

# **Wildlands CPR's 2010 Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (BDNF) Monitoring Summary**

From June through September Wildlands CPR conducted ten trips totaling 22 field days to monitor off-road vehicle (ORV) use within the Pioneer Mountains. We documented evidence of motorized use and associated natural resource damage as well as the presence of signs and closure devices. Findings show impacts from authorized use, evidence of little or no use on open roads or trails, locations of non-system routes, and compliance with road and trail protections.

## **Methods**

Wildlands CPR developed specific monitoring protocols to record our findings, which include trip summaries with corresponding photo documentation forms; see appendix B for a sample form and our photo documentation protocols. A digital camera and a GPS device were used to take pictures and create waypoints to mark the location of specific findings, which were then transferred to Google Earth. In this manner anyone can simply click a waypoint and see a picture of that specific location.<sup>1</sup>

## **Summaries**

The following summaries highlight findings from each trip with photos illustrating impacts from off-road vehicle use and problems with road management. However, in some areas these issues are not present due to user compliance and effective signage. Generally, we found fewer impacts within the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area (WSA), especially south of the Pioneer Loop National Recreation Trail where summer ORV use is prohibited. However, there are still places with serious problems, especially in the West Pioneer Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) outside the WSA boundary, and in the East Pioneer IRA.

Please see the individual trip reports in Appendix A for detailed findings, along with the corresponding Google Earth files available on our website.<sup>2</sup> All pictures referenced in the individual trip reports can be found on our Flickr website.<sup>3</sup>

## **June 13-15**

### *Harriet Lou Road*

This first trip monitored roads #925 & #7445 near Harriet Lou Creek to test our protocols and equipment. This area is outside the West Pioneer WSA and IRA, however this does not mean impacts are less of a concern and there was erosion and resulting sediment delivery to the creek due to poor conditions where the road travels on north facing slope. Road #7445 was rutted with

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that these waypoints were recorded in WGS84/UTM formats and some may deviate from actual physical locations by several feet, but anyone using these locations should be able to find the area represented in the photos.

<sup>2</sup> For our first trip we do not have a detailed report since we were relying on old forms that we abandoned in favor of narrative descriptions to supplement the photo documentation and waypoints shown on Google Earth.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/wildlandscpr/>

some deep pools forming. Both roads are open to all vehicle types with a hunting season closure from Oct. 15 – Dec. 2.<sup>4</sup> These roads need better drainage features installed to prevent sediment yields to Harriet Lou Creek, and until this maintenance is completed, there should be a spring closure implemented to avoid further deterioration.



Rd. #925 just east of Harriet Lou Creek.



Rd. #7745 shows water flowing down toward the creek.

### *Calvert Mine & Hill*

This trip followed the Calvert Loop Rd. #8243 to Calvert Mine, which is open to all types of vehicles yearlong. From the mine, monitoring continued on Rd. #70648 that passes near Calvert Hill, which is also open to all vehicles, but has a hunting season closure. Just west of Calvert Hill several non-system routes enter the West Pioneer IRA, as does Rd. #70648 where monitoring continued for a short distance before turning back to follow Rd. #8243.

Gates in the area seem to be working as there was no evidence of violations. The main roads are generally stable, though there was a stretch of Rd. #70648 that went through an open wet meadow, and here there were ruts and numerous parallel tracks. The area is well signed, but there was one non-system route with a “designated” sign connecting Rd. #70648 and #8243. This sign should be removed and the connector route rehabilitated, as should the numerous other non-system in the area, especially where they enter the IRA.

(Photos on the following page)

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<sup>4</sup> These are the dates for all subsequent references to hunting season closures



Tracks through a meadow off Rd. #70648.



Designated route sign for this non-system route connecting Rd. #70648 to #8243.

### *Scenic By-way Trailheads*

Numerous major trailheads near the Pioneer Mountain Scenic Byway (Hwy 73) provide access to both the West and East Pioneers. Monitoring checked for violations and signs at four trailheads that all enter the West Pioneer WSA. The Pioneer Loop National Recreation Trail (NRT) #2750 at Stine Creek was well signed and there was no evidence of motorcycle use, which is all that is allowed from this entrance. The Grouse Creek trail, off Pettengill Rd. #186, does not have a number and is closed to all summer motorized use, as the trailhead sign shows. However, further up another sign is bolted on a tree stump and falsely indicates the trail is open to motorcycles; most likely someone took the sign from another location and placed it here, however no motorcycle tracks were seen at this time but law enforcement should periodically check this trail. Trailhead for the Wyman Creek Tr. #2167 and Odell Creek Tr. #2758 were both well signed and did not show evidence of illegal use; both are protected in the summer.

### **June 22 -23**

#### *Bryant Creek, Ferguson Lake, and Trident Meadows*

Monitoring focused on the area around Ferguson Lake starting at the intersection with Bryant Creek Rd. #1213 and Rd. #7391, then following trails #2735 and #2732, the latter of which heads back to Bryant Cr. Road where Tr. #2471 leads into Trident Meadows. Unfortunately, all trails in this area are open to motor vehicles, including jeeps, except during hunting season; Tr. #2732 has an additional closure from Dec. 2 to May 15.

Serious damage was seen on Tr. #2732 heading down to Ferguson Lake from Tr. #2735; this trail should be closed since the lake has another access point from Bryant Creek Rd. #1213.



Extreme ponding on Tr. #2732 to Ferguson Lake and multiple tracks riding around logs and boggy areas.

### *Elk Creek & Wyman Creek Road*

The purpose of this trip was to monitor three areas off the Scenic Byway: one near Lacy Creek off Rd. #1299, another off the main Wyman Creek Rd., and finally an area just inside the East Pioneers by Elk Creek. All of these areas are near campgrounds that are popular with motorized users.

Monitoring found the area around Elk Creek to be heavily damaged with multiple non-system routes cutting through boggy areas and one up a hillside. Only Tr. #2043 is available for summer motorized use<sup>5</sup> until it reaches the Torrey Mt. Recommended Wilderness Area, but numerous track and poor signing make it difficult to follow the official trail. Monitoring turned west across the Scenic Byway to an area outside the West Pioneer WSA, and found a non-system route accessing a gravel pit that has become an motorized play area, despite efforts to sign and block access.

(Photos on the following page)

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<sup>5</sup> Available for all vehicle types until it transitions into a backcountry designation that limits use to vehicles 50 inches or less.



Non-system route cutting across Elk Creek.



Gravel pit turned motorized play area south of Lacy Creek Rd. #1299

### **July 6-7: Cherry Creek**

Road #1011 turns into Cherry Creek Tr. #2123, which continues approximately four miles to Cherry and Granite Lakes, both at the eastern foot of the 10,633 foot Granite Peak that falls within the Torrey Mt. Recommended Wilderness Area. The two lakes are outside the boundary but another, Green Lake, is within and easily reached from Cherry Lake.

Motorized use has been allowed on this trail for a long time and erosion and vegetation damage are quite easy to find. The current BDNF Visitor and Travel map shows Tr. #2123 turning into Tr. #21231 just below Cherry Lake. It does not identify a trail directly to Cherry Lake but rather to Granite Lake. However, there is a non-system trail to Cherry Lake that has significant damage as evidenced by multiple fire rings, litter, chopped down live Whitebark Pines, broken glass, and carved up trees. Granite Lake has fared better as there is only one small area easily accessible by motorized users. The Forest Service tried to reroute the spur to Granite Lake (Tr. #21231) a few years ago to prevent erosion on a steep hill side. However it is clear that users have rejected those efforts and continue to use the fall line approach to Granite Lake. This is causing considerable damage and erosion.

Another problem is the non-system, user built route going across the outlet of Cherry Lake and on towards Green Lake. This trail has been pushed to a boulder field where it stops, however, there are multiple approaches to Green Lake and it is only a matter of time before users find a way to carve a route to it.



A non-system route going into Cherry Creek & eroding the streambank



This non-system route hill climbs towards Granite Lake

## **July 19-20**

### *Teddy Creek*

An old logging road, #7387, that is open for winter and administrative use but otherwise closed, accesses this area. The main sign at the gate is old and only shows closure for full-sized vehicles and dirt bikes, but not ATVs so it needs updating. All routes dead end for snowmobiles with the possible exception of the fire break route that leads to BLM lands. The area shows slight motorcycle use, but no ATV use on Forest Service lands. However, part of one road in the westernmost point of BLM lands, section 15 T1N-R12W, had some deep ruts and ponding from past ATV use. It amounts to a couple hundred yards beyond the closure signing and stops in a wet meadow adjacent to Teddy Creek. BLM officials apparently dropped several large trees on the west side of the creek to discourage crossing of the creek and this has worked well.

(Photos on the following page)



Teddy creek in the foreground with a log on the road in the background placed to stop ATV use.



Sign on BLM land indicating non-motorized use only.

### *Foolhen Ridge*

Western access to Tr. #2735 begins at the Forest Service and BLM border in the northwest corner of section 23, T1N-R12W, where there is a designated route marker and motorized restriction sign for the hunting season closure, however, the sign needs a trail number. Once inside the West Pioneer IRA, ATVs damage was found on and off the trail in a saturated meadow. Additionally, other trail segments had significant water problems including ponding and rutting. However, by far the worst damage came from a non-system route carved by ATVs from the ridgeline down to Foolhen Lake where multiple tracks were found in the surrounding meadows.

In summary, illegal ORV use is causing significant damage to the Foolhen Lake area and authorized use is causing further problems on Tr. #2735 where the slopes are too steep or where it travels through wet areas. After monitoring both the east and west access points for Tr. #2735, it is apparent that this trail should not be open to summer motorized use.

(Photos on the following page)



ORV damage to Tr. #2735 from authorized use.



Deep ruts from unauthorized use on this non-system route heading to Foolhen Lake.

### **August 3-4**

#### *Little Joe Creek*

Trail #2043 starts near Elk Creek in the East Pioneer IRA, right before entering the new Torrey Mt. Recommended Wilderness Area (RWA); the trail ends at the intersection with Tr. #2269, which travels north-south between Jacobson and Gold Creeks. Monitoring continued south along Tr. #2269 up along the watershed divide. All of Tr. #2043 is protected yearlong, but ORV use continues to damage the area causing trail widening, rutting and continued use of non-system routes. Enforcing the new trail protections will continue to be a challenge for the Forest Service, and trails in the Torrey Mt. RWA need serious rehabilitation in order to discourage future illegal use.

(Photos on the following page)





Illegal ORV use on Tr. #2043 causes trail damage.



A motorcycle track seen here between ATV tracks on protected trail #2269 from recent illegal use.

### *Doolittle Creek*

This trip monitored Rd. #2421, which provides the main access to the Doolittle Creek watershed focusing in an area from the north fork of Doolittle Creek past the middle and south forks, then on to minor forest roads #71235 and #71233, all of which are well marked. These roads are just outside the West Pioneer IRA in old logging units. At a point along the north fork there was evidence of motorcycle use on a non-system route. Unfortunately the sign only prohibits use for vehicles 50 inches or greater, but since this is not a system trail it should not be signed as if it were designated for motorcycle use. With this exception though, there was very little motorized use or damage to the landscape in this area.

(Photos on the following page)



Rd. #21285 in poor condition showing severe gullying



Motorcycle tracks on a non-system route. The sign falsely indicates the route is designated for such use.

### **August 16-18**

#### *Foolhen Ridge to Bible Camp Park to Alder Peak to Osborne Creek*

This loop trip follows Tr. #2086 along Foolhen Ridge until meeting Tr. #2135, which ends in the Bible Camp Park. At this point monitoring followed Tr. #2251 north, and turned east on the Pioneer NRT #2750, until continuing north again along the Osborne Creek Tr. #2146, which ends as it meets the Alder Creek Tr. #2008. From here monitoring followed Tr. #2008 until turns onto Rd. #1213 heading to Tr. #8-A where the trip ends.

All these trails are within the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area and only open to motorcycles in the summer, except for Tr. #8-A and Rd. #1213, which are closed to all summer motorized use.<sup>6</sup> Motorcycle use was evident on some trails, especially the Pioneer NRT #2750, but not on trails to the Bible Camp Park or on the Osborne Creek Tr. #2146. There were some problems in the area with missing or contradictory signs, and some off trail activity, but generally motorcycle use on system trails were not causing erosion or other physical damage to the trails.

(Photos on the following page)

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<sup>6</sup> There was some sign of ATV use for the first ¼ mile on Tr. #2086 that ends at the WSA boundary.



Motorcycle damage to this wet meadow off Tr. #2086



Incorrect sign on at the junction of Tr. #8-A.

*Lambrecht to Pettengill to Copper Creeks to Kelly's Cabin and Fox Park*

This loop trip started in the West Pioneer WSA just south of the Jerked Prairie inholding on Rd. #1290, which ends at the border of the private property at the beginning of Tr. #2085. Following this north around the inholding, the trail descends into Pettengill Cr. where it eventually intersects with Tr. #2245. Monitoring followed this trail west and south until turning east on Tr. #2143, which leads to Kelly Cabin and Fox Park before ending at Tr. #2226. From here monitoring followed this trail east back to Rd. #1290.

Tr. #2143 is protected from summer motorized use, but the others are open to motorcycles. However, there was damage from illegal ATV use on Tr. #2245 where a plugged culvert could be causing sediment delivery to Pettengill Creek; the illegal use ended at a camping area that was thoroughly trashed and definitely not fitting within the area's wilderness character.<sup>7</sup> However, this was the only significant motorized impact seen on the trip with some slight motorcycle use evident on Tr. #2226. No violations were seen on Tr. #2143.

(Photos on the following page)

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<sup>7</sup> The West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area was established in 1977 and its wilderness character must be maintained as it existed that year.



Tracks from illegal ATV use on Tr. #2245



Large campground and not seen here is a plastic pipe, bricks, wood shavings for tent floors, meat poles, and old wire on trees.

### *Lower Sheep Creek Area*

This trip monitored the lower end of Sheep Cr. on trails #2216, #2140 and one that is unnumbered, all of which are open to ATVs and motorcycles and are within the East Pioneer IRA. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of mile past the trailhead, there is a sign in front of a steep grassy hillside off the trail about 100 feet indicating a non-system route traveling north is open to motorcycles. However, there is no obvious trail at this point, nor does one appear on the map so this sign should be removed.

From Tr. #2216, Tr. #2140 takes off south, roughly following a narrow ridge to a big south facing bald knob above Fourth of July Creek. Some locations on this trail have significant erosion problems and need maintenance. Going back to Tr. #2216, monitoring continued a short way to the intersection with the Clifford Creek Trail #2753, which is open to ATVs and motorcycles, but ends in section 13 near the creek. This trail should not be open to motorized use since it does not connect with any other trail and dead-ends at an old mining site in section 13; illegal use could extend the route further south where it would cross the creek and violate a protected area.

From Tr. #2216, the unnumbered route travels north (just opposite Tr. #2140), and goes into sections one and six. It appears this trail is primarily used for rancher access for a cattle grazing allotment. However, there were some non-system routes in the area.



Sign showing a non-existent trail open to motorcycles



Rutting seen on Tr. #2140 inside the East Pioneer IRA

## **August 24-25**

### *Lacy Creek Trail to Odell Lake to Bobcat Lakes*

This trip started at the Lacy Creek Trailhead in the West Pioneer WSA following a loop from the Pioneer NRT #2750 until it splits south on Tr. #2758 to Lake of the Woods and then on to Odell Lake. From here monitoring continued up to Odell Mt., then on to Sand and Baldy Lakes, eventually turning north and east to Bobcat Lakes and then out to the Lacy Creek Trailhead on Tr. #2050.<sup>8</sup>

On Tr. #2750, ATV's are allowed to a point just before Schwinger Lake, where Tr. #2758 heads south to Lake of the Woods. However, the Visitor and Travel map is unclear as to what use is authorized on this portion of Tr. #2758, and ATV tracks were seen going to the lake where there was a large campsite with multiple fire rings and wood structures that do not meet the wilderness character of the area.

While light motorcycle use was seen on some of the trails, most of the damage came from ATV use; especially where they have avoided using a bridge in favor of going directly through a stream. However it should be noted that Tr. #2750 between Baldy and Sand Lakes is closed to all summer motorized use, but motorcycle tracks were evident on the trail.

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<sup>8</sup> See the full trip description to see all the trail numbers that were monitored.



Dual ATV tracks along Tr. #2750 through this open meadow



Vandalized sign on Tr. #2750 heading from Baldy to Sand Lakes, tracks were found past the sign.

## September 2-3<sup>9</sup>

### *Anderson Meadows-Stewart Mountain*

This 16 mile trip started from the Wyman Creek trailhead, following Tr. #2167 through Anderson Meadows until turning west on Tr. #3401 heading to Bear Lake and then on to Tr. #3205 going to Stewart Lake; there is a small loop in this area that eventually meets back with the main Tr. #2167. All trails are within the West Pioneer WSA in an area protected from summer motorized use. No violations were found, but there are significant grazing impacts where cows have created numerous paths making it difficult to identify system trails; especially around Stewart Lake. Cows have also collapsed stream banks and eroded creek crossings.

### *Harrison Park-Bear Wallow*

This survey began and ended at Harrison Park just off the Scenic Byway by Crystal Park. Monitoring followed a loop along Beaver Creek (Tr. #1192, #1171), then headed south on Tr. #2167 before connecting with Tr. #1425 following Bear Wallow Creek back to Harrison Park. Here, there are several camping areas in the immediate vicinity but the entrance is well signed to discourage ATV and motorcycle use, though snowmobile use is allowed. There were no motorized violations, but grazing impacts were clearly evident.

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<sup>9</sup> Only a small selection of waypoints from our photo documentation forms are shown on the Google Earth map since we found no motorized violations and impacts were mostly associated with cattle grazing (see Google Earth files for pictures).

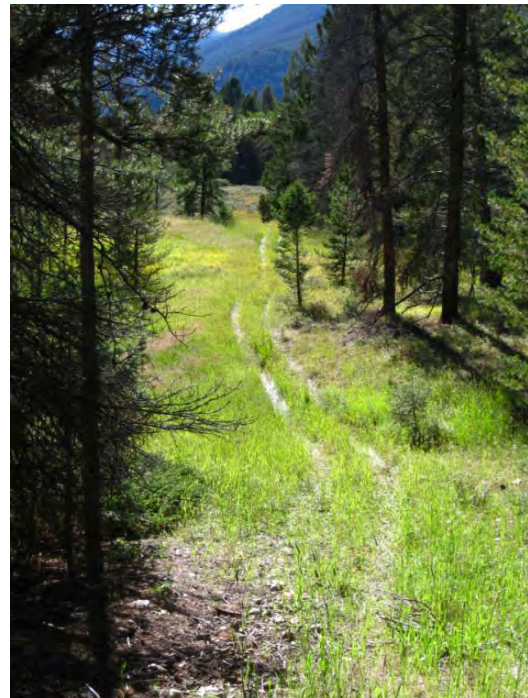
## September 11-12

### *Adson Creek to Butler Creek to Sheep Mt.*

This trip began on Adson Creek Rd. #70618 that turns into Tr. #2137 as it travels east where it eventually connects with Rd. #7409 at Vipond Park. However, monitoring did not evaluate these routes, instead focusing on an unnumbered trail that heads south toward Butler Creek where, according to the Visitor and Travel map, it ends at an old mine site.<sup>10</sup> This area is outside the East Pioneer IRA, however illegal use extended the unnumbered trail creating a non-system route all the way to Sheep Mt., well inside the roadless area. Also found in this area were several letters and cut up license plates nailed to trees to act as reflective devices. Additionally, there was another non-system route found along Butler Creek heading west where at the bottom Forest Service signs were found that showed hunting season closures for non-system routes, suggesting these are legitimate for motorized travel.



This non-system route leads from an old mine site into the East Pioneer IRA heading to Sheep Mt.



This non-system route follows Butler Creek

### *Pioneer Mountain Scenic Byway Trailheads & Coolidge Ghost Town*

This survey checked current signing and motorized use along a number of roads and trails that lead into or is near the Torrey Mt. RWA in the East Pioneers. These include areas around the Boulder Creek Trailhead, Maurice Cemetery, Lost Meadow Trailhead, Mono Creek Campground, and the Coolidge Ghost Town. Monitoring found little evidence of motorized use on system trails, though there was some use on roads and non-system routes. There is still a sign

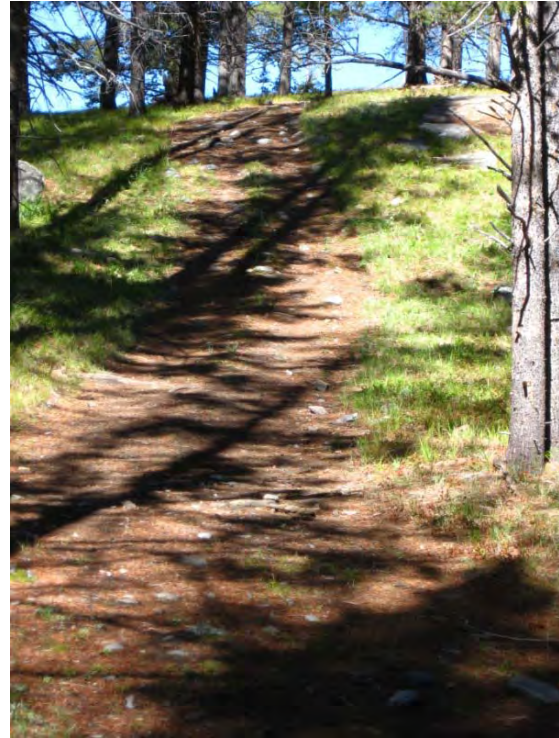
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<sup>10</sup> Since this trail is unnumbered it could be a non-system route that was added to the map.

for Tr. #2152 at Maurice Cemetery, which was relocated to Lost Meadow; this trail segment should be removed since it crosses the creek, is very steep in places and has a new access point. A non-system route was found leading west from Rd. #3976 by the Lost Meadow Trailhead. Perhaps most troubling is the authorized use allowed past the gate on Rd. #2465 that goes through the Coolidge Ghost Town making it easy to cart away artifacts and detracting from the experience of those who walked in from the parking area.



Old section of Tr. #2152 from Maurice Cemetery that should be signed as closed and rehabilitated.



Non-system route from Rd. #3976

## **September 23-24**

### *Sawlog Creek Area*

This trip monitored roads in the Sawlog and Tucker Creek drainages. The main Sawlog road along the creek accesses the West Pioneer IRA after fording across the Big Hole River through BLM ground in Sec 17. It appears there is little traffic on this road due to high river levels for most of the summer, which may swamp ATVs, but would be fine for full-sized trucks. All of the routes surveyed do not have official system numbers on the Visitor and Travel map. Many signs in the area were lying on the ground, and others incorrectly showed some routes as part of the travel system; these signs need to be replaced to prohibit motorized use.

(Photos on the following page)





Damaged sign for an unnumbered trail heading towards Tucker Creek.



This route is supposed to end in section 32, but trucks have pushed the trail further going further south down the slope of the knob

### *Cannivan Gulch Area*

This trip monitored the Cannivan Gulch area and Tr. #2216 as it connects from the Sheep Creek drainage; there is a pass at this point. However, instead of following Tr. #2216 from the end of Rd. #7407 as intended, monitoring followed a set of non-system routes almost all the way to Black Lion Mt., which is in an area protected from motorized use, before turning north to Tr. #2216 at the Cannivan/Sheep Creek pass.

Rd. #70606 proceeds south from the intersection of roads #7406 and #7407, and where it officially ends there was a messy camp spot with a fire ring full of garbage and broken beer bottles. A non-system route continues south from Rd. #70606 and eventually crests out to overlook a beautiful view of Canyon Creek and the East Pioneers. At this point it meets another non-system route traveling east-west along the ridge, and monitoring turned west to follow it towards Black Lion Mt., where it crests out at a point looking northwest into the Sheep Creek drainage. This is very much goat country and it is sad that an ATV route has been carved into such a pristine and beautiful landscape. Monitoring continued north to find Tr. #2216 at the Cannivan/Sheep Creek pass, where there was yet another non-system route cutting south across the ridgeline. At this point, monitoring followed the trail back out to Rd. #7407 where the trip ended.



Following a non-system route along a ridge towards Black Lion Mt. This is in a protected and once pristine area.



A non-system route cuts south from the Cannivan/Sheep Creek pass area.

## Conclusion

Our monitoring efforts show that the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest has some significant challenges in managing impacts from off-road vehicles as well as rehabilitating past and current damage. Additionally, the forest has made great efforts to sign closures, but compliance is not uniform and some non-system routes are signed as if they are designated for off-road vehicle use. Within the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area there is decent compliance with trail protections<sup>11</sup> and light to moderate motorcycle use, however, where ATVs are still allowed there is significant damage. We found more impacts in the West Pioneer Inventoried Roadless Area from motorized use, including numerous non-system routes and damage from authorized use. In the East Pioneer Inventoried Roadless Area, motorized use is a serious concern in the Cherry Creek and Cannivan areas, as well as some places accessed from the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway. Several old non-system routes need active rehabilitation to prevent future use, and signs need to be corrected to show that some routes are not part of the designated system. Overall, this was a great monitoring season that we hope will lead to better management of motorized impacts and rehabilitation of the damage we found.

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<sup>11</sup> With the exception of the closure from Baldy to Sand Lakes.

## Appendix A – Full Trip Reports

### June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Bryant Creek, Ferguson Lake, and Trident Meadows

This trip started outside the West Pioneer IRA near the intersection of Bryant Creek Rd. #1213 and Rd. #7391 where an old bridge crosses the creek. Here evidence was seen of sediment delivery where rain washed sand down onto the bridge and over the edge into Bryant Creek. The logging roads in this area are better protected though than in the Harriet Lou area as they have drainage ditches on the uphill sides that keeps the seepage off the roads. At waypoint (WP) 89 there should be a gate but it has been removed. The road deteriorates at this point in quality and becomes wetter and narrower. This trail showed the most use, and continues on to WP 93.

Tr. #2735 begins at WP 92 and is open to all vehicles except during the hunting season from Oct. 15 – Dec. 2, however there is an old metal gate near the beginning that is not signed, but there is a route that goes around it. The trail is very steep and does not appear to meet any trail standard. The water bars are mostly full of sand and gravel and no longer do their job of diverting runoff. Routes from both directions show ATVs are going around water bars since it is easier than going over them. This trail is going up the fall line for roughly ½ mile before it meets an unnumbered trail heading north. Monitoring continued on Tr. #2735, which turns southeast at this point. These trails are poorly located and not maintained, so even though they are outside the IRA they should still be closed until the Forest Service can eliminate and prevent future damage.

Near the top of the ridge at WP 102 the trail splits with Tr. #2735 heading northeast and Tr. #2732 traveling south to Ferguson Lake; the sign here needs replacing. Monitoring continued on Tr. #2732 along a steep, sagebrush side hill and then proceeds nearly straight south down through what used to be a beautiful place to look for elk.<sup>1</sup> Much erosion and rutting is present. Between the bottom of the sagebrush side hill (WP 108) and Ferguson Lk. there is a real mess. Much of the trail is in bog and literally under water, (see WP 110 and photos).

At Ferguson Lake, Tr. #2732 heads west to Rd. #1213, and at WP 111 there is a user-created route going off trail through a couple trees before meeting back with the main trail. However, since this section of Tr. #2732 is more stable, drier and on gentler terrain, it should be the only motorized access into Ferguson Lk., and restricted to only ATVs or motorcycles. No ATV's should be allowed north of the lake (way too wet) or on either of the steep areas mentioned. Ideally, the lake would have a non-motorized buffer 150 feet from the shoreline.

One of the peculiar things on this route are the two signs at WP's 114 & 115 that tell ATV's the trail is closed about a quarter mile south due to the WSA protections. Why bother letting them go even the ¼ mile? This just invites violations. They should be stopped at the beginning of the trail.

It was a very pleasant horseback ride on Tr. #2471 through Trident Meadows and both moose and elk were seen in the area. It does not appear ATV's are currently violating this area from

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<sup>1</sup> Our monitor used to guide in this country in the early 90's and this ATV trail was not there then.

either portal (WP 115 and 120). The remainder of this route covers some old logging roads all of which could be closed without much impact on the motorized users.

### **June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Elk Creek & Wyman Creek Road**

The purpose of this survey was to follow up on three areas off the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway: one near Rd. #1299 along Lacy Creek, another off the main Wyman Creek Rd., and finally an area just inside the East Pioneers by Elk Creek. All of these areas are near Forest Service campgrounds popular with motorized users.

The BDNF Visitor and Travel Map shows Rd. #2413 (just off the Wyman Creek Rd.) as continuing for over a mile; the full length is not accessible at this time of year due to the bridge over Wyman Creek being removed and high water in the creek. The remainder of the road may be accessible later when water levels drop. This road has a metal gate at the beginning but it is very easy to get around. There was minor evidence not far from Wyman Creek (WP 130) that an ATV had left the old road and climbed a hill and proceeded cross country.

The route between roads #1299 and #2411 turned out to be a gravel pit access road that motorized users are entering from both the north and south. The pit likely dates back to the construction of the Wise River Scenic Byway in the early 70's. Attempts by the Forest Service to prevent access with a gate on the south and signs on the north are ineffective. The gravel pit and mounds is an attractive feature for ATV's and motorcycles. The use of the area probably keeps a number of motorized users off other parts of the forest, but may create a liability issue for the Forest Service. On the brighter side however there appears to be no motorized use on Rd. #2411, which swings west and south near the WSA boundary. This was an old logging road to several clear cuts from decades ago. The cuts are growing in nicely and the area is not steep so there is very little impact from erosion or runoff. The road is ideal for short hikes or mountain bike trips for less energetic campers but it appears to get very little overall use. There is a range fence just before the last clear cut and the trail dead ends shortly after the fence.

At Elk Creek there is an informal campground that is unnamed by the Forest Service although they have installed a vault toilet. There are maybe ten campsites. The Little Joe trail #2043 starts here and accesses the Torrey Mt. Recommended Wilderness Area (RWA). Historically, this trail was open to all types of vehicles to the upper end of Little Joe Meadows, so there were numerous non-system routes seen in the area. Between the campground and the east side of Tr. #2043 there is a network of **ATV play routes**. Two non-system routes leave the campground directly, but only one is signed as unauthorized. The routes connect back to Tr. #2043 in two locations but one of them must pass by a serious bog hole since it receives less use. One trail attempted to expand in a northeasterly direction but was stopped by a barb wire fence (part of a grazing allotment). It is worth noting that the topographic map (USGS Maurice Mountain) identifies a spring in this area. That is certainly the case as this entire area is very wet with multiple willow patches and marshes. This is excellent moose habitat and is also in close proximity to the Wise River.

The routes in the Elk Creek area should be fully rehabilitated and Tr. # 2043 heavily monitored

to ensure no violations occur into the RWA. The ATV use in boggy locations is causing serious vegetative damage and erosion. More signs are needed and one could be posted in a prominent place (maybe by the vault toilet) that could read: "There are no authorized trails leaving this camping area; motorized use restricted to Trail #2043. Please comply." Barb wire or jack leg fencing could be installed around the east and south sides of this campground to protect Elk Creek and the nearby marshlands.

### **July 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> – Cherry Creek**

Road #1011 turns into Cherry Creek Tr. #2123, which continues approximately four miles to Cherry Lake and Granite Lake, both at the eastern foot of 10,633 foot Granite Peak that falls within the Torrey Mt. RWA. The two lakes are outside the recommended boundary but a third, Green Lake, in the immediate area is within.

Motorized use has been allowed on this trail for a long time and erosion and vegetation damage are quite easy to find. The current BDNF Visitor and Travel map shows Tr. #2123 turning into Tr. #21231 just below Cherry Lake. It does not identify a trail directly to Cherry Lake but rather to Granite Lake. The 1996 map shows a trail to both and one advancing toward Green Lake. It was then identified as #123 and #123A.

In the 90's the trail to Cherry Lake was in such bad shape that motorized users were wandering out in the wet meadows to get to the lake, and a motorized group from Butte did a project with the Forest Service to reroute the trail to get it more away from the meadows. The trail remains a challenge still as it is very rough with boulders. Multiple routes through the timber are evident.

Cherry Lake is the hardest hit by motorized use, evidenced by multiple fire rings, litter, chopped down live whitebark pines, broken glass, and carved on trees. Granite Lake has fared better as there is only one small area easily accessible by motorized users.

The Forest Service tried to reroute the spur to Granite Lake (Tr. #21231) a few years ago to prevent erosion on a steep hill side. However it is clear that users have rejected those efforts and continue to use the fall line approach to Granite Lake. This is causing considerable damage and erosion. It would be highly worth the effort to try to get this route closed entirely in the travel plan.

Another problem is the non-system, user built route going across the outlet of Cherry Lake and on towards Green Lake. This trail has been pushed to a considerable boulder field where it stops, however, there are multiple approaches to Green Lake and it is only a matter of time before users find a way to carve a route to it. This is another trail which should be eliminated as it bumps up against the RWA boundary and the distance between Cherry Lake and Green Lake is only ½ mile, and a very nice hike.

On the lower reaches of Tr. #2123 there are several creek crossings beginning with the one shown in Photo #1659 where a lot of soil is going into Cherry Creek. On up the trail there is a steep sidehill where the Forest Service installed rubber water bars which protect the trail but

divert runoff of sand and gravel down a steep slope directly into Cherry Creek, a key Westslope Cutthroat trout watershed, (see photo #1682).

Finally some of the trails shown on the Forest Service map are not accurate. Tr. #2089 and Tr. #2757 are somewhat redundant in appearance as they parallel other routes, and appear to simply intersect Tr. #2123 at a common point but this still needs ground verification.

### **July 19<sup>th</sup> – Teddy Creek**

An old logging road (#7387) accesses this area, which is open for winter and administrative use but otherwise closed. The main sign at the gate is old and only shows closure for full-sized vehicles and motorcycles, not ATVs so it needs updating. All routes dead end for snowmobiles with the possible exception of the fire break route to BLM lands.

The area shows slight motorcycle use and no ATV activity on Forest Service lands. There was one location of ATV abuse in Section 15 T1N-R12W, the westernmost point of BLM lands. It amounts to a couple hundred yards beyond the closure signing and stops in a wet meadow adjacent to Teddy Creek. BLM officials apparently dropped several large trees on the west side of the creek to discourage crossing of the creek and this has worked well. This location is near an old cabin that appears on the Dickie Hills USGS topographic map.

Road #7387 has three legs as it climbs the mountain; the main road, a fire break route that shows some motorcycle use (photo 361), and the spur road #7387A that is grown in and ends in an old cutting unit. The main route climbs to a high elevation and becomes thickly grown in (photo 360).

Roads on BLM land east of Teddy Creek also provide access to Tr. #2735, which follows the north ridge of Foolhen drainage, and meets with Tr. #2732 to Ferguson Lake. The BLM has done a very good job at signing the web of roads to make it very clear what is open and closed.

The gate and sign at the entrance to this area (WP 164) could be slightly improved to reflect ATV closure and to discourage motorcycles from going around the gate.

### **July 20<sup>th</sup> – Foolhen Ridge**

Western access to Tr. #2735 begins at the Forest Service and BLM border in the northwest corner of section 23, T1N-R12W, where there is a designated route marker and motorized restriction sign for the hunting season closure, however, the sign needs a trail number. Monitoring found significant damage from ORV use in the area including a non-system route carved down to Foolhen Lake; this trail should be closed to all summer use due to all the resource damage and fully rehabilitated.

The trail proceeds a short distance to the West Pioneer IRA boundary and shortly after enters a wet meadow where ATV damage is quite evident, (see pictures 390 &391). From that point to the

first ridge, the trail climbs a number of very steep pitches that are too steep even for a horse. Near the top between way points 181 and 182 there is a stretch of relatively flat trail that is in the water continuously.

At WP 183 there is a non-system route created by ATV use going to Foolhen Lake; the route appears on no maps, including the Revised Forest Plan's Interim Road & Trail Map. This ATV route appears to be relatively new as the steep portion, which drops about 90 feet from WP 183 to WP 185, shows only light erosion and is not boulder strewn, but it is only a matter of time before the damage becomes worse. Between waypoints 185 - 188 there is significant ORV damage. ATVs have been using multiple routes around dead and downed trees, and have traversed many very wet spots creating a deep mud bog. Even at the lake they have proceeded to drive way out into the wet fen doing considerable damage to the physical environment and the aesthetic beauty of Foolhen Lake. This illegal ATV route must be addressed immediately by the Forest Service, with both signing and obliteration.

A separate motorcycle route is evident between waypoints 189 and 192, although it appears to be receiving little use. Cut logs are seen along the fairly open woods. Trail #2735 continues along the top of Foolhen ridge and intersects trail #2732 before continuing to Rd. #7391 just off the main Bryant Creek road.

In summary, illegal ORV use is causing significant damage to the Foolhen Lake area, and authorized use is causing further problems on Tr. #2735 where the slopes are too steep or where it travels through wet areas. A Forest Service inventory shows that Foolhen Lake is a nine acre, non-motorized lake with Cutthroat trout, and is supposed to be accessible by foot only. The incursion of ATV's has stolen from the quiet user a very scenic and formerly peaceful location. The effects on wildlife in the area have to be considered as well. After monitoring both the east and west access points for Tr. #2735, it is apparent that this trail should not be open to summer motorized use.

### **August 3<sup>rd</sup> – Little Joe Creek**

The Little Joe Trail #2043 officially starts at the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway near Elk Creek (N.W. Corner of Section 9). Monitoring started from the byway in Section 17 to save a couple miles of traveling on roads that were partially survey on June 23, (Elk Creek). Most of the area surveyed is in the new Torrey Mt. Recommended Wilderness Area and for the first time this year the Forest Service is managing it as such, i.e. protected from motorized use year-round. The newly installed sign at WP 195 (rec. wild boundary) is the first line of defense, and was in good condition. Another sign further along the trail at WP 197 shows a closure for an unauthorized route that heads towards the Big Point saddle, the beginning of which has been blocked by a small pile of logs. This trail branches at the saddle and was about one mile long. While there were no fresh tracks at this time, the route is well established and needs rehabilitation to prevent future use.

It appears that in years past Forest Service trail maintenance followed ATV specifications, and this season only a couple of log were cut to reflect a narrower foot and stock width. However

even with the new signs and management direction, ATV and motorcycle use on Tr. #2043 is certainly evident as well as on non-system routes found in the area.

A few years ago ATV activity stopped just above Little Joe Meadows at WP 204. Since then users have pushed it all the way up to trail #2269, (which travels north-south between Gold and Jacobson Creeks) and then south along Tr. #2269 to the Little Joe /Jacobson divide; this area is unique due to the many springs in a large meadow that drains into Gold Creek.

This entire area is excellent elk habitat which features south facing sagebrush side-hills, large wet meadows, and heavy timber. Elk will be relieved to not hear motorized use but current damage from illegal ORV use poses a significant enforcement challenge since users tend to use visible routes. Monitoring also found considerable bear activity and tracks near the meadows. The scenery, which includes wildflower patches, large meadows, and mountain views adds to the high Wilderness values of Little Joe Creek.

At WP 199 there is a long stretch of wet meadow which has been heavily impacted by motorized use. This is a good candidate for a trail re-route uphill to the south if the area can be rehabilitated, (see photos 491 & 499).

### **August 4<sup>th</sup> – Doolittle Creek**

This trip monitored Rd. #2421, which provides the main access to the Doolittle Creek watershed focusing on an area from the north fork of Doolittle Creek past the middle and south forks, then on to minor forest roads #71235 and #71233, all of which are well marked. These roads are just outside the West Pioneer IRA in old logging units. At a point along the north fork there was evidence of motorcycle use on a non-system route. Unfortunately the sign only prohibits use for vehicles 50 inches or greater, but since this is not a system trail it should not be signed as if it were designated for motorcycle use. With this exception though, there was very little motorized use and little damage to the landscape in this area.

At WP 215 there is a triple fork associated with two older logging roads, neither are very long or appear on the BDNF Visitor and Travel map. Both showed some ATV exploration as evidenced by tracks in the grass, but there was no damage or new routes. It would seem that both of these routes could be rehabilitated. Finally, it would be no surprise to find a trail extension at the end one of these routes as it dead-ends on a flat ridge, which would normally invite further motorized activity, but that was not the case at this time.

The forest road is well designed with many rubber water bars that are effective at keeping dirt from the stream. On the ridge top there is an intersection with Rd. #71235. Monitoring did not explore the SE branch. The NW branch leads to a winter game range and on down through large sagebrush areas to private land. Again there appears to be little motorized traffic from any vehicles.

While bush-whacking back to the truck, there were some ATV routes leading from private land in section 29. These are likely historic rancher routes associated with cattle operations. There are



several gates from private to public land, but no routes showed any frequent use.

There is an unnumbered and unsigned motorcycle route on the map in Sec 33, T1S-R14W. There is a gate at WP 229 through a Forest Service fence. This leads to a draw and up onto the ridge. The trailhead for this is very hard to see from Rd. #2421 and consequently there is practically no use on this trail.

### **August 16<sup>th</sup> – Foolhen Ridge to Bible Camp Park to Alder Peak to Osborne Creek**

This loop trip follows Tr. #2086 along Foolhen Ridge until meeting Tr. #2135, which ends in the Bible Camp Park. At this point monitoring followed Tr. #2251 north, and turned east on the Pioneer NRT #2750, until continuing north again along the Osborne Creek Tr. #2146, which ends as it meets the Alder Creek Tr. #2008. From here monitoring followed Tr. #2008 until it meets with Rd. #1213 heading to Tr. #8-A where the trip ends.

All these trails are within the West Pioneer Wilderness Study Area and many are open to motorcycles in the summer, except for trails #2164, #8-A and parts of Rd. #1213, which are closed to all summer motorized use. There was evidence of light motorcycle use on Tr. #2086, and a non-system route was found at WP 231 heading towards Trident Meadows; fortunately no tracks were seen on this route.

Where Tr. #2086 intersects with Tr. #8-A, there is a sign indicating Tr. #8-A is open to motorcycles, but at the east end of this trail there is a sign on the old logging road #1213 showing it closed to all summer motorized use as the BDNF Visitor and Travel map displays; there is also an old sign showing it is open to motorcycles. Both the incorrect signs for Tr. #8-A should be removed. The steeper part farther east is much more difficult and hits the dead end road closure at WP 253, which marks the end of the monitoring trip.

At the Pioneer Outfitter camp (WP 233) there was some motorcycle damage in the wet meadow for a short distance where the trail crosses. Motorcycle use continued past Foolhen Cabin to the Christiansen Creek Tr. #3096 (an old sign shows this as the Squaw Creek Trail). It does not appear they are going down this trail or back north to Peterson Meadows and Trident Meadows on Tr. #2099.

There is motorcycle use in all trail directions at the intersection of Tr. #2086 with #2750 but no real damage anywhere. No motorcycle use was seen going to Bible Camp Park on Tr. #2135. This is a rough trail and easy to lose near the bottom. Also there was no motorcycle use from Bible Camp Park up to Alder Pass. Trail #2750 seems to be the much preferred route, but it is hard to follow east of Alder Peak with only a few cut logs and rock cairns, but it generally follows the ridge. The trail signs at the Reservoir and Osborne Creek crossings are poor and unclear.

There was no motorized use on Tr. #2146 down Osborne Creek as this is not allowed and the trail is very difficult to find and follow. Motorcycle use is allowed on the Reservoir Creek Tr. #2046, (compare the signage at WP 247 and WP 248). If starting on the Osborne Creek Tr. #2146

from the Alder Creek Tr. #2008, you would first see an “unauthorized trail” sign. Following the trail further, you would next come across a sign showing the trail is closed only during hunting season, (see WP 247). Officially Tr. #2146 is a system trail and closed to all summer motorized use and the signs need to be replaced to indicate current management direction.

At WP 249, Alder Creek Tr. #2008 hits the old logging road #1213 and follows it for a short distance until going back to a trail. There is a good sign showing the road is closed to all summer motorized use and Rd. #1213 has grown in with short grass that makes for a wonderful horseback riding and walking path. This, could be decommissioned and reconstructed to trail standards, but there are two large bridges along the road that have been removed and would need to be replaced with smaller foot and horse bridges or safe creek fords and foot logs for non motorized use, (see waypoints 251 & 252).

### **August 17<sup>th</sup> – Lambrecht to Pettengill to Copper Creeks to Kelly's Cabin and Fox Park**

This loop starts just south of the Jerked Prairie inholding on Rd. #1290 that ends at the border of the private property where Tr. #2085 begins and travels north around the area. At the north end of the inholding the trail starts to descend down towards Pettengill Cr. where it eventually intersects with Tr. #2245. This trail has apparently seen ATV traffic in the past due to its width and eroded condition on steeper spots. A large log across the trail in heavy timber discourages ATV traffic at this time. It appears motorcycles have been dragged under this log, which is about three feet off the ground.

Pettengill Creek Tr. #2245 showed evidence of significant ATV abuse, even though this trail is only open to vehicles less than 50 inches wide. At WP 261 there was a plugged culvert with water flowing across the trail. This is very near Pettengill Creek which means every cow, horse, motorcycle or illegal ATV that crosses this spot stirs up mud that soon finds its way to the creek. Replacing the culvert may fix this problem, but future monitoring is needed to ensure its effectiveness.

Just after WP 262 and at WP 263 there are a couple of very messy hunter camps. These are within the WSA and this should be a pack it in- pack it out, leave no trace area. The camps have old corrals, fire pits, wood piles, tables, sitting logs, bricks, a large metal fire ring, plastic pipe, shavings for tent floors, meat poles, and old wire on trees. At one location there is a concentrated weed patch which was not identified.

There is some evidence of motorcycle use coming down Lost Horse Tr. #2135 as it meets Tr. #2245, which was causing only slight erosion at the time. According to the BDNF Visitor and Travel map Tr. #2245 meets Stone Cr. trail #2202, which is not signed and appears to no longer exist. Following up on its status, the Forest Service explained the trail has been closed as a result of previous fires. A large blow down is evident for a half mile by WP 266 but it was not blocking the trail.

The Demijohn Tr. #2162 connects Tr. #2245 with the Pioneer NRT #2250 and is open to motorcycles though no use was evident. Monitoring continued on Tr. #2245 until turning east on

Copper Creek Tr. #2143, which is easy to miss and eventually leads to Kelly Cabin and Fox Park before connecting with Tr. #2226. The Copper Creek trail is very steep and narrow, hard to follow and poorly blazed. It is also closed to summer motorized use and no violations were evident. After following Tr. #2143 across Pettengill Creek, there was an old sign for the Whiskey Creek Trail that should be removed since it no longer exists. No motorized use was seen along the entire length of Tr. #2143, but at the intersection with Tr. #2226 there were some motorcycles tracks, however not in large numbers; this trail is open to motorcycles with no seasonal restrictions.

### **August 18<sup>th</sup> – Lower Sheep Creek Area**

This trip monitored the lower end of Sheep Cr. on trails #2216, #2140 and one that is unnumbered, all of which are open to ATVs and motorcycles, and are within the East Pioneer IRA. The trailhead sits between the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway and the Wise River. The road accesses Forest Service land by skirting around the Flying Cloud Ranch on its north side. About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of mile past the trailhead, there is a sign in front of a steep grassy hillside off the trail about 100 feet indicating a non-system route traveling north is open to motorcycles. However, there is no obvious trail at this point, nor does one appear on the map so this sign should be removed.

From Tr. #2216, Tr. #2140 takes off south, roughly following a narrow ridge to a big south facing bald knob above Fourth of July Creek. At this point there is a sign indicating only motorcycles are allowed from this point on, but it appears from flattened grass that an ATV violation has taken place recently. However, it is unclear what use is currently authorized since the BDNF Visitor and Travel map shows the trail open to vehicles 50 inches or less until it crosses Fourth of July Creek. Some locations on this trail have significant erosion problems and need maintenance, (see waypoints 282, 283, 284).

Going back to Tr. #2216, monitoring continued a short way to the intersection with the Clifford Creek Trail #2753, which is open to ATVs and motorcycles, but ends in section 13 near the creek. This trail should not be open to motorized use since it does not connect with any other trail and dead-ends at an old mining site in section 13. No new motorized use was evident at this time, but past use has caused some ruts to appear. At this point monitoring turned north onto an unnumbered trail that is open yearlong to ATVs and motorcycles.

The unnumbered route, shown in green on the BDNF Visitor and Travel map, goes into sections one and six. It appears this trail is primarily used by a rancher to access a cattle grazing allotment that accommodates about 80 head of Angus and for placing salt licks in two locations. The trail which continues up the canyon in Section 6 was not surveyed on this date. It becomes very steep and accesses some higher open areas. There were some non-system routes in the area and a torn down sign that showed a seasonal closure for hunting at WP 293.

The lower part of this trail between waypoints 287 and 288 has some erosion and is becoming mostly a boulder trail, (see photo 0754)

## **August 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> – Lacy Creek Trail to Odell Lake to Bobcat Lakes**

This trip starts on Tr. #2750 from the Lacy Creek Trailhead at the end of Rd. #1299. Trail #2050 also begins at this point. Monitoring followed Tr. #2750 to Tr. #2758 going to Lake of the Woods and Odell Lake where it meets Tr. #3197 that goes to the old Martin Mine site. At this point monitoring continued up Tr. #3010 (which does not appear on the map) to Odell Mt. where it meets the intersection of Tr. #2259 and Tr. #99. From the top of Odell Mt. monitoring continued on Tr. #99 to Tr. #2750 by Sand Lake, and then turned south past Baldy Lake to the intersection with Tr. #2245. At this point monitoring followed Tr. #2245 to the intersection with Tr. #2226 that leads to Bobcat Lakes, and from here monitoring turned southeast on Tr. #2050 heading back to the Lacy Creek Trailhead.

On Tr. #2750, ATV's are allowed to a point just before Schwinger Lake (see WP 303), where Tr. #2758 heads south to Lake of the Woods. However, the BDNF Visitor and Travel map is unclear as to what use is authorized on this portion of Tr. #2758, and ATV tracks were seen going to the lake where there was a large campsite with multiple fire rings and wood structures that do not meet the wilderness character of this area. The Skull Cr. Trail #2141 is not being used, the sign posts have been pulled out and are lying on the ground. Though the map shows this is a system trail, it looks abandoned and should be removed since it leads to the Skull Odell Research Natural Area.

In the meadows along lower Lacy Creek near WP 299 ATV's created dual tracks in a couple of locations, (see photo 776). A sow black bear and two cubs were sighted near WP 300 where ATV's for some unknown reason are occasionally not using a perfectly good bridge, but instead going upstream a few yards through a grassy wet area, or downstream a few yards through the steeper banks of the creek.

The south route was caving the muddy bank directly into the creek.

The short trail to Schweingar Lake is not open to ATV's but is wide enough to accommodate them. This trail should be narrowed to discourage violations. No use was seen at this time.

The motorized trail closure sign just north of Odell Lake is one of the best in the area, (see photo 819), even though it has bullet holes and rude remarks carved into it. However, no illegal motorized use was seen past Lake of the Woods.

The yellow sign "Stay on trail" just southwest of Odell Lake is curious. First it's on a large hillside meadow and the trail tread for two different trails is not at all evident. It's not clear what user group this is directed at but at this point it would have to be foot, horseback, or snowmobile. It just doesn't seem to make sense and this type of "highway yellow" regulating sign seems out of character for the area, (see photo 823).

The BDNF Visitor and Travel map does not show a dashed line for Tr. #3010 from the Martin Mine northwest to Section 13. However trail is present up to a point in Sec 13 where it is nearly impossible to find; no motorized use was seen here. The trail to the top of Odell Mountain (#99) is hard to locate from Tr. #2259, but it simply follows the ridge line to the top. The rest of Tr. #99 going north is little more than a ridgeline pathway, not really suitable for horse travel. It is a good

hiking trail, very scenic with views of surrounding mountain ranges and several ponds and lakes, but it is intermittent with several rocky outcroppings, and is poorly blazed. In any trail guide and on maps this should be identified as a foot only trail.

There was one motorcycle track on Tr. #2750 between Sand to Baldy Lakes; this section is closed to all summer motorized use as signs at the lake and trailhead indicate, (see photos 765 and 877). There was one campsite at Baldy Lake with a fire pit filled with beer cans and broken beer bottles.

The route from Baldy Lake to Bobcat Lakes via Tr. #2750-#2226-#2050 did show some motorcycle use, but it was light and there were no trail impacts. A puncheon route in Section 6 has a blowout and could use a culvert. If it gets any worse users, will start going around it through the wet meadow. Some of this trail around Bobcat Lakes is very rough, rocky, and steep. It would take a seasoned motorcyclist to negotiate this trail safely. No abuses in meadows or wet areas was seen at this time.

### **September 2<sup>nd</sup> – Anderson Meadows-Stewart Mountain**

This 16 mile trip started on Tr. #2164 heading southwest from the Wyman Creek trailhead off Rd. #2414. Monitoring followed this trail until turning west on Tr. #3401 heading to Bear Lake. Past the lake, monitoring turned north on Tr. #3205 heading to Stewart Lake and continued west past the intersection with Tr. #3197 until meeting Tr. #3198 that loops back to Tr. #3401 and then back to Tr. #2167.

This entire area is protected from ORV use and only a small selection of waypoints from our photo documentation form are shown on the Google Earth map since we found no motorized violations and impacts were mostly associated with cattle grazing.

The main trail #2167 travels through Anderson Meadows where several other trails leave it both to the south and north. Without the Forest Service signs these trails are hard to identify and the creek crossings would be difficult due to deep water and mud. Some places in the meadows had orange diamonds attached to trees by snowmobilers.

At Stewart Lake the signage is good but there are so many cow paths in the meadows that it's impossible to know if you are on an official trail or not. In addition to creating all the trampled paths, cows in the area have eroded numerous stream banks and creek crossings, (see photos 949 & 950). Many of the creeks have green flowing moss growing from the bottoms, which could be from a combination of the relative flatness of the creeks, warm water temperatures, and nutrient loads from all the cow manure washing in, (see photos 943 & 946).

At WP 349 there is a hiker-horse trail built by users to provide a shortcut back to Odell trailhead. There are two places where the Forest Service placed Unauthorized Trail signs. One at WP 350 where there is a short trail going up the hill before Odell Creek that stops at the top, (see photo 961). The second sign is at WP 351, which is almost back down to the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway; there is some new abuse but it has been signed and rocks placed in the path. This is no

doubt associated with all the other Lacy Creek camping area abuse.

### **September 3<sup>rd</sup> – Harrison Park-Bear Wallow**

This survey began and ended at Harrison Park just off the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway by Crystal Park. There are several camping areas in the immediate vicinity but the entrance to the Harrison Park area is well signed to discourage ATV and motorcycle use, though snowmobile use is allowed. This area could be called the land of 100 meadows and 10 million cow pies.

The spider web of trails connects the many wide grassy meadows that exist throughout the roughly 20 square miles. North of Maverick Mountain the terrain is relatively flat with no more than a 600 foot difference from the highest point to the lowest. The system of meadows is excellent range for wildlife and livestock. Protection of wildlife summer range is one of the reasons given for it being summer non-motorized, however it appears the emphasis is more on cattle range than wildlife; none of the latter were seen on this trip. There is a long history of livestock grazing in this area and there are numerous fences to keep cattle in one area or another. Also visible are old mitigation efforts to prevent further bank erosion from cattle (photos 1002 & 1004).

There was no evidence of ATV or motorcycle use on any of the system trails, but there are at least six other routes into this area. Two from Anderson Meadows area, (Halfway and Upper Wyman Creeks), others from the upper and lower reaches of Old Tim Creek as well as from Blue Creek and Shoestring Creek trails which come from the Elkhorn Hot Springs vicinity.

If there are water quality concerns in this system of creeks, which feed the Big Hole River, the Wise River, and the Beaverhead River, it is with cattle manure and stream bank erosion and not summer motorized travel. It would be an interesting scientific project to examine the water quality of these creeks with regard to e-coli and Cryptosporidium as well as fish populations as compared to creeks in the East Pioneers.

This entire area is protected from ORV use and only a small selection of waypoints from our photo documentation form are shown on the Google Earth map since we found no motorized violations and impacts were mostly associated with cattle grazing.

### **September 11<sup>th</sup> – Adson Creek to Butler Creek to Sheep Mt.**

This survey began on Adson Creek Rd. #70618 that turns into Tr. #2137 as it travels east where it eventually connects with Rd. #7409 at Vipond Park. However, monitoring did not travel these routes, instead focusing on an unnumbered trail that heads south toward Butler Creek where, according to the BDNF Visitor and Travel map, it ends at an old mine site.<sup>2</sup> This area is outside the East Pioneer IRA.

At the beginning of Rd. #70618 there is a travel restriction sign just off the Pioneer Mt. Scenic

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<sup>2</sup> Since this trail is unnumbered it could be a non-system route that was added to the map.

Byway, and at the junction with the unnumbered trail there is a portable jack-leg, one panel gate with a sign for a hunting season closure, (see WP 369). Also looking north at this point, there are remnants of an old mine road that comes from Asdon Creek; no use was evident.

Turning uphill on the unnumbered trail heading south, the path was mostly steep and rocky. At WP 370 there is a non-system route following Butler Creek that is explained in more detail below. Continuing on the unnumbered trail, monitoring found that motorized users have been busy constructing a lengthy non-system route extending the trail toward Sheep Mountain well inside the East Pioneer IRA. Logs have been cleared as recently as this year. The most peculiar feature of motorized use in the area is the large number of reflective devices attached to the trees along the way (above the mine). Some of these reflectors are 6-8 inch letters (“G”, “W”, “N” etc), while others are cut up car license plates nailed to the trees. Some of the letters are 10 feet off the ground. One can speculate that these were placed here to aid either ATV's or snowmobiles in night travel or during hunting season. Monitoring continued to follow the non-system route until it hit the snowline.

Returning back to WP 370, monitoring continued on the non-system route along Butler Creek, which winds through timber and grassy openings. The route disappears in a meadow just past WP 381, but there are several places further west where the route could lead. Past the meadow the canyon narrows and gets slightly steeper. After crisscrossing the creek a couple of times, monitoring found what appears to be a very old and no longer used logging road that comes up from the ranch at the bottom; there was no motorized use in this lower section. At the bottom of the canyon (WP 382) there is a sign that says the area is closed to all motorized vehicles Oct 15-Dec 1. It is unclear if this means the road is open the rest of the year, but since it does not appear on the BDNF Visitor and Travel map, it is probably a decommissioned or closed road that should not be signed as if it were open to the public.

A knapweed patch was noted at the beginning of an irrigation ditch (WP 384) which leaves the Wise River to the east. It does not appear this infestation is related to ATV use. This was reported to the Big Hole Watershed Weed Committee via e-mail. Shortly after at WP 385 there is a sign at what may be the Forest Service boundary indicating a hunting season closure on this undetermined road (ownership is unclear). The parcel to the north cannot be identified on Montana Cadastral Survey and it shows up as private on the BDNF Visitor and Travel map but it could be state owned. The travel sign at WP 386 also shows a hunting season closure, but this is for a non-system route that should have an unauthorized sign, rather than one that suggests it's a legitimate trail.

### **September 12<sup>th</sup> – Pioneer Mountain Scenic Byway Trailheads & Coolidge Ghost Town**

This survey checked current signing and motorized use along a number of roads and trails that lead into or near the Torrey Mt. RWA in the East Pioneers. First was the Boulder Creek trailhead located about ¼ mile off the Pioneer Mt. Scenic Byway where two trails begin (#2117 and #2754) both of which connect to Tr. #2140 from Sheep Creek. These trails are open to motorcycle and snowmobile use with no seasonal restrictions. Little use was evident, especially on #2754, which gets steep and rocky after a short distance as it climbs up to a plateau in the

trail. No ATV use was seen at this time.

The next area monitored was around Maurice Cemetery where an old homesteader family was buried. This used to be the Gold Creek trailhead (Tr. #2152) years ago, but due to the lack of space for parking and turning around it was replaced by the Lost Meadow Trailhead a short distance away. However, a sign still remains at the Gold Creek Trailhead indicating the old trail is still open to motorcycles, but this could be incorrect if it is no longer part of the official system. Regardless, this trail should be closed and the sign changed accordingly since there is a new access point and portions of the old trail are very steep and requires crossing the creek, (see photo 1078).

Officially Tr. #2152 begins from the Lost Meadow Trailhead off Rd. #3976; the trail splits from the road at WP 392, and unfortunately there are no signs showing what motorized use is allowed. This is a problem since ATVs are prohibited, and motorcycle use on Tr. #2152 ends at the intersection with Tr. #2140, which turns north and does allow motorcycles. At WP 393 there is an intersection with trails #2152, #2140, and the old motorcycle route to the cemetery. About 50 feet before this point, there is an old sign that shows motorcycle use is allowed, which may be confusing since it is not clear that it is meant for Tr. #2140. New signs for Gold Creek Tr. #2152 are firmly in place and fitting for the recommended wilderness. No violations are occurring. The only sedimentation into Gold Creek appears to be from cattle and in past years we have seen significant damage along the creek.

Past the Lost Meadow Trailhead, Rd. #3976 proceeds south for about one mile and is open to all users with a seasonal winter closure. The road is in poor condition with severe gullying and needs maintenance since there is evidence that it is being used for some camping and firewood collection. Monitoring followed the road to its end in an old clear cut, and at WP 394 a non-system route has been created by ATV use, which climbs a hill and then proceeds north along an open ridge that overlooks the byway and Wise River. It appears this is just an ATV play trail for the sole purpose of getting a view which could be accomplished with only a short walk. This route should be signed as unauthorized and obliterated.

The next area started from Rd. #2465<sup>3</sup> at the Mono Creek Campground where Tr. #1002 begins and is protected year round once it enters the Torrey Mt. RWA about a mile from the trailhead. The sign here is in good condition, but needs to indicate the yearlong protection at the RWA boundary; currently it shows that snowmobile use is allowed. After checking the beginning of Tr. #1002, which did not show evidence of motorized use, though there were some mountain bike tracks, monitoring returned to Rd. #2465 heading south towards the Coolidge Ghost Town.

Looking west from WP 399 there is an old road that appears to be Tr. "#20000?" as shown on the BDNF Visitor and Travel map that is open both ATVs and motorcycles, and there was evidence of significant motorized use; no signs were posted at the intersection. This route connects Rd. #2465 to the byway just below Lupine picnic area. Monitoring returned to the road after traveling the route about ¼ mile since no adverse impacts were observed; the road bed is stable, though there could be an issue where it crosses the creek near the byway.

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<sup>3</sup> This is sometimes referred to as the old Polaris Road.



At WP 401 there is an old logging road leaving Rd. #2465 that could be a northern extension of Rd. #2406, though it is unclear on the travel map and it may be an old logging road. Unfortunately there is no gate or sign indicating its designation. Tracks from motorized use go over a berm at WP 402 where there is also a torn up culvert; there is erosion and ponding at this site.

As Rd. #2465 crosses Elkhorn Creek there is another road that heads northeast accessing some private mining claims that are owned by Surf and Mountain LLC (Seattle) and the Davis Family Trust (Cardwell Mt). However, there were no signs at this point and it should be gated since it accesses private land.

Finally monitoring continued from the Coolidge-Elkhorn parking area where full-sized vehicles must stop, but ATVs and motorcycles can continue past the gate all the way to the beginning of Tr. #2747. At the parking area there is an old sign that restricts vehicles over 40 inches, but motorized use was evident all the way to the start of Tr. #2747 where it ended.

### **September 23<sup>rd</sup> – Sawlog Creek Area**

This trip monitored roads in the Sawlog Creek area, including a road near Toomey Creek. The main Sawlog road along the creek accesses the West Pioneer IRA after fording across the Big Hole River through BLM ground in Sec 17. It appears there is little traffic on this road due to high river levels for most of the summer, which may swamp ATVs, but would be fine for full-sized trucks. All of the routes surveyed do not have official system numbers on the BDNF Visitor and Travel map.

The trail shown on the map toward Tucker Creek is barely visible and not seeing any motorized use. The route through Sec 21 is an old road but appears to be closed to full sized vehicles by way of a barrier (see photo 1170), but the sign has been destroyed, (see WP 414). The route shown becomes a single track at WP 418. No route is shown beyond WP 416 (up the creek toward Sec 28) but the sign in photo 1176 seems to suggest there is a route beyond the fence, but none was visible on the ground.

Between waypoints 420 and 428 there is a serious knapweed problem. The weeds are mostly right in the road and many were in full bloom. This was reported to the Forest Service Wise River office and the Big Hole Weed Committee.

There are a number of other short “side” routes along this survey, created by full size vehicles. It appears hunters want to access all the good “lookout” points with their vehicles where they can sit and watch for game. The worst one is at WP 431 where the route has been advanced down the steep hill to a little grassy spot, (see photo 1199 that shows the end of route at a grassy spot).

There were numerous signs in the general area showing designated routes, but many were laying flat on the ground, either run over or broken by cattle. There appears to be another ford across the river between Section 24 (state land) and Sec 19 (BLM).

Erosion and vegetation damage is not serious in this area but the weed problem needs to be addressed.

### **September 24<sup>th</sup> - Cannivan Gulch Area**

This trip monitored the Cannivan Gulch area and Tr. #2216 as it connects from the Sheep Creek drainage; there is a pass at this point. However, instead of following Tr. #2216 from the end of Rd. #7407 as intended, monitoring followed a non-system route almost all the way to Black Lion Mt., which is in an area protected from motorized use, before turning north to Tr. #2216 at the Cannivan/Sheep Creek pass.

This area is accessed from Highway 43 at Dewey Mt. The Quartz Hill Rd. #187 extends through Vipond Park to Rd. #7406. The BDNF Visitor and Travel map shows this road turning south from Buffalo Head Gulch, over a small ridge and into Cannivan Gulch.

Rd. #70606 proceeds south from the intersection of roads #7406 and #7407. It shows some evidence of old dozer use as it enters the timber just past WP 446 where the road officially ends; there is a messy camp spot here with a fire ring full of garbage and broken beer bottles. A non-system route continues from the end of Rd. #70606 and eventually crests out to overlook a beautiful view of Canyon Creek and the East Pioneers. At this point it meets another non-system route traveling east-west along the ridge which apparently comes in from either Rd. #70607 or Rd. #187 in Section 12. At this point monitoring turned west following the route towards Black Lion Mt.

The route continues up the grassy ridge and skirts the timber for as long as possible before climbing through a couple of steep spots that are showing the usual erosion and vegetative damage. As it continues to climb, the terrain becomes almost all fine rock with very few trees or grasses. At WP 450 there is a steep downhill section which shows a long and ugly scar from fall line ATV use, (see photo 1264); another parallel track is beginning just to the north. An uphill section before WP 451 shows similar damage as can be clearly seen in photo 1247 before the trail ends at a cliff that drops into the east fork of Sheep Cr. This is very much goat country and it is sad that an ATV route has been carved into such a pristine and beautiful landscape.

If it weren't for the steepness of the terrain north of WP 451 there would surely be a continuous ATV route all the way to Cannivan/Sheep pass. There have been previous attempts to establish a non-system route at the pass traveling south and there is still parts of a route along the ridge (see waypoints 453-4, photo 1270, 1275). This route needs signed as closed and rehabilitated.

On another note there has been considerable road obliteration done in the Cannivan mining claims area just before the pass. The road from the gate to the claims has been narrowed down to a two track sized trail, fertilized and seeded. The road system in this area is extensive and more rehabilitation is needed to restore the area.

## Appendix B – Photo Documentation Guide and Sample Form

- Waypoints – Initially the photo form did not have a column for waypoints and were written next to the photo number. Later a column was added for waypoints. Each waypoint number was automatically created by the GPS device and may not follow a strict numerical progression. Some waypoints were recorded for location purposes only and do not have an associated photo.
- Photo Number – Typically each photo number corresponds to the frame number shown on the camera’s display screen.
- Photo Direction – Indicates the direction the monitor faced at the time the picture was taken; though the form indicates these were recorded in compass degrees, this proved impractical therefore the direction was recorded as N –north, S- south, E-east, W- west or combinations of these.
- UTM East and UTM North – Waypoints were recorded in WGS84/UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) formats.
- Route # – These are official road or trail numbers that correspond to the 2008 Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest Visitor and Travel Map. Blank fields indicate the number is the same as the one above, or the route does not have a system designation (see comments for clarification).
- Width – Indicates the width (in feet) of the route at a specific waypoint location. This value was recorded only when the route widened noticeably.
- Erosion – This value is qualitative and meant to indicate the general severity of the problem; in some cases a “Y” for yes was used instead of a 1 or 2. Numbers indicate the following:
  - (1) erosion negligible, surface is stable with no ruts
  - (2) some surface flow on route, shallow wheel ruts
  - (3) overland surface flow channeled down route
  - (4) live stream channeled down route
  - (5) significant soil loss and/or soil movement on route
- Vegetation – This qualitative value indicates if motorized use damaged vegetation such as when a vehicle travels through a grassy meadow or parallels a route. In most cases only a 2 or 3 was recorded.
  - (1) none
  - (2) yes
  - (3) severe
- Exotics – This indicates the presence of invasive non-native plant species (weeds). Our monitoring focused more on levels of use and inventorying non-system routes, therefore this value was only recorded for severe cases, otherwise a “1” was generally used to indicate none were documented; this does not mean a complete absence of weeds.

- Water – Monitoring focused on the presence of water on the route, or within 100 feet. In some cases we noted active sediment transport to active waterways from road ditches or stream crossings.
  - (1) No
  - (2) Yes
  
- Additional Comments – Clarifying information on the photographs or what was observed.

**OFF-ROAD VEHICLE MONITORING:**  
**PHOTO FORM**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Day of Week/Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Area: \_\_\_\_\_

USGS Quad: \_\_\_\_\_

Way point #	Photo #	photo direction	UTM East	UTM North	route #	width	erosion	veg.	exotics	water	Comments

Width (in feet)

Erosion (status of worst erosion):

- erosion negligible, surface is stable with no ruts (1)
- some surface flow on route, shallow wheel ruts (2)
- overland surface flow channeled down route (3)
- live stream channeled down route (4)
- significant soil loss and/or soil movement on route (5)

Veg. (vegetation damage):

- none (1)

- yes (2)
- severe (3)

Exotics (presence of exotic plant species):

- no (1)
- yes (2)
- severe (3)
- uncertain (4)

Water (within 100' of a waterway):

- no (1)
- yes (2)

Additional Comments:

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**Surveyor Information**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_