

National Bison Range Complex CCPs - Draft Range of Management Alternatives Concepts and Actions

Alternative A: No Action

Under this alternative we would continue all the current management activities, and maintain funding, infrastructure, all programs, and staffing at existing levels.

Alternative B: Maximize the Quality of Public Experiences

This alternative emphasizes managing habitat and wildlife populations to provide quality, wildlife-dependent opportunities for the public. All programs of the Complex would foster public support and appreciation for the resources of our land and our waters. The Service would maximize these recreational opportunities by providing improved access, facilities, interpretive materials, and environmental education. The Service would aim to maintain natural processes and healthy wildlife populations through partnerships to enhance the quality of the public's experience.

Alternative C: Manage for Ecological Sustainability

This alternative emphasizes maintaining and/or enhancing ecological communities, recognizing ever-changing environmental conditions. In cooperation with our partners, the Service would use a prioritization framework to identify and define future conditions that will drive management actions to:

- Build ecological community resiliency
- Promote species diversity
- Increase integrity of habitats
- Restore natural processes

Alternative D: Species-Focused Management

Under this alternative, carrying capacity for target species would generally drive management of wildlife and plant population numbers. Lands would be managed under a corridor concept for transient species populations (e.g. wolverine, lynx, grizzlies, wolves). Carrying capacity for bison would be determined in concert with carrying capacities for other species. Bison population management would also involve genetic diversity considerations. Targeted species populations (e.g. Spalding's catchfly, trumpeter swans, and bighorn sheep) would be managed with individualized considerations (e.g. disease, threatened and endangered species, and habitat). Management objectives would include managing for a diversity of species, including plant species.

Alternative E: Collaborative/ Partner-Based Landscape Level Conservation

Units of the Complex are separated by significant distance across the landscape. All are part of the Northwestern Montana ecosystem. To provide connectivity with the larger landscape and preserve unique components of each small unit, this alternative seeks to facilitate collaborative, cooperative, and coordinated management of the Complex with our federal, tribal, state, local, public, and private partners. This alternative seeks to increase opportunities for public use and education. It seeks to provide better opportunities for fish, plant, and wildlife habitat on lands outside the boundaries of our units by creating corridors for habitats, conducive to wildlife migration and movement. It also seeks to incorporate the expertise, resources, and efforts of our partners to help facilitate the benefits of a broader functioning landscape. This approach promotes the shared responsibility of managing actions across the landscape.

Wildlife Management Goal

Protect, maintain, and restore healthy and diverse wildlife populations with respect to species that are endemic, migratory, and mandated species of concern.

Topic Area – Bison – Actions

<p>Manage for long term sustainability under a meta-population framework.</p> <p>Guidelines are set forth by the Fenced Animal Management Plan for population targets.</p> <p>Staff makes adjustments when necessary to maintain or improve habitat conditions, or when there are wildlife health threats or increased risks of disease.</p> <p>Actively monitor the health of all species and document mortality when possible.</p> <p>Adhere to low stress handling techniques. Work with partner agencies when appropriate.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Strive to ensure bison are visible to the visiting public.</p>	<p>Emphasize a genetically diverse and sustainable population.</p> <p>Identify best grazing system (rotation vs. free) and incorporate patch burning.</p> <p>Establish population size based on habitat conditions while at a minimum, maintaining a genetically diverse bison herd.</p> <p>Prioritize funding for changing to a corral system designed to enhance low stress handling techniques.</p> <p>Emphasize work with partners to donate surplus bison to conservation herds that would participate in the meta-population.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative C, plus:</p> <p>Bison population numbers will be based on balance of needs of habitat and other targeted species.</p> <p>Continue reviewing protocol for annual round-up and consider collaborating with others to share information (including traditional ecological knowledge) and methods that manage/evaluate animals less like livestock.</p> <p>Bison population potentially managed for expansion through cooperation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (use existing federal facility and expand grazeable acres onto neighboring tribal land).</p>	<p>Develop bison management goals in coordination with partners (e.g. the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe, other Tribes, State of Montana, public, etc.), such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish herd management goals. ● Include management actions (e.g., cull herd; potentially allow traditional hunting) use as source herd. ● Manage bison as a meta-population with other bison herds. Use other bison herds to enhance genetics. <p>Establish an advisory team of partners.</p> <p>Bison health: same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Consider opportunities for bison to access areas that may be any available land neighboring Refuge lands.</p>
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Topic Area – Birds (Migratory, native birds, other birds) – Actions

<p>Implement new avian monitoring program on National Bison Range. Support annual bird surveys being conducted on the National Bison Range through research partners based on interest and need (e.g. colonial waterbirds, waterfowl, grassland birds, owls). Continue Christmas bird count on the National Bison Range.</p> <p>Maintain seasonal closures during waterfowl nesting season on Pablo and Ninepipe refuges and Flathead Co WMD.</p> <p>Lake County WMD and Batavia WPA actively manage water for waterfowl.</p> <p>Continue restoration efforts on Lake Co WMD to improve habitat for avian species.</p> <p>Continue the restoration of wetlands and riparian habitats, as well as acoustic monitoring for all bird species on Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Distribute information regarding timing of migration accessibility and best locations to view.</p>	<p>No active management to bird species but rather provide habitat for trust species through habitat management, research, and monitoring.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative parts of A, plus Alternative C.</p> <p>In addition, determine needs of targeted bird species and actively manage them.</p> <p>Consider reintroduction of Sharp-tailed Grouse to the National Bison Range.</p>	<p>Manage at a landscape level.</p> <p>Work collaboratively with partners to develop conservation plan.</p> <p>Incorporate lands outside USFWS property to maximize habitat capabilities at landscape scale.</p> <p>Develop partnerships to monitor bird species and evaluate management actions.</p>
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Topic Area – Wildlife health – Actions

<p>Existing wildlife health surveys include regular observation and documentation of unusual condition or behavior for all wildlife. Increased surveillance is triggered by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● refuge biologist if unusual conditions observed are cause for concern ● through National Wildlife Health Office guidance ● because of identified regional or local threats ● if concerns are identified through partners. <p>Sample collection and testing is conducted opportunistically (e.g., through mortality as with avian influenza; Chronic Wasting Disease) and periodically (e.g., bison roundup) or through approved research (e.g., boreal toads, bighorn sheep)</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A, plus involve public through Citizen Science projects.</p> <p>Follow the National Strategy for Amphibians to address disease issues on all sites.</p> <p>Work with Non Governmental Organizations, universities, State, Federal, Tribal partners.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus work with NGOs, universities, State, Federal, Tribal partners</p> <p>Follow the National Strategy for Amphibians to address disease issues on all sites.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus work with Non Governmental Organizations, universities, State, Federal, Tribal partners.</p> <p>In addition, respond aggressively to issues arising in targeted species.</p> <p>Continue reviewing protocol for annual round-up and consider collaborating with others to share information (including traditional ecological knowledge) and methods that manage/evaluate animals less live stock.</p> <p>Follow the National Strategy for Amphibians to address disease issues on all sites.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus work with Non Governmental Organizations, universities, State, Federal, Tribes to conduct research.</p> <p>Work with partners to develop a wildlife health program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Within USFWS National Wildlife Health Office guidelines ● Ensure methods/analysis is consistent with other agencies. ● Plan for major disease of concern “Who does what?” <p>Follow the National Strategy for Amphibians to address disease issues on all sites.</p>
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Topic Area – Other ungulate populations – Actions

<p>Cooperate on determining population size (if necessary) with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks at Lost Trail NWR and Flathead County WMD (hunting).</p> <p>Guidelines for the National</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, Lake County and Flathead County WMD WPAs: Move towards more sustainable levels of ungulates based on habitat conditions.</p>	<p>Emphasize use of natural processes to regulate ungulate populations.</p> <p>Work with partners to facilitate movement that does not sacrifice wildlife health.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>In addition, mesh elk and deer populations with needs of other targeted species.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, Lake</p>	<p>Work with State and Tribal regulatory agencies on population management.</p> <p>Manage ungulate populations at a landscape level.</p> <p>Create management plan in</p>
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<p>Bison Range set forth by the Fenced animal management plan.</p> <p>Manage elk populations actively to stay consistent with targets set forth in the plan, also giving consideration to habitat and wildlife health. When population management is required, USFWS identifies the appropriate course of action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. cull (continue to donate meat to state and tribal non- profit food donation facilities) 2. translocation and 3. augmentation <p>Work with federal, tribal and state officials to identify source or recipient populations and follow appropriate guidelines and regulations.</p>		<p>Manage populations according to habitat availability</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, Lake County and Flathead County WMD WPAs: Move towards more sustainable levels of ungulates based on habitat conditions.</p> <p>t</p> <p>National Bison Range: Reduce active management of elk, pronghorn and bighorn sheep.</p>	<p>County and Flathead County WMD WPAs: Move towards more sustainable levels of ungulates based on habitat conditions.</p> <p>National Bison Range: Reduce active management of elk, pronghorn and bighorn sheep.</p>	<p>collaboration with partners (State, Tribal, Federal, public).</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, Lake County and Flathead County WMD WPAs: Move towards more sustainable levels of ungulates based on habitat conditions.</p>
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Topic Area – T&E species and other Species of Concern – Actions

<p>Document occurrence of listed species and species of concern and seek to protect or enhance habitat.</p> <p>Lost Trail NWR is one of the sites in the Spaulding Recovery Plan: consider reintroductions, genetics research, ES funding to</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Distribute information regarding accessibility, migration time, and and best locations to view.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>In addition, increase surveys and monitoring of targeted species.</p>	<p>Work collaboratively with State, Tribal, other Federal agencies to develop monitoring and survey plans.</p> <p>Use existing state plans (e.g., State Wildlife Action Plan). Identify habitat needs at landscape level.</p>
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<p>conduct management activities.</p> <p>Coordinate surveys with partners such as MT Natural Heritage Program, USGS, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Non Governmental Organizations, and other researchers.</p> <p>Assist Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes with enforcement.</p>				<p>Work with other agencies to man habitat availability to meet the needs of federally listed species and species of concern (e.g., bull trout).</p>
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Topic Area – Other Wildlife and Plants– Actions

<p><i>Pollinators:</i> Surveys (bumble bees) Plantings for pollinators (at National Bison Range, as well as in Lake Co and Flathead Co WMDs) – small areas, enhance existing milkweed patches.</p> <p>Create pollinator garden at Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Carry out herpetological survey and inventory with partners or as funding and timing allows.</p> <p>Carry out annual surveys of boreal toads and snake genetic studies, as well as acoustic monitoring of bats at Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Increase hunting opportunities as a management tool.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, but: Minimize surveys through partnerships or where identified species absence threatens site sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A. In addition, consider future passage for native amphibians and reptiles where they occur. Manage to increase under-represented habitat types typical of historic vegetation.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Beavers at Lost Trail NWR – work with MT Fish, Wildlife, Parks to write beaver plan. Identify source populations. Pollinators: look for additional opportunities to partner with Private/State/Tribes/other Federal to improve conditions.</p>
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<p>Work with partners (e.g., MT Natural Heritage Program, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) to document occurrence of bats on other units of the refuge complex.</p> <p>Restore beaver habitat at Lost Trail NWR.</p>				
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Topic Area – Predators – Actions

<p>Manage population size (periodic control of coyotes on National Bison Range).</p> <p>Document occurrence of golden eagles, lynx, wolverine, griz, wolves, mountain lions, mustelids.</p> <p>Protect all predators at Lost Trail NWR as part of the ecosystem and for public viewing.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p> <p>Except for coyote control at the National Bison Range, allow natural predation as a management tool to maintain ungulate herbivory at a level where sensitive flowering plant species essential for pollinators, birds, small mammals remain protected.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative B, plus at National Bison Range: Evaluate predator control.</p> <p>Protect all predators for Ecological Sustainability at Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Emphasize natural processes and look at adjusting fences to minimize effects on predators.</p> <p>Facilitate predator (wolf) movement.</p> <p>Emphasize working with partners to identify and remove non-native or man-made predator habitats where applicable or affecting priority species sustainability</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative B.</p>	<p>Work with partners to conduct research on monitoring strategies (cost/personal savings).</p>
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Habitat Management Goal

Conserve, restore, and promote biological integrity in functional and sustainable ecologically diverse habitats of the inter-montane ecosystem of western Montana.

Topic Area – Prairie/Grassland – Actions

<p>Active prairie/grassland renovation and restoration efforts across the Complex. Also, reintroduction of prescribed fire through cooperative management across the Complex.</p> <p>On the National Bison Range, seeding and planting post-invasive species treatment; fire or forest management treatments .</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, seeding and planting on-going. Complete Fire History Study and plan for Patch Burning Program. Grassland monitoring program.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, for Spalding’s catchfly: Mapping/inventory for protection from construction activity and chemical treatment, Recovery Plan actions, genetic research, and reintroductions at Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, thinning of lodgepole pine stand encroachment into prairie and aspen restoration.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Ensure health of grassland habitat in high visitation areas.</p> <p>Provide grassland area trails where feasible.</p>	<p>Focus prairie/grassland management (triage) based on where there is the highest chance of success to enhance and maintain sustainability or where sustainability is most threatened.</p> <p>Emphasis on maintaining and enhancing Palouse prairie.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Actively manage habitat, based on availability for targeted species as appropriate.</p> <p>Improve Palouse prairie habitat for the benefit of Palouse prairie-specific plant species.</p>	<p>Manage at landscape level. Develop management plan with partners for “greater good” of habitat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Multiple use of larger areas. ● On-the-ground actions for habitat treatments. <p>Identify opportunities for restoration of native plant species.</p> <p>Work with partners to map species of concern (Spalding’s catchfly).</p> <p>Where appropriate, manage under a wildlife corridor concept.</p>
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

<p>Lake County WMD – active grassland renovation in cooperation with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and Pheasants Forever to improve bird habitat.</p>				
<p>Topic Area – Wetlands/Riparian (Water Management) – Actions</p>				
<p>Across the Complex, focus on riparian/wetland restoration including removing artificial structures and enhancing natural flowing water where possible; providing vertical structure and diversifying species composition;</p> <p>On the National Bison Range, maintain developed springs to provide water for wildlife.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, restoration of Pleasant Valley Creek and Dahl Lake. Remove Upper and Lower Moose Ponds. Active plantings for restoration. Conduct post-restoration monitoring.</p> <p>Wetland inventory and stream flow monitoring.</p> <p>Work with Natural Resource Conservation Service to manage Wetland Reserve Program units and MT</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Manage water levels and flow to enhance visitor experience and opportunities in select areas. Provide riparian trails for visitors when possible.</p> <p>Where possible, on additional units, restore the original hydrology to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Where appropriate, restore the original hydrology to the maximum extent possible. Minimize active water manipulation. Consider Hydrogeomorphic Analysis Model.</p> <p>Where it is not feasible to restore hydrology, focus water manipulation activities in places where flooding threatens infrastructure or where it takes minimal effort.</p> <p>Manage to reduce occurrence of dense reed canary when possible</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Select and prioritize areas to restore the original hydrology (to the maximum extent possible) based on targeted species needs. Also, conduct monitoring based on targeted species needs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Manage at a landscape level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Map and determine management needs. ● Water management ● Restoration ● Identify sites to maximize resource use/habitat benefits/reduce cost. <p>Where possible, restore the original hydrology to the maximum extent possible. Identify opportunities to share and enhance restoration actions.</p> <p>Where appropriate, manage under a wildlife corridor concept.</p>

<p>Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) leases.</p> <p>Flathead and Lake County WMDs - Active water manipulation, where possible. Restore creeks on McGregor Meadows WPA.</p>				
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Topic Area – Forest – Actions				
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<p>On the National Bison Range and Lost Trail NWR, conduct prescribed fire/patch burning, active thinning, and slashing.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, manage forests, as appropriate, for aspen regeneration, snag preservation, Ponderosa pine restoration, thinning of lodgepole pine stand encroachment in aspen stands, and remove lodgepole pine in riparian, grassland and forested areas.</p> <p>Participate in Forest Stewardship program with MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Provide a trail opportunity for visitors in forest habitat.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Continue to build resiliency through management activities with partners.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Actively managing forest for targeted species and maintaining forested corridors for species, where appropriate.</p>	<p>Partner with Tribal/State /MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation/ U.S. Forest Service/Private agencies on forest management projects.</p> <p>Manage at a larger scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordinate with partners on management actions ● Consolidate efforts in order to impact a larger area (example aspen regeneration and snag preservation on Lost Trail NWR) ● Consider allowing a private timber company to harvest timber on Lost Trail NWR if they leave more timber or aspen on their land. <p>Where appropriate, manage under a wildlife corridor concept.</p>
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Topic Area – Connectivity/Corridors (restoration activities) – Actions				
<p>Across the Complex, install wildlife friendly fences.</p> <p>Conduct stream/riparian restoration, where possible.</p> <p>For plants, participate in planning partnerships with Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Pheasants Forever, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Weyerhaeuser Company, Flathead Lakers, Natural Resources Conservation Service.</p> <p>Lake County WMD -- actively working with partners to identify areas where work (e.g. invasives management, trail creation, fence removal etc.) can be done on a larger scale</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A,plus:</p> <p>Support “shared use” path efforts associated with highway improvement projects on WPAs, easements and fee title.</p> <p>Connect with off refuge trails.</p>	<p>Same as A plus,</p> <p>More emphasis on connectivity and corridors to support natural processes and sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A and C, while actively managing corridors for targeted species (for example, grizzly bears).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative ,plus:</p> <p>Work with partners to identify corridors and connectivity areas. Where appropriate, manage under a wildlife corridor concept.</p> <p>Expansion of habitat conservation opportunities with partners</p>
Topic Area – Land Protection (fee/easement/urban encroachment) – Actions				
<p>Flathead Lake County WMDs -- Easement program.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR, pursue fee title additions.</p> <p>On Lost Trail NWR and Flathead County WMD, fence the boundary in high off-road or trespass areas to protect habitat.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A,plus:</p> <p>Increase access for wildlife dependent recreation while minimizing disturbance to native habitat.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Maximizing partnerships.</p> <p>Smith Lake WPA.</p> <p>Powerline conversions.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A while actively managing land protection activity for targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A,plus:</p> <p>Expand habitat protection opportunities (fee or conservation easements).</p> <p>On the National Bison Range, work with partners to swap quarter corners for more effective management.</p>

				<p>On Lost Trail refuge, work with partners to swap DNRC leases for more effective management</p> <p>Work with partners to address trespass issues.</p> <p>Where appropriate, manage under a wildlife corridor concept.</p>
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Topic Area – Fire – Actions

<p>Across the Complex, conduct cooperative prescribed burn efforts with land management agencies to restore fire as a natural landscape process.</p> <p>On National Bison Range, maintain annual operating plan with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes for wildfire suppression.</p> <p>On Lost Trail refuge, conduct forest thinning for fire breaks and Forest Stewardship Plan.</p> <p>On Lost Trail refuge and Flathead County WMD, maintain cooperative wildfire agreements with the MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Restore and sustain the original fire regime to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except only suppress wildfires where infrastructure or cultural resources are threatened or there is significant damage to trust resources (e.g. bison).</p> <p>Restore and sustain the original fire regime to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A while actively managing fire-related management for targeted species.</p> <p>Restore and sustain the original fire regime to the maximum extent possible.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus,</p> <p>Manage fire at a landscape level.</p> <p>Restore and sustain the original fire regime to the maximum extent possible.</p> <p>Where appropriate, manage under a wildlife corridor concept.</p>
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Invasive Species Goal

Prevent, reduce, and contain the invasion and spread of noxious, invasive, and harmful non-native species within the Complex while working with partners to address off-Complex infestations within the surrounding landscape.

Topic Area – Partnerships – Actions

<p>Across the Complex, participate in partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (Prism) with Flathead, Lake and Sanders County, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, SKC, and Missoula County. Work together on outreach to reduce spread, increase local knowledge and share pest strategies.</p> <p>Utilize USFWS Invasive Species Strike Team to fullest extent in implementing Early Detection/Rapid Response tactics includes mapping, monitoring and managing new invaders.</p> <p>Work cooperatively with Lake, Flathead and Lincoln County Weed Departments in managing established species, getting up to date tactical advice on chemical efficacy and new trials.</p> <p>Work with neighbors and agencies to address invasives related to urban encroachment.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except emphasize prevention and initial attack for new invaders.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Topic Area – Priorities for invasives management – Actions				
<p>Across the Complex, prioritize Early detection/rapid response for new species.</p> <p>Highest public use areas.</p> <p>Aquatic Invasive Species prevention (no boating on Lost Trail, Ninepipe, and Pablo NWR; Provide enforcement assistance for boats)</p> <p>Use Integrated Pest Management (biocontrol, fire, mechanical, spraying, flooding).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>On National Bison Range, add a vehicle wash station to address weed issues</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except</p> <p>Potentially reduce or avoid Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in certain areas based on targeted species such as pollinators.</p> <p>Prioritize invasive species that threaten habitat/health of targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>
Topic Area – Outreach – Actions				
<p>Across the Complex, provide signage, brochures and displays on invasive species. Work with local agencies and institutions to provide education to groups about the threats to our ecosystem from invaders as well as details about our program, successes and failures, and future plans.</p> <p>Conduct biocontrol tour yearly.</p> <p>Regularly respond to inquiries.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Increase outreach material effort.</p> <p>Add signs in treated areas to educate the public.</p> <p>Reinstate school outreach programs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus more emphasis on areas outside of USFWS units.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Where herbicide use is avoided to protect pollinators, provide signs to explain management approach to public.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Work with partners to develop consistent outreach program and message.</p>

Research and Science Goal

Encourage high quality research and promote the use of scientifically sound management decisions.

Topic Area – Partnerships – Actions

<p>As part of our Reserve Treaty Rights Land Initiative project with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, we are promoting research on pollinators, forested habitats, and birds.</p> <p>Promote research by cooperating with other federal, state, tribal, and local governments, non governmental organizations, and universities.</p> <p>Continue to identify information gaps, increase knowledge in areas of study that are pertinent to refuge resources and that assist in management.</p> <p>Continue US Geological Survey monitoring of boreal toads and snake genetics studies on Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Incorporate Citizen Science projects.</p> <p>Identify research that affects or informs management at landscape level with multiple landowners and agencies.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Identify research that affects or informs management at landscape level with multiple landowners and agencies.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, but actively seeking additional partnerships and experts for targeted species.</p> <p>Identify research that affects or informs management at landscape level with multiple landowners and agencies.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Partner with universities, the state, tribes, and other federal agencies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve coordination with Tribal universities/colleges to increase student participation in monitoring or research. ● Identify research that affects or informs management at landscape level with multiple landowners and agencies.
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Topic Area – Wildlife and plant populations (T&E/Species of concern, Recovery, Genetics, Health) – Actions

<p>Permitted (Special Use Permits) activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● grasshoppers ● owls ● primary production ● pronghorn 	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Incorporate Citizen Science projects.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A while actively seeking additional research for pollinator species (complex-wide), and boreal toads and Spalding’s genetic studies at Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● bighorn sheep <p>Prioritize Special Use Permits based on information needs.</p> <p>Continue with Notre Dame UNDERC Bison research, Spalding catchfly Recovery Site, genetics research, and reintroductions on Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Continue with boreal toad breeding studies and acoustic monitoring on Lost Trail NWR, cameras and rub pads for carnivores, grassland birds, genetics, etc.</p> <p>Wetland Delineation in restoration areas plus ongoing water flow monitoring after creek restoration in Lost Trail NWR.</p>				
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Topic Area – Habitat management and Restoration – Actions				
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<p>Continue the Pleasant Valley Creek Restoration studies, forest inventory, aspen restoration, and browse studies at Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Also involve interested public and volunteers on projects when appropriate</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Prioritize research on how to build and maintain sustainable habitats.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Prioritize additional habitats for targeted species.</p> <p>Evaluate, through research, existing corridors for targeted species.</p>	<p>Follow a large-scale, landscape-level approach.</p> <p>Create advisory team to identify management issues requiring research.</p>
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Topic Area – Human dimension (wants and desires of the public, impact of increasing urbanization, quantifying visitor usage) – Actions

<p>Continue the National Bison Range 5-year National Visitor Survey and Banking on Nature.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Research history for all groups who use the National Bison Range Complex area and provide information and examples to the public.</p> <p>Develop protocol to more accurately quantify visitation to the National Bison Range.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Adjust visitor access based on targeted species needs (some areas may need to be closed due to targeted species presence).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Complete survey on public attitudes and preferences for management of USFWS lands (U of MT) has excellent program for this.</p> <p>Create citizen’s advisory board for management of Complex.</p>
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Monitoring and Adaptive Management Goal

Through the life of this plan, we will monitor and evaluate the consequences of our actions and use adaptive management to reach desired outcomes.

Topic Area – Programmatic reviews – Actions

<p>Utilize recent Visitor Service Review. Conduct Annual safety inspections. Update Fire Management Plans</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Follow recommendations of visitor services review for National Bison Range, Ninepipe/Pablo, and Lost Trail NWRs. Complete comprehensive condition assessment of facilities to identify needs to improve visitor experience.</p> <p>Complete visitor services review of volunteer, environmental education programs once fully staffed.</p>	<p>Station review for all programs to shift focus to new management priorities.</p> <p>Complete Habitat Management Plans for all units and evaluate effectiveness of Habitat Management Plans every 3 years thereafter.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Complete Habitat Management Plans for all units and evaluate effectiveness of Habitat Management Plans every 3 years thereafter.</p>	<p>Create a team to review CCP and make recommendations on changes/future actions.</p> <p>Collaborate with partners on completing Habitat Management Plans for all units and evaluate effectiveness of Habitat Management Plans every 3 years thereafter.</p>
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Topic Area – Monitoring plans (wildlife and birds) – Actions				
<p>National Bison Range - Fenced animal management plan</p> <p>Lost Trail NWR, WMDs - Currently, no official monitoring plans</p> <p>Other existing monitoring plans: Habitat Conservation Plan Hydrogeomorphic Analysis Fire Management Plan Waterfowl management Plan Management of Mixed Conifer Forests</p> <p>MT Fish and Wildlife Conservation Strategy (MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks)</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Develop plan to monitor visitor impacts on wildlife habitat and populations.</p>	<p>Support development of consistent plans that are consistent with ecological timeframes and sustainability.</p> <p>Emphasize monitoring plans that focus on resilience, integrity, and sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A and C, while substantially increasing monitoring plans for targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>
Topic Area – Water rights and management – Actions				
<p>Across the Complex, conduct water manipulation (flow and level) to the extent possible to benefit waterfowl/wildlife.</p> <p>Work with partners to monitor water quality and quantity on Mission creek, Jocko river and Ashley creek.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Manage water levels and flow to enhance visitor experience and opportunities.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>
Topic Area – Apply research/Use knowledge from monitoring to evaluate goal achievement – Actions				
<p>Work with researchers issued Special Use Permits and other partners to inform management activities based</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Use information to modify</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, while focusing on ecologically appropriate timeframes and sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, while substantially modifying Special Use Permits based on target species-</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>

<p>on science through reporting findings, sharing data and promoting publications pertaining to refuge resources (e.g. bison herd, wildlife, visitor services, plants, natural resources).</p> <p>Develop Standard Operating Procedures from research recommendations.</p> <p>Survey wildlife and plant populations.</p> <p>Apply research to invasive species management.</p>	<p>management to enhance visitor experience and opportunities.</p>		<p>based research, and aggressively implement.</p>	
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Public Use Goal

Provide compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, for persons of all abilities, to learn, enjoy, and appreciate the inter-montane landscape of western Montana, the fish and wildlife and plants.

Topic Area – Hunting – Actions

<p>Lost Trail NWR -- Youth hunting for big game (elk, deer). Big game hunting for hunters with disabilities. Follow Montana state regulations for elk, deer, mountain grouse, and turkey.. All other species on Lost Trail NWR are protected. Flathead County WMD - Provide and allow for hunting according to Montana state and Federal regulations on Waterfowl Productions Areas (WPAs) in Flathead County.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Increase awareness of opportunities and access to public.</p> <p>Examine opportunities to provide hunting in areas where it is currently closed.</p> <p>Seek opportunities for special hunts (disability, veterans, youth, etc.). Provide accessible blinds.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Explore options to expand in areas that further support ecological sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A. B and C,plus:</p> <p>Increase input/influence on setting hunting levels for certain species.</p> <p>Potential increases in hunting closures based on species needs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A,plus:</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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<p>Lake County WMD - Follow Montana and Tribal Joint Regulations on WPAs in Lake County.</p> <p>Follow State/Tribal rules and regulations where possible (conduct an evaluation) in order to minimize federal regulations that differ.</p> <p>No hunting on National Bison Range, Ninepipe and Pablo NWRs.</p>	<p>Increase hunting opportunities as a management tool.</p> <p>Coordinate with the Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes with any big game opportunities on the National Bison Range Complex.</p>			
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Topic Area – Fishing – Actions

<p>National Bison Range - provide accessible fishing access.</p> <p>Lost Trail NWR - no fishing.</p> <p>Flathead County WMD - Provide fishing according to Montana state and Federal regulations on Waterfowl Production Areas in Flathead County.</p> <p>Lake County WMD - Provide fishing according to Montana and Tribal, Federal Joint Regulations on WPAs, NinePipe, and Pablo NWRs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Increase awareness of opportunities and access to public.</p> <p>Examine opportunities to provide fishing in areas where it is currently closed. Increase accessibility for fishing at Jocko River and other locations on the Complex.</p> <p>Evaluate need for lead tackle ban at Pablo and Ninepipe NWRs.</p> <p>Follow State rules and regulations whenever possible (conduct an evaluation).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A except,</p> <p>Minimize federal regulations that differ from state/Tribal regulations.</p> <p>Plus, increase opportunities by opening NinePipe and Pablo NWRs earlier. Allow fishing from dam at Ninepipe NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, B and C plus:</p> <p>Increase input/influence on setting fishing limits for certain species.</p> <p>Potential increases in fishing closures based on needs of fish or other targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus.</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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Topic Area – Wildlife Observation – Actions

<p>Across the complex, wildlife observation is available at all units.</p> <p>National Bison Range - Maintain auto tour route and interpretive trails. Provide backpacks with binoculars and field guides for loan. Provide bird tours with partners.</p> <p>Lost Trail NWR -- Observation from auto tour route, county road pull-outs, interpretive trails. Provide backpacks with binoculars and field guides for loan and organized tours.</p> <p>Interpretive trails at Ninepipe NWR and Flathead WPA.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Increase awareness of opportunities through a variety of methods and partners.</p> <p>Provide observation blinds where possible.</p> <p>Renovate existing infrastructure that supports wildlife observation.</p> <p>Improve quality of experience by providing guidance.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except,</p> <p>limit maintenance of trails/facilities that are minimally used or take significant maintenance.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except</p> <p>Potential increases in closures based on needs of targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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Topic Area – Photography – Actions

<p>Across the complex, photography is available at all units.</p> <p>Issue Commercial/professional photography special use permits on the Complex where requested (e.g. National Bison Range, Lost Trail NWR, Blasdel WPA).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Increase awareness of opportunities through a variety of methods and partners.</p> <p>Explore development of blinds (portables/permanent) designed to increase quality and opportunity for photography – work with partners.</p> <p>Improve quality of experience by providing guidance.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except</p> <p>No new special use permit programs, e.g. backcountry permits for photography/filming.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except</p> <p>Potential increases in closures based on needs of targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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Topic Area – Education – Actions

<p>Allow school group visits to National Bison Range, Lost Trail NWR, and Flathead, Smith and Batavia WPAs (limited use).</p> <p>At National Bison Range, provide pamphlets for school groups.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Ensure adequate staff available to work with partners to increase quality educational opportunities.</p> <p>Develop materials for educators regarding resources of the complex (e.g. Junior Ranger).</p> <p>Develop materials following State Office of Public Institution guidelines for educators.</p> <p>Increase participation by educational groups – partners/grants.</p> <p>Strive to match programs to Montana State School benchmarks and standards.</p> <p>Reach out to underserved populations (e.g. homeschools, smaller rural schools, elderly, non-english speaking)</p> <p>Provide information about Complex at each site so visitors might travel to other units also.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus promote management concepts for this alternatives through visitor services.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except</p> <p>Potential increases in closures based on needs of targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Topic Area – Interpretation (e.g. signage) – Actions

<p>Across the Complex, provide brochures for all units.</p> <p>National Bison Range -- Provided group talks on a limited basis. Maintain interpretive signs and displays in the Visitor Center. Coordinate with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe on development and distribution of materials.</p> <p>Lost Trail NWR -- Maintain interpretive signs, including two two areas along the county road highlighting refuge restoration projects. Maintain interpretive displays in the Visitor Center/office.</p> <p>Maintain interpretive signs at Ninepipe NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Develop brochures that meet agency standards – general, wildlife, special.</p> <p>Follow guidance found in recent Visitor Services review.</p> <p>Replace signs as needed on all applicable units on the Complex.</p> <p>Examine opportunities with partners to develop new materials that emphasize the unique quality of resources on the Complex.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus promote management concepts for this alternatives through visitor services.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A,plus:</p> <p>Increase species-based information, signage.</p> <p>Increase group talks regarding targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A,plus:</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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Topic Area – Access/Facilities (e.g. new parking lots, trails, visitor center, auto tours) – Actions

<p>National Bison Range - Operate Visitor Center 5 days/wk in summer and closed in winter. Replace within 5 years. Maintain auto tour route. Maintain trails, parking lots, roads, kiosks, signs, restrooms and day use area. Continue recreation fee</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Staff adequately with partners (staff, volunteers) to expand hours at National Bison Range and Lost Trail NWR visitor contact areas.</p>	<p>Support visitor services position/program.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A and C, except</p> <p>Potential increase in closures based on targeted species needs.</p> <p>Plus, potential increase in viewing opportunity for</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p> <p>Restore Visitor Services and update facilities at National Bison Range. Work with</p>
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<p>program.</p> <p>Lost Trail NWR -- Office open weekdays. Improve auto-tour route, trails, parking (Transportation Plan). Maintain pollinator trail and an overlook into a wetland area next to the office and another overlook for viewing the restoration area.</p>	<p>Restore Visitor Services and update facilities at National Bison Range.</p> <p>Repair/renovate existing trails and parking areas and overlooks.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to increase trails and overlooks with partners.</p> <p>Improve and expand auto tour routes to high quality.</p> <p>Explore alternative funding.</p> <p>Increase visitor use fees.</p> <p>Explore opportunities for camping on Complex.</p>		<p>targeted species.</p>	<p>partners to evaluate the possibility a new viewing area along Highway 200.</p>
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Topic Area – Informational signage – Actions				
<p>Across the Complex, all signs, including entrance signs, are in variable condition. Need to update sign inventory.</p>	<p>Update sign inventory.</p> <p>Complete full information signage replacement at National Bison Range, following standards.</p> <p>At National Bison Range, include tribal place names and words on signs, where appropriate</p> <p>Include the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes</p>	<p>Limit and reduce signs to important areas (e.g. high use).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A and B.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus.</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>

	and Blackfeet history throughout the Complex on signs, where appropriate			
Topic Area – Outreach – Actions				
<p>Conduct Congressional visits.</p> <p>Maintain websites/Facebook pages.</p> <p>Provide Local/Community Visitor Centers and Chamber of Commerce with National Bison Range Complex information.</p> <p>Attend a wide variety of local events, provide presentations, and host information booths.</p> <p>Provide Lost Trail NWR brochures for MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks office in Kalispell for public distribution.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Increase offsite school programs</p> <p>Develop tourism promotion cards (rack) for appropriate units.</p> <p>Work with partners to participate in local events consistently.</p> <p>Recruit volunteers and partners to increase outreach.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus promote management concepts for this alternatives through visitor services.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A while increasing all activities based on targeted species needs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
Topic Area – Other uses – Actions				
<p>Trapping on Flathead Co. WPAs, in accordance with MT State regulations.</p> <p>Issue special use permits for other uses such as Boy Scouts of America antler collection, Cultural resources (sage collection, bison fur, skulls), and ceremonial requests.</p> <p>Camping – only for educational/volunteer groups (by special use permit only)</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Examine other uses of hiking trails (cross-country skiing, snowboarding) and lakes (skating, sledding).</p> <p>Examine opportunities for camping for educational groups.</p> <p>Develop standardized guidelines for cultural uses.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative as B, plus</p> <p>Determinations of lands of activity to be based on targeted species needs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>

Topic Area – Commercial uses – Actions

<p>Commercial photo and filming by special use permit at all units. Grazing on Lake Co. WMD through special use permit for for habitat management.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>No new special use permit programs. Review grazing plan/permits.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Determinations of lands for activities to be based on targeted species needs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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Topic Area – Managing capacity – Actions

<p>Utilize traffic counters at National Bison Range and Lost Trail NWR. Receive visitor use information from University of Montana Institute for Tourism and Recreational resources. Track use for special access for hunters with disabilities.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Collect accurate information regarding visitation at heavily used areas. Follow guidelines in recent Visitor Services review.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Develop better way to record visitation, support tracking through Visitor Services program. Set limits on capacity and review Fee Program.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, except: Determinations of lands for activities to be based on targeted species needs.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Create team to evaluate/implement.</p>
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Cultural Resources Goal

Preserve and interpret the cultural resources and history of the National Bison Range Complex to connect staff, visitors, and community to the area’s past and continuing traditions.

Topic Area – Interpretation – Actions

<p>Continue with existing interpretive efforts of the refuge complex cultural resources and seeking additional opportunities where appropriate, including with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (e.g., displays at the National Bison Range).</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Explore additional partners to assist with or provided interpretation of additional cultures where appropriate. Develop signage that recognizes the history and the contributions of local cultures.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Promote partnerships and tap local Tribal expertise to protect and interpret cultural resources throughout the refuge complex.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Seek additional traditional ecological knowledge for targeted species throughout the refuge complex. Highlight cultural resources on basis of targeted species.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Create a team to assist the refuge complex staff on how to evaluate and implement cultural resources interpretation throughout the refuge complex.</p>
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<p>Maintain basic level of interpretation about Early Peoples Use of the lands managed by the refuge complex.</p> <p>Maintain existing interpretive panels and displays throughout the refuge complex.</p> <p>Continue existing efforts to recognize or include contemporary cultural resources and connections, including with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (e.g., through Special Use Permits).</p> <p>Continue providing historical background and information through interpretive signs and displays at Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Continue providing occasional tours of the pictographs at Lost Trail NWR (typically three or less per year).</p>	<p>Include tribal place names and native words on signs, where appropriate at National Bison Range.</p>			
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PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Topic Area – Access to cultural resources – Actions

<p>Continue allowing access to pictograph site at Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Continue providing access to cultural sites and historical items (e.g., historical photos and documents) via Special Use</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Where and when appropriate, provide public access to historic buildings at Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Where and when appropriate, continue to provide access to cultural resources throughout the refuge complex on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative B.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Create a team to assist the refuge complex staff on how to evaluate and implement access to cultural resources throughout the refuge complex.</p>
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Permits at the National Bison Range.	Ensure protection and then provide trail access to the pictograph site at Lost Trail NWR.			
Topic Area – Protection of cultural resources/historic properties – Actions				
Continue with current efforts (i.e., monitoring and restoration) to protect cultural resources from damage (e.g. pictographs, Blasdel barn, historical buildings in National Bison Range and Lost Trail NWR).	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Initiate efforts to prevent vandalism or destruction of the Blasdel Barn near Kalispell and the pictograph site at Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Continue seeking partnerships to protect cultural resources throughout the refuge complex.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, but also seek to remove historic resources and structures when their preservation is unfeasible.</p> <p>When feasible, work with partners to restore historic resources and structures.</p> <p>Seek exemption from full restoration requirements and block public access to historic properties when full restoration is unfeasible.</p>	Same approaches as those for Alternatives B and C.	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Create a team to assist the refuge complex staff on how to evaluate and implement cultural resources protection throughout the refuge complex.</p>
Topic Area – Ethnobotany – Actions				
Continue to build information about cultural anthropology and historical uses and importance of plants, that informs use and care of native plants in restoration activities at the National Bison Range.	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus</p> <p>Increase public ethnobotany programs throughout the planning area.</p> <p>Develop and distribute interpretive materials regarding traditional uses of botanical resources.</p>	Same as Alternative A, while emphasizing how ethnobotany can inform decisions that support sustainability.	Same approach as Alternative C	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Create a team to assist the refuge complex staff on how to integrate and emphasize ethnobotany as part of the local cultural resources heritage and in restoration activities throughout the refuge complex.</p>

Partnerships and Collaboration Goal

Maintain and cultivate partnerships that help achieve the vision and supporting goals and objectives of the National Bison Range Complex to support wildlife and habitat conservation, research, foster awareness and appreciation of natural and cultural resources and provide education along with all necessary infrastructure of the inter-montane ecosystem of western Montana.

Collaborate with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and other Tribal governments in a manner consistent with the Service’s Native American policy and with other Federal, State, and local government entities in a manner consistent with applicable Service policies.

Topic Area – Big game management – Actions

<p>Continue to provide genetically diverse bison to other agencies with bison herds working on bison conservation efforts (e.g., Tribal, Department of Interior) and to others via sale.</p> <p>Continue cooperative efforts with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks on elk and deer research and management efforts (e.g., browse research, population surveys) at Lost Trail NWR.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Explore options that further support ecological sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>General recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish a technical or advisory teams ● Share staff or positions with other agencies to perform field work and implement actions ● Pool funding among partners ● Collaborate with partners along the landscape and at a large scale level.
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Topic Area – Restoration – Actions

<p>Continue restoration work at Lost Trail NWR with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Flathead Co.</p> <p>Continue working with Partners for Fish and Wildlife to find opportunities for stream restoration.</p> <p>Continue working with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, other governmental agencies and non</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A but emphasizing sustainability.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A while prioritizing restoration projects based on targeted species needs.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A, while looking for ways to increase the number and scope of partnerships.</p>
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governmental organizations on riparian, wetland, grassland restoration opportunities.				
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Topic Area – Prescribed Fire/Wildfire – Actions

<p>Continue existing efforts with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, Montana Conservation Corps (e.g., training, planning, personnel for conducting burns, control wildfires).</p> <p>Update and operate under existing fire management plans.</p> <p>Continue to update and operate under annual operating plans for wildfire suppression (e.g., the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the National Bison Range Complex)</p>	Same approach as Alternative A.	Same approach as Alternative A.	Same approach as Alternative A while prioritizing fire management based on targeted species needs.	Same approach as Alternative A, while looking for opportunities and ways to increase and expand partnerships.
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Topic Area – Tribal trust responsibility – Actions

<p>Continue to consult with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on issues as needed at National Bison Range.</p> <p>Consult with all relevant Tribes on Lost Trail NWR.</p> <p>Continue self-governance negotiations (Annual Funding Agreements) with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, as requested.</p> <p>Conduct other opportunistic</p>	Same approach as Alternative A.	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Include Ninepipe and Pablo NWRs in management discussions.</p>	<p>Same approach as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Aggressively and proactively solicit information from Tribes on targeted species designations.</p> <p>Aggressively and proactively seek out traditional ecological knowledge from Tribes on species.</p>	Look for ways to increase partnerships.
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coordination with Tribes (e.g. contracts, memorandums of understanding, etc.)				
Topic Area – Flathead Indian Irrigation Project – Actions				
Continue partnership to coordinate water management on Pablo, Ninepipe, and other Reservation reservoirs and irrigation ditches (WMDs and National Bison Range).	Same approach as Alternative A.	<p>Improve partnerships.</p> <p>Emphasize the importance of good water management to ecological sustainability.</p>	Same approach as Alternative A.	Look for ways to increase partnerships.
Topic Area – Private landowners/neighbors – Actions				
Continue cooperation with neighbors on resource related issues to seek common conservation goals. Continue to work with Weyerhaeuser Company on shared boundary fencing on Lost Trail NWR.	Same approach as Alternative A.	<p>Same approach as Alternative A.</p> <p>Target outreach to conservation properties adjacent to FWS units or in areas of specialized focus (e.g. corridors).</p>	Same approach as Alternative C.	Look for ways to increase partnerships.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT

Administration and Operations Goal

Effectively use funding, staff, partnerships, volunteers, and equipment to restore and manage Complex habitats, conduct programs, and improve and maintain all necessary infrastructure to the benefit of the Complex and the Refuge System.

Topic Area – Staffing – Actions

<p>Manage within new Regional Strategic Framework. National Bison Range - currently 5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions filled. Lost Trail NWR - currently 2 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions filled. 1 temporary position.</p> <p>Currently, 1 full time Law Enforcement Officer for south half of Complex (shared with Lee Metcalf NWR).</p> <p>No Outdoor Recreation Planner.</p> <p>Seasonal employees hired as budgets allow (0-4 in a typical year).</p>	<p>Same as Alternative A, plus:</p> <p>Hire a permanent Visitor Services employee using agency hiring authority to comply with Visitor Services and Outreach criteria for a high visitation station and clerical/volunteer coordinator.</p> <p>Add 1 full-time, permanent Law Enforcement Officer for the north half of the Complex</p> <p>Add data manager/clerical assistance for the Complex (1 FTE, with career ladder opportunities)</p> <p>.5 FTE biologist/range tech</p> <p>Add one full time, permanent maintenance position to Lost Trail to meet minimum of 3 staff per site (regional safety requirement).</p>	<p>Same as B</p>	<p>Same as B.</p>	<p>Same as Alternative B, plus:</p> <p>Identify similar needs with partners and pool resources.</p> <p>Shared position for field work.</p> <p>Collaborate with partners to hire a permanent Visitor Services employee to comply with Visitor Services and Outreach criteria for a high visitation station and clerical/volunteer coordinator.</p>
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Topic Area – Volunteers – Actions

<p>Currently have volunteers at National Bison Range and Lost Trail NWR, depending on staff availability to coordinate.</p>	<p>Manage a volunteer program to improve the quality of visitor experiences.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to develop a Friends Groups for the National Bison Range.</p>	<p>Same as B</p>	<p>Same as B</p>	<p>Same as B, plus:</p> <p>Collaborate with partners on managing volunteer program and developing a Friends Group.</p>
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Topic Area – Equipment – Actions				
Repair and replace equipment where needed.	Same approach as Alternative A, with emphasis on equipment sharing (especially in maintaining). Utilize technology where appropriate (e.g. drones, flights).	Same approach as Alternative B	Same approach as Alternative B.	Same approach as Alternative B, plus collaborate with partners.
Topic Area – Infrastructure needs (dispose, replace, new, maintain) – Actions				
National Bison Range Visitor Center currently planned for replacement in 5-year plan. Maintain 13 pit toilets. Maintain roads. New maintenance shop repair. Lost Trail NWR -- Rehabilitate current trailer pads. Conduct dust abatement for Pleasant Valley Road. Maintain two historic homes, bunkhouse, modular home and horse barn.	Same approach as Alternative A, plus: Match infrastructure for staffing and public use. Update infrastructure.	Same as B	Same as B	Same as B, plus collaborate with partners.
Topic Area – Law enforcement – Actions				
Continue with law enforcement across the Complex. Coordinate with other law enforcement agencies. Continue to assist with law enforcement support at national and regional levels as needed.	Same approach as Alternative A.	Same approach as Alternative A.	Same approach as Alternative A.	Same approach as Alternative A.
Topic Area – Partnerships (cross-program and cross-agency sharing) – Actions				
Continue to support staff efforts to develop and maintain partnerships.	Same approach as Alternative A.	Same approach as Alternative A –	Same approach as Alternative A.	

PRELIMINARY DRAFT