

# *KEEP THE MEDICINE BOW WILD*



The Citizens' Plan to protect and restore the  
Medicine Bow National Forest

Maps will be available in the near future

# ***KEEP THE MEDICINE BOW WILD***

For far to long, the Medicine Bow National Forest has been managed almost exclusively to benefit logging corporations, at the expense of wildlife and wildlands. To turn the tide, local residents have drafted their own management plan, based on over 400 scientific studies, to protect and restore this amazing forest and all the diverse wildlife that make it their home. The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will:

## ***Save the Special Places***

Only 7% of the Medicine Bow is currently protected as wilderness. Many of the forest's untamed areas, like the wild Rock Creek Canyon and the ancient ponderosa pine forests of Laramie Peak, should be preserved for wildlife and the enjoyment of future generations. The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will protect these and other special places by managing all of the forest's roadless areas as wilderness or other special designations.

## ***End Clearcut Logging***

Clearcutting is the most environmentally damaging type of logging and is not accepted by the public, yet it is still the rule and not the exception on the Medicine Bow. The citizens' plan will end clearcutting, and allow only less damaging types of logging.

## ***Connect Forest Habitat***

On the Medicine Bow, the last remaining islands of continuous forest are isolated in a sea of clearcuts and logging roads. The citizens' plan will restore habitat connections to allow wildlife to move freely into new areas and migrate between their winter and summer homes.

## ***Restore Natural Processes***

The forests of the Rocky Mountains evolved with natural processes such as mistletoe, pine beetle, and fire for millions of years. And if these processes are eliminated, the forests becomes less a forest and more a tree farm. To keep the Medicine Bow forests wild and healthy, the Citizens' Plan will restore natural processes to their rightful place within this forest ecosystem.

## ***Encourage Responsible Recreation***

The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to explore the natural beauty of the forest. Motorized access to forest lands will be substantially the same as today. And because it will protect large wild areas from logging operations and irresponsible vehicle use, the plan will increase and protect quiet non-motorized recreational opportunities along with the environment.

## ***PROBLEMS ON THE MEDICINE BOW***

The plant and animal communities of the Medicine Bow National Forest are facing a number of serious threats, which the Forest Service has, unfortunately, refused to address. For this reason, concerned citizens have come together to create their own management plan—a common sense alternative to the Forest Service status quo. The plan, entitled Keep the Medicine Bow WILD, is designed to protect and restore this incredible forest.

### **Plants and animals are not being given the protection they need.**

- River otter, lynx, white-tailed ptarmigan, wolverine, gray wolf, grizzly bear, Audubon's big horn sheep, and American bison have all been driven to extinction on the Medicine Bow.
- Other plants and animals, like the Laramie columbine, the boreal toad, and the Colorado River cutthroat trout are close to extinction on this forest.

### **Logging on the Medicine Bow is damaging the environment and is diminishing the forest's wildness.**

- The Medicine Bow is the most heavily logged national forest in the Southern Rocky Mountains.
- More than two-thirds of the forest have been heavily impacted by clearcuts and logging roads.
- Clearcutting is the most damaging type of logging and is not accepted by the public. Yet clearcutting is the rule and not the exception on the Medicine Bow.

### **Logging on the Medicine Bow National Forest is "fragmenting" the forest, cutting it up into smaller and smaller pieces.**

- Forested migration and habitat corridors are being systematically cut down inside the Medicine Bow, and between this forest and the Colorado forests located immediately south.
- Many animals, like northern goshawk and pine marten, require large areas of continuous forest for survival. These animals are not able to find the nesting habitat, security, or food they need in the small patches left between clearcuts and logging roads.

### **The Medicine Bow is being damaged by irresponsible recreation.**

- In the spring and summer, careless off-road vehicle users drive through riparian areas and wetlands, needlessly damaging wildlife habitat and harming water quality.
- Currently, snowmobiles can travel almost anywhere on the Medicine Bow—off road and often within sensitive biological areas, harming forest plants and animals living beneath the snow.
- Snowmobile use has more than doubled in the past few years on the Snowy Range. The Forest Service has taken no steps to address the environmental impacts associated with this new snowmobile boom.

## Keep the Medicine Bow WILD

### ***SAVING THE SPECIAL PLACES***

The Keep the Medicine Bow Wild Plan will protect all remaining roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres on the Medicine Bow National Forest—many of which will be proposed for permanent protection as wilderness.

#### **Protecting roadless areas makes sense.**

- Roadless Areas provide a full range of recreational opportunities. It is becoming increasingly difficult to get away from roads and clearcuts on the Medicine Bow. By protecting roadless areas, the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD plan will ensure that anglers, hunters, and hikers can continue to enjoy the beauty of untrammeled nature and “get away from it all” on this forest.
- Protecting roadless areas on the Medicine Bow will benefit hunters. Healthy elk and deer populations need large areas of undisturbed habitat for hiding cover and shelter from the hot summer sun and winter wind. Some of this forest’s best areas of undisturbed habitat are in roadless areas.
- Of course, protecting roadless areas will also benefit the animals and plants of the Medicine Bow. Many animals, like the Northern Goshawk, require large areas of continuous forest to survive—exactly the kind of habitat found in roadless areas. If roadless areas disappear, so too will many of the rare animals that inhabit these wild lands.

The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will work to permanently protect many of the forest’s roadless areas for future generations. Some of these special places are:

- **Rock Creek Canyon** - Ancient lodgepole pines and a spectacular stream occupy this heavily timbered canyon.
- **Laramie Peak** - 400-year-old ponderosa pine and the extremely rare Laramie columbine are harbored within this roadless area.
- **Huston Park Additions** - These large roadless lands next to the Huston Park Wilderness Area provide old-growth habitat to forest dwelling animals, and provide human visitors spectacular scenery.
- **Vedauwoo** - Truly incredible rock formations, beaver dams, forested slopes and open meadows are only some of the outstanding qualities making this roadless area deserving of wilderness.

### ***ENDING CLEARCUT LOGGING***

Because clearcut logging is so environmentally destructive, and because it has been so overused on the Medicine Bow, the Citizens' Plan will phase-out clearcut logging in favor of less damaging harvest types.

- Of all the cutting methods currently available, clearcutting generally causes the most damage to forest wildlife and their habitats, soils, visual quality, and recreation.
- Clearcutting fragments the forest into small patches, leaving the remaining strips of old trees unsuitable for animals requiring larger areas for nesting, security, and forage.
- In June 1992, the Chief of the Forest Service announced that the use of clearcutting would be reduced by 70% on National Forests. However, clearcut logging is still the most common method of removing trees from the Medicine Bow.
- For the proposed Tie Camp Timber Sale, 80 (65%) of the 123 cuts would be clearcuts. All of these clearcuts would harm wildlife, soils, watersheds, recreation, or aesthetic resources.
- In the Rockies, clearcutting is the cheapest method of removing trees from a forest.
- Clearcutting does not mimic fire as the USFS often claims in an attempt to justify its logging proposals. Clearcutting takes most of the nutrients out of the forest rather than recycling into the soil as fire does. Furthermore, clearcutting is done on 80-140 year rotations, while natural fire might affect a part of the forest only once every 300 years.
- Although the extent of clearcutting is easily seen by airplane, most clearcuts are not evident when driving a car through the Medicine Bow National Forest because the Forest Service has left 100-200 foot-wide "beauty strips" of uncut trees along roadways to hide the scars and because many logging roads on the forest are gated and closed to public travel.

## Keep the Medicine Bow WILD

### ***RESTORING NATURAL PROCESSES***

Natural processes such as pine beetle, mistletoe, and fire are important components of the Medicine Bow ecosystems, without which they cannot be healthy. Unfortunately, the Forest Service has suppressed these processes and has used them as an excuse to promote large scale logging operations—at great harm to the plants and animals which live here. The Citizens' Plan will work to restore natural processes to their rightful place in the forest ecosystems of the Medicine Bow.

#### **Healthy forests need dead and dying trees.**

- Natural processes *create* food and habitat. Owls nest in mistletoe. Woodpeckers nest in standing dead trees and eat insects that are tree parasites.
- Natural processes are essential components of the nutrient cycle within forests, promoting rebirth and growth of new plants and trees.
- Natural processes, unlike clearcut logging, don't kill all the trees. Some are left to provide habitat and to grow and thrive.

#### **Even if it was a good idea to entirely stop all forest fires, it simply isn't possible. In fact, logging may actually increase fire risk.**

- Logging operations target the largest and oldest trees in an area, even though these trees, with their thick bark and high branches, are the most fire resistant.
- Logging removes the forest canopy, which normally keeps a forest floor cool and moist. Without a canopy, the sun dries out potential fuels lying on the forest floor.
- A great deal of dead wood, called slash, is often left behind by logging operations. Logging slash quickly dries out and becomes extremely flammable.

### ***CONNECTING FOREST HABITAT***

Animals requiring large tracts of forest once lived successfully in the “big wild” forests of the Medicine Bow. Unfortunately, these large tracts are now few and far between because the Medicine Bow is being sliced into smaller and smaller pieces by clearcuts and logging roads. For this reason, the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan adopts a “core and corridor” approach, based on the principles of conservation biology. This approach has two steps:

- 1. Protect the largest tracts of forest available, which are roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres, from logging and roadbuilding.**
- 2. Designate forested corridors linking these core wildlife areas. Logging will be allowed in corridors as long as it does not harm ecosystem health. Forest roads will remain open, but no new roads will be built.**

By protecting the last wild places on the Medicine Bow, and restoring forested corridors between them, wildlife will be able to move freely into new areas and migrate between their winter and summer homes.

Some of the Wildlife which will benefit from a “Core and Corridor” approach are:

- **Elk** - Restored corridors will benefit these animals as they travel between their high altitude summer homes and their winter range at the periphery of the forest.
- **Northern goshawk** - This amazing raptor is very sensitive to human impacts and requires large forested areas for survival.
- **American marten** - Forested corridors will allow this old-growth loving predator to travel between wild areas on the Medicine Bow.
- **Lynx** - The lynx once thrived in the big wild forests of the Medicine Bow. But, when these big forests disappeared, so too did the lynx. Protecting core wildlife habitat on the Medicine Bow, and restoring corridors between them, will make it more likely that this beautiful feline can be returned to the forest ecosystems of southeastern Wyoming.

## Keep the Medicine Bow WILD

### ***ENCOURAGING RESPONSIBLE RECREATION***

The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will not only do wonderful things for the environment. It will do wonderful things for recreationists as well.

#### **Protecting non-motorized recreational opportunities.**

##### **Hiking**

Not many people like to hike through clearcuts and other places devastated by logging operations. But most people do enjoy hiking and exploring the natural beauty of wild places like Rock Creek Canyon and Laramie Peak. By protecting these places from logging operations and new roads, the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will also protect people's ability to hike and enjoy the last roadless areas of the Medicine Bow.

##### **Fishing**

Unfortunately, water quality is often degraded by irresponsible motorized use on the Medicine Bow—when off-road vehicles are driven through and along fragile riparian areas. The Citizens' Plan will protect water quality by keeping motorized vehicles on roads.

##### **Cross-country Skiing and Snowshoeing**

Often, skiers and snowshoers are frustrated by the impossibility of escaping the sights, sounds, and smells of snowmobiles. The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will protect and increase non-motorized winter recreational opportunities by asking snowmobilers to stay on roads—so that this forest might be shared and enjoyed by everyone.

#### **Encouraging Responsible Motorized Recreation**

Considering the negative environmental impacts of off-road vehicle use, the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD position on motorized vehicles seems incredibly simple. Responsible motorized recreation occurs when vehicles, including snowmobiles, stay on roads. The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan will maintain all Forest Service developed routes, so thousands of miles of roads will be open to motorized vehicles. These roads are not plowed and provide almost unlimited motorized recreational opportunities—summer or winter.

## Keep the Medicine Bow WILD

### ***Mountain Biking and a Wild medicine Bow***

With its challenging terrain, beautiful scenery, plenty of single track and countless miles of old logging roads, the Medicine Bow National Forest is a favorite place to mountain bike. Here are some questions and answers concerning mountain biking and the Citizens' Conservation Plan.

#### **Which areas on the Forest will remain open to mountain biking if the Forest Service adopts the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD plan?**

In the Citizens' Conservation Alternative, about 35% of the forest would be protected as wilderness. All other areas (65%) would be open to mountain biking. Trails that will remain open include the *Happy Jack trail complex*, *Headquarters Trail*, *the Sheep Mountain Trail*, and *the Corner Mountain Trail*. Thousands of miles of dirt roads and jeep trails will also remain open to mountain bikes.

#### **Would some areas in the Medicine Bow National Forest be closed to mountain bikes?**

Yes. The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan would designate most of the roadless areas larger than 5,000 acres in size as wilderness. Because the Wilderness Act allows no mechanized equipment inside a wilderness, mountain bikes would be excluded. If you would like to know which areas on the forest the citizens' conservation plan proposes as wilderness, please look at the map inside one of our "Keep the Medicine Bow WILD" brochures or give us a call at our office.

#### **My mountain bike doesn't cause that much damage. Why do you want to kick me out?**

Right now, the Medicine Bow National Forest is the most heavily logged national forest in the entire Southern Rocky Mountain Region, which includes Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico. At least 2/3 of the forest has been heavily impacted by logging roads and clearcuts. Because the Medicine Bow is so heavily logged, almost every roadless area on the forest is threatened.

Wilderness designation is the only way to permanently protect special places on the forest from logging. So, people aren't supporting the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD plan because they are against mountain biking. They just want to save what little wild forest is left on the Medicine Bow.

Let's take the Rock Creek Roadless Area as an example. In the past few years, the Forest Service has attempted to log this spectacular area and to conduct a large oil and gas exploration project within its boundaries. Only by luck and a lot of hard work were citizens able to stave off these projects and keep the area wild. Though a new Rock Creek Wilderness would be off-limits to mountain bikes, it would preserve the area as it stands today—clearcut and drilling rig free. To us, this seems like a very good trade.

## Keep the Medicine Bow WILD

### *Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Road System*

#### **Background**

- More than 3,000 miles of roads cut through the Medicine Bow, which is more than enough mileage to travel from New York to San Francisco.
- 90% of the forest is within one mile of a Forest Service designated road. 98% of the Medicine Bow is within two miles of a road.

#### **Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Proposal**

- The current Forest Service road system will remain substantially unchanged in the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan. Thousands of miles of roads will remain open to vehicle traffic.
- The Keep the Medicine Bow WILD proposal will close a few routes inside proposed wilderness boundaries totaling about 40 miles across the forest. These routes are: 872, 872f, 874, 103, 336 between roads 396 and 275, 700n, 700b and 700bb.
- The routes which will be closed to vehicle traffic are all unmaintained jeep trails, most of which harm streams, wetlands, meadows, or sensitive wildlife.

1,400 miles of roads criss-cross the Snowy Range section of the Medicine Bow.

Out of this huge number, the Keep the Medicine Bow WILD Plan proposes that only 20 miles of the most environmentally harmful roads be closed.

# Lands Protected as Wilderness for Selected Forests

% Wilderness

