

About the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act of 2009

Montana Trout Unlimited

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- Applies only to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, the Seeley Lake Ranger District on the Lolo National Forest, the Three Rivers Ranger District on the Kootenai National Forest and six BLM Wilderness Study Areas in southwest Montana.
- Permanently protects nearly 700,000 acres in 25 undeveloped areas as federally designated wilderness, including important headwater tributaries that host native fish or which supply cold, clean water to the Madison, Clark Fork, Big Hole, Blackfoot, Ruby, Yaak, Red Rock and Jefferson Rivers, as well as Rock Creek.
- Protects another 300,000 acres as Special Management Areas or National Recreation Areas, basically prohibiting commercial logging, roadbuilding, mining and oil and gas development, but allowing existing legal motorized and bicycle use.
- Directs the Forest Service to do some sort of logging on an average of 7,000 acres of the 3.4 million-acre Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest each year for 10 years, and 3,000 acres of the Three Rivers Ranger District—but to do it as part of large-scale stewardship projects that include restoration of damaged habitat and recreational features. It also directs the agency to do stewardship projects with logging on the Seeley-Lake Ranger District, but it doesn't include a required acreage. **The bill does not mandate a specified amount of timber that must be cut.**
- Requires that the value of trees cut in stewardship projects be invested back into restoration activities on the same landscapes, which can include removal of sediment-bleeding roads and fish-blocking culverts, riparian habitat improvements, instream flow enhancements, reduction of livestock impacts to fish habitat, maintenance of trails and campgrounds, as well as control of noxious weeds.
- Makes it clear that the logging that occurs in the large-landscape stewardship projects is prioritized for areas that have been previously developed, have existing road densities that are high and which have high incidences of insect infested timber stands. **The bill does not direct the Forest Service to log inventoried roadless areas.**
- Requires the Forest Service to create and consult with a multi-interest advisory committee on where large-landscape stewardship projects will occur, and requires the agency to create and consult with project-specific committees to help design stewardship projects.
- Requires the Forest Service when implementing projects to adhere to all environmental laws, including NEPA, the ESA and the Clean Water Act. The bill also leaves untouched the ability of citizens to file administrative appeals or litigation that affects the projects.
- Prohibits the agency for the most part from building new, permanent roads, and it requires the landscapes where stewardship projects occur to be left with road densities that do not exceed on average more than 1.5 linear miles per square mile. This standard improves wildlife security and it is based on scientific literature. It also greatly benefits fish in watersheds that have high concentrations of roads.

- Most components of the bill sunset within 10-15 years, though the wilderness, special management and national recreation areas are permanent.
- “Releases” a portion of one congressionally designated Wilderness Study Area – the West Pioneers. But it becomes a National Recreation Area. The bill also releases another four small BLM Wilderness Study Areas so that they can be managed under that agency’s local land-use plan. None of these areas is precluded from future consideration for wilderness or other congressional designations.
- Travel planning, logging, mining, motorized and primitive recreation on those parts of the three national forest areas in the bill not designated as wilderness, special management areas, or national recreation areas will be managed under existing forest plans. **The bill does not “re-write” forest plans.** It simply modifies them or directs how they can be implemented. Grazing will be unaffected by the bill, and motorized recreation in all areas except those designated as wilderness will be managed through existing authorities, such as through forest plans and travel plans.

For more information and to look at maps, go to www.testersenate.gov or www.montanaforests.org.