

SWAN VALLEY GRIZZLY BEAR CONSERVATION AGREEMENT: A MIXED OWNERSHIP LANDSCAPE PLAN^{TWS}

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A Conservation Agreement was developed and implemented in 1995 covering approximately 368,000 acres in the Swan Valley of west central Montana between Plum Creek Timber Company, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This management plan allows the cooperators to meet economic and recreational objectives for their ownership while providing conservation benefits to grizzly bears using information from local scientific studies and the newest technology. The biological objective is to maintain landscape conditions conducive to grizzly bears to facilitate their movement between the Bob Marshall and Mission Mountains Wildernesses. Measures have been developed that minimize disturbance to bear habitat and the period of their likely use and to decrease the potential for human-caused mortality. Conservation measures include establishing linkage zones across the valley floor, the stepped rotation of commercial activities through the valley, landscape habitat and access management, and site-specific habitat prescriptions for forest management. Specific plan measures include the curtailment of management activities within linkage zones during the early spring period as bears emerge from dens; coordinating the commercial activity among landowners to occur in only 4 of 11 subunits during the non-denning period; retention of cover at both the landscape and stand level; and reducing public vehicular access in bear habitats by instituting road restrictions and road reclamations. The Plan includes monitoring such as evaluating the effectiveness of road closure devices, sampling administrative use levels within inactive subunits, tracking commercial activity, and reporting landscape cover levels.