

Chapter 4 – Thematic Approach to Land Management

Introduction

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), in conjunction with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), regulations, and subsequent additions to the Forest Service's Directives Systems created a planning and implementation framework for National Forests. The USFS released new planning regulations in 2005, replacing the prior 1982 planning rule and approach.

The 2005 planning rule, with the associated revision of the Directives, creates an inherent challenge for the Pike-San Isabel planning process due to the lack of precedent and examples throughout the National Forest System. Furthermore, bridging the USFS land management approach and regulations with that of UASPP's conservation biology approach (as discussed in Chapter 2 – Methodology) is equally challenging.

The Wild Connections team, as of the publication of this document, does not fully know the broader layout and approach that the Pike-San Isabel will use beyond the specific plan components mandated in the new regulations. Thus, the Wild Connections planning team thoroughly reviewed the few draft forest plans that are currently available under the new 2005 planning rule in order to determine a basis for presenting our proposal in a similar language, context, and layout. We hope that any incongruence will be discussed and resolved during the collaborative process with the Pike-San Isabel Planning team.

Definitions, Terminology and Our Interpretation

This section defines the terminology and sets the management approach employed by this proposal with the goal of bridging the USFS regulations and our conservation biology focus. This proposal utilizes management *Themes* to geographically distribute *Desired Conditions* across the forest. *Objectives*, *Guidelines*, and *Suitability of Areas* analysis serve to help guide specific project level planning, which are mandated to work towards achieving the *Desired Conditions* for that specific area.

Themes – A theme is similar to zoning, in which areas with similar physical, ecological, resource use suitability characteristics, and/or management goals are defined.

Each of the management themes is associated with a range of activities that are generally suitable and consistent with desired conditions. The activities that are addressed with suitability guidance include: recreational motor vehicle use, new road construction, livestock grazing, timber harvest, and mineral development. A particular use may be unsuitable for an area because physical and biological features or values would be unacceptably impacted by the activity (GMUG website, 2006).

While Themes are not mandated in the 2005 Planning Rule, three of the four draft plans that are operating under the 2005 Regulations (San Juan National Forest; Grand Mesa-Uncompahgre-Gunnison National Forests; Bitterroot, Flathead and Lolo National Forests) all utilized the Thematic approach to land management. The Themes utilized within this proposal are similar to those of the three draft forest plans.

Desired Conditions (36 CFR 219.7(a)(2)(i)) – Aspirational in nature, desired conditions are the social, economic, and ecological attributes that guide management of the land and resources within the Plan Area. Desired conditions are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities. Desired conditions may be achievable only over a long time period, may be reached in the short term, or may already exist.

Objectives (36 CFR 219.7(a)(2)(ii)) – Concise projections of measurable, time-specific, intended outcomes. The objectives for the Plan are the means of measuring progress toward achieving or maintaining desired conditions. Objectives are not commitments and are not final decisions approving projects and activities in the plan area.

Guidelines (36 CFR 219.7(a)(2)(iii)) – Information and guidance for project and activity decision-making to help achieve desired conditions and objectives. Guidelines are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities in the plan area. Guidelines should provide the recommended technical and scientific specifications to be used in the design of projects and activities to contribute to the achievement of desired conditions and objectives.

While the 2005 regulations state that Guidelines are not commitments or final decisions approving projects and activities in the plan area, the Wild Connections team has stated our guidelines in strong language and fully expects the guidelines will be adhered to in all but the most unusual circumstances. Our expectations set the management bar high in order to protect the ecological values, and our understanding is that this is best accomplished through consistent and rigorous use of the guidelines.

Suitability of Areas (36 CFR 219.7(a)(2)(iv)) – Identifies specific areas as generally suitable for various uses. An area may be identified as generally suitable for uses that are compatible with desired conditions and objectives for that area. The identification of an area as generally suitable for a use is guidance for project and activity decision making and is not a commitment or a final decision approving projects and activities in the area. Uses of specific areas are approved through project and activity decision making.

Special Areas – Identified, evaluated, and designated for their unique or special characteristics. Special Areas may be designated by statute, by a plan, plan amendment, plan revision, or by a separate process in accordance with NEPA and other applicable laws (36 CFR 219.7(a)(2)(v)). Examples of Special Areas are botanical, historical, or archeologically significant areas. The desired conditions, objectives and guidelines for Special Areas may be either site specific or based on the type of Special Area. Special Areas are described under Theme 2.

Themes – Summary List

The Wild Connections Conservation Plan utilizes the following Themes, with details found in the following pages.

Theme 1 – Natural Processes Dominate

- Theme 1.1 – Existing Wilderness
- Theme 1.2 – Recommended Wilderness
- Theme 1.3 – Core Reserve

Theme 2 – Special Areas

- Theme 2.1 – Research Natural Areas: Existing and Proposed
- Theme 2.2 – Experimental Forests
- Theme 2.3 – Eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers
- Theme 2.4 – Special Areas: Minimal or Interpretive Use

Theme 3 – Natural Landscapes with Limited Management

- Theme 3.1 – Quiet Use Areas
- Theme 3.2 – Connectivity Areas

Theme 4 – Recreation Emphasis Areas

- Theme 4.1 – Motorized Recreation Areas
- Theme 4.2 – Scenic Byways

Theme 5 – Active Management

- Theme 5.1 – Active Management for Wildlife Habitat
- Theme 5.2 – Active Management for Human Needs

Theme 6 – Grasslands Environment *

Theme 7 – Residential Forest Interface

Theme 8 – Permanently Developed Areas

- Theme 8.1 – Ski Based Resorts
- Theme 8.2 – Permanently Developed Recreation Areas

Theme 9 – Significant Lands (Non-USFS)

- Theme 9.1 – Non-Forest Service Recommended Wilderness
- Theme 9.2 – Significant Non-Forest Service Biological Areas
- Theme 9.3 – Non-Forest Service Connectivity Areas

** The Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands are engaged in a separate planning process, and thus this theme is not utilized on the forest units of the Pike-San Isabel.*

Allowable Uses in Each Theme

‘X’ denotes permitted use.

Reserve Design Category	Theme	Commercial Timber Harvest	Fire Use	Compatible Fuels & Vegetation Treatments	Compatible Grazing	Motorized Recreation*	Mountain Bikes	Non-Motorized, Non-Mechanized Recreation
Core Reserves	1.1 – Existing Wilderness		X		X (Pre-existing)			X
	1.2 – Recommended for Wilderness		X	X (WUI Only)	X (Pre-existing)	X (Pre-existing, Phase Out)	X (Pre-existing, Phase Out)	X
	1.3 – Core Reserve		X	X	X	X (Pre-existing, Phase Out)	X	X
	2.1 – Research Natural Areas: Existing and Proposed		X		Decision by Area			By Special Use Permit
Linkages	3.1 – Quiet Use Areas		X	X	X	X (Pre-existing, Phase Out)	X	X
	3.2 – Connectivity Areas		X	X	X	X	X	X
Compatible Use Lands	2.2 to 2.4 – Special Interest Areas	Decision by Area	Decision by Area	Decision by Area	Decision by Area	Decision by Area	Decision by Area	Decision by Area
	4.1 – Motorized Recreation Areas			X	X	X	X	X
	4.2 – Scenic Byways			X	X	X	X	X
	5.1 & 5.2 – Active Management	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	7 – Residential Forest Interface			X	X	X	X	X
	8.1 & 8.2 – Permanently Developed Recreation Areas			X	X	X	X	X

*Motorized Recreation is limited to designated routes. Seasonal closures may exist.

Oil and Gas leasing and Mining are not included on this table due to the very limited reserves within the Pike-San Isabel.

Sensitive areas or areas experiencing historical overuse and plant community impairment should be placed into, non-use, permanently retired or managed intensively to mimic natural regimes.

Themes Defined

Theme 1 – Natural Processes Dominate

These lands are managed to maintain highly natural conditions. Management activities are virtually unnoticeable. Existing and recommended Wilderness areas are included in Theme 1. This zone also includes semi-primitive lands that are managed to provide other user opportunities that are inconsistent with Wilderness such as mountain biking.

Theme 1.1 – Existing Wilderness

Wilderness Areas are designated by Congress and managed to protect and perpetuate their natural state, while offering opportunities for solitude and individual self-reliance.

Desired Conditions:

- Natural processes and conditions are minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation do not detract from the natural setting.
- Ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease are essentially allowed to operate relatively free from the influence of humans.
- Management emphasis is for the protection and perpetuation of essentially pristine biophysical conditions and a high degree of solitude for both wildlife and humans.
- Vegetation composition and structure result predominantly from natural processes and succession, and non-native vegetation is rare.

Management Objectives:

- All resource management activities are integrated in such a way that evidence of current human use, including permitted livestock and recreation, is substantially unnoticeable the following season, so that natural biological processes are not adversely or artificially changed over time by human use.
- Visitors will be self-reliant and should expect low levels of contact with other people.
- Few if any human-made facilities and structural improvements are present, and only within the degree permitted by the Wilderness Act.
- Invasive species are monitored and eliminated in a manner consistent with conservation principles outlined in Chapter 3, Forest-Wide Management Recommendations.
- Pursue acquisition of any existing private inholdings and mining claims.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Wilderness areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), commercial use of miscellaneous forest products, and public gathering of forest products, including fuelwood.
- **Fire** – Wilderness areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function. Natural fire processes through a “let burn” regimen, subject to appropriate safeguards for potentially affected resources outside wilderness, is preferred to any other type of management.
- **Travel** – These areas are unsuitable for motorized or mechanized use except in emergency or other special situations.
- **New Road Construction and reconstruction of existing roads** – New roads and reconstruction of any existing roads are prohibited.
- **New Trail Construction** – New trail construction is discouraged, other than for the purpose of re-routing sections of trails causing resource damage. In such cases, construction must be

accomplished using primitive tools, and trail sections causing resource damage must be restored.

- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Where currently established, livestock grazing can continue at the same level and intensity, provided that the integrity and sustainability of all ecological systems is maintained. When allotments become vacant, they are generally retired.
- **Other** – Wilderness areas are unsuitable for other activities or uses that do not conform to wilderness policy, such as facilities that provide user comfort, utility corridors or communication sites.

Management Guidelines:

- Area is managed pursuant to the Wilderness Act of 1964, and any additional caveats in the specific Acts that designated each Wilderness area, so as to protect and perpetuate natural conditions while providing opportunities for solitude and self-reliance. Additional guidelines necessary to ensure the maintenance of primitive conditions and intact ecosystems in individual wilderness areas may be formulated.

Theme 1.2 – Recommended Wilderness

Recommended Wilderness areas are those that stakeholders advocate for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. All of the proposed wilderness areas meet the capability requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964 for designation.

Desired Conditions:

- Until Congressional action is taken, these areas will be managed to protect their wilderness characteristics, allowing opportunities for solitude and self-reliance by the individual.
- Natural processes and conditions are minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation do not detract from the natural setting.
- Ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease essentially are allowed to operate relatively free from the influence of humans.
- Management emphasis is for the protection and perpetuation of essentially pristine biophysical conditions and a high degree of solitude for both wildlife and humans.
- Vegetation composition and structure result predominantly from natural processes and succession, and non-native vegetation is rare.

Management Objectives:

- All resource management activities are integrated in such a way that evidence of current human use, including permitted livestock and recreation, is substantially unnoticeable by the following season, so that natural biological processes are not adversely or artificially changed over time by human use.
- Visitors will be self-reliant and should expect low levels of contact with other people.
- Current trail designations will be reevaluated to emphasize only non-motorized, non-mechanized use.
- Few if any human-made facilities and structural improvements are present.
- Invasive species are monitored and eliminated in a manner consistent with conservation principles outlined in Chapter 3, Forest-Wide Management Recommendations.
- Pursue acquisition of existing private inholdings and mining claims, and withdraw the entire area from mineral entry, subject to valid rights existing at the time of designation of the area as a proposed Wilderness.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Recommended Wilderness areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), commercial use of miscellaneous forest products, and public gathering of forest products such as fuelwood. Fuel treatment projects outside the WUI are discouraged, but any such projects should use non-motorized techniques and prescribed fire. Other projects within the WUI are allowed. Fire use is the recommended management method where feasible.
- **Fire** – Recommended Wilderness areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function. Natural fire processes through a “let burn” regimen, subject to appropriate safeguards for potentially affected resources outside recommended and designated Wilderness, is preferred to any other type of management.
- **Travel** – Trail and road designations may contain motorized or mechanized use in rare circumstances, with a management objective of moving towards non-motorized, non-mechanized designation.
- **New Road Construction and reconstruction of existing roads** – New roads are prohibited, as is reconstruction of existing roads. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to non-motorized, non-mechanized trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **New Trail Construction** – New trail construction is discouraged, other than for the purpose of re-routing sections of trails causing resource damage. In such cases, construction should be accomplished using primitive tools, if feasible, and road sections causing resource damage must be restored.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Where currently established, livestock grazing can continue at the same level and intensity, provided that the integrity and sustainability of all ecological systems is maintained.
- **Other** – Recommended Wilderness areas are unsuitable for other activities or uses that do not conform to wilderness policy such as facilities that provide user comfort, utility corridors or communication sites.
- Recommended Wilderness areas are unsuitable for other activities or uses that have the potential to change or alter the qualities that qualify an area for wilderness recommendation.

Management Guidelines:

- Do not authorize outfitter-guide assigned campsites for longer than 14 days.
- Density of sites will be moderate, not to exceed three sites per acre or six sites per linear mile of trail in designated areas. Campsites will be minimal and well-dispersed elsewhere.
- Bridges may be necessary for user safety or to protect streamside areas but should not be provided merely for user convenience.
- A minimal number of signs, if any, should be provided for resource protection and directions at trail junctions.
- Manage historic structures, including eligible or listed National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) sites to be compatible with the wilderness setting.
- Accomplish pest management under the same guidelines as would be used for established Wilderness.
- Minimize the concentration of public uses in alpine areas when such use is creating resource damage. Use genetically local (at the ecological subsection level) native plant species for revegetation efforts when technically and economically feasible. Use seed mixtures and mulch that are weed-free. To prevent soil erosion, non-persistent, nonnative annuals or sterile perennial species may be used while native perennials are becoming established. However, the priority is to use native species.
- Activities will be managed to avoid disturbance to sensitive species that would result in a

trend toward federal listing or loss of viability.

Theme 1.3 – Core Reserve

Core Reserves are areas of unroaded land, usually larger than 2,500 acres, which have been shaped primarily by natural forces but that are not desirable for designation as Wilderness. Core Reserves emphasize the maintenance and sustainability of current biological diversity. Management emphasis is to protect critical habitats, seasonal wildlife concentrations, and/or birthing areas, and to allow management by natural ecological processes. Management guidance is designed to maintain or restore the natural character of these areas while providing limited opportunities for non-motorized and mechanized recreation.

Desired Conditions:

- Management emphasis is to perpetuate, and where necessary, restore, native plant and animal species, and natural processes.
- Vegetation composition and structure result predominately from natural succession, and non-native vegetation is rare.
- Ecological processes such as fire, insects, and disease are essentially allowed to operate relatively free from the influence of humans.

Management Objectives:

- All resource management activities are integrated in such a way that natural biological processes are not adversely or artificially changed over time by human use.
- Visitors will be self-reliant and should expect low levels of contact with other people.
- Current trail designations will be reevaluated to emphasize non-motorized use. New trail construction is discouraged.
- Invasive species are monitored and eliminated in a manner consistent with conservation principles outlined in Chapter 3, Forest-Wide Management Recommendations.
- Pursue acquisition of existing private inholdings and mining claims, and withdraw the entire area from mineral entry, subject to valid rights existing at the time of designation of the area as a core reserve.
- Non-manipulative human uses are allowed as long as they are compatible with maintaining the desired biological diversity.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Core Reserve areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Public gathering of forest products is discouraged. Vegetative manipulation is allowed when needed to achieve the desired conditions for the area, such as re-establishment of natural disturbances and reintroduction of extirpated native species.
- **Fire** – Core Reserve areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function and to restore to the range of natural variability. Natural fire processes through a “let burn” regimen, subject to appropriate safeguards for potentially affected resources outside core areas, will be allowed to occur where appropriate.
- **Travel** – Future trail development would be minimal and provide only for non-motorized travel. Current trail designations may contain motorized or mechanized use in rare circumstances, with the management objective of moving towards non-motorized designation. Mountain bikes are discouraged, but may be allowed if there was preexisting use, or where it is determined that they do not impair the biological resources of the area.
- **New Road Construction and reconstruction of existing roads** – New roads are prohibited, as is reconstruction of existing roads other than to access valid existing rights. Existing

- unclassified roads should be converted to non-motorized trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Where currently established, livestock grazing can continue at the same level and intensity, provided that the integrity and sustainability of all ecological systems is maintained.
- These areas are unsuitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Management Guidelines:

- Do not authorize outfitter-guide assigned campsites for longer than 14 days.
- Density of sites will be moderate, not to exceed three sites per acre or six sites per linear mile of trail in designated areas. Campsites will be minimal and well-dispersed elsewhere.
- Bridges may be necessary for user safety or to protect streamside areas but should not be provided merely for user convenience.
- A minimal number of signs should be provided for resource protection and directions at trail junctions.
- Manage historic structures, including eligible or listed National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) sites to be compatible with the wilderness setting.
- Accomplish pest management under the same guidelines as would be used for established wilderness.
- Minimize the concentration of public uses in alpine areas when such use is creating resource damage. Use genetically local (at the ecological subsection level) native plant species for revegetation efforts when technically and economically feasible. Use seed mixtures and mulch that are noxious weed-free. To prevent soil erosion, non-persistent, nonnative annuals or sterile perennial species may be used while native perennials are becoming established.
- Activities will be managed to avoid disturbance to sensitive species that would result in a trend toward federal listing or loss of viability.

Theme 2 – Special Areas

These areas are managed to protect or enhance areas with unusual characteristics, including areas such as Research Natural Areas, special biological or geological areas, cultural/historical areas, or other special designations. These lands vary in size from a few hundred to several thousand acres. Management emphasis is on protecting or enhancing the values for which they are designated, and where appropriate, conducting research or light development for interpretive public education. Intensity of management will vary based on the objectives for the particular area.

Theme 2.1 – Research Natural Areas: Existing and Proposed

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) form a long-term network of ecological reserves designated for research, education, and the maintenance of biodiversity. Emphasis is on research, study, observations, monitoring, and educational activities that allow ecological processes to prevail with minimal human intervention. RNA designation requires approval of the Regional Forester and concurrence from the Research Station Director. Research Natural Areas are selected for one or more of the following reasons:

- To serve as reference areas for evaluating the range of natural variability and the impacts of management in similar environments.
- To protect and maintain representative or key elements of biological diversity at the genetic, species, population, community, or ecosystem levels.
- To serve as areas for the study of ecosystems and ecological processes, including succession.
- To support educational activities.
- To serve as baseline areas for measuring ecological change.

Desired Conditions:

- Natural processes and conditions are minimally affected by human use, and impacts from visitation do not detract from the natural setting.
- Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, and insects and disease, are generally allowed to function with little human influence.
- Management emphasis is for the protection and perpetuation of essentially natural biophysical conditions.
- Vegetation composition and structure result predominately from natural succession, and non-native vegetation is rare.

Management Objectives:

- Allow uses that maintain or improve the ecological and research characteristics for which the RNA was designated or is proposed.
- Current levels of horseback riding, hunting, fishing, camping, and related low impact non-motorized uses by the public are allowed to continue, provided they do not interfere with research. Recreational use will be restricted or eliminated if it threatens to interfere with the objectives or purposes for which the RNA is established.
- Protect the natural condition of the ecosystem, its processes, and any species or values for which the RNA was established or is proposed.
- Until formal establishment, manage proposed RNAs to maintain and enhance the character, research potential, and ecological values for which the areas have been identified.
- Permit and encourage use by scientists and educators.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Research Natural Areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), vegetative manipulation projects or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products, as well as for fuelwood gathering.
- **Fire** – Research Natural Areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function, if this is consistent with the purpose for which the area is designated or proposed.
- **Travel** – Prohibit motorized and mechanized use, except when necessary for research or educational access, or in special or emergency situations. Use restrictions or closures may be necessary to protect the area from actual or potential damage due to public use.
- **New Road and Trail Construction and reconstruction of existing roads and trails** – New roads and trails and reconstruction of existing ones are prohibited, except when they are necessary to provide access for research or to reduce resource damage occurring from existing travelways. In such cases, the roads or trail sections causing the damage should be closed and obliterated. Minor new construction can also occur to access research sites.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Research Natural Areas are generally not suitable for livestock grazing except as part of research, and any existing grazing is phased out if it is likely to interfere with current and future research.
- **Other** – Research Natural Areas are generally suitable for other uses to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated. They are generally suitable for non-manipulative research, observation, and study of undisturbed or minimally disturbed ecosystems and unique habitats. They are generally suitable for limited interpretation facilities but not suitable for permanent facilities that provide for user comfort. These areas are unsuitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Theme 2.2 – Experimental Forests

Experimental Forests provide lands for management-based research that serves as the basis for management of forest and rangelands. Established Experimental Forests are managed according to specific plans.

Desired Conditions:

- Manage the area consistent with the reason for which it was designated.

Management Objectives:

- Experimental Forests are managed to provide the reliable scientific data on forestry principles and practices over the long term.

Suitability:

- Experimental Forests are generally suitable for other uses to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated and the use is agreed to by the Research Station Director and the Forest Supervisor, per 36 CFR 219.2(b)(3), 219.7(c)(2).
- **Timber** – Experimental Forests are not suitable for timber production, although timber harvest (including salvage), for research purposes can occur. These areas are generally not suitable for commercial use of miscellaneous forest products.
- **Fire** – Experimental Forests are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function, consistent with research purposes.
- **Travel** – These areas are generally suitable for motorized use on designated roads and trails, if not harmful to research.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads are prohibited unless needed for research. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and decommissioned.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Experimental Forests are generally not suitable for livestock grazing except for research purposes.
- **Other** - These areas are generally not suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Theme 2.3 – Eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

This Theme is applied to river segments proposed for designation as wild, scenic, or recreational under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It includes, but is not limited to, the segments of the South Platte River and its North Fork that are addressed in the South Platte Protection Plan (SPPP), a locally developed alternative to federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designation which was endorsed by the US Forest Service in 2004. Management details that will preserve the outstandingly remarkable values are unique to the SPPP and are detailed in the South Platte Canyons complex in Chapter 5.

Theme 2.4 – Special Areas: Minimal or Interpretive Use

Special Interest Areas may be designated to protect and manage threatened, endangered and sensitive species, or other elements of biological diversity; or for their emotional significance, scenic values, or scientific values. Special Interest Areas (SIAs) are managed to protect or enhance areas with unusual or unique ecological, zoological, geological, scenic, historic, or prehistoric, or other cultural characteristics. Management emphasis is on protecting or enhancing (and where appropriate, developing and interpreting for public education and recreation) areas with unusual characteristics.

Desired Conditions:

- The rare or outstanding values of the areas are the primary consideration. Other resource values and uses are secondary to the protection, maintenance, and restoration of an area's

special values for public education, enjoyment, and study.

- The setting is usually natural, but will vary depending on the area and the primary focus of the designation. Plant and animal species and communities will vary depending upon the characteristics of each area.
- Evidence of human activities, including interpretation and habitation, is consistent with the characteristics for which the area was established.

Management Objectives:

- Allow uses that maintain or improve the ecological and research characteristics for which the SIA was designated.
- Recreational use will vary based on the objectives or purposes for which the SIA was established.
- Protect the natural condition of the ecosystem, its processes, and any species or cultural and historical values for which the SIA was established.
- Permit and encourage use by scientists and educators.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Special Interest Areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Vegetative manipulation may be used to maintain or restore natural conditions, to protect threatened, endangered, and sensitive species, or to protect other values for which the SIA was proposed or designated.
- **Fire** – Special Interest Areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function, if consistent with the purpose(s) for which the area was designated.
- **Travel** – These areas are generally suitable for motorized use on designated roads and trails, if such use is not harmful to the values of the area.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads are prohibited unless needed to protect the values for which the area was designated. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Special interest areas may or may not be suitable for livestock grazing, depending on the impacts and reasons for area designation.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Special interest areas may or may not be suitable for livestock grazing, depending on the impacts and reasons for area designation.
- **Other** – Special Interest Areas are generally suitable for other uses to the extent that these uses are in harmony with the purpose for which the area was designated. These areas are unsuitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Management Guidelines:

- Maintain or restore the natural (or near-natural) conditions and protect the habitat of threatened, endangered, or sensitive species as well as the values for which the special interest area was established.
- Regulate motorized and mechanized travel where necessary to protect the values for which the individual area was proposed or established.
- Facilities are present to the extent needed to maintain the area or to accommodate visitor use.
- Appropriate authorizations are required for the collection of paleontological, geological or plant materials.

Theme 3 – Natural Landscapes with Limited Management

Management guidance is designed to maintain or restore the natural character of these areas while providing limited opportunities for recreation. These areas offer backcountry motorized and non-motorized settings. Travel modes include foot and horse, and may include mechanized and motorized trails. Multiple use activities such as fuels treatment and prescribed fire are conducted primarily to maintain or restore natural ecological conditions. Livestock grazing is common and is managed to maintain the ecological integrity of upland and riparian plant communities. In areas where motorized recreation is suitable, motorcycles, ATVs, and snowmobiles, rather than full-sized passenger vehicles, will generally be allowed, though allowable use may vary.

Theme 3.1 – Quiet Use Areas

Management emphasizes non-motorized recreation opportunities in a natural or natural-appearing landscape with moderate or little evidence of human-caused disturbance. These areas provide non-motorized recreation and a quiet backcountry experience isolated from the sounds of motorized vehicles.

Desired Conditions:

- Improvements such as trailheads, trails, signs, bridges, fences, or shelters that enhance the recreation opportunities may be present. Trails provide hiking, horseback riding, mountain biking, Nordic skiing, and/or snowshoeing opportunities. The potential to view wildlife is high.
- A variety of uncrowded, non-motorized recreation opportunities are provided in a natural or natural-appearing setting.
- Vegetation composition and structure result predominately from natural succession. Non-native vegetation is rare.
- Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, and insects and disease, are generally allowed to function with little human influence; fire may be re-established where feasible.

Management Objectives:

- All resource management activities are integrated in such a way that natural biological processes are not adversely or artificially changed over time by human use.
- Invasive species are monitored and treated consistent with conservation principles outlined in Chapter 3, Forest-Wide Management Recommendations.
- Pursue acquisition of existing mining claims and withdraw the entire area from mineral entry.
- There is potential for wildlife habitat improvement projects and small vegetation alterations.
- Investments in compatible resource uses such as livestock grazing may occur, but no new roads may be constructed.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Quiet Use areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Small vegetative management projects may be allowed that benefit wildlife habitat or reduce fuel loads.
- **Fire** – Quiet Use areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function.
- **Travel** – Future trail development would be minimal and provide only for non-motorized travel. Current trail designations may allow motorized use in rare circumstances, with the management objective of moving towards non-motorized designation. In general, motorized travel is prohibited except when authorized for special use permit administration, for Forest Service administration, or for emergency purposes. Mechanized travel is generally allowed.
- **New Road Construction and reconstruction of existing roads**– New roads are prohibited.

Reconstruction of existing roads is minimized. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to non-motorized trails or closed and rehabilitated.

- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing, where currently established, will continue and is carefully managed to maintain the integrity of rangeland and riparian systems. Current rangeland infrastructure will be maintained and accessed, but the development of new infrastructure is not common.
- **Recreation** – Discourage competitive contests and group events. Seasonal or year-round restrictions on human use may be applied to provide seclusion for wildlife such as nesting for birds and raptors, big-game rearing areas, and mammals with large home ranges (lynx, mountain lion, wolverine, etc). Recreation amenities and facilities are relatively minimal, and are installed to reduce impacts to the natural resource (e.g. a toilet facility to reduce impacts from dispersed use).

Management Guidelines:

- Management activities should replicate biological processes and strive to replicate natural vegetation pattern.
- Improvement such as trailheads, trails, signs, bridges, fences, or shelters that enhance the recreation opportunities may be present.

Theme 3.2 – Connectivity Areas

Management emphasis is to facilitate daily, seasonal, and natal dispersal movements of native wildlife between larger blocks of suitable habitat. Connectivity areas are broad, heterogeneous areas that encompass multiple potential movement pathways for one or more species. Management practices maintain a natural condition to provide animals with the security, food and shelter they need to meet their life history requirements. Connectivity areas provide some security from intensive recreational and other human disturbances, and low-intensity dispersed, recreation activities are encouraged.

Desired Conditions:

- The maintenance of wildlife migration and dispersal areas to ensure connection between core areas is emphasized.
- Vegetation composition and structure result predominately from natural succession, and non-native vegetation is rare.
- Ecological processes such as natural succession, fire, and insects and disease, are generally allowed to function with little human influence; fire may be re-established where desirable and feasible.

Management Objectives:

- All resource management activities are integrated in such a way that natural biological processes are not adversely or artificially changed over time by human use.
- Invasive species are monitored and treated, consistent with conservation principles outlined in Chapter 3, Forest-Wide Management Recommendations.
- Pursue acquisition of existing mining claims.
- There is potential for wildlife habitat improvement projects and small vegetation alterations.
- Investments in compatible resource uses such as livestock grazing, mineral exploration and development etc. may occur, but no new roads may be constructed.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Connectivity Areas are not suitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Small vegetative management projects may be allowed that benefit wildlife habitat or reduce fuel loads.
- **Fire** – Connectivity Areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote or restore ecosystem function.
- **Travel** – Future trail development would be minimal and ideally designed for non-motorized travel. Current trail and road designations may allow motorized use, with possible seasonal limitations on motorized use to facilitate migrations. Mechanized travel is generally allowed.
- **New Road Construction and reconstruction of existing roads** – New roads are discouraged, and reconstruction of existing roads is designed to protect the natural resources and promote safety of users. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Leasing may be allowed. Strong, non-waivable lease stipulations such as controlled surface use, timing restrictions and/or No Surface Occupancy are employed to protect natural setting and wildlife habitat. Mining is highly discouraged.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Where currently established, livestock grazing can continue, provided the integrity and sustainability of ecosystems is assured. Current rangeland infrastructure will be maintained and accessed, but the development of new infrastructure is not common.
- **Recreation** – Discourage competitive contests and group events. Seasonal or year-round restrictions on human use may be applied to provide seclusion for wildlife such as nesting for birds, big-game rearing areas, and mammals with large home ranges (lynx, mountain lion, wolverine, etc), or during birthing and periods of migration. Potential security habitats will be protected from concentrated recreational use. Recreation amenities and facilities are developed to reduce impacts to the natural resource, e.g., a toilet facility to reduce impacts from dispersed use.
- **Other** – Provide signage concerning the importance of the area for wildlife where roads or highways traverse these linkage areas. Coordinate with state and federal transportation agencies to implement appropriate restoration measures to ensure the safe passage of wildlife across roads and highways that traverse these linkage areas.

Management Guidelines:

- Adjust livestock grazing to meet wildlife habitat objectives. Limit grazing to no more than 20 percent utilization of forage production each year.
- Motorized travel is minimized to the greatest extent possible to reduce fragmentation and conflicts with wildlife.

Theme 4 – Recreation Emphasis Areas

Lands are managed to emphasize recreation opportunities and scenery values. These areas are typically centered on recreational destinations, transportation corridors, winter snow play areas, and near bodies of water. Motorized uses are common and include trails and roads. Other multiple uses activities can occur as long as those activities are compatible with the recreational goals of a specific area.

Theme 4.1 – Motorized Recreation Areas

Management emphasis is for dispersed and/or concentrated motorized recreation, restricted to designated motorized routes, and concentrated recreation on and near water bodies. These areas should provide the motorized user with safe motorized recreational opportunities in a natural setting. Motorized travel may be restricted or seasonally prohibited to protect physical and biological resources. Despite moderate-to-high levels of motorized use, biological communities are maintained

to provide varied, healthy plant communities, structural stages, and associated wildlife. The potential for contact with other users is moderate to high. Solitude or isolation is less important than the opportunity to participate in desired recreational activities.

Desired Conditions:

- A variety of plant communities, structural stages, and associated wildlife occur in patterns maintained primarily through ecological processes.
- These areas should provide the motorized user with safe and varied difficulty and types of motorized and water-based recreational opportunities in a natural setting.

Management Objectives:

- Conflict with motorized travel groups is minimized through management of roads and trails of varied difficulty and usage.
- To protect sensitive natural resources, some high-use recreation sites may be hardened or further developed, or additional restrictions may be enforced.
- Resource uses such as: livestock grazing, timber management, wildlife management are not emphasized and therefore have little impact on ecological conditions.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Motorized Recreation Areas are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Small projects to promote wildlife values or reduce fuel loads may be permitted. Fuelwood gathering may be allowed.
- **Fire** – Motorized Recreation Areas are generally unsuitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function. Some individual areas may be suitable for this use.
- **Travel** – Motorized travel is limited to designated roads and trails. Some areas may have seasonally restricted motorized travel to maintain wildlife habitat during seasons of critical use, such as breeding, brood rearing or migration. Travel restrictions are posted at trailheads. Water based activities are compatible with the aquatic and riparian resource goals, and may include restrictions on use of motorboats and personal watercraft.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads and trails may be created, but are discouraged except where need is clearly demonstrated. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Leasing may be allowed, but may be limited to protect the natural setting and recreation experience via lease stipulations, including controlled surface use, timing restrictions and/or no surface occupancy. Recreation facilities may be withdrawn from mineral entry.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing is allowed.
- **Recreation** – Discourage competitive contests and group events. Management controls may be implemented to protect resources or public safety. Allow uses and activities only if they do not degrade the recreational characteristics, scenic qualities, or the environment.

Management Guidelines:

- Livestock will be dispersed so as to avoid concentration in high-use dispersed recreation areas.
- To protect sensitive natural resources, high-use recreation sites may be hardened, further developed, or additional restrictions enforced.

Theme 4.2 – Scenic Byways

These areas consist of designated scenic byways, scenic areas, vistas, and travel corridors, or other high-quality scenic areas in which outstanding features draw attention and to which people gravitate. These types of areas are managed to protect or preserve the scenic values and recreation uses.

Desired Conditions:

- Opportunities exist to view high-quality scenery that represents the natural, historical and cultural character of the region.
- Travel corridors along scenic byways provide recreation and interpretive facilities that promote the reasons for designation as scenic.

Management Objectives:

- When opportunities exist, vistas and other viewing opportunities are created and maintained, as appropriate.
- Forest management activities may be seen, but will be visually subordinate to the surrounding landscape.
- Because visual quality is emphasized, all activities and interactions maintain the scenic beauty for which the area is designated.
- Work with local governments where appropriate to establish generally consistent management and signage in segments that are adjacent to the forest.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – Scenic Byways are unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Vegetation alterations may be present to enhance viewing opportunities or to maintain long-term vigor and health of the vegetation and ecosystem, to promote wildlife values, or reduce fuel loads.
- **Fire** – Scenic Byways are generally unsuitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function. Some individual areas may be suitable for this use.
- **Travel** – Motorized travel is limited to designated roads and trails. Some areas may have seasonally restricted motorized travel to maintain wildlife habitat during seasons of critical use, such as breeding, brood rearing or migration. Travel restrictions are posted at trailheads.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads and trails may be created, but are discouraged, except where need is clearly demonstrated. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated. Reconstruction of existing roads should enhance the purpose of the scenic byway and generally maintain the existing character of the travelway.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Leasing may be allowed within the viewshed of the byway, but may be limited to protect the natural setting and recreation experience via lease stipulations, such as controlled surface use, timing restrictions, and no surface occupancy.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing, where currently established, will continue with an adequate set back from the right of way or other safety measures to prevent animal vehicle collisions.
- **Recreation** – Management controls may be implemented to protect resources or public safety. Allow uses and activities only if they do not degrade the recreational characteristics, scenic qualities, or the environment.

Management Guidelines:

- Reasonable effort can be made to control insect and disease epidemics that threaten the scenic quality of the area, but treatments must not diminish the scenic quality more than would be expected if the epidemic were not controlled.

- These areas or parts of them will be withdrawn from mineral entry when such action is deemed necessary to meet the objectives of the management area.
- Vegetation management practices will be designed to meet scenery resource objectives.

Theme 5 – Active Management

These areas are characterized by a mix of rangeland and forested ecosystems that are managed to meet a variety of ecological and human needs. These lands are identified for active management with the potential for a full spectrum of multiple use activities such as: wildlife habitat, energy development, timber harvest, livestock grazing, dispersed motorized recreation, prescribed fire, and vegetation treatments. This zone is where intensive timber management can occur for commercial production. A specific area could potentially have a few or several resource development activities, depending on the characteristics of the land.

Theme 5.1 – Active Management for Wildlife Habitat

Management objective is to provide high quality all-season habitat, forage, cover, escape terrain, breeding habitat, and protection for a variety of wildlife species and associated plant communities. Management will provide for a variety of plant communities and successional stages through a combination of human manipulation and natural processes.

Desired Conditions:

- These areas will balance resource uses with the maintenance of sustainable ecosystems.
- A mosaic of vegetation composition, patch size and seral structure is ideally present, some showing the effects of past management activities; but most affected predominantly by natural forces such as fire, insects, and disease.

Management Objectives:

- Landscapes may appear modified with roads and vegetation management activities evident at moderate levels.
- Management activities are designed to enhance habitat for a range of native plant and animal species.
- Management will provide for a variety of plant communities and successional stages, patch size, rotation period, and patterns through a combination of human manipulation and natural processes.
- Forage production is available for both livestock and wildlife.
- Promote development of variety in uneven-age stands appropriate to the range of natural variability of each cover type. Retain late-successional forest conditions where possible and protect old-growth stands.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – These areas are suitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products, as long as these activities do not compromise wildlife habitat. Management practices should promote late-successional stages, and emphasize the restoration and maintenance of habitat quantity and quality for native plant and animal species.
- **Fire** – These areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function and to reduce fuel levels.
- **Travel** – Motorized travel is limited to designated roads and trails. Areas may have seasonally restricted motorized travel to maintain wildlife habitat during seasons of critical use, such as breeding, brood rearing or migration. Travel restrictions are posted at trailheads.

- **New Road Construction** – New roads may be built, but the priority should be to reduce overall road density to protect wildlife habitat and reduce road maintenance costs. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activities are generally authorized. Specific areas may have restrictions or prohibitions on activities to protect resources.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing is allowed and is managed to maintain the integrity of rangeland, wildlife habitat and riparian systems.
- **Recreation** – Discourage competitive contests and group events. A wide range of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities exists. Recreational facilities may be present. Dispersed camping opportunities are plentiful.
- **Other** – These areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Management Guidelines:

- Protect wildlife areas and communities from recreational and resource extraction impacts that are providing important habitat components such as wintering areas, birthing areas, rearing areas and migration routes for wildlife.
- Temporary logging roads should be closed and rehabilitated after each entry is completed.
- Reduce road density in areas of ungulate and wide-ranging predators' concentrations, production and migration areas and areas that have sensitive plants and plant communities.
- Ground cover is adequate to protect the soil and appropriate for the habitat type.
- Range improvements are designed to be compatible with wildlife and aquatic life.
- In areas where adequate, dense, late-successional conifer habitats exist to provide security for lynx denning and movement, vegetation management activities should maintain or enhance habitats important to the lynx' primary prey species, such as snowshoe hare and red squirrel.

Theme 5.2 – Active Management for Human Needs

The Wild Connections team has included this Theme in order to acknowledge the possibility of more intensive uses of certain forest sections. However, as commercial logging is no longer a pervasive use on the Pike-San Isabel, and very little economically recoverable oil and gas reserves exist, this theme is to be used with utmost discretion. Fuels treatment projects are more common, and are allowed in nearly every theme, provided the project adheres to guidelines contained within this plan. Given the shift in forest uses and our focus on sustainable management, the Wild Connections team feels that lands that traditionally would fall into this Theme should be incorporated, save a few exceptions, under Theme 5.1.

Desired Conditions:

- These areas will balance resource uses with the maintenance of sustainable ecosystems.
- A wide variety of vegetation composition and structure is present, some showing the effects of past management activities; others affected predominantly by natural forces such as fire, insects, and disease.

Management Objectives:

- Landscapes may appear modified with roads and vegetation management activities evident at moderate levels.
- Management will provide for a variety of plant communities and successional stages, patch size, rotation period, and patterns appropriate to the range of natural variability of each cover type through a combination of human manipulation and natural processes.
- Forage production is available for both livestock and wildlife.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – These areas are suitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), fuels reduction or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Management practices should promote late-successional stages, and emphasize the restoration and maintenance of habitat quantity and quality for native plant and animal species.
- **Fire** – These areas are generally suitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function and to reduce fuel levels.
- **Travel** – Motorized travel is limited to designated roads and trails. Some areas may have seasonally restricted motorized travel to maintain wildlife habitat during seasons of critical use, such as breeding, brood rearing or migration. Travel restrictions are posted at trailheads.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads may be built. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activities are generally authorized. Specific areas may have restrictions or prohibitions on activities to protect resources.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing is allowed and managed to maintain the integrity of rangeland and riparian systems.
- **Recreation** – Discourage competitive contests and group events. A wide range of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities exists. Recreational facilities may be present. Dispersed camping opportunities are plentiful.
- **Other** – Protect areas and communities from recreational and resource extraction impacts that are providing important habitat components such as wintering areas, birthing areas, rearing areas and migration routes for wildlife.
- These areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Management Guidelines:

- Soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate for that soil type, climate, landform, and geologic processes. Evidence of rills, actively eroding gullies, and soil pedestals are minimal to nonexistent.
- Ground cover is adequate to protect the soil and appropriate for the habitat type.
- Range improvements are designed to be compatible with wildlife and aquatic life.
- All new roads passing through this area will avoid important wildlife forage, cover, and birthing areas.

Theme 7 – Residential Forest Interface

The Wild Connections planning team has included this theme to specifically acknowledge Forest Service lands located within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI). The WUI is based on the findings and definitions recommended by the Front Range Fuels Treatment Roundtable. They define the WUI as the area where structures such as private homes or community infrastructure abut or are intermixed with forest and other vegetative fuel types with a density of three structures per acre or 250 people per square mile (which translates to approximately one structure per six acres). A clear line of demarcation generally exists between the wildland fuels and residential, business, and public structures. The private lands are usually undergoing pressure from urban and private residential development (Front Range Fuels Treatment Roundtable Report, 2006).

Desired Conditions:

- Management actions are geared toward influencing the vegetation composition and structure to allow visual screening while minimizing hazardous fuel loading patterns.

Management Objectives:

- Opportunities to consolidate land ownership may be pursued.
- The predominant management objective is to reduce fire danger and fuel loading to protect life, property and public safety.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – These areas unsuitable for commercial timber production, however timber salvage or small scale operations to reduce fuel loads or diseased trees may be utilized. Vegetation treatments occur often to improve public safety, enhance scenery or reduce fuels.
- **Fire** – These areas are generally unsuitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function and to reduce fuel levels.
- **Travel** – Motorized travel is limited to designated roads and trails. Numerous open roads provide access to private land.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads may be built, but will be discouraged. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing may continue where currently established, but is generally discouraged and is carefully managed to maintain the integrity of rangeland and riparian systems and to minimize conflicts with humans.
- **Recreation** – Prohibit competitive contests and group events. A wide range of motorized and non-motorized recreational activities exists. Dispersed recreation activities requiring overnight stays are not encouraged.
- **Other** – Protect areas and communities from recreational and resource extraction impacts that adversely affect important habitat components such as wintering areas, birthing areas, rearing areas and migration routes for wildlife.

Management Guidelines:

- Management activities are coordinated with other affected landowners.
- Develop, where appropriate and practical, coordinated multi-jurisdictional land management efforts and community fire plans.
- Minimize potential for insect and disease outbreaks through vegetation treatments, maintaining stands at a moderate or lower risk, in cooperation with landowners.
- Develop landownership adjustment patterns in cooperation with local governments, private landowners, forest users and the general public.
- Additional guidelines with respect to fuels treatment projects are listed in Chapter 3.

Theme 8 – Permanently Developed Areas

These areas are permanently altered by human activities to the extent ecological conditions and landscape appearances are likely outside their natural range of variability. Management emphasis is generally for a single activity such as highly developed recreation sites for skiing and other activities, utility corridors, or mineral development areas.

Theme 8.1 – Ski Based Resorts

Management emphasis provides for downhill skiing on existing sites. Management integrates ski area development and uses with other resource management to provide healthy forest ecosystems; vegetative diversity; habitat protection for threatened, endangered and sensitive species; forage production for wildlife; and opportunities for summer non-motorized recreation.

Desired Conditions:

- Ski areas provide winter sports activities and other intensively managed outdoor recreation opportunities for large numbers of national and international visitors in highly developed settings.
- Vegetation generally appears in a natural state, except where it is manipulated to provide for the intended intensive use.

Management Objectives:

- Management actions are geared toward influencing the vegetation composition and structure to promote inter-trail tree stands and to minimize hazardous fuel loading patterns.
- Vegetation is managed to avoid catastrophic changes that could result from windthrow, insects, disease, or fire. Disturbed areas are revegetated to restore scenic integrity and minimize erosion.
- Recreational uses are intensively managed during the summer and winter seasons.
- Protection of scenic values is emphasized through application of basic landscape aesthetics and design principles, integrated with forest management and development objectives.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – These areas unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Vegetation treatments occur often to improve public safety, enhance scenery or reduce fuels.
- **Fire** – These areas are generally unsuitable for managed fire use. Fires will generally be suppressed to protect infrastructure.
- **Travel** – Winter motorized travel is limited to administrative and permittee use. In snow-free seasons, designated roads and trails may be open to motorized and mechanized use. Non-motorized use is allowed year-round, as long as it does not interfere with permitted use or damage vegetation.
- **New Road Construction** – New roads may be built. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – These areas are withdrawn from mineral entry, subject to valid exiting rights.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing may continue where currently established, but is generally discouraged and is carefully managed to maintain the integrity of rangeland and riparian systems.
- **Recreation** – Emphasis is on the permitted intensive use. Prohibit competitive contests, except as provided in permits. Dispersed recreation activities requiring overnight stays are not encouraged.
- Management manipulation of forests and non-forest terrestrial vegetation and aquatic systems will emphasize the restoration and maintenance of healthy vegetation and public safety.
- These areas are generally suitable for commercial communication sites or utility corridors.

Management Guidelines:

- Reasonable efforts are made to limit the visibility of structures, ski lifts, roads, utilities, buildings, signs, and other man-made facilities by locating them behind landform features or by screening them behind existing vegetation. Structures should be non-reflective and blend in with the terrain as much as possible.
- Permanent outdoor advertising is not a needed public service and is not allowed.
- Facilities are designed with an architectural theme intended to blend facilities with the natural environment.
- Ski area operations, including new facilities and trails, will protect diurnal security and

- nocturnal foraging opportunities for Canada lynx.
- Noise and lighting will be minimized to prevent adverse impacts on adjacent forest resources. Any new snowmobiles needed for service or ski patrol must be four-stroke or clean-technology machines.
- New ski runs may not be created in identified wildlife movement corridors.
- Snowmaking and other water depletions will be conducted in a manner that conserves stream pattern, geometry, substrate composition, and aquatic habitat in affected perennial streams.
- Snow management, including snowmaking will be conducted in a manner that prevents slope failures, gully erosion, and stream bank destabilization.

Theme 8.2 – Permanently Developed Recreation Areas

These areas contain developed recreation sites that provide an array of recreational opportunities and experiences, usually in a forested environment. These types of areas also include the surrounding terrain, resulting in an attractive setting for the developments. Areas are managed to provide concentrated recreation opportunities in multiple-site, highly developed recreation complexes. Major site modifications and facility installations may be present. These areas may appear singly or in a combination at recreational complexes. They may include both private and public facilities that are located on National Forest System lands.

Desired Conditions:

- Management actions are geared toward influencing the vegetation composition and structure to promote visual screening and to minimize hazardous fuel loading patterns.
- Vegetation is managed to avoid catastrophic changes that could result from windthrow, insects, disease, or fire. Disturbed areas are revegetated to protect scenery and minimize erosion.

Management Objectives:

- Recreational activities are emphasized, and are often enhanced by modifying the area, although vegetative cover and soil quality are maintained.
- Recreational uses are intensively managed during the appropriate season(s).
- Protection of scenic values is emphasized through application of basic landscape aesthetics and design principles, integrated with forest management and development objectives.

Suitability:

- **Timber** – These areas unsuitable for timber production, timber harvest (including salvage), or commercial use of miscellaneous forest products. Vegetation treatments may occur often to improve public safety, enhance scenery, or reduce fuels.
- **Fire** – These areas are generally unsuitable for managed fire use to promote ecosystem function and to reduce fuel levels.
- **Travel** – Motorized travel is limited to designated roads and trails. Numerous open roads provide access to roaded recreational and motorized OHV opportunities on designated roads and trails.
- **New Road Construction and reconstruction of existing roads.** – New roads may be built, and existing ones may be reconstructed. Existing unclassified roads should be converted to trails or closed and rehabilitated.
- **Mining, Oil & Gas** – Activity is not authorized except for valid existing rights. Withdraw the area from mineral entry.
- **Livestock Grazing** – Livestock grazing may continue where currently established, but is generally discouraged and is carefully managed to maintain the integrity of rangeland and riparian systems.

- **Recreation** – Discourage competitive contests. A wide range of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities exist.
- Management manipulation of forests and non-forest terrestrial vegetation and aquatic systems will emphasize the restoration and maintenance of habitat quantity and quality for native plant and animal species.

Management Guidelines:

- Reasonable efforts are made to limit the visibility of structures, roads, utilities, buildings, signs, and other man-made facilities by locating them behind landform features or by screening them behind existing vegetation.
- Permanent outdoor advertising is not a needed public service and is not allowed.
- Facilities are designed with an architectural theme intended to blend facilities with the natural environment.
- Vegetation is retained to screen facilities from key viewpoints.
- Recreation sites, including new facilities and trails, will protect diurnal security and nocturnal foraging opportunities for Canada lynx.
- New recreation sites may not be created in identified wildlife movement corridors.

Theme 9 – Significant Lands (Non-USFS)

The Wild Connections planning team utilizes this theme to highlight and acknowledge other lands critical to both habitat and connectivity, such as adjacent National Forests, state parks, private and BLM lands. Although out of the immediate jurisdiction of the USFS, it is critical that Forest management considers the greater ecosystem to which it is connected. Forest activities must be compatible with management activities on these adjacent public lands.

Theme 9.1 – Non-Forest Service Recommended Wilderness

Wild Connections has also included seven large BLM managed roadless areas as they are integral to our overall vision as wilderness core reserves. In some cases they are combined with adjacent USFS land into a larger wilderness area. The Wild Connections team is working with the BLM on the management of these lands. Details are provided in Chapter 6 and in the respective complex Narrative.

Theme 9.2 – Significant Non-Forest Service Biological Areas

Wild Connections has also included State Parks and State Wildlife Areas, especially in South Park, the Wet Mountain Valley and the land between South Park and the Arkansas River due to their important biological values. These are beyond the management authority of the USFS, but as the Wild Connections Conservation Plan is focused on larger ecoregion sustainability, these lands are critical to acknowledge regardless of political ownership.

Theme 9.3 – Non-Forest Service Connectivity Areas

Wild Connections has identified large linkage corridors across other lands. Although these lands themselves are beyond the administrative authority of the USFS, it is vital to protect the entry and exit paths from USFS lands which animals are using to access these corridors.