

BITTERROOT NATIONAL FOREST CLIMBING MANAGEMENT PLAN

PREPARED IN COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

March 24th, 2022



Introduction

The Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) is home to the gnarled grey peaks of the heavily glaciated and snowcapped Bitterroot Mountain Range. This 95-mile stretch of natural wonder and picturesque mountain scenery with abundant recreational opportunities, starts south of Lolo, Montana and ends near Lost Trail Pass on the Montana and Idaho border.

The west side of the Bitterroot Valley gives rise to numerous glaciated canyons ending in high elevation, ice-sculpted peaks. Within these west-side canyons, there is a multiplex of cliff ecosystems which provides suitable habitat for a broad range of flora, fauna, and unique soil types. The heavily timbered, gently sloping, and non-glaciated Sapphire Mountain range lies on the east side of the Bitterroot Valley.

The Bitterroot Range is comprised of a variety of geologic formations which bestow natural opportunities for mountaineering and rock climbing. These rock formations are highly sought after by climbers, bird enthusiasts, and photographers

and provide rejuvenating and idealistic recreational experiences. Within these rock formations are sensitive ecosystems that if disturbed have the potential for negative impacts.

Given the significant increase in the local population and ensuing demand for recreational opportunities, this document addresses management solutions and seeks to create a sustainable approach to climbing management that parallels USFS policy and management directives on the BNF.

The BNF Climbing Management Plan (CMP):

- Is an effectual way to develop and build partnerships with the local community and organizations to address recreation and resource management issues.
- Provides management policy and directives that actively protects, preserves, and sustains the ecosystem, cultural and heritage resources, and rare, threatened, and endangered wildlife.
- Creates educational opportunities and outreach programs to help raise awareness about responsible recreation, appropriate climbing ethics & activities, and best practices for land stewardship.
- Produces adaptive management policies to address the ever-changing conditions in the natural and physical environment.
- Formalizes the participation and agreements made by contributors that have actively participated in the development of the CMP.

Inherent Risks of Climbing on National Forest System (NFS) Lands

** Climbing opportunities on NFS lands have inherent potential risks due to features or qualities of the land or environment, such as uneven or otherwise dangerous terrain; the risk of falling; risks associated with poor placement and lack of maintenance of fixed anchors and fixed equipment; risks associated with insufficient training, experience, or equipment; exposure to and effects of weather and wildfire; and the presence of insects, reptiles or wild animals, poisonous plants, hazard trees, flood plains, rock fall, landslides, and other aspects of the*

natural world. Individuals engaging in climbing at climbing opportunities on NFS lands assume these inherent risks.

Climbing opportunities on NFS lands have a development scale of 0, 1, or in rare cases 2. Recreational opportunities at these low development scales are managed with an emphasis on resource protection and are typically characterized by uneven or natural terrain, little or no amenities, and no management of activities or site conditions.

Accordingly, climbing management plans are developed to address resource concerns associated with climbing opportunities on NFS lands, as opposed to visitor comfort. Climbing opportunities have greater inherent risks than developed recreation sites, which have a development scale of 3, 4 or 5 and are specifically designed, developed, and managed with an emphasis on visitor comfort.

Background

Climbing in the Bitterroot Valley has existed for several decades and continues to be a destination spot for locals and climbers passing through the area. Currently, there are numerous climbing opportunities in the Bitterroot including sport routes, multi-pitch big wall routes, single-pitch traditional routes, top rope routes, bouldering, and technical mountaineering climbs. A few popular climbing areas on the BNF include Mill Creek Canyon, Blodgett Canyon, and Lost Horse Canyon.

With all recreational activities, climbing has potential to incur measurable effects and impacts to natural and cultural resources. Some examples of resource impacts that could potentially occur are:

- User created access trails
- Rock and vegetation alteration
- Negative wildlife encounters
- Degradation to Wilderness character & quality
- Potential damage to cultural sites
- Adverse user group impacts

With a substantial increase in the popularity of climbing as a sport nationwide and the nuanced styles that accompany it, a CMP is desired to best plan for appropriate use on the BNF so that this popular recreation activity and experience will be available for future generations.

Scope of the Plan

The CMP seeks to address an effective solution to manage climbing activities that takes place on all NFS lands within the Bitterroot National Forest.

The intent of this plan is to provide for recreational climbing opportunities while minimizing and mitigating the impacts of recreational use on vulnerable resources. In addition, the plan seeks to promote sustainable climbing activities, reduce user conflicts, and help land managers and stakeholders properly plan for future climbing activities that will take place on the Bitterroot National Forest.

The success of this climbing management plan hinges on the participation and continued involvement of stakeholders to develop science-based management decisions, community driven solutions, and to create a desirable & sustainable management plan that works now and into the future.

Resource Topics Covered

- Wildlife
- Rock & Vegetation Alteration
- Access Trails, Staging Areas, and Rappel/Belay Stations
- Route Development-ROS, Inventory & Fixed Hardware- (Section includes climbing in non-wilderness and wilderness areas)
- Cultural & Heritage Resources
- Sanitation

Wildlife- 36 CFR 261.8 & May Consider Special Order

General Overview

The Bitterroot National Forest is home to several wildlife species that make their home in the abundant cliff ecosystems. Two of these species, the Peregrine Falcon and Golden Eagle, are primary species of concern in relation to rock climbing.

In following federal policy in relation to raptors, specific climbing areas will be seasonally restricted to the public during periodic times of the year to ensure

protection of federally listed, endangered, threatened, and any other rare or sensitive wildlife species.

Monitoring and assessments will take place on a regular basis during periods of closures to make sure impacts from climbing do not have a negative effect to wildlife species.

Adaptive management in certain areas will be used to better understand the relationship between climbing and wildlife. Cooperation between the USFS, Western Montana Climbing Coalition, and the community will be paramount to successful implementation of these adaptive management methods.

General Management Direction and Practices

Golden Eagle

Minimize disturbance to active golden eagle nests to support successful reproduction and continued occupancy of golden eagle territories on the BNF.

1. The Bitterroot National Forest will implement a seasonal climbing closure order effective February 1st each year in areas of known golden eagle nests in the Bitterroot canyons. This closure will continue until the affected nests are determined to be inactive, or if active, until after any young have fledged.
2. An **adaptive** 800-meter radiused buffer on known golden eagle nests will be implemented in areas that are known for climbing and other disturbing activities.

This 800 meter buffer can be modified using the adaptive management concepts of viewsheds (Camp et al. 1997) and prior experience with the effects of recreational activities to individual nests. This recognizes the concepts that physiographic features may limit potential disturbance to individual nests, that individual eagles have different tolerance levels for disturbance, and that some can become habituated to and accept at least some forms of disturbance over time.

3. The Bitterroot National Forest will work with interested groups to alert the climbing community and the general public to the presence of closures and buffers around golden eagle nests, and require that climbers and other

recreationists avoid these buffers around active nests until the young have fledged.

Peregrine Falcon

Maintain the Bitterroot peregrine population at or near the carrying capacity of the habitat.

1. No preemptive spring closures of large sections of cliff will be implemented. Peregrines have re-established territories in the Bitterroot in the presence of climbing and have likely adjusted eyrie locations to avoid areas that are frequently climbed.
2. The Bitterroot National Forest along with partnership with the WMTCC and surrounding community members, will continue to monitor Bitterroot peregrine territories in conjunction with the Montana Peregrine Institute (MPI), and will continue to provide any occupancy and productivity data gathered to MPI and to interested parties.
3. If the BNF becomes aware of the location of an active eyrie through monitoring or reports from individual recreationists or groups, the USFS will work with climbing groups to alert the climbing community to the presence of the eyrie and request that climbers avoid using routes in the vicinity of the eyrie until the young have fledged. This procedure builds on past successes where the BNF has contacted the Western Montana Climbers' Coalition to request postings of alerts on websites and social media relevant to climbers.

Vegetation & Rock Alteration- 36 CFR 261.9

General Overview

Natural resource alteration contributes to the degradation of the natural environment and quality of NFS lands. Vegetation alteration deteriorates soil stability and has potential to increase erosion during the three parts of climbing activities which includes accessing the climb, staging areas, and during the climb.

Rock alteration has the potential to affect cliff ecosystem habitat for biological communities, wildlife, and other resources. It can also have a negative effect on visual and aesthetic qualities for other forest visitors.

General Management Direction and Practices

Vegetation Alteration

- 1) Vegetation alteration to enhance a climbing experience is prohibited unless it poses a significant safety concern.
- 2) Utilization of tree savers, rub straps or other equipment that prevents resource damage is required when utilizing trees as an anchor.

Rock Alteration

- 1) Removal of rock from its natural position will be prohibited unless it poses an immediate and significant threat to the climbing party or future climbing activities.
- 2) Chipping, use of glue, epoxy, or other fixatives for hand holds and foot holds is prohibited on all National Forest System lands within the boundaries of the Bitterroot National Forest.
- 3) The practice of cleaning or gardening a climbing route to enhance or remove biological material to make the recreational experience easier is prohibited.

Access Trails, Staging Areas, and Rappel/Belay Stations- 36 CFR 261.10

General Overview

The primary access points for climbs on the Bitterroot National Forest are off of currently designated NFS trails. This off-route travel has the potential to increase erosion and trample sensitive vegetation. These user-created trails also have not been inventoried by the USFS for cultural or biological resources, nor designed to reduce erosion potential.

Staging areas are defined as peripheral areas below climbs where climbers temporarily store climbing gear/equipment, day bags, chairs or crash pads. These staging areas have the potential to grow larger over time as use or group size increases. Hardening of these surfaces to prevent erosion and enlargement may have to take place.

Rappel/Belay areas are specific to individual climbs and can develop into larger areas depending on climbing technique or style. In some scenarios, rappel and belay stations are needed to prevent impacts and protect natural and cultural resources.

General Management Direction and Practices

1. A climbing area inventory is needed to guide the management decision to bring existing access trails to climbs into the NFS Trail Inventory.
2. New trails will be constructed/modified to FS standards and maintained in partnership with the Western Montana Climbers Coalition, USFS & local community.
3. Proper signage and interpretation kiosks at specific locations will guide and educate users to help minimize resource damage.
4. Creation of new staging areas, rappel, and belay stations are prohibited until further analysis is completed by the USFS to inventory natural and cultural resources.
5. Practice of proper outdoor ethics, Leave No Trace, and minimizing use should be at the forefront of every climber's ethos when setting out for a day in the crags.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum and Climbing Development

General Overview

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) planning tool will be utilized to provide a framework for management decisions that will address current and future climbing opportunities on the Bitterroot National Forest. The ROS will help guide management decisions in relation to climbing by considering the recreationalist's desired set of experiences, appropriateness of opportunity class setting and route

development, and level of management goals for current and future climbing use. The ROS will also help to better manage long term sustainability as the increase and demand for outdoor recreational opportunities significantly increases on the Bitterroot National Forest.

What is the ROS?

The ROS is a tool that is based on three elements: activities, settings, and experience opportunities. The three settings associated with the ROS are physical, social, and managerial. In combining these three settings within a particular management area, a ROS map is generated and used as an oversight tool to help land managers and users manage desired recreational opportunities, or in this case climbing opportunities.

Physical Setting

In the physical setting, there are three important components that relate to the climbers desired experiences which are, remoteness, size, and evidence of humans. The physical setting is defined by the absence or presence of human sights or sounds, size, and amount of environmental modification caused by human activity.

Social Setting

Social setting is measured by user density and relates to the frequency and types of association between individuals and groups. The social setting factor is important because it will indicate opportunities for solitude, or how much interaction with other users there will be while climbing.

Managerial Setting

The Managerial setting reflects the number and types of behavior restrictions placed on climbers by land management agencies, private landowners, or other prohibitions in the management area.

What is a recreational opportunity?

A recreational opportunity, or in this case climbing, is described by a combination of physical, biological, social, and managerial conditions that gives value to a place. Thus, any climbing opportunity includes qualities provided by-nature (landscape, topography, scenery, vegetation) qualities associated with recreational use (levels and types of use), and conditions provided by management (developments, roads, regulations). In combining variations of these qualities and

conditions, management can provide a variety of opportunities for climbing on the Bitterroot National Forest.

ROS Opportunity Class

When considering opportunities for climbing, a climber must make a choice about what type of climbing to engage in, what setting the climbing takes place in, and overall, the type of experience the climber seeks. This decision will be based on the three characteristics of social, physical, and managerial which relate to the six, nationally defined ROS Classes. Each of the six primary ROS classes are defined below:

1. **Primitive** settings encompass large, wild, and predominately unmodified landscapes. Their size and configuration create remoteness from the sights and sounds of human activities, management, and development. Signs and other structures are minimal and constructed of rustic, native materials. Motorized travel does not occur. Encounters with other users is very low, offering visitors the opportunity for solitude, self-reliance, closeness with nature, challenge, risk, and discovery. Many primitive settings coincide with designated wilderness areas in which mechanized equipment is not present. Additional primitive settings may also occur outside of wilderness areas. Mechanized travel and motorized equipment may occur in non-wilderness primitive settings.

2. **Semi-Primitive Non-motorized** settings are characterized by predominantly natural or natural-appearing landscapes. The size of these areas facilitate distance from more heavily used and developed areas, creating a sense of remoteness. Interaction with other users is low. These settings provide opportunities for self-reliance and utilizing wildland skills. Motorized vehicles are not present, while mountain bikes, and other mechanized equipment may be present. Although some roads may be evident, they do not dominate the landscape. Vehicular use is infrequent. Occasional administrative use occurs on these roads for the purpose of natural and cultural resource protection and management.

3. **Semi-Primitive Motorized** classes are characterized as predominately natural or natural appearing backcountry settings. Motorized travel by off-highway vehicles (OHVs) or high clearance vehicles occurs on designated routes and areas. Motorized routes are typically maintenance level 0-2 roads or motorized trails, offering a high degree of self-reliance, challenge, and risk in exploring these large backcountry settings. Mountain bikes, other mechanized equipment, and non-

motorized uses, are also present. Limited rustic facilities are present for the purpose of visitor safety, sanitation, and resource protection.

4. **Roaded Natural** settings are characterized by predominately natural-appearing settings, with moderate sights and sounds of human activities and development. The overall perception is one of naturalness. Evidence of human activity varies from area to area and may include improved highways and high maintenance level roads; developed campgrounds and other recreation sites; small resorts and summer homes; and evidence of other multiple uses and management activities such as livestock grazing, timber harvesting, mining, watershed restoration activities, and oil and gas operations. Roads, motorized equipment, and vehicles are common in this setting. Non-motorized uses are also present. The density of use is moderate except at developed sites, where concentrations of use are higher. Regulations pertaining to user behaviors are common but generally less restrictive than those in the Rural and Urban ROS classes.

5. **Rural** settings are characterized as modified natural environments. While these landscapes often contain geometric patterns created by management activities, there is a dominant sense of open, green-space, typically characterized as pastoral farm and ranch lands. Facilities are common and may include: resorts and summer home complexes; administrative sites and work centers; and highly developed campgrounds, interpretive sites, trailheads, picnic areas, and other recreation facilities. The sights and sounds of human activity and management are readily evident and the level of interaction with other users ranges from moderate to high.

6. **Urban** settings are characterized as highly modified landscapes, dominated by structures and other infrastructure. Clustered facilities contain amenities for user convenience and comfort. There is a preponderance of on-site regulations that direct and limit the behavior of visitors. Very high and concentrated use levels are common. These settings are typically small in overall size and not common on forest system lands. Large ski areas, visitor centers, and resorts are sometimes classified as urban ROS settings.

ROS Opportunity Class and Climbing Area Development

For current and future development of climbing opportunities, the four ROS Classes that are present on the BNF will help capture and define what, where and when it is appropriate for climbing area development on the Bitterroot National Forest.

This is best accomplished by taking each of the ROS Classes and directly align them to the different styles of climbing that take place on the Bitterroot National Forest.

Primitive- *Traditional Climbing; Fixed Anchors allowed only in emergency situations.*

Climbing in the Primitive class takes place in a remote setting where the social setting is void of humans or very limited interaction with humans occurs. The physical setting is very remote and provides for self-reliance, the utilization of Wilderness skills, closeness with nature, challenge, risk, and discovery. The Primitive setting on the Bitterroot National Forest coincides with designated Wilderness and is void of motorized and mechanized equipment (managerial setting). Climbing infrastructure development is non-existent as the Primitive Class is incompatible with types of climbing that are fixed anchor protected.

Semi-Primitive Non-motorized- *Traditional Climbing; Fixed Anchors allowed only in emergency situations.*

Climbing in Semi-Primitive Non-motorized class takes place in a remote setting or areas that have natural or natural appearing landscapes that creates a sense of remoteness. The social interaction is very low but other users do exist such as hikers, mountain bikers and fisherman. Use on the landscape is not permanent aside from some trails and possible presence of historical roads. Motorized vehicles are not present. Climbing infrastructure development is non-existent as the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Class is incompatible with types of climbing that are primarily fixed anchor protected.

Semi-Primitive Motorized- *Traditional Climbing; Also Potential for Climbing that relies on fixed anchors.*

Climbing in Semi-Primitive Motorized takes place in a predominately natural or natural appearing backcountry setting. Roads and motorized routes exist and are not regularly maintained. This setting offers feelings of self-reliance, challenge, and risk in exploring the backcountry setting. Other motorized use and non-motorized use is present including mountain bikes. Some administrative areas and structures exist for the purpose of visitor sanitation, safety, and resource protection. Climbing infrastructure development is limited and should be centered around areas that have facilities for the use of the recreationist. Further evaluation will be conducted to decide if development should occur.

Roaded Natural- *Traditional, Climbing that relies on fixed anchors.*

Climbing in Roaded Natural takes place in a natural-appearing landscape with moderate human sounds, development, and activities. Naturalness mixed with human development dominates the landscape. The presence of multiple user groups exists and there are improved roads, highways, developed campgrounds and other recreation sites in this setting. Access to recreation areas are well defined and administrative facilities and structures exist for the purpose of visitor sanitation, safety, and resource protection. Opportunities exist for new recreators and users. Climbing infrastructure development is appropriate and follows all management regulations, CMP recommendations, and prohibitions in the specific areas.

ROS and Climbing Development Summary

When examining existing climbing areas that have been developed on the Bitterroot National Forest, many of these popular climbing areas fall within the Roaded Natural setting. Further examination seems to indicate that a mixture of natural landscape and geology with low to moderate human development which includes good access trails, parking areas, proximity to developed roads/facilities are a common trend when surveying existing climbing areas that have been developed or are gaining popularity.

In conclusion, the Roaded Natural setting is most appropriate for planning areas of future climbing development that require bolt-intensive route development on the Bitterroot National Forest. This development, however, will be guided by the authorization process defined in the following sections.

Climbing Development Authorization, Inventory, and Use - 36 CFR 261.10

Authorization

If an area is determined to be eligible/suitable for climbing infrastructure development based on ROS designation, an authorization application can be made.

The application must describe a climbing area development plan that will be submitted through the Western Montana Climber's Coalition – Bitterroot Chapter. The plan will:

- identify primary access points (i.e., Trailheads, NFS Road number, parking area locations) and potential needs for increasing access,
- # of proposed routes and potential for future development, # and location of potential access trails,
- # and location for hardened surfaces (i.e., belay stations, staging areas, etc.) to accommodate increased use,
- contain maps that will guide a cultural and natural resource survey by the appropriate USFS staff. All efforts will be made to complete the necessary surveys within as short a time frame as possible.
- **A signed, formalized agreement will be completed with the USFS to highlight each party's roles and responsibility to help manage all current and future climbing areas.**

The ideal development of a climbing area consists of:

- Engaged citizens that have a shared vision for recreating responsibly, respect for other recreational uses, promote land stewardship, and help create sustainable management alternatives and solutions for appropriate development & growth.
- Access to infrastructure or the site is suitable for infrastructure to be built. (Toilets, trash cans, engineered trail systems, informational kiosks, etc.)
- Opportunities for new recreational experiences. (Beginner climbing routes).
- Practice of climbing ethics and development techniques to create a practical and sustainable climbing area.
- Educational programs to engage the local community and new climbers to address natural resource issues, wildlife, cultural and heritage resources, and to promote responsible recreation on the land.
- A certain number of volunteer days/month to preserve the naturalness of the climbing area.
- The development of an information platform that shares information about climbing in the Bitterroot.

Inventory

To best manage current and future climbing opportunities and to protect cultural and natural resources, a base-line inventory of climbing areas will be completed in

partnership with the Western Montana Climbers Coalition and USFS. This inventory will establish a foundation for ongoing and future management of climbing areas. The climbing area inventory will be public information and will also be managed in the USFS Infrastructure database.

Use

Similar to other Forest user permits (i.e., Mushroom, firewood, Christmas tree, etc.) Forest-wide climbing permits will be issued on an annual basis for anyone engaged in climbing activities. These permits will be available for free at all Forest Service offices on the Bitterroot National Forest. These permits will be valid during the entire calendar year of use.

Climbing permits provide a way to engage both the local community and visitors by presenting the permit holder with educational information and stewardship opportunities at the time of purchase. This is one means of helping to educate users as to the importance of sound stewardship of the lands that we love.

Fixed & Temporary Climbing Hardware - 36 CFR 261.10, 36 CFR 261.18

General Management Direction and Practices

Climbing Areas Outside of Wilderness

1. Forest Service personnel are not responsible for placement, replacement, or maintenance of fixed anchors and fixed equipment or assessing or ensuring their safety.
2. Placement or replacement of any fixed hardware is appropriate after a Climbing Development Application has been reviewed and signed.
3. All non-climbing specific hardware is prohibited on NFS lands. (Including but not limited to concreted anchors, homemade climbing equipment, steel cables, etc.)
4. Existing fixed anchors and fixed equipment may be used without restriction.
5. Caching camping equipment, climbing equipment or any other items to increase ease of access to climbing areas in all NFS lands including Wilderness, WSA's and Recommended Wilderness is prohibited.
6. Motorized rock drills can be used when its occurrence does not negatively impact natural & cultural resources.

- a) The use of motorized rock drills is limited to areas that have been pre-authorized with the USFS and fall within the appropriate ROS setting.
 - b) The use of motorized rock drills should be limited to certain times of the day when peak use of the recreation area is at a minimum.
 - c) The use of motorized rock drills will be restricted if it's used in any other way than related to climbing.
7. All temporary or removable climbing equipment and hardware will be removed from NFS lands. Removable climbing equipment and hardware is defined as but not limited to, slings, stoppers, nuts, chocks, cams, big bros, hooks, pitons etc.
- a) In some circumstances where climbers have no other option but to utilize temporary anchors for rappels, some temporary or removable equipment may be left behind. Please work with your local climbing community to notify others so this piece of equipment can be located and removed under a reasonable and prudent timeline. The USFS is not responsible for lost, left, damaged or unattended climbing equipment that has monetary value.

Climbing Areas within Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, & Recommended Wilderness - 36 CFR 261.18 & See Special Orders

The USFS and Bitterroot National Forest recognizes climbing as a legitimate and appropriate use of Wilderness. Under the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness General Management Direction of the Bitterroot National Forest Management Plan, Section II, page B-1, mountain climbing has been listed as a recreational use within the Wilderness.

However, under Section 4c of the Wilderness Act, certain uses are prohibited including installations, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the proper administration of the area. (See Wilderness Act, Section 4c).

Prior to the placement or replacement of any fixed anchor hardware, the Bitterroot National Forest will complete a Minimum Requirements Analysis to determine and officially document whether the permanent installation of bolts or anchors in climbing areas within wilderness, meet the minimum requirements necessary for the administration of the area for the purposes of wilderness. The exception to this is in emergency, rescue-type situations.

Educational and Interpretive outreach will be provided to the local community, climbers, and other interested parties in partnership with national & local climbing organizations, the USFS/Bitterroot National Forest, local environmental groups, and the public to raise awareness about climbing in Wilderness areas.

The USFS along with other partners will develop educational materials and interpretive plans related to climbing in Wilderness. This information will be published on an external Forest Service website and as needed, published in hard copy versions that address natural and cultural resource protection, potential use conflicts, standards for climbing ethics, and other outdoor ethics such as Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly.

General Management Direction and Practices

- 1) The preservation of Wilderness character and resources will take precedent over all climbing related activities within Wilderness.
 - a) Permanent anchors, bolts and hardware placement will be limited to emergency situations or where negative effects will occur to the resource (following an MRA) to protect and preserve the “untrammled,” “undeveloped,” and “outstanding opportunities for solitude” qualities of the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness.
- 2) Any climbing related activities will be prohibited when its occurrence, continuation, or expansion will have or has had an adverse impact to Wilderness character, values, and resources.
- 3) Traditional climbing methods which rely on removable protection is allowed in designated Wilderness.
 - a) When climbing in designated Wilderness, the use of temporary anchors and equipment that can be removed, such as slings, cams, nuts, chocks, stoppers, and removable pitons will be used to preserve Wilderness character and quality.
- 4) Climbing that is primarily bolt protected is incompatible with Wilderness preservation and management due to the concentration of human activity that it supports, and the types and levels of impacts associated with these climbing routes.

- 5) Wilderness Study Areas and Recommended Wilderness Areas will be managed according to their appropriate ROS designation.
- 6) Motorized rock drills and practices such as chipping and use of glue, epoxy, or other fixatives for hand holds and foot holds within Wilderness areas are prohibited.
- 7) Caching camping equipment, climbing equipment or any other items to increase ease of access to climbing areas in all NFS lands including Wilderness, WSA's and Recommended Wilderness is prohibited.
- 8) Placement of fixed anchors and fixed equipment in Wilderness will be considered supported by a Minimum Requirements Analysis to respond to an emergency involving public health and safety or other type of emergency such as a forest fire or other natural disaster.
 - a) New fixed anchors and fixed equipment placed in Wilderness in an emergency must be removed unless the USFS determines that the fixed anchors and fixed equipment are determined to be the minimum necessary for the protection of the Wilderness resource, or that removal of the fixed anchors and fixed equipment presents an unacceptable risk of injury, death, or Wilderness resource damage.

Cultural & Heritage Resources - 36 CFR 261.9

General Overview

The Bitterroot National Forest administers lands within the ancestral homeland of the Bitterroot Salish-or Séliš, Nez Perce (Nimiipuu), Shoshone, and others. The Forest is responsible for the management and protection of heritage resources located on National Forest lands. These typically are categorized as archaeological sites, historic buildings, historic structures, Traditional Cultural Properties (TCP) and sacred sites. In addition to the agency's tribal trust responsibilities, a number of federal laws have been enacted to ensure the USFS protects significant heritage resources. These include the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), Native American Graves

Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) and numerous executive orders.

The Forest Service's Heritage Resources Program seeks to protect significant heritage resources, share their values with the American People, and to contribute relevant information and perspectives to Natural Resource Management. This will help ensure future generations the opportunity to discover the human story etched in the landscape of our National Forests and Grasslands, make the past part of recreational experiences and community life, and connect people to the land in a way that helps us better understand and manage forest ecosystems.

Climbing activities have the potential to adversely affect significant heritage resources, and negatively impact culturally significant areas. While some resources are recognizable to the average person, many require the skills and training of a professional archaeologist and the expertise of Tribal members to identify when a resource is present. For these purposes, the Forest must complete a process of consultation with affected Tribes on any activity the Forest proposes to fund, permit or is located on forest lands.

Not all significant heritage resources and culturally significant areas located on the Bitterroot National Forest are known. To be compliant with federal law, the Forest must work to identify, evaluate and make a finding of effect on any activity on forest lands. Most recreational activity is exempted from such review, since it typically poses "little or no potential for adverse effect" to a significant heritage resource. Certain climbing activities, such as bolt emplacement, rock drilling, anchoring and climbing itself on sensitive resources could negatively impact resources intended for protection.

Further, the location of both significant heritage resources and culturally significant areas is often withheld from public disclosure in order to prevent illegal vandalism, looting, pot hunting and other adverse impacts. The Forest Service Manual (2361.4), states that culturally sensitive information may be withheld from public disclosure, as outlined under the Freedom of Information Act, NHPA and ARPA.

Climbers should be aware of the protections afforded heritage resources and culturally significant areas when recreating on public lands. The willful destruction of archaeological resources on public lands are criminal and civil offences punishable by fines and jailtime. As an act of good faith, and in compliance with

federal law, no climber should willfully excavate, alter, remove, damage, or otherwise deface archaeological resources on public lands.

In order to raise public awareness and promote the preservation and protection of areas that are culturally, and historically significant, educational and informational outreach will be developed and posted on an external USFS website, and in hard copy, to increase awareness of climbing activities in cultural and historical areas. Interpretive signs will be placed at trailheads and in other access points that are popular for recreational activities.

In consultation with Tribes, the Forest may restrict or place prohibitions on climbing on areas identified as culturally significant or contain significant heritage resources. Areas recommended for intensive use through the application process will be provided to the Forest Heritage Program Manager, who will then that the heritage program compliance review process is completed. This typically involves a background literature search, invitation to consult with Tribes, a field inventory (if necessary), and a final inventory report. The report document is then typically sent to the State Historic Preservation Office and affected Tribes. For a full overview of the section 106 consultation process please refer to <https://www.achp.gov/>.

General Management Direction and Practices

1. Climbing in areas that are defined as culturally significant is prohibited. Educational outreach and closure orders will be placed at trailheads and posted on an external Forest Service webpage and climbing organizations webpage.
2. All discoveries of culturally significant objects, antiquities, or artifacts will be left in place as they are found.
3. Immediate notification shall be made to the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisors Office or Ranger District if sacred sites and or culturally significant items are discovered.
4. Any unauthorized or attempted unauthorized excavation, removal, damage, alteration, or defacement of any archaeological resource on NFS lands and prohibits the sale, purchase, exchange, transportation, or receipt of any

archaeological resource obtained from NFS lands or offering to sell, purchase, or exchange any archaeological resource obtained from NFS lands will be subject to criminal and civil penalties. (ARPA, 1979) (16 U.S.C. 470aa et seq.).

Sanitation- 36 CFR 261.11

The proper disposal of human waste, pet waste, and trash, are paramount practices for keeping the natural resource and recreational experience clean and free from contaminants on the Bitterroot National Forest.

General Management Direction and Practices

1. In areas of high use, all human waste, pet waste, and trash will be carried out and disposed of properly.
2. In areas of low to moderate use, human waste, pet waste, and trash can be buried 6-8 inches deep and should not be located within 200 feet of a water source, areas of concentrated use, trails or campsites.

Definition of Terms

Climbing: A wide spectrum of techniques used to ascend, descend, or traverse technical rock and frozen terrain, including but not limited to bouldering, rock climbing, mountaineering, Via Ferrata (see FSM 7330.5), canyoneering, and ice climbing.

Climbing Opportunity: A user-created or primarily user-created dispersed recreation area on NFS lands with no, minimal, or limited Forest Service investment or amenities where climbing may be performed.

National Forest System: A nationally significant system of Federally owned units of forest, range, and related land consisting of national forests, purchase.

Fixed Anchor: Climbing equipment such as a bolt or piton that is left in place to facilitate ascent, descent, or traverse of technical terrain.

Fixed Equipment: Climbing equipment other than a fixed anchor that is left in place to facilitate climbing, such as a fixed line or ladder.

Motorized Drill: A device that uses a motor, engine, or other non-living power source to drill holes for the installation of fixed anchors or fixed equipment.

Wilderness: A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: The ROS is a tool that is based on three elements: activities, settings, and experience opportunities. The three settings associated with the ROS are physical, social, and managerial. In combining these three settings within a particular management area, a ROS map is generated and used as an oversight tool to help land managers and users manage desired recreational opportunities

Sacred site: Any specific, discrete, narrowly delineated location on Federal land that is identified by an Indian tribe, or Indian individual determined to be an appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion, as sacred by virtue of its established religious significance to, or ceremonial use by, an Indian religion; provided that the tribe or appropriately authoritative representative of an Indian religion has informed the agency of the existence of such a site (EO 13007, Sec. 1).

Authority

The principal authorities governing climbing on NFS lands are:

1. *The Organic Administration Act (16 U.S.C. 551). This act authorizes the Forest Service to regulate the occupancy and use of national forests.*
2. *Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act (7 U.S.C. 1011(f)). This act authorizes the Forest Service to regulate the use and occupancy of national grasslands.*

3. Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136). This act specifies congressional policy to secure for the American people an enduring resource of wilderness for the enjoyment of present and future generations; defines wildernesses as areas untrammeled by people that offer outstanding opportunities for solitude; directs agencies to manage wilderness to preserve natural ecological conditions; and, with certain exceptions, prohibits motorized equipment, structures, installations, roads, commercial enterprises, aircraft landings, and mechanical transport in wilderness.

4. National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) (54 U.S.C. 300101 et seq.). This act obligates federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties.

5. Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) (16 U.S.C. 470aa et seq.). This act provides for criminal and civil penalties for unauthorized or attempted unauthorized excavation, removal, damage, alteration, or defacement of any archaeological resource on federal or Indian lands and prohibits the sale, purchase, exchange, transportation, or receipt of any archaeological resource obtained from federal or Indian lands or offering to sell, purchase, or exchange any archaeological resource obtained from federal or Indian lands.

6. Section 8104 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (25 U.S.C. 3054). Upon the Forest Service's approval of a request from an Indian tribe, this Act authorizes the Forest Service to close temporarily to public access specifically identified NFS lands to protect the privacy of tribal activities for traditional and cultural purposes. Section 8102(5) of the Act defines the term "Indian tribe" as any Indian or Alaska Native tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or other community, the name of which is included on a list published by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to section 104 of the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (24 U.S.C. 479a1). Section 8102(9) of the Act defines the term "traditional and cultural purpose" "with respect to a definable use, area, or practice, means that the use, area, or practice is identified by an Indian tribe as traditional or cultural because of the long-established significance or ceremonial nature of the use, area, or practice to the Indian tribe."

7. Executive Order (EO) 13007, Indian Sacred Sites. This EO directs federal agencies to accommodate access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners and to avoid adversely affecting the physical integrity of such sacred sites.

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