



Caribou-Targhee National Forest &
Curlew National Grassland

Recreation and Trails, VQM, Wilderness Potential/Roadless, Specialist Report

Lower Portneuf Cooperative Vegetation Management
Project: Existing Conditions
Westside Ranger District,
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

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Introduction

The Lower Portneuf Cooperative Vegetation Management Project initiation letter, signed by the Westside District Ranger on October 10, 2023, outlined the draft proposed action. The proposed project area encompasses approximately 32,700 acres of National Forest System (NFS) managed land with treatments proposed to occur on up to 12,185 acres. This project presents unique vegetation management opportunities to improve forest health and wildfire resilience. The proposal includes approximately 6-8 miles of temporary roads, timber harvest and timber stand improvement (tending), and prescribed fire using Best Management Practices (BMPs) on the Westside Ranger District of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to assess project needs as they pertain to Forest Recreation, Roadless areas, Wilderness and Visual Quality Management resources within the project area.

Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy

Regulatory Framework

Land and Resource Management Plan Revised Forest Plan for the Caribou National Forest – 2003

The Caribou National Forest Revised Forest Plan (RFP) provides standards and guidelines for recreation management. The RFP outlines desired future conditions and goals for the recreation resource (including access and trails), as well as Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines. A list of the applicable RFP direction is summarized in the sections below.

Desired Condition, Standards and Guidelines

The desired future conditions (DFC) for recreation, as defined in the RFP (p. 3-39) states that “People visiting the national forest enjoy a broad range of recreation opportunities amid natural settings. Recreation experiences and settings meet public expectations of quality and variety, while complimenting other resource objectives.” Selection of goals, standards, and guidelines are listed below. See project record for full documentation of standards and guidelines.

The applicable DFC goals for recreation include (RFP. 3-39):

1. Developed and dispersed recreation facilities, access, and programs are consistent with the desired Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) setting and other resource goals of the area in which they are located.
2. Recreation programs and facilities meet all applicable local, state, and national standards for health and safety.

The recreation guidelines that apply include (p.3-39 -40):

1. Construction and reconstruction of recreation facilities and trails that occur within Aquatic Influence Zones (AIZ) will adhere to the standards and guidelines described for Prescription 2.8.3

2. Projects should be planned and implemented to meet the ROS as depicted on the Forest ROS map. (Guideline)

DFC for Roads, Trails and Access (RMP 3-36 to 38) include:

1. Transportation system provides access to the Forest to meet planning and management goals including recreation, special uses, timber management, range management, minerals development, and fire protection.
2. The transportation system is safe, environmentally sound, and is responsive to public needs and affordable to manage and maintain.
3. The Forest provides a variety of road and trail opportunities, including motorized and non-motorized experiences.

Forest-wide goals for roads, trails and access include:

1. National Forest Service roads and trails needed for long-term objectives are maintained in a manner that provides for user safety and minimizes impact to forest resources. Roads and trails not needed for long-term objectives are decommissioned, stabilized, and restored to a more natural state.
2. Forest roads and trails are managed to maintain or improve watershed condition.
3. The forest transportation system is developed and maintained at the minimum level necessary to effectively and efficiency manage natural resources, provide user access, protect capital investments, provide for user health and safety and protect the environment.

Forest-wide Guidelines for Roads, Trails and Access include:

1. The construction of new or maintenance of existing motorized and non-motorized access routes should be consistent with the ROS class in which they are located.
2. Operation, maintenance and rehabilitation of existing trails should be the priority over new construction.
3. Minimize construction of new transportation routes, evaluate existing routes, and reconstruct or relocate routes not meeting management goals.

The applicable DFC goals for Scenic Resources include (p. 3-40):

1. Provide quality settings for a wide range of recreation opportunities.
2. Restore, maintain or enhance the scenic quality of Forest landscapes to meet adopted objectives for scenery.
3. Objectives for scenery reflect user expectations and ecological goals for forest landscapes.
4. Objectives for scenery either Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) or Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) shall be met along Scenic or Historic Byways, Wild and Scenic Rivers and other sensitive travel routes and special emphasis areas.

5. Timber Harvest can occur for such things as public safety, visual quality. Long term sustainability, or ecosystem components and/or to meet the goals of the prescription. (RFP 4-24)

Idaho Inventoried Roadless Areas

- Conserves the undeveloped/unroaded character of the vast majority of the IRA's
- Allows limited fuel treatment activities to reduce the risk of wildland fire effects to private and public property and municipal water supply systems; and
- Accommodates limited exceptions for some communities highly dependent on the natural resources found on NFS land. (Federal Register 2008)

Forest Plan Prescription Areas

Prescription 2.1.2, Visual Quality Maintenance

Prescription 2.1.3, Municipal Watershed

Prescription 2.2, Research Natural Areas

Prescription 2.7.2, Elk and Deer Winter Range

Prescription 2.8.3, Aquatic Influence Zone

Prescription 3.2, Semi-Primitive Recreation

Prescription 4.1, Developed Recreation Sites

Prescription 4.2, Special Use Authorization Recreation Sites

Prescription 4.3, Dispersed Camping Management

Prescription 5.2, Forest Vegetation Management and

Methodology

The affected environment analysis is tiered to the 2003 Caribou Resource Management Plan FEIS and Appendices. Recreation use patterns are drawn from district field observations and past public involvement. The following discussion describes the existing trails, recreation uses and trends, scenery, special uses, wilderness potential and roadless values of the project area. The Forest Service Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) will be used to evaluate potential impacts to recreation use and settings.

Existing Condition

The forest niche is “Accessible Adventures, the spectacular scenery of the Caribou-Targhee is easily reached from highways, byways, and back doors. The bond between forest and community spans generations through family activities such as camping, hiking, hunting, fishing and riding Off Highway Vehicles (OHV.) During the winter, the forest offers vast expanses of untracked powder; ideal for snowmobiling and skiing.” The easy-on/easy-off portions of the forest contribute to the daily quality of life of many locals. Opportunities exist for quiet and remote settings, structured use and dispersed uses, motorized use, and backdoor access. Diverse activities, opportunities, and experiences are numerous and available year-round.

The analysis area surrounds the Pocatello community and lies adjacent to Fort Hall, Chubbuck, Inkom, McCammon, Arimo, American Falls, Aberdeen, and Rockland valley communities. The analysis area serves as the backyard to a valley population of approximately 86,611 people (2020 US Census data). Forest users are generally residents with daily use in the afternoon and peaks

on weekends. The analysis area serves as a gateway along I-15 to destination spots in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). The analysis area hosts a diversity of outdoor recreation uses provided by city, state, and federal agencies along with other partners. People visit the area for camping, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, Nordic skiing, nature viewing, OHV riding, and snowmobile travel.

Recreation is recognized as a critical resource within the project area due to its contributions to the local economy, its influence in connecting people to the land, its impact on public understanding of natural and cultural resources, and its role as a catalyst for public stewardship. As such, recreation is identified as a key ecosystem service. The Forest Service strives to provide a set of recreation settings, opportunities, and benefits that are sustainable over time. Sustainable recreation is defined as the set of recreation settings and opportunities in the national forest that are ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for present and future generations. For best effect, all aspects of recreation should include the principles of sustainability.

Recreation Setting

The last twenty years has brought more users who see the area as a recreation destination. This has brought a different type of recreational user into the local communities, one with more disposable income and time for both motorized and non-motorized recreation. Recent changes and advances in technology have led to motorized machines that can go places not accessible several years ago which has led to more use in the summer and winter months and an increased demand for motorized travel routes and areas. The demand has led to allocated use areas so both motorized and non-motorized users can enjoy their sport. Overall, recreation on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest has increased from historical levels and is more diverse today than in the past.

Recreation Activities and Facilities

The recreation demand in the project area occurs year-round with a peak season from Memorial Day to Labor Day. A lull in visitor use is observed in the spring. In the summer months recreation use is in the form of hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, dispersed and developed camping, fishing, sightseeing and motorized activity. In the fall visitors enjoy viewing fall colors, hunting, mountain biking, and OHV use. Large group gatherings are popular at Mink Creek Group Site, Scout Mountain Group Site, East Mink Creek Nordic Center and Camp Taylor.

The winter encompasses visitor use at Park N Ski trails, the Nordic Ski Area, and snowmobile trails. Visitors utilize various forms of winter travel via fat tire biking, snowshoeing, backcountry alpine skiing, hiking, and snowmobiling. Snowmobilers and other winter users use designated over the snow travel routes and unrestricted over the snow play areas. Some areas are closed to protect wildlife.

Scout Mountain Campground offers a dense forest canopy which provides shade for campers. It is the districts most popular campground and is in the project area. Through Great American Outdoor Act (GAOA) and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) funds, the campground has received an updated water system, 10 new vault toilets, and campground furniture which includes accessible picnic tables, fire rings, and utility tables. Campground upgrades were finalized in the fall of 2023. East Fork Mink Creek OHV trail and Scout

Mountain Nature Trail are accessible within the campground boundary and popular for campers and the recreation public to use.

The recreating public desires more parking spaces for vehicles, larger camping pads for RVs and tents, and wider vegetation clearing around roads for vehicle maneuverability. Trees within the Scout Mountain Campground footprint are showing signs of insect infestation and disease. The timber report discusses a more detailed analysis of the campgrounds tree health decline.

The old Scout Mountain Amphitheater remains popular for weddings, history buffs, and a problem area for high school parties due to easy access from Justice Overlook parking. Justice Overlook, Lead Draw, and several dispersed camping spots in South Fork are popular areas for pallet fires, which are prohibited on the Forest.

Though not a recreation facility, the Bannock Guard Station and associated admin road is also adjacent to the Project Boundary.

Recreation sites and trails in relation to the project boundary and proposed treatments are found in Appendix A for Lower Portneuf Vegetation Management Project Development Map.

Recreation facilities within the project boundary are listed in Appendix B: Recreation Facilities within Project Area.

Dispersed Camping

Dispersed camping is popular for visitors who desire a more rustic setting, no fees, and less crowding. In the project boundary, areas along the Scout Mountain Road, the lower Scout Mountain Loop Road (also called the Camp Taylor Road, Forest Road #002) Crestline, Clifton Creek Road (Forest Road #006) have been used for many decades. Although outside the project area, the ponderosa pine plantations off South Fork of Mink Creek are always popular camping choices in the summer and fall. The Forest has a 14-day stay limit for most of the project area except Crestline area that has a 5 day stay limit.

Hunting and Fishing

The project area lies in Idaho Fish and Game Unit 70 and receives heavy use from big and upland game hunters during the fall and early winter. Fishing opportunities are limited to small streams and ponds within the analysis area.

Gathering Forest Products

Firewood and Christmas tree cutting are popular activities within the analysis areas. Firewood permits are sold early June through the end of November and has been a popular activity for the public for decades. Permitted visitors can gather dead and/or down trees within areas open to firewood cutting for firewood. A total of 260 Christmas tree permits were sold for the 2023 winter season (Christmas Tree cutting is also permitted in other areas of the Westside Ranger District outside analysis area) from mid-October through the holidays. Permitted visitors can cut trees up to 20 feet and is a cherished activity for families.

Recreation Special Uses

A special-use authorization is a legal document such as a permit, term permit, lease, or easement, which allows occupancy, use, rights, or privileges of NFS land. The authorization is granted for a specific use of the land for a permitted timeframe.

The Forest Service manages a variety of special use permits within the area that provide unique recreation opportunities to the community. Permitted recreation uses provide specific recreational opportunities to the public and deliver economic benefits to rural economies. Commercial special use permits include ski resorts, outfitter and guiding services, recreation events, and organizational camps. Lands special use permits are issued for transmission lines, water lines, communication sites, recreation residence, and pipelines.

The area has one hunting and fishing outfitter and guide permit and one outfitter guide permit for wilderness medicine courses. See Appendix C for a detailed description and location of special uses on the Westside Ranger District within the project area.

Vegetation management within recreation special use permit footprints has been an ongoing challenge to manage for the permittees, often they lack the special skills for complex hazard tree removal and lack of resources for fuels reduction management. A fair amount of coordination is required from permittees to remove larger diameter trees on NFS land, further complicating hazard tree removal or fuels reduction.

Other Special Use Permits not listed in Appendix C

Events not commercial in nature such as family reunions, weddings, or large group gatherings with 75 or more people require a non-commercial group permit. In the analysis area, Cherry Springs Nature Trail, Scout Mountain Amphitheater, and dispersed site locations in the Mink Creek corridor have been the most popular locations for non-commercial group permits.

One-time recreation events are issued a one year or less permit but still have the same guidelines and requirements as a 5-year recreation event permit. Mink Creek corridor, Scout Mountain, Gibson Jack, and the Nordic Center have been popular locations for one time recreation events such as disc golf events, running and bike races, and commercial group gatherings where an entry fee is charged.

Research permits are not uncommon in the project area. Universities such as Idaho State University (ISU) and others have conducted research in the project area the last few years.

Transportation and Travel Management

Many people visit the analysis area for recreational travel, including driving for pleasure (sedan and 4X4 travel) and motorized and non-motorized trail use. Weekday trail use is common, especially during the late afternoons and early evenings due to the area's proximity to valley communities. The analysis area's non-snow season trail system is popular and receives heavy use from early spring into late fall. To avoid resource damage, gates are used to control motorized access on some area roads and trails during wet times and snow season. The lower motorized gates close annually on November 15th and reopen on May 15th or as conditions warrant. While the higher elevation motorized gates also closed November 15-June 14th. The lower Scout Mountain Road gate at Lead Draw is the exception. That gate normally closes in the fall and reopens once the road base is frozen and there is enough snow to access the East Mink Creek

Nordic Center and/or the snow above the Upper Scout Mountain Gate. The Westside Ranger District works closely with the City of Pocatello to determine when the gate will open, and close, to provide access to winter recreation areas. The Westside Ranger District has delayed opening gates May 15th due to high snow years with special closure orders.

Idaho Birding Trail

Portions of Idaho Fish and Game's Idaho Birding Trail has 175 sites over 2,000 miles of trail. Three of those sites are within the project area and are marked with signs at Cherry Springs, Kinney Creek Trailhead, and Scout Mountain. The Idaho Birding Trail was developed by the Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) nongame program with other state, federal, and private partners to promote opportunities for rural economic growth in the form of providing amenities to travelers who are birding, and to promote the conservation of bird and wildlife habitat to maintain the quality of life for Idahoans. The birding trail represents a collection of bird watching hotspots and diverse habitats. The trail is a series of self-guided, auto-driven tours, lasting anywhere from an afternoon outing to a week-long expedition. Most sites are easily accessible and are connected by no more than a 30-minute drive. It is marked by Idaho's Department of Commerce Labor's Division of Tourism, and IDFG.

Trails

There are approximately 584 miles of system trails on the Westside Ranger District. The trails on the Westside Ranger District are open to hiking, biking, horseback and foot travel riding all year round.

Most system trails were developed in the early part of the 20th century; some follow historic travel routes and were used to facilitate transportation by pack string or on foot, primarily for transportation or for work but not necessarily for recreation. Trails accessed mining claims, grazing allotments, administrative sites, and remote locations for firefighting.

Originally, trails were not constructed to today's standards and often amounted to the shortest cleared route between two points. Erosion, mud bogs, and steep grades were less of a concern because the trails were lightly used, and with an emphasis on less local and more distant destinations. Every visitor to the National Forest has an idea of what they expect a "trail" to look like and that has been evolving over time and change in user preferences. Many roads and trails in the area would benefit from general maintenance and increased signage to direct people to authorized routes. The seven most important trail features are: scenic views, loops, wildlife viewing, shade, proximity to town, access to streams, and options for distance and bailouts.

Forest Service direction for National Quality Standards for Trails is found in the Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2353.15 - National Quality Standards for Trails. This section states to apply the National Quality Standards for Trails in the planning, construction, maintenance, condition assessment, and management of NFTS trails, in accordance with FSH 2309.18, section 15. The National Quality Standards for Trails consist of five key measures: health and cleanliness, safety and security, condition of facilities, responsiveness, and resource setting.

Trail Fundamentals include five key concepts that are cornerstones of Forest Service trail management: Trail Type, Trail Class, Managed Use, Designed Use, and Trail Design Parameters. Trail Fundamentals are individually prescribed for each NFS Trail via Trail Management Objectives (TMOs), which document the intended purpose and management of each trail.

A Trail Type is a category that reflects the predominant trail surface and general mode of travel accommodated by a trail. There are three Trail Types for NFS trails: Standard Terra Trail, Snow Trail, and Water Trail. The trails identified in this analysis are Standard Terra Trail Motorized and Nonmotorized and Snow Trails as shown in Appendix D.

The Trail Class is the prescribed scale of development for a trail, representing its intended design and management standards. Trail Classes are general categories reflecting trail development scale, arranged along a continuum. There is five Trail Classes, ranging from the least developed (Trail Class 1) to the most developed (Trail Class 5). The trails identified in this analysis are a mixture of Trail Class's 2 through 5 that are identified in the project area. Trail Class is applied that most closely reflects the management intent for the trail or trail segment, which may or may not reflect the current condition of the trail.

Trail Classes are general categories reflecting trail development scale, arranged along a continuum. The Trail Class identified for a NFS trail prescribes its development scale, representing its intended design and management standards.

Trail Class 2:

- Moderately developed.
- Tread is continuous and discernible, but narrow and rough, usually a single lane with minor allowances constructed for passing,
- Typically native materials.
- Route markers present, regulatory and resource protection signing infrequent.
- Obstacles may be common, substantial, and intended to provide increased challenge, blockages cleared to define route and protect resources, and vegetation may encroach into trailway.
- Natural fords, bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access.

Trail Class 3:

- Developed
- Tread is continuous and obvious. Single lane, with allowances constructed for passing where required by traffic volumes in areas with no reasonable passing opportunities available.
- Constructed out of native or imported materials.
- Obstacles may be common, but not substantial or intended to provide challenges. Vegetation cleared outside of trailway.
- Structures may be common and substantial, natural or constructed fords, bridges are needed for resource protection and appropriate access.
- Bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access.
- Signs at junctions as needed for user reassurance, regulatory and resource protection signing may be common. Information and interpretive signs may be present outside wilderness areas.

Trail Class 4:

- Highly developed.
- Tread wide and relatively smooth with few irregularities. Single lane, with allowances constructed for passing where required by traffic volumes in areas with no reasonable

passing/ opportunities available. Double lane where traffic volumes are high, and passing is frequent.

- Native or imported materials may be hardened. The tread is wide, firm, stable, and generally uniform.
- Vegetation cleared outside of trailway and obstacles infrequent and insubstantial.
- Structures frequent and substantial, typically constructed of imported materials. Constructed or natural fords. Bridges as needed for resource protection and user convenience. Trailside amenities may be present.
- Route identification signing at junctions and as needed for user reassurance. Regulatory and resource protection signing common.
- Information and interpretive signs may be common outside wilderness areas. Accessible information likely displayed at trailhead.

Trail Class 5:

- Fully developed.
- Tread wide, firm, stable, and generally uniform, single lane with frequent turnouts where traffic volume is low to moderate. Double where traffic volume is moderate to high.
- Commonly hardened with asphalt or other imported material.
- Obstacles not present. Grades typically < 8%
- Structures frequent or continuous, typically constructed of imported materials. Includes bridges, boardwalks, curbs, handrails, trailside amenities, and other similar features.
- Route signing at junctions and for user reassurance, destination signing common, information and interpretive signs common, accessibility information likely displayed at trailhead.

Managed Uses are the modes of travel that are actively managed and appropriate on a trail, based on its design and management. Managed Use indicates management's intent to accommodate a specific use. There can be more than one Managed Use per trail or trail segment. For example, a trail designed and managed as an OHV trail may also be managed for motorcycle use. Bicycles may also be allowed on the trail. Designed Use is the Managed Use of a trail that requires the most demanding design, construction, and maintenance parameters and that, in conjunction with the applicable Trail Class, determines which Design Parameters apply to a trail. There is only one Designed Use per trail or trail segment. In some situations, when there is more than one.

Design Parameters are technical guidelines for the survey, design, construction, maintenance, and assessment of a trail, based on its Designed Use and Trail Class. Design Parameters reflect the design objectives for NFS trails and determine the dominant physical criteria that most define their geometric shape. These six criteria include: tread width, surface, grade, cross slope, clearing and turns.

On the Westside Ranger District there are six designed uses: Pack and Saddle, OHV, Motorcycle, Bicycle, and Hiker/Pedestrian, and Snowmobile. Varying tread width and vegetation clearing ranges within design uses and trail class identification. More in-depth trail design parameters for each Designed Use and Trail Class can be found in FSH 2309.18. Sections 23.11-23.32, Exhibit 01.

Design use trail classes on the Westside Ranger District in the project area range from Trail Class 2-3. Cherry Springs Nature Trails are a Trail Class 5. Snowmobile routes are Trail Class 4. Each Design Use has different criteria for tread width and trail clearing design.

- Pack and Saddle tread width ranges from 60"-84" with trail clearing of 8-10' in height and 72" to 96" in width depending on Trail Class 2 or 3.
- ATV tread width ranges from 48"-60" with trail clearing 6'-8' in height and 60"-72" depending on Trail Class 2 or 3.
- Motorcycle tread width ranges from 8"-36" with trail clearing of 6'-8' in height and 36-60" in width depending on Trail Class 2 or 3.
- Bicycle tread width ranges from 12"-48" with trail clearing of 6'-8' in height and 36-72" in width depending on Trail Class 2 or 3.
- Hiker/Pedestrian tread width of 6"-60" with trail clearing of 6'-10' in height and 24"-72" in width depending on Trail Class 2 or 3. Trail Class 5 has a trail width of 36"-120" with trail clearing of 8'-10' in height and 60"-72" in width.
- Snowmobile tread width of 8'-20' with trail clearing of 8-12' in height and 10'-22' in width focusing on widen clearing at turns of if increased sight distance needed. Most snowmobile routes on the district are on existing Forest Service roads and ATV trails.

There are two goals in using each of the Trail Fundamentals to determine the planned design standards of a trail:

- To provide trails that are consistent with the applicable land management plan, provide opportunities for satisfying recreation experiences harmonize with and provide opportunities for enjoyment of the National Forest setting, and minimize maintenance costs.
- To design, construct, and maintain sustainable trails, that is, trails that withstand the wear and tear of normal traffic and reasonable user behavior during the managed season of use and that have minimal negative effects on adjacent resources.

Non-Motorized Use

Within the project area there 39.21 miles of non-motorized trails of which 34.36 are moderately developed, 3.73 are developed, and 1.12 miles are highly developed. Non-motorized summer use on system trails includes trail running, day hiking, backpacking, mountain biking and horse riding/packing. During hunting season, horse use on the district typically increases. **Motorized Use**

There are 33.97 miles of motorized trails in the project area of which 20.22 miles are moderately developed and 13.75 are developed.

NFS roads are only open to highway-legal vehicles; however, under specific circumstances, system roads could be designated as dual use for both licensed and unlicensed vehicles. On the Caribou National Forest motorized users are required to participate in Idaho Department of Recreation registration/sticker program.

The USFS manages roads by assigning maintenance levels with corresponding vehicle suitability for each level. Maintenance level 3-5 is maintained for passenger cars. Maintenance level 2 is maintained for high clearance vehicles only. Maintenance level 1 is closed for public vehicular

use. Appendix D lists the roads in the project area with maintenance levels and vehicle suitability.

Motorized use is popular in both the snow and snow free season. The motorized routes are based on snow and snow free seasons which are covered under the travel management rule.

This project includes routes on roads and trails as well as terra and over the snow trails. OHVs and class 1,2, and 3 e-bikes are permitted to operate on identified roads open to full-size motorized vehicles and trails open to 50 inches or less. All non-motorized users can use single or 50 inch or less trails, however; motorized vehicles cannot travel on non-motorized trails.

Unauthorized Trails/Non-Designated Routes

The use and creation of unauthorized routes continues to be a problem on the Westside Ranger District. Cattle and wildlife trails, fence lines, ridge tops and previous used haul routes that were not properly closed in the past have become popular to use with the mechanized and motorized communities. In 2022 and 2023 a large survey effort was conducted to map unauthorized trails and needed trail improvements within the project area.

Implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule resulted in motorized vehicles being restricted to designated roads and trails. The motorized vehicle use map (MVUM) is the controlling legal enforcement tool, and operators of motor vehicles are responsible for complying with the MVUM. During the snow season the Over the Snow Vehicle Use Map (OSVUM) applies. Onsite posting of signs is not essential to enforce the travel plan; however, signing is used to the extent feasible to minimize inadvertent violation of restrictions. The Westside Ranger District has seen in an increase in sign vandalism over time. There is still confusion by the recreating public that all classes of e-bikes fall within the United States Forest Service definition of motorized and are only permitted on trails displayed on the MVUM and OSVUM.

Winter Recreation

Winter non-motorized use includes, hiking, snow shoeing, trail running, fat tire biking, Nordic and alpine skiing. Park N Ski permits are required for designated parking lots. Park N Ski sales have been on a steady rise as sales have nearly doubled from 2019-2024. For the 2024-2025 winter season, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation provided Westside Ranger District with \$6,674.64 in collected revenue from sticker sales.

Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation accounted for 853 registered snowmobiles in the Bannock County program as of April 5th, 2024. However, users who do not designate Bannock county as their primary riding area can still operate on the the trails within the project area, so this is number only reflects allocated use by register user. The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation requires the operator of snowmobiles (to include any self-propelled vehicle under two thousand (2,000) pounds unladen gross weight, designed primarily for travel on snow or ice or over natural terrain, that may be steered by tracks, skis, or runners. A tracked ATV or UTV meets the definition of a snowmobile to purchase an annual recreation permit in the form of a sticker.

Winter motorized opportunities are limited to trails open to over snow vehicles and areas that do not have oversnow restrictions. The Westside Ranger District OSVUM displays these designations.

Appendix D lists motorized, non-motorized, and over the snow routes including roads and trails within the project area.

2021 Pocatello Area Trail User Survey

During November 2021 Idaho State University (ISU) administered a trail survey on behalf of the City of Pocatello, and in partnership with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The ten-minute trail user survey was developed to get input from residents and other trail users about their current trail experiences and their ideas for what this trail system should be. Recruitment resulted in 1,130 respondents for the survey in one month. The full results can be reviewed on the City of Pocatello's website.

Community members and visitors expressed their love of local trails and public land for access, proximity, views, beauty, solitude, wildlife and variety. The survey also demonstrated that trail maintenance is a primary trail system issue.

Top favorite places in the survey highlighted West Fork, City Creek, Gibson Jack, and Scout Mountain as sought out places to recreate on trails. Second tier favorites were Slate Mountain and Elk Meadow.

Appendix E shows density of trail use in the Portneuf Valley Regional Trail System from the survey. The project area encompasses popular trail systems and areas that can be compared on the density map.

Visuals and Scenery

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes

Recreation Opportunity

The word opportunity is defined as a "combination of circumstances favorable for a purpose." The purpose or goal of the recreationists is to realize satisfying experiences. This is done by participating in preferred activities in preferred environmental settings. Thus, recreation opportunity is the availability of a real choice for a user to participate in a preferred activity within a preferred setting in order to realize those satisfying experiences which are desired. Recreation opportunities across the project area provide a wide variety of activities and settings to connect people to the land and add value to the quality of life for visitors and local communities.

The Forest Service created a nationally recognized classification system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) for identifying, describing, planning and managing a range of recreation settings, opportunities and experiences. The RFP uses ROS methodology to guide development levels and recreation settings for landscapes. ROS is based on a development scale that considers recreation activities, settings, and experiences. These classes differ in the level of facilities provided and the degree of naturalness, and opportunity for solitude offered.

ROS within the project include:

Roaded Natural and Roaded Modified: A setting natural appearing area with sights and sounds of humans, interactions moderate, developed facilities and resource modification and uses evident.

Semi-Primitive Motorized: A setting that has an area that allows motorized use, is generally at least 2,500 acres in size, and is at least 1/2 mile from a better than primitive road. The likelihood of contact with other visitors is low. The natural setting may have some alterations, but these do not dominate views from trails in the area.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized: A setting within ½ mile to 3 miles of a 2-wheel drive road and is at least 2,500 acres in size. The likelihood of contact with other visitors is low. There is a high probability of solitude in a natural-appearing environment (USDA-FS 1982).

Table 1 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) within Project Area outlines ROS classes within the Project Area.

Table 1 Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) within Project Area.

ROS Class	Acres	Percent of the Project	Deviation from Plan
Roaded Natural	23.77	0.07%	No
Roaded Modified	13,602.96	41.63%	No
Semi-Primitive Motorized	14,087.95	43.12%	No
Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized	4,945.42	15.14%	No
State land	15.13	0.05%	N/A
Private land	23.77	0.07%	N/A

See Appendix F for Recreation Opportunity Spectrum map that outlines ROS classes within the project area.

Visual Quality

High quality scenery, especially scenery with natural-appearing landscapes, enhances people's lives and benefits society. Scenery is a fundamental element of recreation experiences. Viewing scenery is a popular recreation activity nationwide. Public acceptance of management practices is heavily based upon the visual appearance of the forest.

The scenery of the Caribou National Forest is important to residents and visitors of Southeast Idaho. Scenery is described as the appearance of a place or landscape, or the features of a landscape. The character of the landscape varies by location and is dependent on natural features such as geology, vegetation, water features, landforms and human development. Forest management activities have the potential to directly, indirectly and cumulatively affect scenery, actions such as vegetation manipulation; facility construction, road building and fire can change the appearance of landscapes.

Forest landscapes serve as a scenic backdrop to many of the major travel routes and communities of the area. The 1985 Forest Plan utilized the agency's Visual Management System, developed in the 1970's (USDA-FS, Revised 1972), to address landscape management as it applies to scenic quality. Using this system, Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs) were determined for the forest landscapes, based on the area's visibility and distance from recreation sites, communities and major roadways.

The five established classes of VQOs are Preservation, Retention, Partial Retention, Modification, and Maximum Modification. Each VQO describes a differing degree of acceptable alteration of the natural landscape.

A newer handbook, *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*, was released in 1995 (USDA-FS 1995a). Forests have been directed to use the revised handbook, called the Scenery Management System, for project planning. Forest Plan VQOs will be utilized and “cross walked” to corresponding Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs). The characteristic landscape and concern levels are described using the SMS handbook guidance. The VQOs of Partial Retention and Modification can be cross-walked into the Scenery Management System as having an existing scenic integrity of “Moderate” and “Low”. “Moderate” scenic integrity is described as a landscape where the valued landscape character appears slightly altered. Noticeable deviations must remain visually subordinate to the landscape being viewed. “Low” scenic integrity refers to landscapes where the valued landscape character appears moderately altered. Deviations begin to dominate the scenery; however they borrow attributes such as scale, shape, edge effect and pattern of natural openings and vegetation type changes and are compatible to the landscape character. (USDA-FS 1995b). The existing project area landscapes meet management objectives for partial retaining existing scenic quality. The visual quality objectives (VQOs) are roughly equivalent to the scenic management system scenic integrity levels (SIOs) with the project area are Partial Retention/ Moderate and Modification/Low. Restoration, stewardship and scenery management want to achieve the same goals, to maintain and enhance landscapes that are resilient, sustainable, and scenic with high scenic quality.

The Scenery of the Project Area

Analysis Methods:

The Scenery of the project area was assessed through past site visits, the Visual Quality Objectives, VQOs, set in the Forest Plan and the FS Handbook for Scenery Management.

Analysis Area: The area of analysis for scenic resources is Scout Mountain, Gibson Jack, West Mink Creek South Fork of Mink Creek, and lower Mink Creek that are visible from the City of Pocatello, Interstate 15 and residences within the valley area, and forest recreation sites and trails.

Landscape Character

The scenery of the analysis area is typical for the Middle Rocky Mountain Basin and Range physiographic provinces. Mountains rise steeply from the semi-arid sagebrush plains. The landscape character of Scout Mountain, Gibson Jack, and Mink Creek has a mosaic pattern of vegetation, including conifer, sagebrush, mountain brush, aspen and grasses on high elevation slopes, and lower foothills. The existing landscape character has a variety of topography and vegetation cover. Due to variations in topography and vegetation type, minor facilities and small scale vegetation changes are not readily evident when viewed from a distance. The landscape character can “absorb” some visual alterations. The project area has a natural appearance to the majority of viewers.

The analysis area is visible from Interstate 15, the City of Pocatello, Bannock Highway and numerous residences and travel routes in the lower valley. Interstate 15, some areas of the city of Pocatello, and many residences in surrounding rural areas see the project area as background or middleground. Residences on the West Bench see portions of the analysis area as foreground.

People using the Gibson Jack trails and Cherry Springs Nature Area see portions of the analysis area as immediate foreground and foreground. Foreground is defined as within ¼ mile to ½ mile from the viewer, middleground is defined as within ½ mile to 3 miles, and background is beyond 3 miles.

Due to the high visibility of the project area, the concern levels for these landscapes were mapped as “high” during the original visual resource management assessment in the 1980s. This concern level is still valid today. Based on a high concern level, areas that are visible from the interstate, the city, the lower valley, Bannock Highway, and recreation sites and trails were given VQOs of Retention and Partial Retention. Retention allows for changes that are not readily visible to most viewers. Partial Retention allows for changes in the landscape that may be evident but are visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape.

A VQO of Modification was assigned to portions of the project area that not seen from major travel routes or viewing points. Modification allows management activities that may dominate the surrounding landscape, but must borrow from the naturally established form, line, color and texture of the surrounding scenery.

Using the Scenery Management Handbook the project area would be described as having High to Moderate scenic integrity. Some areas that are not visible from the lower valley have a scenic integrity of Low.

Scenic integrity is defined as the degree to which a landscape is visually perceived to be “complete”. The highest scenic integrity ratings are given to those landscapes which have little or no deviation from the character valued by constituents for its aesthetic appeal (SMS Handbook, pg. 2-1).

The Gibson Jack Trails, other popular area trails, and Cherry Springs Nature Area are used year round by valley residents. People use the Mink Creek drainage for dispersed and developed camping, hunting, fishing, trail riding and snowmobiling.

See Appendix G for a map of Visual Quality Objectives in the Project Area.

Table 2 displays the acres and percentages of Visual Quality Objectives within the Project Area:

Visual Quality Objective	Acres	Percent of the Project
Modification	21,414.61	65.49%
Partial Retention	5,519.33	16.88%
Retention	5,763.39	17.63%

Open Motorized Road Density (OMRD)

The ORMD includes all open forest roads and trails displayed in miles per square mile for a specific analysis area as discussed in the 2005 Caribou Travel Management Plan. The ORMD within the Project area are Forest Vegetation Management is 1.7 miles of designated motorized

route per square mile with a ceiling of 2.0 miles of designated route per square mile, Rangeland Vegetation Management is 0.6 miles of designated motorized route per square mile with a ceiling of 1.0 miles of designated route per square mile and Semi-primitive Recreation is 0.4 miles of designated motorized route per square mile with a ceiling of 0.5 miles of designated route per square mile. OMRD is discussed further in the wildlife report.

Roadless

The Lower Portneuf Cooperative Vegetation Management Project is within Scout Mountain and West Mink Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA's) More than half of the project is untouched by the Idaho Roadless Rule. There are three themes present within the project area General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland, Backcountry Restoration, and Forest Plan Special Area.

Backcountry Restoration the following apply:

- Temporary roads may only be used for the specified purpose.
- Temporary roads must be decommissioned after use.
- Temporary roads must be designed to minimize resource effects.

Timber cutting, sales and removal to:

- To improve threatened, endangered, and proposed species habitat
- Maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition, structure, and processes
- To reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildland fire effects

This decision is made by Regional Forester.

In the General, Forest, Rangeland and Grasslands theme, road construction, reconstruction and timber cutting is permissible after necessary environmental analysis is completed. Maintenance of forest and temporary roads is permissible. The decision is made by whoever has decision authority, in this case the Westside Ranger District Ranger.

Forest Plan Special Areas are certain lands that would be managed pursuant to applicable land management components. These lands include areas such as research natural areas, designated and eligible wild and scenic river corridors, developed recreation sites, or other specified management purposes. In the case of the Lower Portneuf Project these areas are shown in Appendix H. These forest plan special areas are included for the sake of completeness; however, the Idaho Roadless Rule does not recommend management direction for these lands, which would continue to be governed by forest plans (Roadless FEIS page 29). Table Q-1 in the Idaho Roadless Area Conservation FEIS shows the forest plan special areas that overlap Idaho Roadless Areas (Roadless Area Conservation; NFS Lands in Idaho FEIS Appendix Q Page 72).

Appendix H shows roadless areas that overlap Forest Plan Special Areas.

Scout Mountain IRA # 152

Topography of the Scout Mountain IRA is quite steep with brush and grass covered slopes. Aspen stands are common, and small stringers of Douglas -fir are found on north-facing slopes. Elevations range from 4,600 feet to 8,710 feet above sea level at Scout Mountain.

Below are the Characteristics of the Scout Mountain IRA:

Natural Integrity: Naturalness of the environment is considered moderate, because unimproved roads and timber harvest activities are evident in the area.

Opportunities for Experience: Remoteness and solitude are considered **low**, because of the area's small size and minimal natural screening. Opportunities for primitive recreation and challenging experiences are considered moderate.

Special Features: No special features or attractions have been identified in this roadless area. About 200 acres are in Management Prescription 2.1.2(b) Visual Quality Maintenance. This prescription is located along major travel corridors.

Manageability: Manageability of the area is considered poor, due to the area's small size and road intrusions. A substantial core area could be achieved by locating the boundaries on natural features.

West Mink #151 IRA

The West Mink IRA's topography is steep with grass and brush covered slopes. Some patches of aspen and stringers of Douglas -fir occur on the north slopes. Elevations range from 5,000 feet to 7,000 feet above sea level.

Natural Integrity: Naturalness of the environment is rated as moderate, because unimproved roads and timber harvest activities are evident in the area.

Opportunities for Experience: Remoteness and solitude are considered low, because of the area's size, road intrusions, and minimal natural screening. Opportunities for primitive recreation and challenging experiences are rated as moderate, and back-country skiing in the area can be challenging.

Special Features: Special features or attractions include areas for non-motorized recreation use, and two Research Natural Areas that cover 3,000 acres. In addition, about 700 acres are in Management Prescription 2.1.2(b) Visual Quality Maintenance. This prescription is located along major travel corridors.

Manageability: Manageability of the area is considered poor, due to the area's small size and road intrusions. A substantial core area could be achieved by locating the boundaries on natural features.

[Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands in Idaho FEIS Appendix C](#) of the Idaho Roadless Areas of page C5-93-94 gives a complete description of the resources within the Scout Mountain IRA and page C5-126-127 for the West Mink IRA. (USDA-FS 2008a).

The management direction of the [Idaho Roadless Rule](#) is based on individual roadless characteristics for lands; (1) containing outstanding or unique features, where there is minimal or no evidence of human use; (2) containing culturally significant areas; (3) containing general roadless characteristics, where human uses may or may not be more apparent; and (4) displaying high levels of human use, while:

- Protecting communities, homes, and property from the risk of severe wildfire or other risks existing on adjacent Federal lands;
- Protecting forests from the negative effects of severe wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks; or
- Protecting access to property, by ensuring that States, Tribes, and citizens owning property within roadless areas have access to that property as required by existing laws. (USDA-FS 2008b).

Effects Analysis

Effects to Recreation, Trails, Roadless, and Visual Quality Management

The proposed action and design features will not materially change the existing road and trail system, developed sites, special uses, or the existing scenic integrity of the project area. Benefits of this project at developed sites, trails, and dispersed sites includes reducing fuels and increase species diversity for future landscape resiliency. Public benefits from prescribed fuel treatments occurs over time from encouraging wildlife habitat for hunting and wildlife viewing to sustained forest health for all types of recreation. Prescribed fuels treatments encourage fire resiliency in highly used recreation trails and sites in the Bannock range that would otherwise be severely impacted by unprecedented fire behavior if left untreated. Impacts to recreation visitation from fuels treatments through social media and studies have shown:

-Thinning of small understory trees and pruning had a slight positive influence on year-to year change in recreation visitation.

-Prescribed burning had a slight negative influence on year-to-year change of recreation in the year of burning but not the year after. (White Em et al. 2024)

The proposed project will have minimal and short-term affects upon public users and recreation resources.

Design treatments to reduce all impacts to special uses, recreation, trails, and facilities.

In General:

- Notify the public in advance of treatment plans.
- Trails, roads, and dispersed camping should only be temporarily closed as needed for the safe implementation of the project.
- Any motorized vehicle access on a restricted road or trail or in a restricted area shall be for official administrative business only and shall be officially approved.
- Phase approach to harvesting to limit impacts to recreationists should be considered.
- Take necessary action to restrict public from using temporary roads.
- All temporary roads will be decommissioned upon project completion.
- Vegetation Staff and Westside Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer should coordinate on treatment applications during peak season of use.
- Peak snowmobile and winter travel, typically mid to late December-April, should be considered when implementing treatment plans.
- Recreation event dates should be considered when implementing treatment plans. Coordinate with Westside Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer on schedule. Recreation Staff Officer will notify recreation event holder six months in advance for permittee to come up with alternative routes/locations for recreation event planning.
- Trail width restrictors or barriers (natural, fence, boulders) used for vehicle size restrictions for project equipment will be returned to original location.

Trails

The proposed project plans to treat up to 54 miles (23 outside of proposed treatment areas) of motorized and nonmotorized trail sides as well as selected roadsides to help limit wildfire spread.

Table 3 Trails and Routes in the Project Area breaks down the treatment area, proposed action, implementation timelines, and impacts to forest visitors.

Motorized and non-motorized trail sides and selected roadsides will help limit the wildfire spread with trailside mowing and maintenance in brush dominated cover types up to 5-6 feet. Mechanical treatment using the listed trails could increase the maximum trail clearing width to up to 6 feet (72 inches) which could be wider than the parameters in design features for a trail class. Trails serve the proposed project as fuel breaks but benefits are increased visibility for safer passage on multi-use trails. The Pocatello Trail User survey shed light on the public’s desire for vegetation management on overgrown trails.

In the last 10-15 years, the Westside Ranger District recreation crew has been limited in capacity to conduct vegetation management on trail systems and relies heavily on volunteer groups and Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) trail crews. The proposed project would aid the recreation program in vegetation clearing on the listed trails and in turn forest visitors benefit. Direct effects to the public are limited to temporary road and trail closures for public safety during harvest operations and times where crews are using the masticator and felling trees across roads and trails.

Table 3: Routes in the Project Area

Treatment Area	Route	Proposed Action	Implementation Timing	Impacts to Forest Users
Prescribed Burn and Mechanical Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gibson Jack Motorized Trail #015 • Slate Mountain Motorized Trail #018 • Gibson Jack Non-Motorized Trail #014 • Cusick Creek Motorized Trail #10 • Kinney Creek Non-Motorized Trail #292 • Elk Meadows Motorized Trail #22 and 044 • Pole Canyon Motorized Trail #029 	<p>Mechanical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chainsaw thinning • Tracked based mastication <p>Trail or road system as holding lines and fuel breaks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brushing 5-6 feet off trail and road on both sides in brush component. • Shaded fuel breaks up to 300 feet within forest/woodland types off roads and trails. <p>Prescribed Burn:</p>	<p>Mechanical: outside migratory bird season. Summer</p> <p>Prescribed burn: fall and spring windows</p>	<p>Hikers, horseback, and mountain bikers can access trails during spring, summer, and fall.</p> <p>If mastication equipment is operating, trail and road traffic could temporarily be halted to allow for safe passage around equipment.</p> <p>No impacts to motorized users outside travel management dates.</p> <p>Notify public in advance of project information including any</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cusick Creek Motorized Trail #10 • Kinney Creek Non-Motorized Trail #292 • Microwave-Midnight/Outlaw Spring Road #276 and 282 • Sterling Justice Non-motorized Trail #505 • Midnight Creek Motorized Trail #058 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jackpot burning • Pile burning 		temporary road or trail closures.
Prescribed Burn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead Draw Motorized Trail #109, 110, 133 • East Wild Horse Mountain Motorized Trail #004 	<p>Trail system as holding lines and fuel breaks. See notes above</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadcast burning • Pile burning • Tree well burning • Jackpot burning 	Fall and spring windows	<p>Hikers, horseback, and mountain bikers can access trails during spring, summer, fall and spring.</p> <p>No impacts to motorized users outside travel management dates.</p> <p>Notify public in advance of project information including any temporary road or trail closures.</p>
<p>Prescribed Burn and Mechanical Treatment</p> <p>Prescribed Burn and Stand Tending/Harvest</p>	Clifton Creek Road #006	<p>Road system as holding lines and fuel breaks. See notes above.</p> <p>1) Single tree or group harvest.</p> <p>Woodland areas can have bigger openings.</p> <p>2) Stand Tending (thinning from below,</p>	<p>Harvest: late summer early winter</p> <p>Mechanical: outside migratory nesting</p> <p>Mid summer-snow flies</p>	<p>Temporary or periodic road closures.</p> <p>Notify public in advance of project information.</p>

		mastication, burn unit prep) 3) Prescribed Fire	Prescribed fire: spring and fall	
Prescribed Burn and Mechanical Treatment Prescribed Burn and Stand Tending/Harvest	Scout Mountain Road #001	Road system as holding lines and fuel breaks. See notes above. 1) Single tree or group harvest. Woodland areas can have bigger openings. 2) Stand Tending (thinning from below, mastication, burn unit prep) 3) Prescribed Fire	Harvest: late summer early winter Mechanical: outside migratory nesting Mid summer-snow flies Prescribed fire: spring and fall	Temporary or periodic road closures. Notify public in advance of project information.
Prescribed Burn and Mechanical Treatment	Camp Taylor/Lower Tendoy Loop Road #002 and 890	Road system as holding lines and fuel breaks. See notes above 1) Stand Tending (thinning from below, mastication, burn unit prep) 2) Prescribed Fire	Mechanical: outside migratory nesting Mid summer-snow flies. Prescribed fire: Spring and fall	Temporary or periodic road closures. Notify public in advance of project information. Notify Camp Taylor Organization Camp and Pocatello Field Archers in advance of treatments.

Developed Recreation Sites and Special Use Authorization Recreation Sites

Historically, mechanical vegetation treatments have occurred at Scout Mountain campground which includes a timber harvest in the 1980's (based upon residual marked trees and stumps). In 2002, additional thinning projects were conducted at the campground, Camp Taylor, and the summer home area to limit ladder fuel and promote wildfire prevention. Hazard tree implementation is ongoing for safe operations of Scout Mountain Campground. The proposed action follows management actions that have been done historically in the area. Another benefit to treatment is addressing disease and insect infestation in stands in developed sites, such as

Scout Mountain campground and the summer home area that were assessed in 2024. See Forest Health Report 2024 for more information.

The proposed action is in line with management direction in developed recreation sites and special use authorization recreation sites, Caribou RFP 4-63 and 4-64:

Disturbances:

1. Control disturbances, such as insects and diseases, consistent with recreation goals.

The proposed project is in line with the guidelines for fire/fuels:

1. Natural fuels should be reduced or otherwise treated to provide defensible space in and around these sites and facilities.
2. Mechanical treatments would be preferred in these areas.

Design Features

Scout Mountain Campground

- Vegetation Staff and Westside Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer should coordinate on treatment plan schedule to mitigate impacts to peak season of use.
- Westside Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer will coordinate treatment plan schedule with campground concessionaire (if applicable). Notify concessionaire (if applicable) of project status and action dates, more than 6 months in advance if there is a need for the company to update season dates on recreation.gov.
- Allow time for crews to mark and GPS campground furniture and water system components at Scout Mountain Campground prior to harvest treatment. Give locations of marked components to sale administrator or forester for inclusion in sale area map.
- Obliterate temporary roads, skid trails, and landings in campground once project is completed.
- Activity debris and slash piles created from treatment plans should not obstruct any component of a campsite, parking spur, overlook, trailhead, group site, access to water system, campsites, campground overlook, parking spurs, group site, water system, and restrooms. Activity debris leftover from harvest will be reduced before campground opens.
- Follow goals and mitigation measures outlined in Scout Mountain Vegetation Plan.
- Damage to campground infrastructure (including cattle exclusion fencing and post and rail fencing) will be replaced by means of the timber sale contract. Campground infrastructure includes water system components, campground furniture, accessible concrete pit vault toilets, paved roads, cattle guards, and parking spurs. All campground improvements, nature trails and trailheads within the sale areas are eligible to be included in sale area improvement plans as non-essential KV funds become available.

Campground furniture includes:

- Fire rings: meeting snow load requirements and accessibility requirements
- Picnic tables: meeting snow load requirements, 8 feet in length, and accessibility requirements.
- Utility tables

- Lantern posts
- Camp site markers
- Information Kiosks

Water System components include:

- Isolation valves
- Pump-out valves
- Water faucet/spigots
- Well and storage tank area: chain-link fence, well, storage tank

Scout Mountain Summer Home Area

- If treatment is deemed necessary, coordinate with summer home permittees.
- Vegetation Staff and Westside Ranger District Recreation Staff Officer should coordinate on treatment plan schedule to mitigate impacts to summer home permittees.
- Obliterate temporary roads, skid trails, and landings once treatment plan is completed.
- Design landing areas out of site and view from summer home lots.
- For harvest treatment, allow two tree lengths of the average tree height from the summer home structures, unless agreed upon between Forest Service personnel and summer home permittee.

Camp Taylor Organization Camp

- If treatment is deemed necessary in the Camp Taylor Organization camp area, coordinate with organization camp permittee.
- Slash piles created for prescribed burn treatment plan should not obstruct any component of a campsite, parking spur, overlook, trailhead, group site, access to water system, campsites, campground overlook, parking spurs, group site, water system, and restrooms. Piles will be located so they are not evident to the casual observer.
- Coordinate with Camp Taylor on any treatments in the winter months outside permit boundary so they can communicate to their customers of any closures.

Pocatello Field Archers

- If treatment is deemed necessary in the special use permit area, coordinate with permittee.
- Slash piles created for prescribed burn treatment plan should not obstruct any component of the special use permit area.
- Piles will be located so they are not evident to the casual observer.

Cherry Springs Nature Area

- Treatment plan actions in Cherry Springs Nature area are mechanical treatments: chainsaw and hand thinning with the use of a chipper to reduce the need of pile burning.
- Notify public of treatment plan in area in advance.
- Buffer prescribed burn treatments outside nature area trail systems by 30 feet.

Dispersed Recreation

This project follows the goals and guidelines for Forest prescription 3.2 Semi-Primitive Recreation and 4.3b Dispersed Recreation. There are dispersed camping sites in this prescription areas and there could be short term closures to these areas for public safety.

Visual Quality Management

Portions of the project area includes acreage of moderate to high scenic integrity. When viewed as a middle ground and background the area is “natural appearing”. The project has the potential to enhance vegetation diversity and age classes, which could enhance fall color and scenery year-round.

For uneven-aged harvest treatments located off Forest Road 001, 002, and 890, timber management activities may be kept to a minimum. The uneven-aged system can achieve the retention visual quality objective in all distance zones if properly applied. The advantage of uneven aged timber management is small scale process which is selective in nature and random in pattern. The forest character is natural appearing and intact when viewed at every angle (USDA-FS 1980).

Other timber objectives include two-aged treatments in the Crystal area located off Forest Road 006 which falls under modification visual quality objective which can borrow from the natural landscape. Two aged systems meet the intent of visual quality management where it is applied in the project area.

Due to the nature of the terrain and landscape within this project area, visual quality objectives can be met by managing for a forested appearance.

Design Features

- Harvest treatments in retention and partial retention areas will be designed to maintain a forested appearance while following form, line, shape, and color of the surrounding environment.
- Landings and temporary roads in retention and partial retention areas will be assessed to minimize visibility from roads and trails to the extent possible.
- Temporary slash piles in retention and partial retention areas could be viewed by the casual observer.
- Temporary slash from stand tending treatments in retention and partial retention areas should be lopped and scattered or otherwise treated.
- Prescribed burn treatments in partial retention and retention areas will be designed to mimic natural burn events should create a mosaic appearance.
- Project activities will be designed to follow form, line, shape, texture, and color of the surrounding environment in modification.
- Retain forest character by achieving design diversity of age and size classes by varying road frontage length and distribution of different sized stands.
- Coordinate with recreation specialists for tree selection in Scout Mountain Campground to achieve visual quality objectives prior to harvest treatment.

Roadless

Any temporary roads will be in the General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland Roadless theme and decommissioned when project is complete. See silviculturists report on page 62. Tree cutting is approved in all applicable themes per the Regional Forester and Idaho Roadless Commission Review. See project record.

Summary of Environmental Effects

The proposed action and design features meet the desired conditions, standards and guidelines and objectives for recreation, travel access, trail management, and Roadless Area and Visual Quality (scenery) as defined in the 2003 Caribou Revised Forest Plan and Amendments.

Table 4 shown below provides a summary comparison of environmental effects to Recreation, Special Uses, Roadless, and VQM resources:

Resource Element	Indicator/Measure	Measure (Quantify if possible)	No Action	Proposed Action	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Trails, Road, and Dispersed Recreation	The miles of new motorized trail, road, and dispersed sites	Miles Number of sites	No new miles of trail or road would be constructed. No dispersed sites effected.	No new miles of trail. Increased visibility from brush management on trails and roads. Temporary roads constructed and then demolished after project completion. No dispersed sites effected long term.	FSM 2350, 7723, FSH 2309.18, RFP 4-58, 4-68,

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<p>Developed Recreation</p>	<p>Scout Mountain Campground Cherry Springs</p>	<p>Area Number of sites</p>	<p>Increase insect and disease infestation. No fuels reduction or defensible space around facilities.</p>	<p>Mitigate and manage hazard trees. Fuels reduction to provide defensible space in and around facilities. Temporary closures for public safety. More area for RV maneuverability around campground. Increase health and diversity of resilient vegetation in campground.</p>	<p>RFP 4-63, FSH 2309.13 Chapter 52.3</p>
<p>Special Uses</p>	<p>Issued permits in project area</p>	<p>Number of issued permits in project area</p>	<p>No special use permits would be affected.</p>	<p>There could be short term effects to special use permittees on a case by case scenario and requires coordination with USFS and permittee to avoid impacts.</p>	<p>Appendix C for list of special use permits in project area and their operating season. RFP 4-64</p>

Roadless	The effects to Roadless values within the Scout Mountain and West Mink Creek IRA's	Roadless Assessment Worksheet	Roadless and Wilderness values would remain the same with current management.	Roadless and Wilderness values would not be affected	IRA and Wilderness Worksheets
VQM	Retention Partial Retention Modification Maximum Modification	Retention Partial Retention Modification	No Effect, Visuals Quality remains the same	Short term effects from project may be evident but will follow guidelines as set forth in the VQO design features.	RFP Glossary-38 Management Themes

Information Sources

Information used in this analysis was derived from several sources summarized below.

- Local Forest-level monitoring reports.
- On-site observations using professional judgement. (Larsen, Harris and Solomon (2021-2024).
- Caribou Revised Forest Plan FEIS. Analysis incorporated by reference (USDA Forest Service, 2003b,)
- FSH 2309.18 Trail Design Parameters
- FSH 2309.13 Chapter 52.3

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