Subset of Desired Conditions Related to Access, Habitat, Wilderness, and Set Aside

1. Road systems are safe and responsive to public needs and desires, are affordable and effectively managed, have minimal effect on aquatic and terrestrial systems, and are in balance with available funding. Administrative use supports Forest Service management objectives.

   Roads needed for the long term are identified and investments are made to minimize negative impacts on the ecosystem. Roads identified for long-term use, but not currently funded for adequate maintenance are put in a stored condition, where they remain on the system but are not actively used. Access requirements anticipated in the future are met by using travel analysis reports to inform travel management decisions.

   A system of roads, trails, and areas for nonmotorized and motor vehicle use is identified and is available for public use. Motor vehicle use occurs on roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use in compliance with Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212). Trails for motor vehicle use provide a variety of recreational experiences, including various difficulty levels and trail lengths, access to scenic areas, and routes through assorted ecosystems while minimizing impacts to natural resources and user conflicts. Loop trails and trailhead developments meet the needs of increased recreation use. Snowmobile use is managed to provide varying challenges and distances while respecting ecological systems and other users.

   Opportunities for trails where motor vehicle use is prohibited are emphasized in backcountry nonmotorized, recommended wilderness, and wilderness areas and provide a range of difficulty for a variety of recreational experiences, including mechanized transportation (bicycles – except in wilderness areas), foot travel, and pack or riding stock. Trails are located to provide experiences in different ecosystem types and scenic settings and do not contribute to natural resource damage.

   Rights-of-way and easements provide adequate and legal access to National Forest System lands. Cooperative road agreements with States and counties are used to provide a seamless public road system to access private, state, and public lands. Jurisdiction of county, state, and local access roads is appropriate to ensure management objectives are met for both private and state lands.

   Where feasible, Forest Service recreation sites are connected to each other and to adjacent communities through pathways, trails, bike lanes, and waterways providing opportunities for both motorized and/or nonmotorized modes of travel and providing for loop-riding opportunities.

   The need for tribal access to exercise treaty-reserved rights is acknowledged and supported.
2. The desired conditions for Watershed Function (section 1.1), Species Diversity (section 1.2), Disturbance Processes (section 1.4), Structural Stages (section 1.6), Plant Species Composition (section 1.7), Stand Density (section 1.8), and Landscape Patterns (section 1.12) provide sustainable

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* = Aligned with First Foods Management Approach

and resilient habitat for elk throughout their seasonal ranges. Elk habitat is spatially and temporally diverse and provides a mosaic of forage, hiding cover, and security across the landscape. The landscape pattern of these attributes provide elk habitat that contributes to improved distribution, abundance, and social acceptability of elk on National Forest System lands.

Hiding cover is available and enhances elk security. Hiding cover and forage patches are distributed to provide adequate biomass and quality forage such that elk remain on National Forest System lands to provide year-round recreational and cultural opportunities and minimize damage to crops and pastures on private lands. Browse and herbaceous plants are available to elk as forage to maintain body condition or animal performance, per the animal's seasonal requirements (e.g., lactation or overwinter survival). The pattern and amount of forage and cover may vary depending on site potential and potential vegetation group desired conditions (sections 1.4, 1.6, 1.8, and 1.12).

Consistent with other desired conditions and management area direction, 30 to 100 percent of a subwatershed provides effective security for elk as defined by Hillis et al. (1991). Lands that provide elk security are distributed across all seasonal ranges providing safety when disturbance in their usual range is intensified by motorized use and other human activities. Larger landscapes that provide elk security exist in appropriate spatial distribution and are connected or are nearby other smaller areas of elk security to allow for seasonal movement of elk across their range and to retain elk on National Forest System lands at all times of the year.

Elk are broadly distributed on spring/summer/fall habitat generally from April through November. Elk habitat provides a balanced juxtaposition of adequate nutritional resources for elk during summer and winter, minimizing human disturbance effects year round, and providing sufficient vegetative cover (Rowland et al. 2000, Long et al. 2008, Toweill and Thomas 2002). Effective elk security (minimal or no motorized use) within flat, high visibility landscapes encourages elk to remain on public lands. In steeper lands with increased topographic relief and/or vegetative cover, effective elk security encourages elk to remain on public lands. Effective security allows elk to utilize available forage and cover during calving season in the spring.

Winter ranges typically exist at lower elevations on smaller portions of the landscape. Elk use winter habitat generally from December through March and often into mid-April. Effective elk security within winter ranges helps maintain body condition and encourages elk to remain on public lands.

Damage to crops and fences on neighboring private lands decrease with improved seasonal distribution of elk on Forest Service lands. Elk populations are distributed across seasonal habitats to fulfil their ecological roles and contribute to societal goals for recreation and available to tribal hunters exercising their tribal hunting rights. Federally listed species (aquatic and terrestrial) trend towards recovery or are delisted. Management activities improve the conservation status of listed species and designated critical habitat. Habitats are managed in accordance with conservation planning documents, recovery plans, best available scientific information, and local knowledge.

Critical habitat components (i.e., primary constituent elements and primary biological features) are protected and restored to achieve species recovery.^*

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