

# **General Assessment and Prescriptions for Flathead Forest Plan Revision**

**Swan View Coalition  
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## **Assessment**

We find the management situation on the Flathead National Forest has resulted from planning that lags decades behind the commercial exploitation of its public lands.

Thousands of miles of logging roads were built, many at the direct expense of the American taxpayer when lumber mills refused to bid on the timber accessed due to its remote location and costs. The Flathead now has six times the miles of road it can afford to maintain and highly fragmented forest ecosystems due to road-assisted logging.

Increasingly powerful and agile snowmobiles, motorcycles, mountain bikes, and ATVs have been manufactured, with manufacturers funding lobbyists and advocacy groups to force open public lands for their use. Inappropriate uses were not nipped in the bud, damaging the habitats of numerous threatened and endangered species as well as the non-mechanized enjoyment of vast areas by people seeking calm and quiet.

From the perspective of fish, wildlife and traditional non-mechanized uses of the National Forests, the baby has been cut in half over and over again by the sheer onslaught of commercial enterprise, compromise and feeble attempts at Travel and Forest Planning.

We doubt the Flathead's efforts to remedy this situation through "collaborative planning" will be adequate. A group of people can agree on how much baggage to bring on their small airplane, but that doesn't mean it's going to get off the ground if the agreement doesn't comply with the laws of physics and nature.

The needs of fish, wildlife and forest ecosystems must be top priority. Science and law must be respected in order to avoid the travesties of the past and to promote appropriate, mindful human behavior.

We find it necessary for the Flathead to now ratchet back developments that threaten the forest ecosystems it manages, as follows:

## **Prescriptions**

1. Ban logging, road building and the use of mechanized vehicles from all roadless lands. Recommend them for Wilderness designation by Congress.

2. Assess already roaded lands for appropriate uses by motorized vehicles and mountain bikes. Flathead National Forest currently has some 3,500 miles of road open to bicycling, with nearly 2,000 of those miles closed to motor vehicles but open to biking without the hassle of dust and traffic. Motor vehicles should be restricted to open roads only. In roaded lands only should single-track trails be assessed for the appropriateness of mountain bike use.

3. Continue implementation of Flathead Forest Plan Amendment 19 to attain the 19/19/68 percentage standards for Open Motorized Route Density, Total Motorized Route Density and Grizzly Bear Security Core in each and every Grizzly Bear Management Subunit. This would include all of the Tally Lake Ranger District and the Island Unit of Swan Lake Ranger District, where Subunits need to be delineated.

4. Follow up on the Flathead's finding that decommissioning a road is cheaper than maintaining it for the long term. Arrive at a much smaller road system that can be fully maintained and meet all water quality Best Management Practices under existing and reasonably foreseeable budgets.

5. Protect and do not log or thin any remaining old-growth forest. Map out and protect a network of recruitment old-growth to provide for adequate amounts and connectivity of old-growth and other forests that will provide abundantly for the needs of all species associated with old-growth, mature and "untidy" forests.

For an annotated bibliography of research that supports these findings and prescriptions, visit:

[http://www.swanview.org/reports/Annotated\\_Bibliography.pdf](http://www.swanview.org/reports/Annotated_Bibliography.pdf)

To view or download a map of abundant public access to the Flathead National Forest, visit:

[http://www.swanview.org/graphics/FNF\\_Public\\_Access\\_Map.pdf](http://www.swanview.org/graphics/FNF_Public_Access_Map.pdf)

To read about two examples of how the Flathead National Forest spent \$840,000 of your tax money to build 27 miles of road to timber sales mills had refused to bid on, visit:

[http://www.swanview.org/reports/A\\_Tale\\_of\\_Two\\_Subsidies.pdf](http://www.swanview.org/reports/A_Tale_of_Two_Subsidies.pdf)