Recreation Specialist Report

Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands Plan Revision

Environmental Impact Statement Analysis

Submitted by:  /s/

Cynthia A. Geuss
Land Management Planner,
Cibola National Forest and National Grasslands
Executive Summary

The pertinent issues derived from the need to change the Grassland-specific components of the 1985 Plan as identified in the 2008 Comprehensive Evaluation Report and Supplemental Analysis of the Management Situation document are explained below. This analysis addresses the needs for change in developed and dispersed recreation, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes, and scenic resources. Dispersed recreation will include motorized recreational activities.

Recreation and Scenic Resources-Dispersed
The current plan is silent on direction for dispersed recreation aside from designations of specific acreages of ROS classifications and motorized uses. Standards and Guidelines direct ORV closures or restrictions to protect resources from unpredictable damage. The revised plan needs to provide more direction on management of dispersed recreation at differing levels of development and in a variety of settings.

Recreation and Scenic Resources – Motorized (Travel Management)
As of this writing, Black Kettle and McClellan Creek have published Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) as directed in the Travel Management Rule. Kiowa and Rita Blanca are mid-way through their Travel Management analysis. The current plan directs restriction or closure of ORV trails when damage occurs. The revised plan will carry forward direction from the Grasslands Travel Management EAs and the Decision Notice and FONSI. The Travel Management decision for the Kiowa and Rita Blanca may need to be revisited if Alternative C is selected.

Recreation and Scenic Resources-Developed
The current plan defines the construction schedule and ‘Person At One Time’ capacity for developed sites. The revised plan would provide a spectrum of developed recreation opportunities characterized by varying levels of development and amenities that are in harmony with their natural and cultural settings (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

The 1985 Land Management Plan is silent on nature based tourism interpretive activities beyond management of cultural resource sites. The preferred alternative would provide direction for increased visitation and touring interpretive activities related to unique scenery, wildlife and formally designated historic sites.

The 1985 Plan is silent on the National and State Scenic Byways and the Santa Fe National Historic Trail located in the vicinity of the Grasslands. The preferred alternative would provide direction for management of these corridors and their associated cultural, recreational, and scenic resources.

Alternative A provides guidelines for management of the Canadian River to preserve wild, scenic, and recreation river potential and acquire private lands within the corridor in order to preserve the unique qualities of the river. Standards for managing the river as Eligible Scenic are carried over from Alternative A to Alternatives B and C. No need for change was identified for the Canadian River.

See the Summary of Environmental Consequences below, for an overview of areas analysis to the recreation opportunities and resources.
Overview of the Affected Environment

Recreation opportunities on the Grasslands greatly contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The Grasslands provide outstanding opportunities for hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, bird and wildlife viewing, driving to enjoy scenery and historic sites. Developed recreation, particularly the lake-based recreation complexes on Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands, and the sites within Mills Canyon area offer unique recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors to enjoy (SESR). Black Kettle, McClellan Creek and Rita Blanca National Grasslands provide special values for the area because the relative scarcity of public lands in Oklahoma and Texas compared to the Kiowa and the rest of the Cibola National Forest in New Mexico. Only 2.6% of the land in Texas is in the public domain (Texas, 2010) and only 1.92% is open to public use. In Oklahoma 2.29% of the land is State or Federal public lands open to public use. This can be compared to the public lands available for public use in New Mexico. In spite of the relative scarcity of public lands, wildlife related recreation is very important to the social and economic climate of Oklahoma. In 2010, Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that 1.5 million people participated in wildlife associated recreation in Oklahoma and the wildlife associated recreation expenditures totaled $995 billion. In Oklahoma it is estimated that 60% visit public lands for these activities. (FWS, 2001) There are similar statistics for Texas, where it is estimated that 4.9 million people participated in wildlife associated recreation and the wildlife associated recreation expenditures totaled 5.4 billion. In Texas it is estimated that 55% of individuals who participate in wildlife associated recreation visited public lands for these activities. (FWS, 2001)

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum process recognizes that people choose a specific setting for recreation activities in order to realize a desired set of experiences. For example, camping in a large undeveloped setting with difficult access and few facilities offers a sense of solitude, challenge, and self-reliance. In contrast, camping in a setting with easy access and highly developed facilities offers more comfort, security, and social opportunities. (USFS, 1990) The ROS classes provide direction for supplying a range of recreation opportunity settings and management emphasis.

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes of Roaded Natural and Semi-Primitive Motorized were assigned to the grasslands in the current forest plan. Roaded Natural areas are defined as areas where there is an opportunity to affiliate with other users in developed sites. These areas are predominantly natural with some site modifications that harmonize with the natural environment. Rustic facilities provide some comfort for the user as well as site protection and on-site regimentation and controls are noticeable but harmonize with the natural environment. The Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation classes have a moderate probability of experiencing solitude with a high degree of self-reliance and challenge in using motorized equipment. These areas are predominantly natural, lacking human modification, except when necessary for site protection.

The presence of state and county roads was the primary defining factor in assigning these classes, and not always the planned recreation management. There are seven factors that are considered when assigning ROS classes: access, remoteness, naturalness, facilities and site management, social encounters, visitor impacts and visitor management. Roads generally influence many of these factors, including access, remoteness, and social encounters. However, the grasslands were heavily roaded due to the relatively flat terrain, grasslands vegetation, and primary grazing and agricultural uses. There are roads on most section lines, and often additional roads throughout the
units. Even though some of the roads are county maintained roads, they typically receive little use. The flat terrain and the minimal use of some roads reduce the influence they have on the recreational experience. Even with the roads, recreation users can experience a sense of remoteness, naturalness and self reliance in many locations. The classification of Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized was not assigned to the Grasslands within the 1985 Forest Plan.

Much of the Mills Canyon area was included in an Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) in the current 1985 Forest Plan. This area was assigned Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS class, which is generally not compatible with an IRA management. There are others areas managed more compatible with Rural Recreation classification due to the facilities provided and proximity to communities. However, this class was not used in the current plan.

**Dispersed Recreation**
Dispersed recreation includes all recreation activities that take place away from developed recreation sites such as campgrounds and picnic grounds. This includes dispersed camping (where no facilities are provided), hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, bird watching. Trail use for hiking, horseback riding and motorized recreation are considered to be dispersed recreation. There are occasional recreation special use permits requested and permitted. These include group activities such as mountain man rendezvous and bicycle events.

Wildlife associated recreation and site seeing are the primary dispersed recreation activities on the grasslands. This includes hunting, fishing, watching wildlife and birding.

*Hunting and Fishing*
Hunting occurs throughout the Grasslands, with the exception of developed recreation and administrative sites. However, hunters frequently use developed recreation sites for camping and staging their hunting and fishing activities. Black Kettle is one of the best public hunting areas in the nation for Rio Grande Turkey and Northern Bobwhite quail, although deer and small game hunting are also popular. Fishing is popular on the lakes and ponds of the Black Kettle, McClellan Creek National Grassland, and the Canadian River on the Kiowa. The projected trend is that hunting and fishing will remain a stable activity, with the greatest activity taking place on the Black Kettle National Grassland in Oklahoma (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

*Hiking and Camping*
Day hiking, and dispersed camping occur on the Grasslands. Dispersed camping occurs frequently associated with hunting. Mills Canyon is the most popular area for dispersed camping on the Kiowa National Grassland, where families have been returning for camping trips for years at favorite sites among the cottonwood groves in the canyon bottoms, and among the juniper clusters on the rim. Many designated dispersed sites on the Black Kettle are frequently used for camping, especially during hunting seasons. Dispersed camping may be reduced in the Mills Canyon and Thompson Grove areas of the Kiowa and Rita Blanca due to potential restrictions enforced as a result of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. As a result, increased use of developed sites is may occur.

Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands currently contain about 13.7 miles of short hiking trails around the major recreation sites, each of which is less than 2 miles long. A need for additional trails has been identified, especially for Mills Canyon and near some of the developed recreation sites on the Black Kettle.
The 2.4-mile portion of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail on the Kiowa has become popular for hiking although it is managed as a historic site (National Historic Landmark) rather than a recreation trail. Because of the flat terrain, and fragmented and fenced land ownership, there are no areas which provide remote backpacking or long trail riding opportunities, and none are expected to be developed. (SESR).

**Off-Highway Motorized Use**
Most of the system roads are open to off highway motorized vehicles, including ATVs and motorcycles that are not licensed for highway use. Driving motor vehicles off-road (cross country) is currently allowed on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands, but has been prohibited on the Black Kettle National Grassland since the 1990s. The Kiowa and Rita Blanca Grasslands are undergoing a planning process in accordance with the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 294) to designate a system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use. Once the Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) is finalized for the District, driving off the designated routes or areas will be prohibited, unless provided for by written authorization such as a special use permit, such as those held by grazing permittees. OHV motorized recreation occurs primarily in the Mills Canyon area, however OHVs are also frequently used for hunting throughout the grasslands. McClellan Creek National Grassland currently provides the only motorized trail system area designated for motorcycles and all-terrain-vehicles (ATVs.)

**Other Dispersed Recreation Activities**
Bird and wildlife viewing have developed into popular recreational activities on the Grasslands. The public’s interest in birds and wildlife has increased a variety of partnerships to provide ecotourism opportunities that would enhance rural economic development (USDA Forest Service, 2008). Kiowa National Grassland has several ‘special’ recreation opportunities that attract visitors to the area. They include the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway, La Frontera del Llano Scenic Byway, Canadian River eligible Scenic River, and the Canadian River Roadless Area. The state of Oklahoma has been promoting tours through the grasslands through their Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma, which emphasizes the wildlife and bird watching opportunities. The Audubon Society has designated a two Important Bird Areas on the Kiowa; Sauz and Perico Creeks.

**Developed Recreation**
Developed recreation sites on the grasslands include facilities such as restrooms, picnic tables, grills, trash containers, parking barriers, and bulletin boards. There are sites where small groups can camp or picnic for day use, as well as group-use structures that accommodate large numbers of people sometimes for extended periods. Under current management, the projected trend is that all sites will contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors, stimulate the local rural economy, and satisfy the demand for different types of developed recreational opportunities (SESR).

**Interpretive Services**
Interpretive Services provide information to share the story of the natural and cultural resources of the grasslands through a variety of mediums. Interpretive panels have been installed in Mills Canyon to provide information on the history of the Mills orchard and ranch, the Work Projects Administration (WPA), and natural resources. An interpretive trail is available near the Cheyenne, Oklahoma City Park. This site is frequently used as an outdoor classroom. There is an interpretive site with picnic tables and parking for the Santa Fe Trail near Clayton, one of the best preserved sets of historic wagon ruts on public lands. There are a number of other interpretive
trails provided in association with developed recreation sites on Black Kettle. An interpretive trail is under construction for the Black Kettle Administrative Office site. There are brochures available on a number of topics, including bird watching and the Santa Fe Trail. There are interpretive services provided occasionally with special events such as the Wildlife Expo in Oklahoma and the public lands fishing derbies.

Summary of Environmental Consequences

The land management plan provides a programmatic framework that guides site-specific actions but does not authorize, fund, or carry out any project or activity. Because the land management plan does not authorize or mandate any site-specific activities or ground-disturbing actions there can be no direct effects. However, there may be implications, or longer term environmental consequences, of managing the forests under this programmatic framework.

An interdisciplinary approach was used to evaluate possible environmental consequences for dispersed and developed recreation resources addressed in this report. We developed individual matrices that prompted review of plan components for both types of recreation, by alternative. This examination revealed whether implementation of any given alternative might have important positive or negative consequence in achieving the desired condition for the recreation resource. The following resource areas and respective alternatives were identified as having potential consequences in attaining the desired conditions for recreation.

Recreation Opportunity Classes

There is a change in the ROS class designations in Alternative B and C. This is proposed to better reflect the desired conditions, objectives and guidelines. The unique characteristics of the grasslands were considered, and the presence of roads was not the primary defining factor. When naturalness and a sense of remoteness are provided despite the presence of roads semi primitive motorized or non motorized classes is proposed. The ROS classes provide direction for recreation and management, and can influence decisions on other types of projects where the level of development proposed is not compatible with the ROS class assigned to an area. This table is an overview of the proposed changes in ROS class acreages by alternative. The 1985 Plan contains a typographical error in the Semi-primitive Motorized ROS class for Kiowa and Rita Blanca. The Plan says 361, 942 acres, it should read 161,942 acres. There may also be variations in the reporting of these acreages in various reports and documents due to recalculations using GIS, changes in land ownership, and rounding.

Black Kettle and McClellan Creek ROS Classes (acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Semi Primitive Non Motorized</th>
<th>Semi Primitive Motorized</th>
<th>Roaded Natural</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,583</td>
<td>29,529</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No Action)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative B</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,695</td>
<td>4,064</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Proposed Action)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28,695</td>
<td>4,064</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kiowa and Rita Blanca ROS Classes (acres)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Semi Primitive Non Motorized</th>
<th>Semi Primitive Motorized</th>
<th>Roaded Natural</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative A</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>161,942</td>
<td>68,900</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No Action)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative B</td>
<td>8,139</td>
<td>219,936</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>1,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Proposed Action)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative C</td>
<td>8,139</td>
<td>219,936</td>
<td>649</td>
<td>1,409</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dispersed Recreation/ Hunting**

Alternative C would have the same environmental consequences as Alternative B and A; however big-game retrieval would be non-motorized as a result of wilderness designation (Alternative C).

**Dispersed Recreation (gas and oil leases)**

Alternative A, B and C recommend leasing gas and oil with no surface occupancy in Mills Canyon.

Standards and guidelines for Alternative A and B and C would have positive consequences for dispersed recreation within the Canadian River corridor. This guidance directs acquisition of private lands within the canyon to preserve the unique qualities of the river.

**Dispersed Recreation, Wind Energy**

Wind energy development was not addressed in Alternative A.

Wind energy design requirements within Alternative B and C have positive consequences for dispersed recreation around the National Historic Trail and Scenic Byways. Guidelines include restricting wind energy developments to 500 feet outside of eligible National Historic Sites, and minimal alterations from landscape character goals in areas of High Scenic Integrity.

**Dispersed Recreation, Livestock Grazing, Land Adjustments**

Standards, guidelines and objectives from Alternatives A, B and C were evaluated for livestock use, and found to have no environmental consequences for dispersed recreation.

**Dispersed Recreation, Heritage Resources**

Plan components for heritage resources in all alternatives would have positive environmental consequences for dispersed recreation.

**Dispersed Recreation, Roads and Access, Motorized Recreation**

Alternatives A, B and C will all have positive environmental consequences for Dispersed Recreation in the area of the Historic Trail and Scenic Byways because the designated road and trail system resulting from implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule will minimize the impacts on scenery and heritage resources by prohibiting cross country use and unauthorized road development.

**Dispersed Recreation, Nature Based Tourism**

Alternative A does not provide direction for managing Nature Based Tourism; however cooperative programs are in place to facilitate conservation of natural and cultural resources; and to promote rural economic development across the Grasslands. Alternatives B and C would continue nature-based tourism under current management.
Alternative A and B and C will all have positive environmental consequences for Dispersed Recreation because the designated road and trail system (Roads and Access resource area) resulting from implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule would minimize impacts on areas of high scenic integrity and heritage resources by prohibiting cross country motorized use and unauthorized road development. Objectives for motorized recreation in Alternatives B and C would have positive consequences for dispersed recreation activities centered on birding, wildlife viewing and other natural resource conservation programs.

Management approaches (specific to Black Kettle) for wildlife habitat improvement in Alternative B and C would have positive environmental consequences for dispersed recreation (Nature-based Tourism) which includes auto touring focused on natural tourism and Watchable Wildlife. Alternative A would neither direct nor prohibit this activity.

Alternative A emphasized dispersed recreation (forest wide direction), however within management direction for both management areas, developed was emphasized. Alternatives B and C would place more emphasis on dispersed recreation than Alternative A.

*Developed Recreation, Camping and Picnic Sites*
Grasslands-wide Objectives and Guidelines for developed recreation within Alternative B and C would have positive environmental consequences such as mitigating for resource damage, accommodating changes in recreational use, ensuring that developed sites harmonize within their natural settings.

*Developed Recreation, Scenery*
Guidelines for Scenery within Alternative B and C would have positive environmental consequences for developed recreation than Alternative A. Scenery guidelines address the degree of alteration from landscape character goals allowed within each of the three scenic integrity levels. Visual impacts from constructed features as well as infrastructure developments are minimized; and environmental design guidance for new infrastructure is provided.

*Developed Recreation, Livestock Grazing, Wind Energy, Land Adjustments*
Standards, guidelines and objectives from Alternatives A, B and C and were evaluated for livestock use, wind energy development and land adjustments, and found to have no environmental consequences for Developed Recreation as described in Alternative B.

*Developed Recreation*
Alternatives A, B, and C would have no environmental consequences from any other resource area that would affect developed recreation.

**Cumulative Environmental Consequences**
The cumulative effects analysis area is Grasslands-wide, immediately adjacent lands, and areas such as Amarillo, Oklahoma City, and other larger areas due to the shortage of public lands in Oklahoma and Texas. This area was chosen because recreation opportunities addressed in this report are geographically diverse.

The National Visitor Use Monitoring Results (NVUM) provided a break-down of Grassland visitors by geographic area. While 31 percent travelled less than 25 miles, 65 percent traveled 26-200 miles and 13 percent traveled 100-200 miles (USDA, Forest Service, 2009).
The desired conditions for Recreation emphasize Forest Service-intergovernmental partnerships and relationships with non-governmental organizations to develop and promote conservation, interpretive sites, and eco-tourism within the planning area. In addition to alternatives outcomes, there may be cumulative environmental consequences as a result of programs sponsored by other agencies. The following describes four of these programs on the Grasslands:

**Santa Fe National Historic Trail:** The Forest Service is currently working under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Park Service to manage our segment of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail (National Landmark). The Grasslands may coordinate with other agencies to maintain consistency in signage and appearance of the trail and associated features.

There is potential for wind energy development across multi-jurisdictional lands. The cumulative environmental consequences of large-scale utility development could degrade the high scenic integrity areas surrounding the Santa Fe National Historic Trail and Scenic Byways.

**Important Bird Areas Program:** This program is managed by the National Audubon Society; the mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity. Audubon-designated Important Bird Areas identify, prioritize and protect vital bird habitat. Wildlife improvements within the Sauz Creek and Perico Creek riparian areas would contribute to protecting IBA habitat.

**The Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma:** This program is managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation; the mission is to manage Oklahoma’s wildlife resources and habitat to provide scientific, educational, aesthetic, economic and recreational benefits for recreationists who appreciate wildlife. A stop at Black Kettle National Grassland and the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site are two of many highlights along the Black Kettle Loop tour.

**Watchable Wildlife:** The mission of Watchable Wildlife is to help communities and wildlife prosper. In 1990 eight federal agencies including the Forest Service signed a MOU to provide a framework for cooperative activities to develop and implement Watchable Wildlife Programs on federal lands. Watchable Wildlife is committed to helping local communities realize the economic potential of nature-related recreation while conserving native plants and animals in their native habitats. Mills Canyon is a Watchable Wildlife Viewing Area (Watchable Wildlife, 2010).

**Recreation Specialist Report**

**Introduction**

This report discloses and evaluates the potential environmental consequences on the Recreation program resource that may result with the adoption of a revised land management plan. It examines, in detail, three different alternatives for revising the management direction for recreation: the 1985 Cibola National Forest Land Management Plan, the no action alternative; the Preferred Alternative and the Wilderness Alternative. This report will compare, dispersed and developed recreation for each of the three alternatives.
Relevant Laws, Regulations, and Policy that Apply

Other Sources of Information from Appendix J of the Draft Plan (Alternative B) contains a comprehensive list of laws, regulation and policy that will not be duplicated within the plan narrative as standards and guidelines. The following is excerpted from that body of material:

Developed Recreation

Other Sources of Information

36 CFR 213 Administration of Lands under Title III of Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act by the Forest Service; 36 CFR 261 Prohibitions; EO 11988 Floodplain Management; R3 Supplement to FSM 2300 Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management; FSM 2310 Planning and Data Management; FSM 2311 Resource Opportunities in Recreation Planning; FSM 2330.3 Publicly Managed Recreation Opportunities, Policy; FSM 2353.16 Trail, River and Similar Recreation Opportunities; Cooperative Agreements and Rights-of-Way; FSM 2390 Interpretive Services; FSM 5340.2 Law Enforcement, Objectives; FSM 5420 Land Purchases and Donations; FSM 7151.02 Land Surveying, Objectives; FSM 7312.1 and 7312.2 Facility Planning, Plans, and Preliminary Project Analysis; FSH 7309.11 Ch 40 Buildings and Related Facilities, Management; Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines; FSM 7400 Public Health and Pollution Control Facilities; FSH 7409.11, Sanitary Engineering and Public Health Handbook; Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines, 5/22/2006; FSM 2303 Recreation, Wilderness and Related Resource Management, Policy; FSM 2334 Recreation, Wilderness, and Related Resource Management, Campgrounds and Picnic Grounds, National Trails System Act, 2009.

Dispersed Recreation

Other Sources of Information


Methodology and Analysis Process

An interdisciplinary approach was used to evaluate possible environmental consequences and outcomes of plan alternatives for special areas as listed above and for natural tourism. We developed individual matrices that prompted review of the plan components for each resource area, by alternative. This examination revealed whether implementation of any given alternative might have important positive or negative consequences and outcomes.

Assumptions

In the analysis for this resource, the following assumptions have been made:

- The land management plan provides a programmatic framework for future site-specific actions.
• Land management plans do not have direct effects. They do not authorize or mandate any site-specific projects or activities (including ground-disturbing actions).
• Land management plans may have implications, or environmental consequences, of managing the forests under a programmatic framework.
• The plan decisions (desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, management areas, monitoring) will be followed when planning or implementing site-specific projects and activities.
• Law, policy, and regulations will be followed when planning or implementing site-specific projects and activities.
• Monitoring will occur and the land management plan will be amended, as needed.
• We will be funded similar to past budget levels (past 5 years).
• The planning timeframe is 15 years; other timeframes may be analyzed depending on the resource (usually a discussion of anticipated trends into the future).

Revision Topics Addressed in this Analysis
The pertinent issues derived from the need to change the Grassland-specific components of the 1985 Plan as identified in the 2008 Comprehensive Evaluation Report and Supplemental Analysis of the Management Situation document are explained below. This analysis addresses the needs for change in developed and dispersed recreation, Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes, and scenic resources. Dispersed recreation will include motorized recreational activities.

Recreation and Scenic Resources-Dispersed
The current plan is silent on direction for dispersed recreation aside from designations of specific acreages of ROS classifications and motorized uses within the management area direction. There is direction provided on the General Management Area direction that would apply to the grasslands. Standards and Guidelines direct ORV closures or restrictions to protect resources from unpredictable damage. The revised plan needs to provide more direction on management of dispersed recreation at differing levels of development and in a variety of settings.

Recreation and Scenic Resources – Motorized (Travel Management)
As of this writing, Black Kettle and McClellan Creek have a previous decision that closed the district to cross country travel and designated a system of roads and trails for motorized use. The rule provided for releasing Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) with public notice when the current management complied with the rule. The MVUM maps were released in October 2008. Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands are about mid-way through their Travel Management analysis, and are currently developing the Environmental Assessment associated with this process. The proposed action (January 29, 2010) would designate 238 miles of National Forest System Roads as open to all vehicles, and three dispersed camping corridors would be designated: at Thompson Grove, the bottom of Mills Canyon and the east rim of Mills Canyon.

Recreation and Scenic Resources-Developed
The current plan defines the construction schedule and ‘person at one time capacity’ for developed sites. The revised plan would provide a spectrum of developed recreation opportunities characterized by varying levels of development and amenities appropriate to the setting that are in harmony with their natural and cultural settings (USDA Forest Service, 2008).
Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes
The current plan designates ROS classes for management of the recreation resource and opportunities on the grasslands based upon road densities. The proposed action and Alternative C propose changes to the ROS classes to respond to the plan desired conditions.

Threats, Risks and Areas of Concern for Recreation
The recreational and tourism trends of the region are an important consideration in deciding which management strategies can be successfully implemented on the Grasslands. They also identify human caused threats or areas of concern that have the potential to affect the social, economic, and ecological sustainability of the Grasslands. Areas of concern for managed recreation on the Grasslands include:

- Continuation and maintenance of opportunities for working with cooperators in the development and management of recreational activities
- Uncontrolled motorized vehicle use on the Grasslands is affecting ecosystem and wildlife health
- Interest in natural and cultural interpretation and education has been increasing among Grassland visitors. Development and maintenance of recreational facilities and activities provided on the Grasslands must be commensurate with the demand for use
- Thresholds for scenery management objectives are being exceeded or could be exceeded based on the potential wind energy development and other potential projects in some areas of the Grasslands (USDA Forest Service, 2008)

Summary of Alternatives
Developed and Dispersed Recreation, and Recreation Opportunity Classes
Alternative A

Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes
This alternative continues with the current management. The emphasis is on Roaded Natural settings and opportunities on the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek units, and providing both Roaded Natural and Semi Primitive Motorized settings and opportunities on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca Units, including providing Semi Primitive Motorized settings and opportunities in the Mills Canyon IRA. Semi Primitive Motorized settings and opportunities is also the class assigned to the Santa Fe National Historic Trail.

Dispersed
The Management Direction for Alternative A emphasizes riparian protection and improvement projects; dispersed and developed recreation opportunities are consistent with other resource considerations, and emphasizes dispersed recreation over developed. Dispersed recreational use is identified as the largest recreation use and includes activities such as hiking, backpacking, picnicking, hunting and fishing, bird watching, ORV use, swimming and sightseeing.
Standards and Guidelines direct ORV closures or restrictions to protect resources from unpredictable damage. Acres of ORV closure would be indicated by Management Area and remaining acres would remain open unless other restrictions were made based upon an environmental analysis. Open roads and trails would be signed on the ground and maps of closure areas would be available. As of this writing, Black Kettle and McClellan Creek have a Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) printed and available to the public. Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands are mid-way through their Travel Management planning process, although their Travel Management Proposed Action is available (USDA, Cibola National Forest, 2010). Amendments to the current 1985 Land Management Plan would designate the open network of public and administrative-use roads and trails on each unit. This direction is consistent with the desired condition for the preferred alternative, and would be carried forward into Alternatives B and C.

**Developed**

Plan objectives for trails and campsite construction are prescriptive; emphasis is on capacity use. Management emphasis for Black Kettle and McClellan Creek would increase site capacity significantly. Site capacity on Kiowa Rita Blanca would increase slightly as result of construction and rehabilitation. Recreation opportunities are categorized by ROS class for dispersed and developed recreation. Guidelines for recreational development would evaluate compatibility with other resources and activities, establish mitigation measures to protect riparian and wetland habitat, emphasize developments that cause no deviation in Visual Quality classification, control sedimentation using Best Management Practices for road design and construction, and provide adequate provisions for effluent and waste water treatment.

**Alternative B**

**Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes**

This alternative proposes changes to the ROS classes. There is a substantial increase in Semi-Primitive Motorized settings and opportunities on the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek units. Many of the units provide a sense of remoteness, naturalness and solitude despite the presence of roads. The desired condition for these areas is for providing for natural conditions, with few facilities and little developed recreation. Areas like the interpretive trails near the Black Kettle Administration building are managed consistent with the rural setting class. There is a substantial increase in providing Semi-Primitive Motorized settings and opportunities on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca units. Many of the units provide a sense of remoteness, naturalness and solitude despite the presence of roads. The desired condition for these areas is to provide natural conditions, few facilities, and little developed recreation. The Mills Canyon IRA is assigned Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized class, as is the area surrounding the Santa Fe National Historic Trail. This is more compatible with the management goals and objectives for this area.

**Dispersed**

Dispersed recreation minimizes conflicts with other uses and facilitates compliance with Travel Management restrictions. Camping and site intensive recreation is restricted to areas where limited environmental impacts might occur. Day hiking, hunting, fishing and primitive camping are the most frequent activities. Trails would be developed to connect public and private lands and vary in length and challenge. Design and construction would minimize damage to soil and water resources. Guidelines include closure or rehabilitation to protect or enhance resource conditions. Dispersed camping would be restricted within 200 feet of historic sites, most
trailheads, interpretive sites and stock water. Management strategies emphasize coordination with other agencies and organizations to identify where new partnerships may exist to expand hiking or other dispersed recreation opportunities.

Opportunities for OHV use occur where the Motor Vehicle Use Maps (MVUM) show designated roads, trails or areas. Motor vehicle use would be especially limited in Mills Canyon and the Santa Fe National Historic Trail corridor. A range of experiences appropriate for the level of ROS exists particularly in areas designated as Roaded Natural, Rural, and Semi-Primitive Motorized.

**Developed**

Desired Conditions for Alternative B describe a range of developed amenities. New developments would be limited. Emphasis would be on maintaining and rehabilitating existing developments. Developed sites integrate natural and cultural elements, and emphasize efficiency in construction and operation. All developed sites are accessible except in cases where it would substantially detract from natural or cultural features. All administrative facilities would be accessible. Potable water systems are available where appropriate. Construction guidelines address wind energy and oil/gas developments. Public safety and stewardship address visitor control. Maintenance, construction and design are consistent with ROS and The Built Environment Image Guide for the National Forests and Grasslands. The desired conditions for Black Kettle and McClellan Creek feature lake based recreation. New or renovated facilities accommodate large recreation vehicles and provide conveniences. The plan objective is to maintain 1/3 of trail miles annually. Guidelines are in place for no-wake boating except McClellan Creek Recreation Area.

Direction for motorized use and plan amendments resulting from implementation of the 2005 Planning Rule would be carried forward from the 1985 Plan into Alternatives B and C.

**Alternative C**

Is the same as Alternative B, but with wilderness.

**Description of Affected Environment (Existing Condition)**

Recreation opportunities on the Grasslands greatly contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The Grasslands provide outstanding opportunities for dispersed recreation including hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, viewing birds and wildlife, driving to enjoy the scenery and historic sites. The developed recreation sites, particularly the lake-based recreation complexes on the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands, and the developed sites in Mills Canyon, offer unique and significant features available for both residents and visitors to enjoy within this region (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

**Dispersed Recreation**

**Hiking and Camping**

Day hiking, developed camping, and primitive camping are the most frequent recreation activities on the Grasslands. Hiking and camping are important; however they may be a secondary activity to hunting, or fishing. Camping occurs at developed and primitive sites throughout the Grasslands. On Black Kettle National Grassland, camping most often occurs at developed sites or one of the 32 designated-dispersed sites that are accessed from open roads. On Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands, camping occurs at developed sites and people also may drive off of...
the roads to camp. This type of dispersed camping may be reduced in some areas of the Kiowa and Rita Blanca due to off road restrictions implemented as a result of the 2005 Travel Management Rule. Increased use of developed recreation sites is projected to occur. Otherwise, the future trend for camping is expected to remain fairly stable across the Grasslands. Changes in users and uses on the District have recently spurred management to install a new developed campground at the top of Mills Canyon and improve the site at the bottom of the Canyon.

Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands currently contain about 13.7 miles of short hiking trails around the major recreation sites, each of which is less than 2 miles in length. Short trails are planned for some recreation sites on the Kiowa, particularly around Mills Canyon. The 2.4-mile portion of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail on the Kiowa is becoming more popular for hikers even though it is maintained as a historic site rather than a trail. Because of the flat terrain, and fragmented and fenced land ownership, there are no areas on the Grasslands which provide backpacking or long trail riding opportunities and none are expected to be developed. Instead, hiking trails provide a mix of day-use opportunities and some provide cultural, historical, or interpretative opportunities. It is projected that demand for day-hiking and interpretive trails will continue to rise on the Grasslands (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

**Off-Highway Motorized Use**

Driving motor vehicles off-road (cross country) is currently allowed on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca National Grasslands but prohibited on the Black Kettle National Grassland since 1990. Several locations have been identified by the public as areas where off-road driving conflicts with other land use activities. The Grasslands are undergoing a planning process in accordance with the 2005 Travel Management Rule to create a designated system of motorized roads, trails, and areas. Once the Motorized Vehicle Use Map (MVUM) is finalized, driving outside designated routes or areas will be prohibited, unless specially authorized.

Off-road driving and associated user-created roads in Mills Canyon and other areas on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca have removed important vegetation cover, accelerated soil erosion and stream sedimentation, and degraded riparian ecosystems, wildlife habitat, scenic quality, and historic sites. Uncontrolled motorized use in Mills Canyon has also impacted the Roadless Area characteristics for which the area was designated, and contributed to introduction and spread of invasive plants.

McClellan Creek National Grassland currently provides the only motorized trail system area designated for dirt-bikes and small all-terrain-vehicles. While off-highway vehicle (OHV) use is increasing nationally, it is unlikely that it will significantly increase on the Grasslands due to the fences and fragmented land ownership. The implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule is expected to address conflicts and resource impacts associated with unmanaged motor vehicle use (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

**Hunting and Fishing**

Hunting occurs throughout the Grasslands, with the exception of developed recreation and administrative sites. It is a major activity on Black Kettle, attracting as many as 3,000 hunters from across the nation during the spring Rio Grande Turkey season. Black Kettle is one of the best public hunting areas in the nation for Rio Grande Turkey and Northern Bobwhite quail, although deer and small game hunting is also popular. Fewer out-of-state residents hunt on the Kiowa due to limits on permits issued in New Mexico. Fishing is popular on the lakes and ponds of the Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands, and the Canadian River on the
Kiowa. The Forest Service works with the state agencies that stock the water bodies with fish. The projected future trend is that hunting and fishing on the Grasslands will remain a stable and continuously popular activity, with the highest level of activity taking place on the Black Kettle National Grassland in Oklahoma (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

*Other Dispersed Recreation Activities*

Bird and wildlife watching are developing into popular activities on the Grasslands. This activity includes observing and photographing birds and wildlife. There is a potential to work with partners to expand these activities on the Grasslands as tourism and rural economic development opportunities (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

The Kiowa National Grassland has several unique ‘special’ recreation opportunities that attract visitors to the area. They include the Santa Fe National Historic Trail, Santa Fe Trail National Scenic Byway, La Frontera del Llano Scenic Byway, Canadian eligible Scenic River, and the Canadian River Roadless Area.

*Developed Recreation*

Developed recreation sites typically include facilities such as restrooms, picnic tables, grills, trash containers, parking barriers, and bulletin boards. Sites range in development levels from those having limited amenities to highly developed. There are sites where small numbers of people can camp or picnic, for day use only as well as large group use structures that accommodate large groups of people sometimes for extended periods.

The Grasslands feature two major recreation complexes in Texas: McClellan Creek and Lake Marvin Recreation Areas, designed around highly scenic reservoirs. Black Kettle National Grassland features three other popular lake-based recreation areas; Spring Creek, Skipout, and Black Kettle, which add diversity to the terrain and provide water-based recreational opportunities not usually found in the Grasslands region. These lakes attract high numbers of visitors year-round, with peak use during spring and fall hunting seasons, and the hot summer months.

All developed recreation sites are open year-round. Drinking water is provided at all campgrounds other than Mills Canyon and Rim campgrounds, and is monitored for public safety standards. Reconstruction upgrades have partially occurred at all of the sites, with toilets and other facilities brought up to meet current Americans with Disabilities Act and Forest Service standards, including accessibility. No major maintenance issues exist, although regular maintenance and upgrades to replace facilities at the end of their service life and as needed to meet accessibility standards should continue. Visitor use does not exceed design capacity, meaning they generally do not exceed 70% of capacity, except during hunting seasons. Under current management, the projected trend is that all developed recreation sites will continue to contribute to the quality of life for local residents and visitors, stimulate the local rural economy, and continue to satisfy public demand for different types of developed recreational opportunities (USDA Forest Service, 2008).

The Forest Service is working to develop and improve interpretive services by increasing coordination with other private and intergovernmental recreation and interpretive programs. To meet these objectives, the Grasslands are developing interpretive sites at significant historic sites and wildlife and bird watching areas on the Grasslands which help improve public awareness and appreciation of natural and cultural resources. Preserving these resources is highly-valued by
local and non-local residents alike. In addition, public access to important natural and cultural resource sites on the Grasslands provides an important opportunity to promote tourism and rural economic development.

**Environmental Consequences**

The land management plan provides a programmatic framework that guides site-specific actions but does not authorize, fund, or carryout any project or activity. Because the land management plan does not authorize or mandate any site-specific activities or ground-disturbing actions there can be no direct effects. However, there may be implications, or longer term environmental consequences, of managing the forests under this programmatic framework.

An interdisciplinary approach was used to evaluate possible environmental consequences for dispersed and developed recreation resources addressed in this report. We developed individual matrices that prompted review of plan components for both types of recreation, by alternative. This examination revealed whether implementation of any given alternative might have important positive or negative consequence in achieving the desired condition for the recreation resource. The following resource areas and respective alternatives were identified as having potential consequences in attaining the desired conditions for recreation.

**Recreation Opportunity Spectrum**

**Alternative A**

The Recreation Opportunity System used the presence of roads as the primary factor in defining the classes. While this didn’t have a major influence on the actual management during the last planning period, there was an incongruity between the ROS management direction and the actual management. Much of the grasslands is managed with little development, especially on the Kiowa and Rita Blanca units. Roaded Natural management primarily occurred near the developed recreation sites. Even though there are roads in the more remote units, they have little influence on the character, management or experience of recreation users. In these units, there were no plans for additional recreation development. It was not likely to encounter other recreationists, or other people outside of hunting season. There were substantial opportunities for experiencing naturalness, remoteness and solitude.

The Rita Blanca has little recreation use outside of the hunting season. There are two developed recreation sites, Felt and Thompson Grove. Felt Picnic Area is on the edge of the community of Felt, OK, and is consistent with the Rural ROS class, but is classified as Roaded Natural. The Mills Canyon Inventoried Roadless Area is classified as Semi-Primitive Motorized, which is inconsistent with the roadless characteristics. The Santa Fe National Historic Trail was also classified as Semi-Primitive Motorized, which is inconsistent with the management described in the National Trails System Act (NPS, 2009).

The Black Kettle was predominantly classified as Roaded Natural. While this is consistent with the developed recreation sites, and the nearby units, it is inconsistent with the undeveloped management of the other units. Like the Kiowa and Rita Blanca, is possible to experience remoteness and a sense of naturalness in these areas. There is no additional recreation developments that were planned for these units during the planning cycle.
**Alternative B.** The proposed ROS classes for the Alternative B are responsive to the desired conditions and associated objectives and guidelines for moving toward the desired condition. There is a substantial increase in the Semi Primitive Motorized classifications. This is compatible with travel management decisions that restrict use to designated roads and trails, which helps to preserve the sense of remoteness, while still providing for motorized recreation opportunities. These areas would continue to managed for very limited recreation development (potentially additional trails) while maintaining low density use, and a sense of remoteness and naturalness.

The Roaded Natural class assignments occur primarily around developed recreation sites. Within this class there is a continuum of development, with more amenities provided at Lake McClellan and Lake Marvin, and fewer on the other Black Kettle and Kiowa and Rita Blanca sites.

The proposed classes for Mills Canyon and the Santa Fe National Historic Trail are for Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized away from the developed sites. This is consistent with the Inventoried Roadless area management for Mills Canyon, and the National Trails legislation for the Santa Fe Trail. This would provide for non motorized recreation opportunities in these areas without encountering motor vehicles. This management would also help to preserve the Santa Fe Trail tracks, and be consistent with the expected experience described in the legislation.

There are Rural ROS class assignments near some of communities, where the community presence and management influence the character of the sites. For example, the interpretive trails at the Black Kettle administrative office and the City Park in Cheyenne, OK are in the Rural ROS assignments. These are both extensions of building sites. The trail surfaces are concrete, with benches and interpretive features which consistent with the Rural setting. There is a high expectation to encounter others, and it provides for a very social setting. The maps showing the proposed ROS classes are available in Appendix A of the Draft Plan, and Appendix L of the DEIS.

**Alternative C**

This alternative is the same as Alternative B. The Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized classification in Mills Canyon is compatible with the recommended wilderness management proposed in this alternative. It would provide for non motorized recreation opportunities consistent with recommended wilderness management.

**Dispersed Recreation, hunting**

Alternative C would have the same environmental consequences as Alternative B; however big-game retrieval would be non-motorized as a result of wilderness designation.

**Dispersed Recreation, Canadian, eligible Scenic River (gas and oil leases)**

Alternative A recommends leasing gas and oil with no surface occupancy in Mills Canyon. These standards and guidelines are carried over from the 1985 Plan, Amendment #12 into Alternative B and C. There are positive environmental consequences for achieving the desired conditions for dispersed recreation. Standards for gas and oil leasing in Alternative B and C also exclude surface occupancy from within 300 feet of all riparian or wetland areas and will have positive environmental consequences for recreation activities within riparian areas outside of the river corridor.
Standards and guidelines for Alternative A and B and C would have positive consequences for achieving the desired conditions for dispersed recreation within the Canadian eligible Scenic River corridor. This guidance directs acquisition of private lands within the canyon to preserve the unique qualities of the river. River corridors identified in the National Rivers Inventory, or otherwise identified for study are protected by Amendment #10 (Wild, Scenic/Recreation Eligible River Areas, October, 7 2002), and carried forward into Alternatives B and C.

**Dispersed Recreation, Wind Energy**

Wind energy development was not addressed in Alternative A.

Wind energy design requirements within Alternative B and C have positive consequences for achieving the desired conditions for Dispersed Recreation around the National Historic Trail and Scenic Byways. Guidelines include restricting wind energy developments to 500 feet outside of eligible National Historic Sites, and one-half mile from high scenic integrity areas, which should not interfere with other landmark views from the byways. Interpretive improvements and historic markers increase visibility and encourage recreation visits to the area.

Alternative B and C would have positive environmental consequences for achieving the desired conditions for dispersed recreation because design guidelines for wind development minimize ground disturbing activities to limit impacts in areas of high scenic integrity. Guidelines also include restricting wind turbine developments to one-half mile from high scenic integrity areas, such as the Canadian River Potential Wilderness.

**Dispersed Recreation, Livestock Grazing**

Standards, guidelines and objectives from Alternatives A, B and C were evaluated for livestock use, and found to have no environmental consequences.

**Dispersed Recreation, Heritage Resources**

Plan components in for heritage resources would have positive consequences for Dispersed Recreation. Objectives include completion of a heritage resource project involving the public, off site educational programs, stabilization of historic homesteads. Guidelines recommend that local materials be used for stabilization activities, rather than importing non-native materials such as posts and beams.

**Dispersed Recreation, Roads and Access, Motorized Recreation**

Alternative A and B and C will all have positive environmental consequences for Dispersed Recreation in the area of the Historic Trail and Scenic Byways because the designated road and trail system resulting from implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule will minimize the impacts on scenery and heritage resources by prohibiting cross country use and unauthorized road development. Objectives for motorized recreation in Alternative B and C would rehabilitate all unauthorized routes where resource damage is occurring as in the area surrounding the National Historic Trail.

**Dispersed Recreation, Nature Based Tourism**

Alternative A does not provide direction for managing Nature-based Tourism on the National Grasslands, however cooperative programs with state and federal agencies, and NGOs are in place to facilitate conservation of natural and cultural resources; and to promote rural economic development across the Grasslands.
Alternatives A and B and C will all have positive environmental consequences for Dispersed Recreation because the designated road and trail system (Roads and Access resource area) resulting from implementation of the 2005 Travel Management Rule would minimize impacts on areas of high scenic integrity and heritage resources by prohibiting cross country motorized use and unauthorized road development.

Objectives for motorized recreation in Alternative B would rehabilitate all unauthorized routes where resource damage is occurring as in the area surrounding the National Historic Trail; other existing routes would be evaluated for closure to protect plant and animal species and important species habitats, thus have positive environmental consequences for dispersed recreation activities centered around birding, wildlife viewing and other natural resource conservation programs.

Guidelines (specific to Black Kettle) for Wildlife Habitat Improvement in Alternative B would have positive environmental consequences for Dispersed Recreation (Nature-based Tourism), which includes auto touring focused on natural conservation and Watchable Wildlife. The management approach emphasizes managing habitat and assessing opportunities to create wildlife improvement plots to meet the demand for important game species.

*Developed Recreation, Lake Based and Wildlife Habitat*
Management Approaches in Alternative B (specific to Black Kettle) for Wildlife Habitat Improvement would have positive environmental consequences for Developed Recreation, lake based developments.

*Developed Recreation, Camping and Picnic Sites*
Grasslands-wide Objectives and Guidelines for developed recreation within Alternative B would have positive environmental consequences such as mitigating for resource damage, accommodating changes in recreational use, water systems comply with safety and sanitation requirements, and developed sites harmonize within their natural settings. Guidelines provide direction for minimizing soil compaction and erosion; the management approach identifies changes in use trends; water systems; and new construction would harmonize with the surrounding landscape. Maintenance, construction and design of facilities would be consistent with the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class and The Built Environment Image Guide (BEIG).

Management direction for Alternative A emphasized dispersed recreation over developed (forest wide) however emphasized developed within the direction specific to these management areas. The standards and guidelines for each Management Unit prescribed a site rehabilitation schedule to increase site capacity (PAOT) and rehabilitate to design condition class. Acreages were prescribed for each ROS class, and prescribed acreages to be managed to meet Visual Quality Objectives.

*Developed Recreation, Scenery*
Guidelines for Scenery within Alternative B and C would have positive environmental consequences for developed recreation as described within that alternative. Scenery guidelines address the degree of alteration from landscape character goals allowed within each of the three
scenic integrity levels. Visual impacts from constructed features as well as infrastructure developments are minimized; and environmental design guidance for new infrastructure is provided. The management approach emphasizes preserving the appearance of the vast horizon, which is important to the scenic integrity of the prairie landscape. The desired conditions related to the guidelines above state that developed recreation sites are in harmony with respect to their natural setting and integrate natural elements of the surrounding area. Developed recreation opportunities are characterized by varying levels of development and amenities appropriate to the setting.

*Developed Recreation, Livestock Grazing, Wind Energy, Land Adjustments*
Standards, guidelines and objectives from Alternatives A, B and C and were evaluated for livestock use, wind energy development and land adjustments, and found to have no environmental consequences for Developed Recreation as described in Alternative B.

**Cumulative Environmental Consequences**
Grasslands-wide and immediately adjacent lands are the cumulative effects analysis area. This area was chosen because recreation opportunities addressed in this report are geographically diverse.

The desired conditions for Recreation emphasize Forest Service-intergovernmental partnerships and relationships with non-governmental organizations to develop and promote conservation, interpretive sites, and eco-tourism within the planning area. In addition to alternatives outcomes, there may be cumulative environmental consequences as a result of programs sponsored by other agencies. The following describes four of these programs on the Grasslands:

**Santa Fe National Historic Trail:** The Forest Service is currently working under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Park Service to manage our segment of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail. The Park Service has developed a strategic plan for the future that includes interpretation, education and a marketing strategy to promote the trail locally, regionally, and nationally (Santa Fe National Historic Trail, Final Strategic Plan, 2003). The management approach for Alternative B emphasizes partnerships and projects to support economic goals and protect the resources for which the trail or byway was designated. The Grasslands may coordinate with other agencies to maintain consistency in signage and appearance of the trail and associated features.

There is potential for wind energy development across multi-jurisdictional lands. The cumulative environmental consequences of large-scale utility development could degrade the high scenic integrity areas surrounding the Santa Fe National Historic Trail and Scenic Byways.

**Important Bird Areas Program:** This program is managed by the National Audubon Society; the mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife for the benefit of humanity and the earth’s biological diversity. Audubon-designated Important Bird Areas identify, prioritize and protect vital bird habitat. Important Bird Areas (IBA) are sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of bird. IBAs include sites for breeding, wintering and/or migrating birds. As demand for wildlife viewing and birding increases, more interpretive sites would be developed to meet the need with an emphasis on bird trails and outdoor classrooms for youth groups, school children and outdoor enthusiasts. Wildlife
improvements within the Sauz Creek and Perico Creek riparian areas would contribute to protecting IBA habitat.

The Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma: This program is managed by the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation; the mission is to manage Oklahoma’s wildlife resources and habitat to provide scientific, educational, aesthetic, economic and recreational benefits for present and future generations of recreationists who appreciate wildlife. The Great Plains Trail of Oklahoma was developed to take advantage of Oklahoma’s rural character, showcase the many wildlife species, and promote rural economic development. One of America’s newest wildlife routes, the Great Plains Trail covers the Oklahoma Panhandle. The ecotourism potential of the trail has brought together a number of public and private groups, including the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation, the State Parks Division, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, the Northwest Cattlemen’s Association, and several local chambers of commerce. A stop at Black Kettle National Grassland and the Washita Battlefield National Historic Site are two of many highlights along the Black Kettle Loop tour.

Watchable Wildlife: The mission of Watchable Wildlife is to help communities and wildlife prosper. In 1990 eight federal agencies including the Forest Service signed a MOU to provide a framework for cooperative activities to develop and implement Watchable Wildlife Programs on federal lands. Watchable Wildlife is committed to helping local communities realize the economic potential of nature-related recreation while conserving native plants and animals in their native habitats (Watchable Wildlife, 2010).

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts
The land management plan provides a programmatic framework that guides site-specific actions but does not authorize, fund, or carryout any project or activity. Before any ground-disturbing actions take place, they must be authorized in a subsequent environmental analysis. Therefore none of the alternatives cause unavoidable adverse impacts.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources
The land management plan provides a programmatic framework that guides site-specific actions but does not authorize, fund, or carryout any project or activity. Because the land management plan does not authorize or mandate any ground-disturbing actions, none of the alternatives cause an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

Adaptive Management
All alternatives assume the use of adaptive management principles. Forest Service decisions are made as part of an on-going process, including planning, implementing projects, and monitoring and evaluation. The land management plan identifies a monitoring program. Monitoring the results of actions will provide a flow of information that may indicate the need to change a course of action or the land management plan. Scientific findings and the needs of society may also indicate the need to adapt resource management to new information. The Forest Supervisor annually evaluates the monitoring information displayed in the evaluation reports through a management review and determines if any changes are needed in management actions or the plan itself. In general, annual evaluations of the monitoring information consider the following questions:
• What are the effects of resource management activities on the productivity of the land?
• To what degree are resource management activities maintaining or making progress toward the desired conditions and objectives for the plan?
• What changes are needed to account for unanticipated changes in conditions?

In addition to annual monitoring and evaluation, the Forest Supervisor reviews the conditions on the land covered by the plan at least every 5 years to determine whether conditions or demands of the public have changed significantly. The forest plan is ordinarily revised on a 10-year cycle and the Forest Supervisor may amend the plan at any time.

**Consistency with Law, Regulation, and Policy**

All alternatives are designed to guide the Kiowa, Rita Blanca, Black Kettle and McClellan Creek National Grasslands’ management activities in meeting federal law, regulations, and policy.

**List of Preparers**

- Cynthia A. Geuss, MCRP, Community and Regional Planning, 1999; 20 years experience as a Region 3 Forest Service cartographer, 2 years experience in planning, Cibola National Forest.
- Nancy Brunswick, M.L.A. Landscape Architecture ; 20 years experience in landscape architecture and recreation management working for the USFS.

**References**


Texas Center for Policy Studies, 2010. Texas Environmental Almanac; Available at: http://www.texascenter.org/almanac/Land/LANDCH3P1.HTML#PUBLIC


USDA, Forest Service, 2009. National Visitor Use Monitoring Results; Comparison of Cibola National Forest to Grasslands


National Trails System Act of 2009
