

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, Montana 59801
2620

TO : Forest Supervisor, Bitterroot

DATE: May 13, 1964

FROM : Howard Foulger, Assistant Regional Forester, By

SUBJECT: Planning

We are returning your approved copy of the Magruder District wildlife plan. This is a practical, realistic plan with a good bit of background information thrown in for good measure.

Enclosure

cc: Btr.

Inf.	Action
<i>Hll</i>	Supv. _____
	Lands _____
	Timber _____
	F. Control _____
	Engrs. _____
	Admin. G. _____
	Dispatching _____
	S.M.S. _____
	E.M.A. _____
	Contract _____
	Land _____
	Timber _____

George H. Foulger
orig returned to Magruder 5/19/64 per J.M.



Archival research by
Dennis Baird
University of Idaho Library
Date Collected: 2008
Source: BNF History Filer
Hamilton

Bitterroot NATL. Forest
History Filer

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Forest Service, Region 1, Missoula, Montana

Forest Supervisor, Bitterroot

2620
April 30, 1963
Your Ref: 4/8/63

W. W. Dresskell, Assistant Regional Forester

Surveys, Studies, Plans

We have reviewed your Magruder District wildlife management plan rough draft with great interest. This is a good plan.

In line with your request, we have the following suggestions:

page 3 - We would rather not anticipate a need for artificial stocking unless the State is already concerned about this. We feel artificial stocking on the Magruder District should be relegated to the unforeseeable future. *deleted*

page 4 - You imply management is not necessary until you have a problem. Do you intend this?

page 8 - B - We suggest rewording, "The State of Idaho has control of the game animals and fish;" perhaps, to say they protect and regulate the use of game and fish would be better.

page 9 - D - A statement of the area of big-game winter range to be cut over would be meaningful here. Perhaps you could specify the area to be cut on winter range by 10-year periods.

page 11 - E - A discussion of stream surveys would be appropriate.

page 11 - F - We suggest that the current action plan be a separate ~~sheet~~ sheet, so that it can be revised without touching the rest of the plan.

Another way of setting up an action plan is as follows:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Completion Goal</u>
Bad Luck Creek browse study - photo points	District Ranger	6/9/64

Appendix - We would prefer that you dispense with game population figures in the plan. The other statistics are interesting and useful.

You furnished a complete set of maps with you plan. This seems a duplication of records since you are required to keep herd unit maps with herd unit records (See FSH 2621.11e, R-1 Sup. No. 304), both in the Ranger's office and the Supervisor's Office. Perhaps a reference to these herd unit maps would suffice for the plan.

Nathan Snyder will plan to spend May 6 reviewing your other plans with you in Hamilton.

W. W. DRESSKELL

Enclosure
cc Btr.

MAGRUDER RANGER DISTRICT

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLAN
Magruder Ranger District

A. Introduction

1. The Magruder Ranger District has a total of approximately 461,000 acres. The district is divided into three different management units. There is the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area, of which approximately 165,000 acres lie on the Magruder District. The area of multiple-use through the middle of the District is approximately 173,000 acres. The third area, designated as the Salmon River Breaks Primitive Area, is approximately 122,500 acres.

With the large areas of wilderness and primitive units, wildlife is one of the most important resources of the District. A large portion of the annual 3500 recreational visitors to the District are associated with the fish and game found in the area.

2. Objective - To manage the big game resource in such a manner that the browse species on the critical winter game ranges will recover to a satisfactory condition and to maintain these key areas in a satisfactory condition with an upward trend.
3. Seven species of big game are found on the District. They are elk, mule and whitetail deer, sheep, goat, black bear and moose. Other wildlife game species are upland game birds (blue, franklin and ruffed grouse), fur bearing animals (beaver, martin, mink and fisher),

upland small game animals (snowshoe rabbits), and fish. Important non-game wildlife includes numerous species of birds, both migratory and otherwise, and numerous predators (coyote, fox, bobcat and cougar).

The basic problem of wildlife management has been the inaccessibility of the area. Much of the excellent hunting on the District is reached only by those with means of packing supplies in and meat out. This will be partially remedied because of the recent reclassification of much of the District to a multiple-use management unit. The game harvest will increase in the multiple-use area as logging and fire access roads are pushed into areas which are largely inaccessible.

A start has been made to improve management and increase harvest of the wildlife by lengthening of hunting seasons and creation of special hunting seasons. The present season on elk and deer is now 2.5 months--from September 15th, to November 30th. This is an increase of 1.5 months over previous seasons. During the past 6 years special seasons have been open for sheep and goats, ranging from 5 days to 3 weeks. Sheep and goats are apparently kept in check by elk competition. Hunting does not materially effect the numbers.

In conjunction with the extended hunting season, the Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game has financed snow removal on the Nezperce Pass to

make the area accessible to hunters. There is no apparent problem in over-population of other big game species as the elk have crowded them out. The continued excess in elk numbers has resulted in browse damage and it is not producing as it should.

Fishing on the District is generally confined to the summer season with the exception of the Salmon River, where fishing for steelhead is common from October through April. The chinook salmon in the Salmon River are fished from May through September. Fall fishing on the Selway River is generally incidental to the hunting of big game. There are approximately 700 miles of fishable streams and 290 acres of lakes on the District. Of this total, about 60 miles of the streams are fished and about 30 acres of the lakes. The principal streams fished are the Salmon River, the Selway River, Indian Creek, White Cap and the Little Clearwater. Lakes stocked with fish are Gold Pan, Elk Track, Burnt Knob, Hidden Lake and White Cap Lake. The streams provide angling for approximately 900 fishermen and the lakes are fished by about 100 each year.

The State of Idaho Fish and Game Department planted an estimated 1,339,000 chinook salmon eggs in the Selway River in the fall of 1961, another 1,000,000 in the fall of 1962 and 380,000 in the fall of 1963. This is an attempt to re-establish this run of fish. The state plans to continue the project for a total of eight years.

Present lake fishing is good, but a study should be made of barren lakes to determine if a development program as necessary as wilderness travel increases. The State of Idaho planned to plant fish by air in several lakes on the Magruder District during the fall of 1963, but there has not been a report on this at present.

There is very little stream improvement to be done on the District. Most of the streams are very steep with cold water and have low food producing capabilities. It will be necessary to make some studies of the various streams to determine their needs. The state is considering the construction of a hatching channel in the Selway River near the mouth of the Little Clearwater. Here the chinook salmon eggs and newly hatched fry will be protected from ice, flood, silt and other conditions that cause high mortality in the eggs and newly hatched fish.

Management of furbearers and upland birds presents no problems on the District.

There has been no trapping on this section of the Forest for the past 15 years. Martin, mink, coyote, fox and bobcat are common throughout the area and there has recently been an increase in beaver. Fisher have been planted on the Sabe Cr. area of the Nezperce Forest and will probably spread onto the Magruder District. There is an increasing interest in cougar hunting on the District.

Upland game bird population is high with blue grouse common on the high ridges and particularly on the Salmon River slopes. Franklin and ruffed grouse are found in the stream bottoms and dense timber in large numbers. The hunting of birds is mostly incidental to the harvesting of big game. Few visits are made into the area for the express purpose of hunting birds because of the great distance from populated areas in the State of Idaho.

4. The history of the Selway elk herd is a history of game population buildup after fire. In 1910 the country around Shessler Peak and East Moose Creek burned off. This was a large burn. In 1919 the area from North Star Creek to Snake Creek burned off. In 1934 the Pete King Fire burned the Lower Selway and part of the Lochsa. The 1934 fire reburned areas that were burned in 1910 and 1919.

The mule deer population built up rapidly after the fires and white-tail deer also increased in number.

In the lower Selway, buildup of the elk population was slow. In 1925 on the Moose Creek District only an occasional elk was seen. However, they increased rapidly and from about 1930 to 1936 a tremendous elk population built up in the north end of the Moose Creek District. These elk and deer pushed up the river into the Magruder District. They also moved east into the heads of the west side canyons of the Bitterroot Valley. In 1935 a small herd of elk was observed wintering in Tin Cup Creek on the Bitterroot side. Appar-

ently at this time elk were summering in the high basins on the west side of the Bitterroot and most were returning to the Selway to winter. We believe that this pattern is still being followed.

Farther south, the elk also crossed the divide into the higher basins, but this came later with the buildup of population farther up the Selway in the Magruder District.

The winter of 1935-1936 was a bad one for the elk on the Moose Creek District. That winter there was a big die off. The deer numbers were drastically reduced. However, the elk population recovered and the highest population on the Moose Creek District is believed to have been reached during the period 1938 to 1942. In 1942 there was another big die off-again in 1947, 1948, and 1952 winter kill was excessive on the Moose Creek District.

The history on the Magruder District is similar to that on the Moose Creek District except there was about an eight-year lag. By 1935 there were elk around Paradise and up the drainages 5 or 6 miles. Deer were also numerous at this time all over the District. The elk reached peak numbers on the Selway section of the Magruder District during the period 1945 to 1947. The winter of 1947-1948 was a severe one and there was a drastic reduction in numbers due to winter kill. Again in the winter of 1952 winter kill was excessive on the Magruder District. Since that time there has not been a

spectacular winter kill, but the numbers of elk and deer in the Selway herd have continued to decline to the present time.

There is evidence that some of the Selway elk from both the Magruder and Moose Creek Districts summer in the heads of the Bitterroot west side canyons and return to the Selway to winter.

There have been elk on the Salmon River portion to the Magruder District for a long time. There was a small bunch of elk around Square Top between Horse Creek and the head of the Selway in 1926.

In 1929 the area between Fawn Creek and Sabe Creek burned. This fire burned from the Salmon River to Harrington Mountain and Swet Lake. Browse increased after this fire and so did the game herds, particularly the deer and elk. The history of this herd, its build-up and die off is not well known. However, it is safe to assume that the bad winters on the Selway also took a toll here. Very little hunting was done on the Salmon River until the late 1940's when hunters began to use the area. It is now used by a limited number of hunters who use both boat and pack string for transportation.

There has been a small bunch of mountain sheep in the Snake Creek to Burned Strip area for years. They continue to exist in practically constant numbers in this vicinity.

Little is known about the population history of the mountain sheep on the Magruder section of the Salmon River.

There was a greater population of mountain goats in the Selway River area and in the Waugh Mountain - Harrington Mountain area, in the 1948-1950 period. Apparently the numbers here have declined and appear to still be declining.

There have always been a few moose in the White Cap - Deep Creek area. Their numbers remain practically static.

Red fox were plentiful until the early 1940's. At that time their numbers were apparently drastically reduced and remain scarce at the present time.

Up until 1930 or 1931 there was a fall run of chinook salmon. They always got to the vicinity of the Magruder Ranger Station about August 20. The big fish were always observed to the forks where Wilkerson Creek and Stripe Creek join. Whether they went beyond this point is not known. In 1929 all the supplies for the Salmon River fire were packed from the end of the road at Kit Carson up the Selway to the fire. On numerous trips from Magruder to Thompson Flat, one packer observed no fewer than 14 black bear fishing every trip.

The steelhead run was not stopped, and Mr. Greenup who worked on the District since 1926 has the impression that at least a few steelhead were observed every year and some years they were quite common. Several steelhead were observed in Deep Creek in June of 1963.

Numerous bald eagles were observed along the Selway River in the 1920's and 1930's. These birds were always seen in the fall. Now they are very scarce.

The natural salt lick at the Upper Crossing was in use by deer in 1929. Apparently there were no elk in the country at that time, for they were not using the lick.

In the 1920's the District was trapped heavily for martin, mink, fox, and coyote. The decline in fur prices in the 1930's and the better job opportunities since the 1940's have eliminated the trapper from this area.

This history shows no big game management. Because the area is so isolated there will be little management of the wildlife resource until it becomes more accessible.

5. The District Wildlife Management Plan will be reviewed each year to determine any changes or additions and deletions. Every five years there will be an intensive review of the entire plan and it will be rewritten if necessary.

B. Cooperators

1. The following agencies are known as cooperators or interested parties:

State of Idaho, Department of Fish and Game

Federal Fish and Wildlife Service - USDA

The State of Idaho has the authority for the regulatory phase of game management. The habitat is the responsibility of the Forest Service. The State sets the seasons and the take of the animals. The Fish and Wildlife Service is available to carry out studies. This latter agency has no administrative responsibility.

2. There is at present a cooperative agreement between the State of Idaho, Dept. of Fish and Game, and the Bitterroot National Forest to keep the snow removed from the Nezperce Pass Road for the convenience of hunters in Idaho. The Bitterroot Forest Engineer is responsible for keeping the road open until five days after the closing date of the hunting season. This is an annual agreement. The Idaho Fish and Game Dept. deposits \$1000.00 annually for this work. It is common practice to extend every courtesy to Idaho State Fish and Game personnel. They are given free use of the Ranger Station facilities for bunking purposes.

There has been a recent request from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the Dept. of Interior, to make a study of fisherman use of the Selway River. Action is being taken on this request by Magruder District personnel.

3. There is an annual Interstate-Interagency meeting held each spring. This is attended by Fish and Game Dept. personnel from Idaho and Montana, and by the Beaverhead, Bitterroot, Salmon and Targhee National Forests. In addition, the Idaho Outfitters and Guides

Association holds an annual meeting in the fall after hunting season. Forest Service personnel are regularly invited to this meeting.

C. Direct Habitat Improvements and/or Projects Carried Out

1. The Idaho State Fish and Game Dept. has planted anadromus chinook salmon eggs in the Selway River in the fall of 1961, 1962 and 1963. The State plans on this planting for eight consecutive years. It is not known if more projects are contemplated.

The District will continue to cooperate in the snow removal on Nezperce Pass.

Forest Service habitat improvement funds have been used on administrative studies to date. Habitat improvements are no doubt needed, but until there is a positive way to protect such improvements from overpopulation of game, such improvements will be meaningless.

D. Coordination Measures

1. Timber - At the present time there are no timber operations on the District, but there will be soon in the area designated for multiple-use. When the multiple-use plan is drawn up, the wildlife management will be incorporated in the plan. It will be some time before timber will be cut on critical winter ranges. Plans will be made at that time for reforestation or conversion to winter game range. There will be no timber cutting on critical winter game range for some time after cutting is started on the District because of road development and the location of the market.

2. Range - There is a possibility of conflict between grazing of recreation horses and winter elk range in the lower Selway vicinity of North Star and Running Creek Ranches. Utilization studies should be set up in the area to determine the actual competition for forage. At this time there are two game exclosures and a number of browse transects established in the North Star drainage. One of the exclosures was placed by the Idaho State Fish and Game Dept. There should be more intensive control and study of commercial packer use of areas used as elk winter range. We hope to set up and analyze an additional three allotments for recreation stock. In these plans, game use will be given full consideration.

No livestock other than recreation stock necessary to harvest the wildlife crop will be permitted on the District.

3. Recreation - As there is increased summer recreational use with the consequent increased grazing it will be necessary to make studies of grazing and wildlife competition in the summer ranges.
4. Watershed - To coordinate with present watershed conditions, it will be necessary to conduct informal surveys for stream bank damage in winter elk ranges, particularly in the Upper Crossing area. As multiple-use practices increase, there will be more work necessary on coordinating watershed and wildlife management. This function cannot be overstressed in that the streams on the District are steelhead spawning streams. Chinook salmon are in the Salmon River drainage and are being re-established in the Selway River.

The classification of part of the Selway River drainages as multiple-use presents a special problem in watershed management. Care must be taken not to disturb the unstable, granitic soils of the river breaks, and this is especially important because of the planting of chinook salmon.

5. Fire Control - The use of early seasons and the recent mild fall weather has increased the potential of hunter caused fires.. Whether or not this damages habitat depends on the area and species involved.

E. Wildlife Surveys

1. Initiate annual utilization studies in cooperation with the State of Idaho in the North Star-Gardiner area.

Cooperate with the State in census surveys and winter range condition studies.

Attend joint meetings with State officials in April on season setting and management problems.

F. Wildlife Studies and Research

1. Migration studies are urgently needed. At the present time there are two elk and deer exclosures on the District. They are located in the North Star drainage and in Grass Gulch at Upper Crossing. Two more are planned--one at Snake Creek and one in Smith Gulch on the Salmon River. There are browse and grass transects at both existing exclosures. The District will complete installation of transects, both three-step and browse on the Salmon River and Snake Creek.

2. RANGER DISTRICT CURRENT ACTION PLAN

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Completion Date</u>
Bad Luck Creek Browse Study - photo points	District Ranger	6/9/64
Pictorial changes in browse type - (Established 6/9/60)		
	District Ranger	
North Star Browse Transects - 4 clusters (Established 6/6 & 7/58, added to 6/9/59)		
Partially read - 9/62, Finish reading 6/63		1966
	District Ranger	
Salmon River Permanent Line Transects - 3 clusters - Smith Gulch Area Lantz Bar Area Between Lucky & Spindle Cr.		
Established April & May, 1962		1967
	District Ranger	
Upper Crossing Permanent Line Transects - 3 clusters		
Established 6/7 & 8/61		1966
	District Ranger	
Salmon River Exclosure (Corey Bar)- with Permanent Line Transects		1964
	District Ranger	
Snake Creek Exclosure - with Browse Transects		1965

G. Special Management Programs

1. The District does not recommend any special management programs.

H. Related Plans

1. The Multiple-Use Management Plan for the District will be completed in FY 1964.

All Range and Allotment Analysis Plans are directly related to the Wildlife Plan. No Allotment Analysis Plans are completed to date. Work has been done on the North Star and Running Creek allotments. These are scheduled for completion on April 1, 1964.

I. Ranger District Current Action Plan (Short-Term Plan)

1. Use will be made of available facilities, such as radio and newspaper releases, concerning wildlife studies and utilization. The District will prepare adequate sign planning for items of interest to wildlife management, such as the enclosure planned at Snake Creek. In all phases of public information there is to be close cooperation with all agencies involved. It is the practice of the District to keep the public informed of snow conditions in the fall by radio and newspaper. In addition, all District personnel should be active in presenting ideas of good citizenship and sportsmanship to all hunters and fishermen.