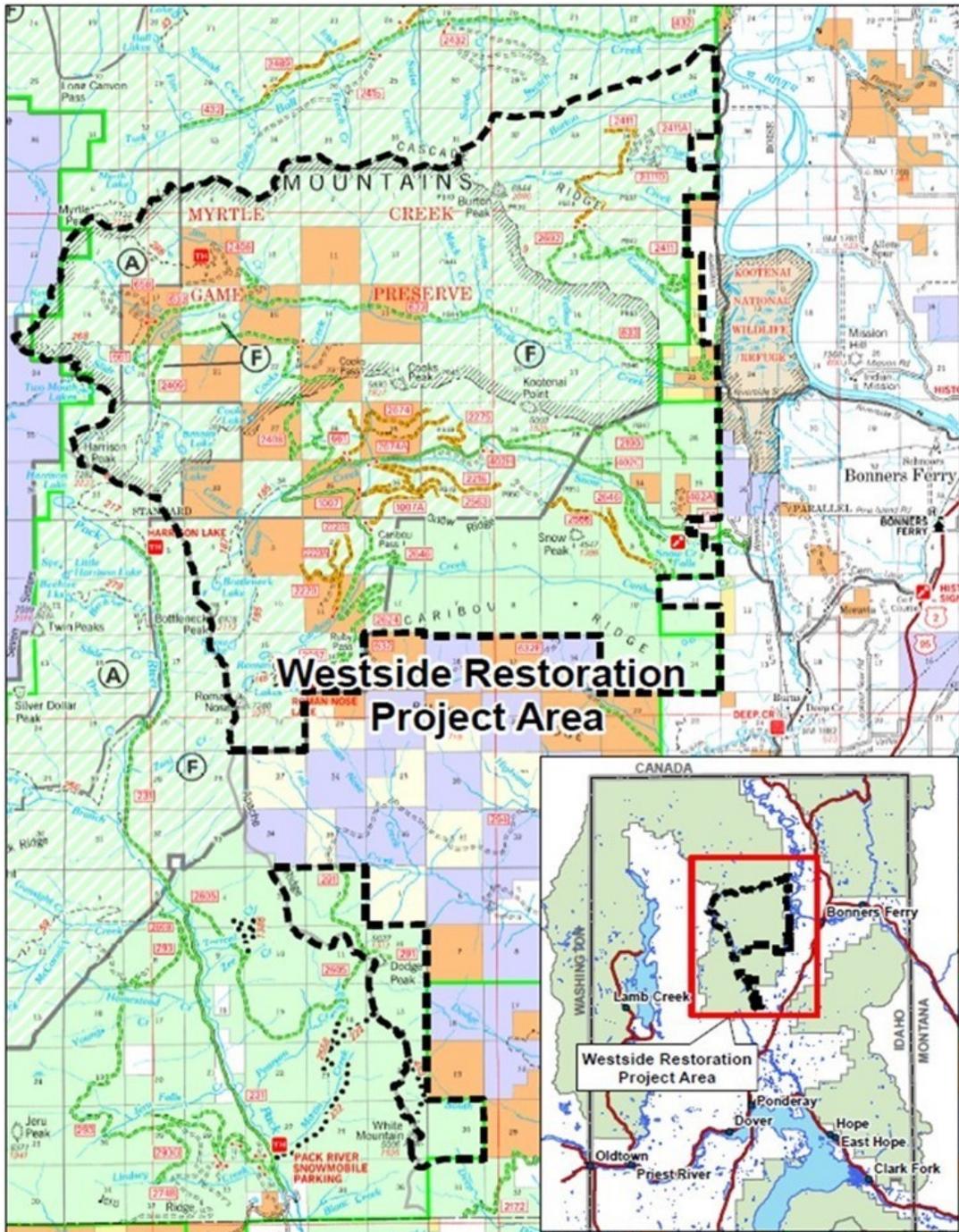


Project Location and Background Information

The Westside Restoration project is approximately 60,000 acres in size and is located within Boundary County, Idaho encompassing the Cascade, Myrtle, Snow and Caribou Creek watersheds, as well as the Dodge Peak and White Mountain areas. Although there are numerous other ownerships within the project area, including the Idaho Department of Lands, private timber company lands, and other private lands, only federal lands (both Bureau of Land Management and National Forest System) are being considered for treatment specific to this project.



Large fire events in the project area included several in the early 1900s, as well as the Sundance Fire of 1967 (approximately 56,000 acres total fire size with around 8,000 acres having burned in the project area), and the Myrtle Creek Fire in 2003 (approximately 3,500 acres, all of which occurred in the project area). However, fire suppression has been quite successful overall and has likely played a role in the fuel buildup and congested stand conditions we see across much of the Westside landscape today. Other disturbance regimes that have changed the landscape included timber management and road building during the 1970's and 1980's. Most of the clearcuts from this era have since regenerated and big game forage has declined concurrently.

Field reconnaissance has identified a need and opportunity to maintain or improve the vegetation resource and the overall resilience of the watersheds to forest health concerns. Given this, vegetation treatments are being designed to move the landscape toward desired conditions as described in the Forest Plan and the Bureau of Land Management Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan (RMP).

Purpose and Need

Improve forest landscape resiliency

A resilient ecosystem is one capable of withstanding a disturbance by resisting damage and recovering over time to its original state. Such disturbances can include wildfire, windstorms, expansive insect outbreaks, and human activities such as fire suppression.

Prior to successful fire suppression and the introduction of blister rust, white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine (on drier sites) were abundant. These species readily regenerated following large wildfires, as they need openings where there is ample sunlight to grow. Lacking natural disturbance, the project area is now largely dominated by dense stands of similar sized and aged Douglas-fir, grand fir, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir (at higher elevations), making them susceptible to insects (such as bark beetle), root diseases and intense wildfire. Reducing the acreage where these species currently dominate in favor of the preferred species will provide for resistance to disturbance and allow some stands to trend towards desired older forest structure. Creating patches of variable sized openings could further increase landscape resiliency through structural diversity.

We also see a need to expand the acres where hardwoods such as quaking aspen, paper birch, and cottonwood are significant components; these species play important ecological roles in our forests, such as providing for wildlife habitat. Lastly, we have a need to manage the densities and compositions of the younger stands. Doing so would promote vigor in the trees that remain while addressing current and long-term fuels reduction needs at the stand and landscape level.

Fuels reduction

Approximately 98% of the project area occurs in the county-defined WUI, including all of the Myrtle Creek watershed, which is the current source of drinking water for the City of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Numerous homes, other structures, as well as private land occur within and adjacent to the project area. In many instances, large quantities of forest fuels on public lands occur next to homes and private property, and hazardous fuels also occur immediately adjacent to National Forest System roads that are important for serving as emergency egress routes for evacuating people from the area and ingress for firefighter personnel and equipment when wildfires occur.

The Forest Plan contains direction to reduce hazardous fuels within the WUI and to manage forest vegetation in these areas so that the risk is low for large wildfires. Based on that direction, and given the conditions of the fuels in the project area and the risks to people, property, infrastructure and natural resource values, we've

determined a need to mitigate fuels on public lands. Our objective is to reduce hazardous fuels in all layers so expected wildfire behavior is low-intensity surface fire over faster-moving, and potentially severe, crown fire.

Improve motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences

Nestled in the Selkirk Mountains, the Westside project area is very popular for recreationists. Several non-motorized trails (Snow Creek Falls, Bottleneck/Snow, Two Mouth, Harrison Lake, Myrtle Lake) and recreation hotspots (Roman Nose) occur within the project area and there is a need to improve access to these areas to accommodate increasing demand and provide for safety.

Improve the scenic quality of the project area

Within the project area, some past timber harvest has resulted in geometrically shaped openings rather than natural vegetation patterns typical of wildfire disturbance. As such, we see an opportunity to accomplish restoration work that results in a more naturally appearing landscape from prominent locations, such as from downtown Bonners Ferry or while driving west across the valley towards the Kootenai Wildlife Refuge.

Improve habitat for grizzly bears and mule deer

Many of the federal lands within the Westside project area consist of closed canopy stands, where forage for wildlife is limited. This structure shades the forest floor, limiting the growth of palatable shrubs and herbaceous species; this includes stands in all forest types including the higher elevation subalpine stands where mule deer forage.

Even in older openings from past wildfires and timber harvest, forage has declined due to growing trees and the remaining shrubs growing too tall and becoming woody and unpalatable. Increasing the amount of open-forest structure, while maintaining or improving security specific to grizzly bears, would be expected to improve the quality and increase the quantity of forage.

Decrease sediment sources

Road surveys were conducted throughout the project area to assess erosion and sediment delivery potential from the current road system. There are opportunities to reduce sediment delivery at certain points by doing road maintenance work such as adding ditch relief culverts, drivable dips, gravel, etc. – typical work associated with facilitating timber harvest and other vegetation management activities.

Control non-native, invasive plants

Noxious weed populations have been observed along project roads and trail systems, and a new invader to the area has been discovered as well (Ventanata – an invasive grass). The Forest Plan desired conditions include the containment or eradication of newly invading, non-native invasive plants (NNIP). To be consistent with the plan, we have a need to include activities that will contain and limit the spread of this and other invasive plants.

Determine long-term transportation needs

Our desired condition includes a transportation system that provides safe and efficient public and administrative access to the Forest for recreation, special uses, forest resource management, and fire management. While being responsive to public needs and desires, our objectives include a road system which can be efficiently maintained while minimizing impacts to resources such as threatened and endangered species, cultural sites, water quality and aquatic species.

Benefit the local economy

Through landscape restoration work, the Westside project could contribute to the local economy through the sale of commercial products and the other associated fuels reduction activities.

Proposed Actions to meet Purpose and Need

Timber Harvest with Fuels Reduction

To meet objectives for fuels reduction, economic contributions, and desired conditions related to forest vegetation and resiliency, among others, the Westside Restoration project (WSR) proposes to treat 7,964 acres of forest stands in the project area using commercial harvest. Both intermediate harvest (including variable density thinning – VDT) and regeneration harvest is proposed – see summary pages 5 and 6, as well as project maps.

Logging equipment used to implement the harvest would include ground based equipment on 4,376 acres, cable (skyline equipment) on 2,855 acres, and helicopter yarding on 733 acres. Several proposed units occur in General Forest Inventoried Roadless (mostly the Kootenai Peak IRA, but also acres in the Selkirk IRA – more information at the end of this section).

Fuels reduction treatments to reduce natural surface and ladder fuels, as well as harvest created slash, would occur on all acres proposed for commercial harvest using mechanical methods (grapple-piling and pile burning), underburning (UB), or whole-tree yarding (WTY) OR a combination of two or even all three of these. Mechanical fuels treatments (grapple-piling) in harvest units is only being proposed where a ground-based harvest system is also being proposed. Prescribed burning, which technically includes both pile burning and underburning, would be used to reduce natural, or pre-existing surface and ladder fuels, as well as to mitigate harvest created slash. In addition, prescribed fire helps to prepare regeneration units for planting and natural regeneration.

How has proposed timber harvest changed since scoping?

Through resource analysis and assessments for harvest operations, our proposed harvest acres have decreased by about 1,500 acres from what we had originally proposed at scoping. Some units have dropped or have been refined to fewer acres due to the need to protect resources such as riparian habitat, wildlife habitat, or soils (among others), while other harvest areas may have been dropped due to access or other challenges.

Prescribed Burning of Natural Fuels

Prescribed burning of natural fuels (without timber harvest) would help accomplish vegetation, forest resiliency, and fuels reduction objectives, while improving habitat for many species of wildlife.

Eleven ‘burn only’ units have been identified ranging in size from 85 acres to 395 acres, totaling 2,538 acres. The burn units were designed to meet project objectives while returning fire to a fire-dependent landscape and helping to provide for safe and effective fire management into the future.

Specifically, prescribed burning of natural fuels would:

- Maintain and improve forage and quality and quantity of browse
- Consume surface fuels (such as grasses, needle litter, small shrubs, and jackpots of down woody fuel) and ladder fuels (tall shrubs, small conifers, and lower branches of larger conifers)
- Apply low-intensity surface fire to about 150 acres of drier forest in Snow Creek (dominated by ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir); including some dry-site old growth.
- Maintain or enlarge existing openings by killing encroaching conifers

- Create openings, specifically in the mid-elevation cool/moist forests and upper-elevation cold/dry forests. These openings would:
 - Disrupt the continuity of large patches of similar sized and aged forests, creating variability in forest structures
 - Allow increased sunlight to the forest floor to stimulate new growth
 - Help reduce spread potential, intensity, and severity of future wildfires

How has the Prescribed Burning of Natural Fuels proposal changed since scoping?

We have increased the acreage of prescribed burning of natural fuels by about 100 acres. This addition is in the dry forest habitat east of Kootenai Peak in the Snow Creek drainage – we determined that some acres dropped from consideration for harvest due to poor access, could still be prescribed burned to meet resource objectives.

Precommercial Thinning

Precommercial thinning (PCT) Of the 1,730 acres proposed for PCT, 948 acres would be thinned by hand (and hand piling could occur) and 781 acres would be either hand thinned (operators on foot with chainsaws) or mechanically thinned (hand thinning with grapple-piling, or use of equipment such as skidsteer or small excavator with mulching or masticating attachment to thin the stand and treat fuels concurrently). Pruning of white pine, where it is present, would occur in conjunction on all PCT acres, to help mitigate white pine blister rust infection.

How has the Precommercial Thinning proposal changed since scoping?

The precommercial thinning proposal has increased by about 240 acres from scoping to include treatment of additional plantations, primarily in the Snow Creek drainage.

Summary of Proposed Vegetation Treatments

- **12,232 acres total of Vegetation Treatments**
 - 7,964 acres commercial timber harvest with fuels reductions
 - Regeneration Harvest: 3,280 acres
 - Intermediate Harvest: 1,995 acres
 - Intermediate - Variable Density Thinning - Harvest: 2,689 acres
 - 2,538 acres natural fuels burning (without commercial timber harvest)
 - 1,730 acres PCT and/or white pine pruning

Some of the aforementioned activities would occur on lands administered by the Coeur d'Alene Field Office of the Bureau of Land Management (221 total acres of treatment proposed on BLM lands; 165 acres of timber harvest and 56 acres of prescribed fire only treatments).

Recreation Management

This area receives a lot of use in all seasons due to access, in particular direct vehicle access to Roman Nose, several hiking trails, and availability for winter recreation. User groups include hunters, hikers, mountain bikers, motorcyclists, off-highway vehicle and snowmobile enthusiasts, and horseback riders to name a few. Because the project area is increasing in popularity with various recreationalists, the risk of resource damage is increasing. To address this several recreation proposals are included such as designated parking along Snow Creek, expanded parking at trailheads and other locations, trail re-routes and new trail construction, a warming hut near Roman Nose, stabilization of the Burton Peak Lookout, to name a few.

Proposed Recreation Improvements

- Construct a non-motorized trail across the face between Snow and Myrtle Creeks, connecting the Kootenai Wildlife Refuge to Kootenai Point and beyond to the Cooks Peak trail (new trailhead at the refuge). All proposed trail construction and rerouting would be accomplished using a combination of hand and mechanical methods (hand tools or a very small excavator), and blasting of rock may be necessary in some locations.
- Construct a new Snow Falls #189 trailhead on USFS managed lands, located approximately 0.3 miles west of the existing trailhead. A ¼ mile connector trail would be constructed to tie the new parking area to the existing Snow Falls Trail #189.
- Create two additional parking locations along the Snow Creek Road. The first at approximately 3 miles and the second at approximately 5.5 miles.
- Extend the parking area at the Bottleneck/Snow Trailhead to the junction of road #661 to increase capacity.
- Construct a Harrison Lake Trailhead #217 on the Myrtle Creek Road #633 near the junction of the Forest Road #2409. Convert Forest Road #2409 to a trail.
- Return the Roman-Nose parking area to its original footprint. Add an additional overflow parking area on the south side of Forest Road #2667. Existing dispersed sites located along Road #2667 would be removed.
- Analyze for the construction of a winter-use warming hut in Section 14, approximately ¾ miles east of Roman-Nose parking area. Site would be accessed by Forest Road #2667UB and construction would be contingent upon local user groups acquiring adequate funding.
- Reroute the Two Mouth Trail #268 to the Myrtle Creek Road #633.
- Construct a two mile section of trail connecting the Myrtle Lake Trail #286 to the Ball Creek Road #432. Construct a new trailhead approximately one mile back on the Ball Creek Road and convert the westernmost mile of Ball Creek Road #432 to a non-motorized trail.
- Stabilize the Burton Peak Lookout Cabin. No amenities would be provided. Once complete recreational use would be on a first come first serve basis.

How have the proposed Recreation Improvements changed since scoping?

We are analyzing for a winter-use warming hut with a specific location identified near Roman Nose, however, construction of the hut would be contingent on local user groups – not the Forest Service – acquiring adequate funding. Construction being contingent on outside (the FS) funding was not made clear during scoping.

Treatment of Non-Native, Invasive Plants

Non-native, invasive plant (NNIP) treatments (herbicides, as well as biological and/or mechanical controls) would continue to occur along project area road corridors which are currently authorized under the Bonners Ferry Noxious Weeds EIS (1995). In addition, we are proposing to expand the area covered for treatments to include temporary roads and other roads reconstructed specifically for project use, as well as trail corridors and other off-road areas in order to eradicate or contain priority weed species (new invaders or potential new invaders to the IPNF).

Expanded areas of NNIP treatments would include a maximum of 130 additional acres per year within the entire project area. This total includes up to 90 acres per year adjacent to project specific roads (temporary and reconstructed roads), as well as up to 40 acres per year to address priority weed species if/when they are discovered off-road and along trail corridors (up to 10 acres of treatments off-road and along trail corridors for each for the major project area drainages – Cascade, Myrtle, Snow, and Caribou Creeks – totaling up to 40 acres annually). To summarize, in addition to the invasive plant treatments already authorized under the current Bonners Ferry Noxious Weeds EIS, the Westside project proposes up to an additional 130 acres of non-native, invasive plant treatment per year within the project area. However, the acreage treated annually would likely be less, as treatments would occur as needed (i.e. when new weed populations are discovered, before temporary roads are decommissioned, etc.)

In addition, we are proposing expanded herbicide use to include aminopyralid, glyphosate, and imazapic for all aforementioned current and proposed additional treatment areas. Aminopyralid, glyphosate, and imazapic are herbicides which have undergone USFS approved risk assessments. Treatments would adhere to the IPNF forest plan best management practices, Pesticide Discharge Management Plan, all pertinent label instructions, and would tier to the management direction in the Bonners Ferry Noxious Weeds EIS.

How have the proposed NNIP treatments changed since scoping?

We have defined the acres proposed for expanded treatments (those outside what is covered in the Bonners Ferry Noxious Weeds EIS) to 130 acres per year, with up 90 of those to occur adjacent to project specific roads, as well as up to 40 acres per year to address priority weed species if/when they are discovered off-road and along trail corridors.

In addition, we had originally proposed expanding herbicide use to include the herbicide indaziflam, however, it has been dropped from consideration in this analysis because the USFS risk assessments on it are not complete.

Aquatics Opportunities

Most of the aquatics opportunities will be specific to road work and drainage improvements near stream crossings to reduce sediment delivery. However, one Aquatic Organisms Passage (AOP) is being proposed on the main Snow Creek road where it crosses an unnamed tributary in Section 25. The existing culvert (located approximately 10 feet from the confluence of Snow Creek) is a barrier to upstream migration of westslope cutthroat trout (there is approximately 3,000 feet of habitat above Snow Creek road). We would replace the existing culvert(s) with a structure such as a bridge or bottomless arch that will provide upstream fish passage to benefit spawning and rearing habitat.

Road Management

Road Treatments	Miles
Reconstruction and Maintenance	71
Temporary road construction	18
Nonsystem roads to be added to the National Forest System (NFS), Reconstructed for Implementation, then Stored	12
Nonsystem roads to be added to the NFS, Reconstructed, and Restricted to Administrative Use	0.3
System Roads Restricted to Administrative Use Reconstructed for Implementation	2.7
Storage of Open or Seasonally Open System Roads	13
Non System Roads Not Needed for Current or Future Management	22

System Road Decommissioning	1.5
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Road Reconstruction and Maintenance – To support large trucks and equipment, we propose to reconstruct and maintain about 71 miles of existing roads. These activities would include clearing brush from the road shoulders to improve sight distance, blading and shaping the road, cleaning ditches, improving drainage structures, and adding gravel to the road surface.

Converting Road Segment to Non - Motorized Use Trail – Converting Road 2409 and 1.4 miles of Road 432 to Non- Motorized Use Trail– We propose to store these roads and convert the surface to a non-motorized trail.

Seasonally Open Road Changes – Roads 1309, 1309C, 2220A, 2220B, 2275, 2275A, 2405, 2405A, 2646A, 2674A, and 2674B are currently classified as open seasonal roads. These roads are currently closed from April 1 through November 15. We propose to place these roads into year round storage.

Roads Restricted to Administrative Use— Road 2226, 402H, and a portion of Road 2667UB will be reconstructed for Project Implementation. These roads are needed for administrative purposes with public use currently restricted for resource concerns and/or facility protection. During project implementation and after completion of project activities, motorized use must be administrative or permitted. These roads are currently restricted from public motorized traffic.

Temporary Road Construction– We are proposing to construct 22 temporary road segments totaling approximately 18 miles for the purpose of accessing harvest units for our proposed activities. These temporary roads would be constructed just for this project and would be decommissioned within 5 years of being constructed.

Placing Roads in Storage – We will be using many of the roads in the project area to accomplish our proposed activities. To meet the forest plan and Grizzly Bear Access Amendment, we are proposing to put 16 miles of roads into storage: about 5 miles that are currently open, approximately 8 miles of which are seasonally restricted, and about 3 miles of roads currently stored year round would be reconstructed, used for project activities, and placed back into storage afterward.

Stored roads would no longer be drivable. They would be blocked with an earthen berm or a short section of full recontour matching the original slope of the land. Storage would remove high risk drainage structures and install additional drainage, such as waterbars and relief swales, to render the road stable and hydrologically inert. Stored roads should need no maintenance when in storage but remain on the FS inventory for possible future and emergency use. Stored roads would remain as part of the National Forest Transportation System and could be reopened as needed in the future. Roads stored for replacement of grizzly bear core habitat would remain stored for a minimum of ten years.

Road Decommissioning – We propose to decommission approximately 1.5 miles of Forest Service Road 658. This road is currently closed with a barrier. Decommissioned roads would no longer be drivable and we would remove all drainage structures, such as culverts, stabilize slopes, and may decompact the driving surface or partially or fully recontour the road prism to restore natural drainage patterns. Decommissioned roads are removed from the Forest Service road inventory.

We also propose to decommission approximately 22 miles of non-system roads that are currently not part of the National Forest System (NFS) of roads. These roads do not provide legal public access and are generally impassable. Removing these roads will help us meet compliance with our forest plan.

Add to NF System – About 12 miles of non-system roads that are currently not part of the National Forest System of roads will be added to the NFS. These roads do not currently provide legal public access and are generally impassable. Approximately 12 miles will be added to the NF system, reconstructed, used for project activities, and placed into storage afterward.

How have the proposed Road Treatments changed since scoping?

Due to a decrease in proposed harvest acres, we have fewer miles of road reconstruction, maintenance, and temporary road construction needs for project implementation. Proposed system road storage has also decreased by about 3 miles from initial proposal. Some decrease was related to errors/fixes in mileage calculations, however, we also dropped the end of the 2190 from consideration for storage (about 2.0 miles) as we determined there may be a long-term need for that road.

Activities Proposed in Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)

Roadless Area	Management Area	Harvest Acres	PCT	Burning Acres	Temporary Road Miles	Trail Miles
Kootenai Peak IRA	General Forest	922	170	362	3.2	5.2
Selkirk IRA	General Forest	188	13	38	0.6	0
	Backcountry	0	0	475	0	0
	Wild Land Rec	0	0	0	0	1.4
White Mountain IRA	Backcountry	0	0	682	0	0
TOTAL		1,110	183	1,557	3.8	6.6

In addition to *non-motorized* trail construction and trail rerouting, the stabilization of the Burton Peak Lookout Cabin would also occur in Inventoried Roadless (Selkirk IRA – Backcountry theme).

How have our proposed actions in Inventoried Roadless Areas changed since scoping?

We had initially proposed 1,071 acres of harvest in the Kootenai Peak General Forest IRA. Through analysis harvest acres have decreased, and in turn a bit less temporary road construction is proposed (0.2 miles fewer). Prescribed natural fuels burning has increased by approximately 100 acres in the Kootenai Peak General Forest IRA, to include some of the acres that dropped from the timber harvest proposal.

Summary of Draft Effects Analysis

The following *draft* summaries of effects is very succinct in regards to project resources and focuses on just a few key issues to address common questions at this point in the process. The draft EA will provide much more detail to these and *all other* resources analyzed.

Draft Effects to Threatened and Endangered Species & Critical Habitat

Grizzly Bear

The Westside Restoration Project would temporarily reduce Core habitat and increase road densities in the Myrtle BMU through temporary road construction and reopening of currently impassable roads. Following implementation, Core would increase (compared to the pre-project condition) as a result of proposed road storage and decommissioning of temporary roads. Similarly, security habitat in the Pack River BORZ area would be reduced during project implementation from road construction and reconstruction, but would be restored

after project completion. Core habitat in the neighboring Ball-Trout BMU would increase through conversion of a currently open road to a non-motorized trail. OMRD in the Myrtle BMU would not exceed the Forest Plan standard of 33% during any single phase of implementation. The Westside Project would result in short-term adverse impacts to grizzly bears as a result of road construction/reconstruction, disturbance from timber harvest and other mechanized activities, and reduction of hiding cover. However, there would be long-term improvements to habitat through increased Core and improvements in grizzly bear forage.

Canada Lynx

The Westside Project proposes regeneration harvest and burning of lynx habitat in the Cascade and Snow LAUs. It would not result in greater than 30 percent of lynx habitat in the affected LAUs being in the stand initiation structural stage not yet providing winter snowshoe hare habitat, or more than 15 percent of lynx habitat in the LAUs having been regenerated by timber management within a 10-year period. The Project also proposes harvest of up to 451 acres of mature, multi-story lynx habitat and precommercial thinning of 185 acres in lynx habitat within the Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI); resulting in 0.3 percent of lynx habitat Forest-wide having been exempted from Standards VEG S1, VEG S2, VEG S5 and VEG S6. Harvest of mature multi-storied stands and precommercial thinning of lynx habitat would potentially have adverse effects on lynx, but these effects have previously been analyzed under the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD). All other Project activities would be consistent with standards and guidelines of the NRLMD.

Selkirk Mountains Woodland Caribou

The Westside Project is not expected to have any effects on woodland caribou during the implementation phase, since caribou presence in this portion of the Recovery Zone is not anticipated for the foreseeable future. Although long-term effects are possible, vegetation management would affect relatively small amounts of caribou habitat, and would increase the resiliency of the forest in the lower elevations and provide fuel breaks that would reduce the potential for fire to alter caribou habitat. Since activities are concentrated at lower elevations at the margins of the Recovery Zone, habitat connectivity would be maintained for the species. Recreation improvements would take place in existing disturbed areas with the exception of two non-motorized trail segments affecting a minute portion of the Recovery Zone. As a result, potential effects to caribou would be discountable.

North American Wolverine

Wolverine may be present in the Westside Project area, and they or their prey could experience disturbance or displacement from proposed activities. However, relatively small amounts (as a proportion of the Project area) of primary and maternal habitat would be affected, and potential disturbance would be temporary and minor at the scale of a wolverine home range. No project activities would take place in denning habitat during the maternal denning period, and the risk of trapping mortality would likely be reduced from the proposed decrease in motorized access.

Current information does not indicate that other potential stressors such as land management activities like those proposed under the Westside Project (or other activities such as recreation, infrastructure development, and transportation corridors) pose a threat to the Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of the North American wolverine. Land management activities (principally timber harvest, wildland firefighting, prescribed fire, and silviculture) can modify wolverine habitat; however, the wolverine is a generalist species that appears to be little affected by changes to the vegetative characteristics of its habitat. While some of these activities have the potential to affect individual wolverines or their habitat (particularly at higher elevations), the potential effects would not reach a level where they would jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

Bull Trout

Under the proposed action, project activities associated with road construction, road reconstruction, road maintenance, culvert replacements, timber harvest, and herbicide use have the greatest potential for impacts to the fisheries resource in the Westside Restoration Project area. Some minor short-term impacts to the fisheries resource are expected but should not substantially impact aquatic habitat conditions beyond what can be passively restored through natural processes; the use of best management practices and design features will be required and have been proven effective to reduce impacts. An effects determination for bull trout and bull trout critical habitat will be established once consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed and will be included in the project biological assessment and letter of concurrence, which will be located in the Fisheries project file.

Draft Effects to Soils and Hydrology

The proposed action alternative would increase detrimental soil disturbance (DSD) in the project area, however DSD would not exceed Region 1 soil quality standards for any of the proposed treatment units. These standards are in place to protect long term soil function and soil productivity. Project design features and mitigation measures reduce the overall impact from management activities in both the short and long term and allow for the proposed action alternative to remain consistent with the Land Management Plan for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests as well as other relevant laws, regulations, and policy.

The proposed action would reduce sediment delivery by improving road drainage, replacing, upgrading, or installing new culverts, cleaning ditches and adding gravel to the driving surface. Through the implementation of the Inland Native Fish Strategy and the incorporation of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA) into the Westside Restoration Project, the proposed activities would not further degrade water quality with respect to temperature because RHCA would retain the canopy cover that prevents solar inputs to the stream. Effective road densities within the project area watersheds would see minimal change from the existing condition after all the project related activities are complete. There would be a slight reduction due to the 13 miles of open road that would be stored upon project completion. However, road densities would increase during the implementation phase of the project when 12 miles of currently-stored roads are opened and 18 miles of temporary roads are constructed to accommodate project activities. ECA values would increase in project area watersheds as a result of the proposed action, but would not result in any increases to water yield or peak flows that could be measured from normal climatic variability.

Draft Effects to American Indian Rights and Concerns

The proposed activities are expected to have no direct effects on all known Traditional Cultural Properties, areas of traditional lifeways resource acquisition, and archaeological/heritage resources within the project planning area as long as the Project Design Criteria, unanticipated discovery plan, and all other requirements are followed including completing on-going Tribal consultation on two areas of concern.

Timeline

Action	When
<i>Draft EA for 30-Day Comment Period</i>	October- November 2020
<i>Final EA and Release of Draft Decision Notice & Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) – Objection Period</i>	December 2020 – January 2021
<i>Release of Final Decision Notice & FONSI</i>	March 2021

