and other partners to do everything they can to support this vital economic boom to the state and the nation.

Youth Conservation Corps...



The Future of Natural Resource Management!



Legislated nationally as a permanent program in 1974, the Youth Conservation Corps puts young people to work on needed conservation projects while providing environmental education opportunities that allow them to “learn while they earn.” In 2011, 77 Youth Conservation Corps crew members on the Lolo, Nez Perce-Clearwater, Kootenai, and Idaho Panhandle National Forests and the Dakota Prairie Grasslands completed a tremendous amount of work, complimenting ranger district staffs and crews. White pine pruning, slash piling, weed inventories, knap weed and blue weed pulling, maintenance and cleaning of rental lookouts, campground maintenance, trail clearing and maintenance, painting of historic buildings, road sign installation, netting young trees to protect emerging buds, aspen tree surveys, snag surveys, installing white bark pine cages, goshawk and harlequin duck surveys, fixing fences, clearing bridges, snow shoveling, culvert cleaning, sign painting, and litter pickup were just some of the major YCC projects accomplished in the Northern Region this year. Engaging youth is a big part of President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative. The Forest Service will see more growth in youth programs in the coming years.



Region One Forest Contact Information

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- Bitterroot NF, 1801 North First Street, Hamilton, MT 59840
Info: (406) 363-7100
- Clearwater NF, 12730 Highway 12, Orofino, ID 83544
Info: (208) 476-4541
- Custer NF, 1310 Main Street, Billings, MT 59105
Info: (406) 657-6200
- Dakota Prairie Grasslands, 240 West Century Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58503
Info: (701) 250-4443
- Flathead NF, 650 Wolfpack Way, Kalispell, MT 59901
Info: (406) 758-5200
- Gallatin NF, 10 East Babcock Ave, Bozeman, MT 59771
Info: (406) 587-6701
- Helena NF, 2880 Skyway Drive, Helena, MT 59601
Info: (406) 449-5201
- Idaho Panhandle NF, 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d’Alene, ID 83815
Info: (208) 765-7223
- Nez Perce NF, 104 Airport Road, Grangeville, ID 83530
Info: (208) 983-1950
- Kootenai NF, 31374 U.S. Highway 2, Libby, MT 59923
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- Lewis and Clark NF, 1101 15th Street N, Great Falls, MT 59401
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