

Citizen reVision
of the
Flathead Forest Plan

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Prepared by:

Arlene Montgomery
Program Director
Friends of the Wild Swan
arlene@wildswan.org

Keith Hammer
Chair
Swan View Coalition
keith@swanview.org

Introduction

The Northern Rocky Mountains of the U.S. encompass one of America's last strongholds of native biodiversity. It contains virtually all the species present at the time of the Lewis & Clark Expedition over two hundred years ago, including grizzly bear, wolf, lynx, and fisher. There are still free-roaming populations of bighorn sheep, elk, moose, wolves, mountain lions and many others. Native bull and westslope cutthroat trout still ply the waters as they migrate from crystal clear natal spawning streams to azure lakes and back. Bald eagles, golden eagles, hawks and falcons soar in the expansive skies overhead and nest in the forests and cliffs. Woodpeckers, goshawks, resident and migratory songbirds find shelter in both lush forests and those burned by wildfire.

The Flathead National Forest is the heart of this wild region. Congress has made great strides in protecting key portions of this Forest by designating some areas as Wilderness. However, approximately 479,000 acres of these unspoiled lands remain unprotected and are increasingly vulnerable to being lost forever through roadbuilding, logging, mining, wanton recreation and other developments which mar the beauty of the landscape and degrade wildlife habitat. The front country has been roaded, logged and scarred – it needs to be nurtured back to health.

The Citizen reVision is based upon sound scientific and economic principles and defines a sustainable future for the Flathead National Forest that emphasizes the outstanding wild, natural and recreational values while taking advantage of the opportunity to create new jobs through restoration work.

Core components of the Citizen reVision are:

- Protect all roadless areas so they maintain the characteristics necessary to be designated as wilderness by Congress in the future.
- Reduce the miles of roads to improve wildlife security and watershed integrity while also providing good paying jobs and reducing road maintenance costs to taxpayers.
- Protect old-growth forest habitat and allow mature forests to develop old growth characteristics such as large snags, down woody material and decadence that are vital to many wildlife and bird species.
- Provide wildlife linkage corridors so that animals can move unimpeded across the landscape. This includes connecting old-growth forest habitat.
- Maintain and/or restore the Five C's that characterize good bull trout and native fish habitat: clean, cold, complex, connected and comprehensive.

- Limit mechanized access to provide secure areas for grizzly bear, elk and other wildlife, while reducing erosion to streams, compaction of fragile soils, and the spreading of invasive weeds.
- Protect soils, the building blocks for healthy tree and vegetation growth that is vital for wildlife food and shelter.
- Protect and/or restore mature multi-story forests that provide essential habitat for lynx and their prey snowshoe hares, as well as other “untidy” forest features (snags, down logs, etc.) essential to the survival of wolverine, fisher, pine marten, other forest carnivores, and a host of bird species.
- Curtail clearcutting and other silvicultural prescriptions which leave large openings that create edge effects and fragment the landscape. These openings are avoided by numerous species.
- Allow fires to perform their ecosystem rejuvenating function -- do not damage this rejuvenation through “salvage” logging.

By leaving carbon-storing trees in the forest, reducing road miles and trimming back the use of motorized vehicles, the Citizen reVision reduces carbon emissions and promotes human health.

The Citizen reVision is organized with individual sections for each area of conservation concern. Each section contains a condensed summary of the best available science followed by Management Recommendations. A complete bibliography of scientific literature can be found at:

http://www.swanview.org/reports/Annotated_Bibliography.pdf

This information can be used by individuals, organizations and other agencies to provide science-based comments to the Flathead National Forest as it revises its Forest Plan. We are also submitting the Citizen reVision to the Flathead so it can be used to develop a conservation alternative in the Forest Plan Environmental Impact Statement.

We sincerely hope that you or your organization will endorse the Citizen reVision as a conservation guide for the future of the Flathead National Forest. Simply email us if you'd like to add your name to the list of Citizen reVision supporters.

To download a copy of the Citizen reVision go to:

http://www.swanview.org/reports/Citizen_reVision_Flathead_Forest_Plan.pdf

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