

## Multiple Use Management at the Headwaters

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*"To sustain the health, diversity and productivity  
of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet  
the needs of present and future generations."  
—Mission of the US Forest Service*



Source: Flathead National Forest, 2005-2009

The 2.4 million acre Flathead National Forest makes up the majority of the headwater lands in the Flathead Watershed, an area larger than the state of Rhode Island. Congress established the Forest Service to provide quality water and timber for the Nation's benefit. Over the years, the public expanded the list of what they wanted from national forests and grasslands. Congress responded by directing the Forest Service to manage national forests for additional multiple uses and benefits and for the sustained yield of renewable resources such as water, forage, wildlife, wood, and recreation. Multiple use means managing resources under the best combination of uses to benefit the American people while ensuring the productivity of the land and protecting the quality of the environment. President Teddy Roosevelt's words over 100 years ago when he helped create the Forest Service still ring true today "...meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs..."

Since 1897 when the Flathead Forest Reserve was created, the Forest has managed for a diverse set of multiple uses. Nearly half of the Forest is congressionally designated wilderness (Great Bear, Bob Marshall, Mission Mountains Wilderness Areas), places where trail work is done using cross-cut saws and travel is by foot and horseback. Over 200 miles of the North, Middle and South forks of the Flathead River flow through the national forest as Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Forest offers a wide range of year-round recreation opportunities from skiing and snowmobiling to whitewater rafting and hiking. Hundreds of miles of open roads are available to access places to hunt, fish, camp, pick huckleberries or just enjoy the scenery.

The harvest and sale of commercial timber takes place across the forest and many area residents take advantage of the personal use firewood and Christmas tree permit programs. The Forest provides habitat for over 200 wildlife species and several different species of fish. This includes the threatened grizzly bear, lynx, bull trout, and

a rare aquatic plant. From high elevation forests and lakes to valley wetlands and ponds, over 200 species of birds have been recorded, a treat for bird watchers.

Flathead National Forest works in cooperation with the Forest Service research unit, supporting two forest research sites that have provided study opportunities on over 80 years of research on western larch and the effects of fire. There are several Research Natural Areas on the Forest, designated to protect unique ecological areas as places to do research, maintain biological diversity and foster education. The Bigfork Tree Improvement Area offers opportunities for studying and growing trees to improve forest health and productivity.

As part of the greater Crown of the Continent Ecosystem and with specially designated areas that help define the unique qualities of the Forest and its sense of place within our local communities, the Flathead National Forest will continue its motto of "Caring for the Land and Serving People."