Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation in the Northern Rocky Mountains

Part 1

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Abstract

The Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership (NRAP) identified climate change issues relevant to resource management in the Northern Rockies (USA) region, and developed solutions intended to minimize negative effects of climate change and facilitate transition of diverse ecosystems to a warmer climate. The NRAP region covers 183 million acres, spanning northern Idaho, Montana, northwestern Wyoming, North Dakota, and northern South Dakota, and includes 15 national forests and 3 national parks across the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region and adjacent Greater Yellowstone Area. U.S. Forest Service scientists, resource managers, and stakeholders worked together over 2 years to conduct a state-of-science climate change vulnerability assessment and develop adaptation options for national forests and national parks in the Northern Rockies region. The vulnerability assessment emphasized water, fisheries, wildlife, forest and rangeland vegetation and disturbance, recreation, cultural heritage, and ecosystem services which are regarded as key resource areas for local ecosystems and communities. Resource managers used the assessment to develop a detailed list of ways to address climate change vulnerabilities through management actions. The large number of adaptation strategies and tactics, many of which are a component of current management practice, provide a pathway for slowing the rate of deleterious change in resource conditions.

Keywords: adaptation, climate change, ecological disturbance, climate-smart resource management, Northern Rocky Mountains, vulnerability assessment

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Summary

The Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership (NRAP) is a science-management partnership consisting of 15 national forests in the Northern Region of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS); 3 national parks; the USFS Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain Research Stations; the University of Washington; and numerous other organizations and stakeholders. These organizations worked together over a period of 2 years to identify climate change issues relevant to resource management in the Northern Rocky Mountains (USA) and to find solutions that can minimize negative effects of climate change and facilitate transition of diverse ecosystems to a warmer climate. The NRAP provided education, conducted a climate change vulnerability assessment, and developed adaptation options for national forests and national parks that manage more than 28 million acres in northern Idaho, Montana, northwestern Wyoming, North Dakota, and northern South Dakota.

Global climate models project that the Earth's current warming trend will continue throughout the 21st century in the Northern Rockies. Compared to observed historical temperature, average warming across the five NRAP subregions is projected to be about 4 to 5 °F by 2050, depending on greenhouse gas emissions. Precipitation may increase slightly in the winter, although the magnitude is uncertain.

Climatic extremes are difficult to project, but they will probably be more common, driving biophysical changes in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Droughts of increasing frequency and magnitude are expected in the future, promoting an increase in wildfires, insect outbreaks, and nonnative species. These periodic disturbances, will rapidly alter productivity and structure of vegetation, potentially altering the distribution and abundance of dominant plant species and animal habitat.

Highlights of the vulnerability assessment and adaptation options for the Northern Rockies include the following:

Water resources and infrastructure

- Effects: Decreasing snowpack and declining summer flows will alter timing and availability of water supply, affecting agricultural, municipal, and public uses in and downstream from national forests, and affecting other forest uses such as livestock, wildlife, recreation, firefighting, road maintenance, and instream fishery flows. Declining summer low flows will affect water availability during late summer, the period of peak demand (e.g., for irrigation and power supply). Increased magnitude of peak streamflows will damage roads near perennial streams, ranging from minor erosion to extensive damage, thus affecting public safety, access for resource management, water quality, and aquatic habitat. Bridges, campgrounds, and national forest facilities near streams and floodplains will be especially vulnerable, reducing access by the public.

- Adaptation options: Primary adaptation strategies to address changing hydrology in the Northern Rockies include restoring the function of watersheds, connecting floodplains, reducing drainage efficiency, maximizing valley storage, and reducing hazardous fuels. Tactics include adding wood to streams, restoring beaver populations, modifying livestock management, and reducing surface fuels and forest stand densities. Primary strategies for

infrastructure include increasing the resilience of stream crossings, culverts, and bridges to higher peakflows and facilitating response to higher peakflows by reducing the road system and disconnecting roads from streams. Tactics include completing geospatial databases of infrastructure (and drainage) components, installing higher capacity culverts, and decommissioning roads or converting them to alternative uses. It will be important to map aquifers and alluvial deposits, improve monitoring to provide feedback on water dynamics, and understand the physical and legal availability of water for aquifer recharge. Erosion potential to protect water quality can be addressed by reducing hazardous fuels in dry forests, reducing nonfire disturbances, and using road management practices that prevent erosion.

Fisheries

- Effects: Decreased snowpack will shift the timing of peakflows, decrease summer low flows, and in combination with higher air temperature, increase stream temperatures, all of which will reduce the vigor of cold-water fish species. Abundance and distribution of cutthroat trout and especially bull trout will be greatly reduced, although effects will differ by location as a function of both stream temperature and competition from nonnative fish species. Increased wildfire will add sediment to streams, increase peakflows and channel scouring, and raise stream temperature by removing vegetation.

- Adaptation options: Primary strategies to address climate change threats to cold-water fish species include maintaining or restoring functionality of channels and floodplains to retain (hence, to cool) water and buffer against future changes, decreasing fragmentation of stream networks so aquatic organisms can reach similar habitats, and developing wildfire use plans that address sediment inputs and road failures. Adaptation tactics include using watershed analysis to develop integrated actions for vegetation and hydrology, protecting groundwater and springs, restoring riparian areas and beaver populations to maintain summer baseflows, reconnecting and increasing off-channel habitat and refugia, identifying and improving stream crossings that impede fish movement, decreasing road connectivity, and revegetating burned areas to store sediment and maintain channel geomorphology. Removing nonnative fish species and reducing their access to cold-water habitat reduces competition with native fish species.

Forest vegetation

- Effects: Increasing air temperature, through its influence on soil moisture, is expected to cause gradual changes in the abundance and distribution of tree, shrub, and grass species throughout the Northern Rockies, with more drought-tolerant species becoming more competitive. The earliest changes will be at ecotones between lifeforms (e.g., upper and lower treelines). Ecological disturbance, including wildfire and insect outbreaks, will be the primary facilitator of vegetation change, and future forest landscapes may be dominated by younger age classes and smaller trees. High-elevation forests will be especially vulnerable if disturbance frequency increases significantly. Increased abundance and distribution of nonnative plant species, as well as the legacy of past land uses, create additional stress for regeneration of native forest species.

- Adaptation options: Most strategies for conserving native tree, shrub, and grassland systems focus on increasing resilience to chronic low soil moisture (especially extreme drought and low snowpack), and to more frequent and extensive ecological disturbance (wildfire, insects, nonnative species). These strategies generally include managing landscapes to reduce the severity and patch size of disturbances, encouraging fire to play a more natural role, and protecting refugia where fire-sensitive species can persist. Increasing species, genetic, and landscape diversity (spatial pattern, structure) is an important "hedge your bets" strategy that will reduce the risk of major loss of forest cover. Adaptation tactics include using silvicultural prescriptions (especially stand density management) and fuel treatments to reduce fuel continuity, reducing populations of nonnative species, potentially using multiple genotypes in reforestation, and revising grazing policies and practices. Rare and disjunct species and communities (e.g., whitebark pine, quaking aspen) require adaptation strategies and tactics focused on encouraging regeneration, preventing damage from disturbance, and establishing refugia.

Rangeland vegetation

- Effects: A longer growing season is expected to increase net primary productivity of many rangeland types, especially those dominated by grasses, although responses will depend on local climate and soil conditions. Elevated atmospheric carbon dioxide may increase water use efficiency and productivity of some species. In many cases, increasing wildfire frequency and extent will be particularly damaging for big sagebrush and other shrub species that are readily killed by fire. The widespread occurrence of cheatgrass and other nonnative species facilitates frequent fire through annual fuel accumulation. In montane grasslands, wildfire may kill Douglas-fir and other species that have recently established in rangelands through fire exclusion. Shrub species that sprout following fire may be very resilient to increased disturbance, but may be outcompeted by more drought-tolerant species over time.

- Adaptation options: Adaptation strategies for rangeland vegetation focus on increasing resilience of rangeland ecosystems, primarily through control and prevention of invasion by nonnative species. Ecologically based management of nonnative plants focuses on strategies to repair damaged ecological processes that facilitate invasion, and seeding of desired native species can be done where seed availability and dispersal of these species are low. Proactive management to prevent establishment of nonnative species is also critical (early detection-rapid response), including tactics such as weed-free policies, education of employees and the public, and collaboration among multiple agencies to control weeds. Livestock grazing can also be managed through the development of site-specific indicators that inform livestock movement guides and allow for maintenance and enhancement of plant health.

Wildlife

- Effects: Few data exist on the direct effects of climatic variability and change on most animal species. Therefore, projected climate change effects must be inferred from what is known about habitat characteristics and the autecology of each species. Habitat for mammals that depend on high-elevation, snowy environments, whether predators (Canada lynx, fisher, wolverine) or prey (snowshoe hare), is expected to deteriorate relatively soon if snowpack continues to decrease. Species that are highly dependent on a narrow range of habitat (pygmy rabbit, Brewer's sparrow, greater sage-grouse) will be especially vulnerable if that habitat decreases from increased disturbance (e.g., sagebrush mortality from wildfire). Species that are mobile or respond well to increased disturbance and habitat patchiness (deer, elk) will probably be resilient to a warmer climate in most locations. Some amphibian species (Columbia spotted frog, western toad) may be affected by pathogens (e.g., amphibian chytrid fungus) that are favored by a warmer climate.

- Adaptation options: Adaptation strategies for wildlife are focused on maintaining adequate habitat and healthy wildlife populations, and increasing knowledge of the needs and climate sensitivities of species. Connectivity is an important conservation strategy for most species in the Northern Rockies. Maintaining healthy American beaver populations will provide riparian habitat structure and foraging opportunities for multiple species. Quaking aspen habitat, which is also important for several species, can be enhanced by allowing wildfire, protecting aspen from grazing, and reducing conifer encroachment. Restoration of open stands of ponderosa pine and mixed-conifer forest through reduction of stand densities will benefit species such as fisher and flammulated owl. Excluding fire and reducing nonnative species will maintain sagebrush habitats that are required by several bird and mammal species.

Recreation

- Effects: Recreation has a significant economic impact throughout the Northern Rockies. A warmer climate will generally improve opportunities for warm weather activities (hiking, camping, sightseeing) because it will create a longer time during which these activities are possible, especially in the spring and fall "shoulder seasons." However, it will reduce opportunities for snow-based, winter activities (downhill skiing, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling) because snowpack is expected to decline significantly in the future. Recreationists will probably seek more water-based activities in lakes and rivers as refuge from hotter summer weather. Higher temperatures may have both positive and negative effects on wildlife-based activities (hunting, fishing, birding) and gathering of forest products (e.g., berries, mushrooms), depending on how target habitats and species are affected.

- Adaptation options: Recreationists are expected to be highly adaptable to a warmer climate by shifting to different activities and different locations, behavior that is already observed from year to year. For example, downhill skiers may switch to ski areas that have more reliable snow, cross-country skiers will travel to higher elevations, and larger ski areas on Federal lands may expand to multi-season operation. Water-based recreationists may adapt to climate change by choosing different sites that are less susceptible to changes in water levels. Hunters may need to adapt by altering the timing and location of hunts. Federal management of recreation is currently not very flexible with respect to altered temporal and spatial patterns of recreation. This can be at least partially resolved by assessing expected use patterns in a warmer climate, modifying opening times of facilities, and deploying seasonal employees responsible for recreational facilities earlier in the year.

Ecosystem services

Ecosystem services are increasingly valued on Federal lands, beyond just their economic value. Climate change effects will vary greatly within different subregions of the Northern Rockies, with some ecosystem services being affected in the short term and others in the long term. Of the many ecosystem services provided in the Northern Rockies, eight are considered here, most of which are relevant to other resource categories included in the assessment.

- Although annual *water quantity* (or water yield or water supply) is not expected to change significantly, timing of water availability is likely to shift, and summer flows may decline. These changes may result in some communities experiencing summer water shortages, although reservoir storage can provide some capacity. Rural agricultural communities will be disproportionately affected by climate change if water does become limiting.

- *Water quality* will decrease in some locations if wildfires and floods increase, adding sediment to rivers and reservoirs. Agriculture is currently the major source of impairment, affecting riparian systems, aquatic habitat, water temperatures, and fecal coliform. Climate change is expected to amplify these effects. Hazardous fuels treatments, riparian restoration, and upgrading of hydrologic infrastructure can build resilience to disturbances that damage water quality.

- *Wood products* are a relatively small component of the Northern Rockies economy, and economic forces will probably have the biggest impacts in the future. As wildfires and insect outbreaks become more common, wood supply could become less reliable, but overall effects will generally be small except in small towns that depend on a steady timber supply.

- *Minerals* and mineral extraction are important economic drivers in eastern Montana and western North Dakota. The biggest effects on this industry will be economic factors and factors related to how it connects to other ecosystem services, particularly water quality. Wildfires and floods can put mineral extraction infrastructure at risk in some watersheds.

- *Forage for livestock* is expected to increase in productive grasslands as a result of a longer growing season and in some cases elevated carbon dioxide. Therefore, ranching and grazing may benefit from climate change. Primary effects on grazing include loss of rural population, spread of nonnative grasses, and fragmentation of rangelands.

- *Viewsheds and air quality* will be negatively affected by increasing wildfires and longer pollen seasons. A growing percentage of the Northern Rockies population will be in demographic groups at risk for respiratory and other medical problems on days with poor air quality. Treatments of hazardous fuels can help build resilience to disturbances that degrade air quality.

- *Regulation of soil erosion* will be decreased by agricultural expansion, spread of nonnative plants, and increased frequency of wildfire and floods. Increased capital investments may be needed for water treatment plants if water quality declines significantly. Climate-smart practices in agriculture and road construction can reduce some negative effects.

- *Carbon sequestration* will be increasingly difficult if wildfires, insect outbreaks, and perhaps plant disease increase as expected, especially in the western part of the Northern Rockies. At the same time, managing forests for carbon sequestration is likely to become more important in response to national policies on carbon emissions. Hazardous fuel treatments can help build resilience to disturbances that rapidly oxidize carbon and emit it to the atmosphere.

Cultural resources

Disturbances such as wildfires, floods, and soil erosion place cultural and heritage values at risk. Damage to cultural and historic sites is irreversible, making protection a key management focus. Climate-induced changes in terrestrial and aquatic habitats affect abundance of culturally valued plants and animals (especially fish), affecting the ability of Native American tribes to exercise their treaty rights. Effects on cultural resources are amplified by external social forces that include a growing regional population, vandalism, and loss of traditional practices in a globalizing culture.

Conclusions

The NRAP facilitated the largest climate change adaptation effort on public lands to date. This collaboration included participants from Federal agencies and stakeholder organizations interested in a broad range of resource issues. It achieved specific goals of national climate change strategies for the USFS and National Park Service, providing a scientific foundation for resource management and planning in the Northern Rockies. The large number of adaptation strategies and tactics, many of which are a component of current management practice, provide a pathway for slowing the rate of deleterious change in resource conditions. Rapid implementation of adaptation—in land management plans, National Environmental Policy Act documents, project plans, and restoration—will help maintain functionality of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the Northern Rockies, as well as build the organizational capacity of Federal agencies to incorporate climate change in their mission of sustainable resource management. Long-term monitoring will help detect potential climate change effects on natural resources, and evaluate the effectiveness of adaptation options that have been implemented.

Contents—Part 1

Chapter 1: Introduction

S. Karen Dante-Wood

The Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership (NRAP) is a science-management partnership among the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS) regional offices and national forests (mostly in the Northern Region, and small portions of the Intermountain and Rocky Mountain Regions); USFS Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountain Research Stations; Glacier, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton National Parks; Great Northern and Plains and Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperatives; Department of the Interior North Central Climate Science Center; Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee; Oregon State University; and EcoAdapt.

Initiated in 2013, the NRAP is a collaborative project with the goals of increasing climate change awareness, assessing vulnerability, and developing science-based adaptation strategies to reduce adverse effects of climate change and ease the transition to new climate states and conditions (see http://adaptationpartners.org/nrap). Developed in response to proactive climate change strategies of the USFS (USDA FS 2008, 2010b,c), and building on previous efforts in national forests (Halofsky et al. 2011; Littell et al. 2012; Raymond et al. 2013, 2014; Rice et al. 2012; Swanston and Janowiak 2012; Swanston et al. 2011), the partnership brings together resource managers and research scientists to plan for climate change in the Northern Rockies.

Climate Change Response in the Forest Service and National Park Service

Climate change is an agency-wide priority for the USFS, which has issued direction to administrative units for responding to climate change (USDA FS 2008) (table 1.1). In 2010, the USFS provided specific direction to the National Forest System in the form of the National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change (USDA FS 2010c) and the Performance Scorecard for Implementing the Forest Service Climate Change Strategy (USDA FS 2010c). The goal of the USFS climate change strategy is to "ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources" (USDA FS 2010c). To achieve this goal, starting in 2011, each national forest and national grassland began using a 10-point scorecard system to report accomplishments on 10 elements in 4 dimensions: (1) increasing organizational capacity; (2) partnerships, engagement, and education; (3) adaptation; and (4) mitigation and sustainable consumption. Progress toward accomplishing elements of the scorecard must be reported annually by each national forest and grassland; all units are expected to accomplish 7 of 10 criteria by 2015, with at least one "yes" in each dimension.

Similarly, the National Park Service (NPS) Climate Change Response Strategy provides direction for addressing the effects of climate change on NPS lands (NPS 2010) (table 1.2). The strategy has four components to guide NPS actions: science, adaptation, mitigation, and communication. The science component involves conducting and synthesizing research at various scales, monitoring trends and conditions, and delivering information to resource managers and partners. It also provides the scientific basis for adaptation, mitigation, and communication. Adaptation involves developing capacity within the agency to assess climate change scenarios and risks and implementing actions to better manage natural and cultural resources aswnd infrastructure for a changing climate. Mitigation efforts focus on reducing the agency's carbon footprint and enhancing carbon sequestration. Finally, the strategy requires the NPS to take advantage of agency capacity for education and interpretation to communicate the effects of climate change to NPS employees and to the public. Park rangers and other employees are encouraged to engage visitors about climate change, because national parks are visible examples of how climate change can affect natural and cultural resources. The similarity of USFS and NPS climate response strategies facilitated coordination between the two agencies.

The NRAP is built on existing efforts in ecosystem-based management and ecological restoration to address climate change and put these efforts in a broader regional context in the Northern Rockies. Restoration is a priority in most national forests in this region, particularly related to hazardous fuels reduction in dry forests (stand density reduction plus surface fuel removal, often with prescribed burning), and restoration of riparian areas to improve hydrologic and biological function. The NRAP works in conjunction with these management priorities to access the best available science on climate change effects and implement climate change adaptation plans.

In 2010, a climate change report was developed for the Kootenai and Idaho Panhandle National Forests planning effort (USDA FS 2010a). At the time, this was the most comprehensive climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation document compiled for the Northern Region. Although this report addressed many issues, it did not include nonforest vegetation, cultural resources, recreation resources, or ecosystem services. The Northern Region

Table 1.1—U.S. Forest Service policies related to climate change.

Policy	Description
Forest Service Strategic Framework for Responding to Climate Change (USDA FS 2008)	Developed in 2008, the *Strategic Framework* is based on seven strategic goals in three broad categories: foundational, structural, and action. The seven goals are science, education, policy, alliances, adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable operations. Like the challenges themselves, the goals are interconnected; actions that achieve one goal tend to help meet other goals. The key is to coordinate approaches to each goal as complementary parts of a coherent response to climate change. All seven goals are ultimately designed to achieve the same end (the USFS mission): to ensure that Americans continue to benefit from ecosystem services from national forests and grasslands.
USDA 2010–2015 Strategic Plan (USDA FS 2010d)	In June 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released the *Strategic Plan* that guides its agencies toward achieving several goals including Strategic Goal 2—Ensure our national forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources. This goal has several objectives. Objective 2.2 is to lead efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The performance measures under this objective seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the U.S. agricultural sector, increase the amount of carbon sequestered on U.S. lands, and bring all national forests into compliance with a climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy. The USFS response to this goal includes the *National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change* and *Performance Scorecard*.
National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change (USDA FS 2010c)	Developed in 2011, the *Roadmap* integrates land management, outreach, and sustainable operations accounting. It focuses on three kinds of activities: assessing current risks, vulnerabilities, policies, and gaps in knowledge; engaging partners in seeking solutions and learning from as well as educating the public and employees on climate change issues; and managing for resilience in ecosystems and human communities through adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable consumption strategies.
Climate Change Performance Scorecard (USDA FS 2010a)	To implement the *Roadmap*, starting in 2011, each national forest and grassland began using a 10-point scorecard to report accomplishments and plans for improvement on 10 questions in four dimensions: organizational capacity, engagement, adaptation, and mitigation. By 2015, each was expected to answer "yes" to at least seven of the scorecard questions, with at least one "yes" in each dimension. The goal was to create a balanced approach to climate change that includes managing forests and grasslands to adapt to changing conditions, mitigating climate change, building partnerships across boundaries, and preparing employees to understand and apply emerging science.
2012 Planning Rule (USDA FS 2012)	The 2012 Planning Rule is based on a planning framework that will facilitate adaptation to changing conditions and improvement in management based on new information and monitoring. There are specific requirements for addressing climate change in each phase of the planning framework, including in the assessment and monitoring phases, and in developing, revising, or amending plans. The 2012 Planning Rule emphasizes restoring the function, structure, composition, and connectivity of ecosystems and watersheds to adapt to the effects of a changing climate and other ecosystem drivers and stressors, such as wildfire and insect outbreaks. A baseline assessment of carbon stocks required in assessment and monitoring will check for measureable changes in the plan area related to climate change and other stressors. Requirements of the Roadmap and Scorecard and requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule are mutually supportive and provide a framework for responding to changing conditions over time.

also funded the University of Washington, Climate Impacts Group to provide datasets of historical (1916–2006) and future (2040s, 2080s) downscaled climate and hydrologic data for the Upper Missouri River and Columbia River basins (Littell et al. 2011).

Building on these downscaled data, the Northern Region developed climate change "primers" to help assess and evaluate regionally specific climate-related trends. Primers for wildland fire, watershed ecology, forest regeneration, and forest landscapes were in progress when the NRAP was begun and have been incorporated into this publication. In addition to these primers, the Northern Region is currently developing a watershed-based climate change vulnerability assessment using downscaled regional water and stream temperature data for the Lolo National Forest; the assessment focuses on bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and includes a preliminary discussion of the western pearlshell mussel (*Margaritifera falcata*), water supply, and forest infrastructure (USDA FS 2015).

The NRAP also incorporates existing Northern Region efforts to consider and address climate change effects in management operations. In 2011, the Northern Region developed an Integrated Restoration & Protection Strategy that provided a framework for climate change adaptation

Table 1.2—National Park Service policies related to climate change.

Policy	Description
National Park Service Climate Change Response Strategy (NPS 2010)	Developed in 2010, the *Climate Change Response Strategy* is designed to guide management actions and collaboration, from the national to park levels, to address the effects of climate change. The *Response Strategy* is based on four components: science, mitigation, adaptation, and communication. These components provide a framework for consistent, legal, and appropriate management decisions. The *Response Strategy* calls for a scientific approach to updating interpretations of previous policy and mandates in order to uphold the mission of the NPS in the face of new conditions created by climate change.
A Call to Action: Preparing for a Second Century of Stewardship and Engagement (NPS 2011)	A *Call to Action* outlines themes and goals for the second century of stewardship and engagement of the NPS. The plan provides actions for the achievement of each goal before the NPS centennial in 2016. Under the theme of preserving America's special places, the plan sets the goal for management of resources to increase resilience to climate change stressors. Specific actions include revised management objectives, increases in sustainability, and changes in investments.
Green Parks Plan (NPS 2012b)	The *Green Parks Plan* (GPP) outlines how the NPS will achieve the commitment set in *A Call to Action,* to "Go Green." An overarching vision and strategy for sustainable management in the future, the GPP is based on nine strategic goals that focus on the effects of park operations on the environment and human welfare. The goals are to continually improve environmental performance; be climate friendly and climate ready; be energy smart; be water wise; develop a green NPS transportation system, buy green and reduce, reuse, and recycle; preserve outdoor values; adopt best practices; and foster sustainability beyond NPS boundaries.
Revisiting Leopold: Resource Stewardship in the National Parks (NPS 2012c)	In August 2012, the NPS released *Revisiting Leopold*, intended as an updated interpretation of the guiding document *The Leopold Report* (Leopold et al. 1963). Members of the current NPS Science Committee were tasked with revisiting three questions: (1) What should be the goals of resource management in the national parks? (2) Which policies for resource management are necessary to achieve these goals? (3) Which actions are required to implement these policies? The interpretation presents general principles and guidance for the enlarged scope of all natural and cultural resources of the NPS. The committee stresses that the NPS needs to act quickly on structural changes and long-term investments in management in order to preserve resources through the uncertainties of environmental change.
Climate Change Action Plan 2012—2014 (NPS 2012a)	The 2012 *Climate Change Action Plan* builds on the 2010 *NPS Climate Change Response Strategy* to communicate how the NPS can respond to climate change at different geographic scales. The plan outlines parameters for introducing science, adaptation, mitigation, and communication actions to address climate change. The plan also identifies high-priority actions for addressing climate change in NPS operations, and describes how to anticipate and prepare for future changes.

(Bollenbacher et al. 2014; USDA FS 2011). In addition, periodic Northern Region restoration and resilience reports provide baseline information on vegetative characteristics to better understand the effects of adaptive management (USDA FS 2014).

Most previous efforts to consider climate change effects and adaptation strategies in the Northern Rockies have focused on vegetation and aquatic resources. The NRAP broadens these efforts to develop a synthesis for a more comprehensive list of resource values, and to develop adaptation strategies for resources that have not been emphasized in management operations.

Science-Management Partnerships

Previous efforts in the Pacific Northwest and beyond have demonstrated the success of science-management partnerships for increasing climate change awareness among resource managers and adaptation planning on Federal lands. Olympic National Forest and Tahoe National Forest initiated the first science-management partnerships for developing adaptation options for individual national forests (Littell et al. 2012). The Olympic climate change study assessed resource vulnerabilities and developed adaptation options for Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington (Halofsky et al. 2011). Similar to efforts on the Olympic Peninsula, the North Cascadia Adaptation Partnership assessed vulnerabilities and formulated adaptation options for two national forests and two national parks in Washington (Raymond et al. 2014).

In collaboration with three management units in California—Tahoe National Forest, Inyo National Forest, and Devils Postpile National Monument—the USFS Pacific Southwest Research Station held climate change education workshops and developed the Climate Project Screening

Tool in order to incorporate adaptation into project planning (Morelli et al. 2012). In response to requests from Shoshone National Forest in northern Wyoming, the USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station synthesized information on past climate, future climate projections, and potential effects of climate change on the multiple ecosystems within the forest (Rice et al. 2012).

In the largest effort to date in the eastern United States, the USFS Northern Research Station, in collaboration with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in northern Wisconsin and numerous other partners, conducted a vulnerability assessment for natural resources (Swanston et al. 2011) and developed adaptation options (Swanston and Janowiak 2012). Another joint national forest and USFS research vulnerability assessment effort focused on the vulnerability of watersheds to climate change (Furniss et al. 2013). Watershed vulnerability assessments, conducted on 11 national forests throughout the United States, were locally focused (at a national forest scale) and included water resource values, hydrologic reaction to climate change, watershed condition, and landscape sensitivity. The assessments were intended to help national forest managers identify where limited resources could be best invested to increase watershed resilience to climate change.

The processes, products, and techniques used for several studies and other climate change efforts on national forests have been compiled in a guidebook for developing adaptation options for national forests (Peterson et al. 2011). The guidebook outlines four key steps to facilitate adaptation in national forests: (1) become aware of basic climate change science and integrate that understanding with knowledge of local conditions and issues (review), (2) evaluate sensitivity of natural resources to climate change (rank), (3) develop and implement options for adapting resources to climate change (resolve), and (4) monitor the effectiveness of on-the-ground management (observe) and adjust as needed. The NRAP is focused on implementation of the principles and practices in the guidebook.

The Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership Process

The NRAP region includes 15 national forests, 7.8 million acres of wilderness, and 3 national parks across the USFS Northern Region and the adjacent Greater Yellowstone Area. The region covers 183 million acres (fig.1.1), spanning northern Idaho, Montana, northwestern Wyoming, North Dakota, and northern South Dakota. To facilitate analyses and interpretations, the NRAP assessment is divided into the following five subregions:

- **Western Rockies:** Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest, Glacier National Park

- **Central Rockies:** Bitterroot National Forest, Flathead National Forest, Lolo National Forest

- **Eastern Rockies:** Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (eastern portion), Custer National Forest (eastern portion), Gallatin National Forest (northern portion), Helena National Forest, Lewis and Clark National Forest

- **Greater Yellowstone Area:** Bridger-Teton National Forest, Caribou-Targhee National Forest, Shoshone National Forest, Gallatin National Forest (southern portion), Custer National Forest (western portion), Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (western portion), Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone National Park

- **Grassland:** Custer National Forest (part), Dakota Prairie National Grassland

The NRAP process includes: (1) a vulnerability assessment of the effects of climate change on hydrology and roads, fisheries, wildlife, forest and nonforest vegetation and disturbance, recreation, cultural resources, and ecosystem services; (2) development of adaptation options that will help reduce negative effects of climate change and assist the transition of biological systems and management to a warmer and otherwise changing climate; and (3) development of an enduring science-management partnership to facilitate ongoing dialogue and activities related to climate change in the Northern Rockies region. These resource sectors were selected based on their importance in the region and current management concerns and challenges.

Vulnerability assessments typically consider exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity (Parry et al. 2007), where exposure is the degree to which the system is exposed to changes in climate, sensitivity is an inherent quality of the system that indicates the degree to which it could be affected by climate change, and adaptive capacity is the ability of a system to respond and adjust to the exogenous influence of climate. Vulnerability assessments can be both qualitative and quantitative and focus on whole systems or individual species or resources (Glick et al. 2011). Several tools and databases are available for systematically assessing sensitivity (e.g., Lawler and Case 2010; Luce et al. 2014) and vulnerability (e.g., Potter and Crane 2010) of species.

For the NRAP, we used scientific literature and expert knowledge to assess exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity to identify key vulnerabilities for the identified resource areas. The assessment process took place over 16 months, and involved monthly phone meetings for each of the resource-specific assessment teams. Each assessment team refined key questions that the assessment needed to address, selected values to assess, and determined which climate change impact models best informed the assessment. In some cases, assessment teams conducted spatial analyses or ran and interpreted models, selected criteria with which to evaluate model outputs, and developed maps of model output and resource sensitivities. To the greatest extent possible, teams focused on effects and projections

Figure 1.1—Project area for the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership (NRAP) (map by Robert Norheim, University of Washington).
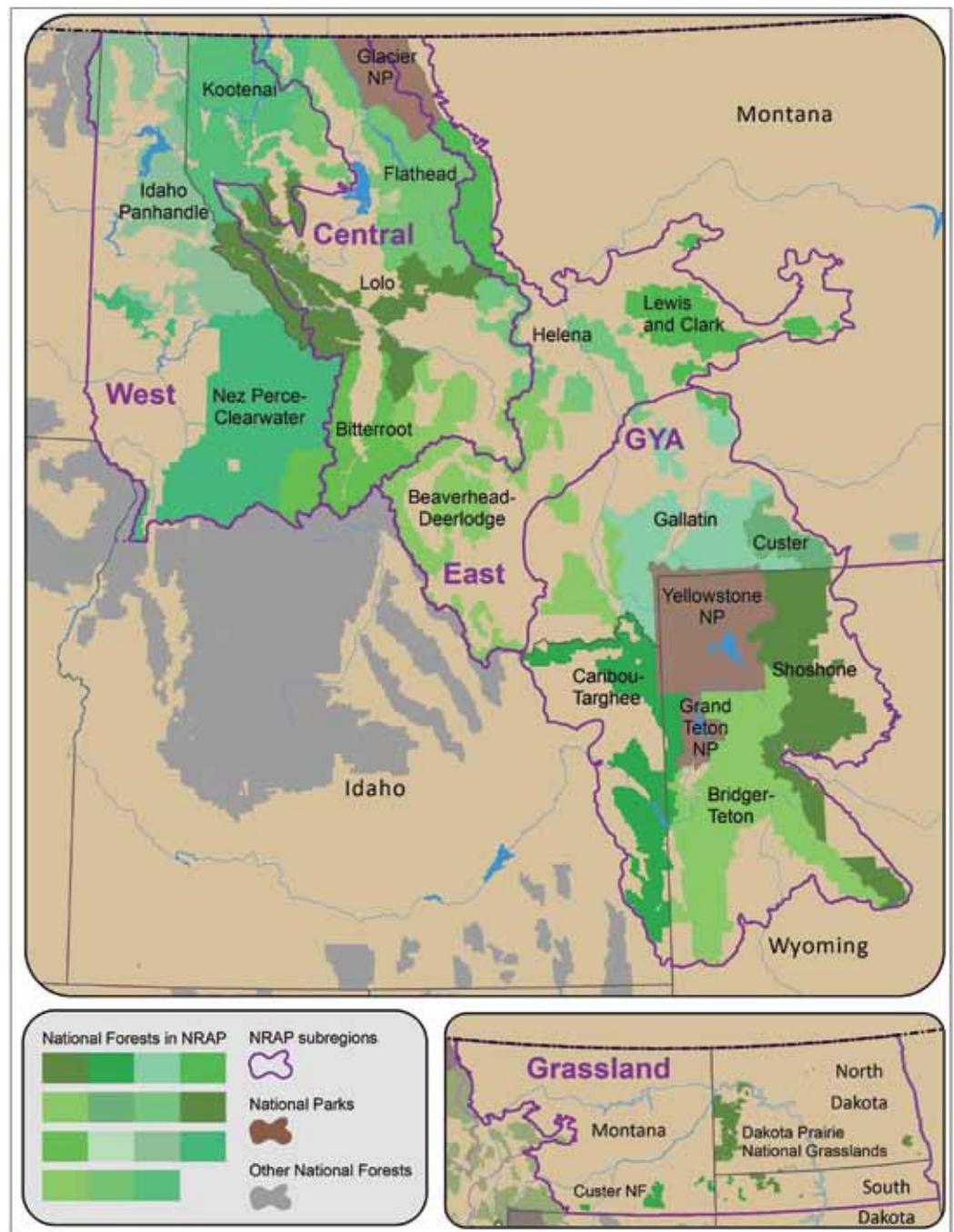
specific to the NRAP region and used the finest scale projections that are scientifically valid (Littell et al. 2011).

By working collaboratively with scientists and resource managers and focusing on a specific region, the goal of NRAP was to provide the scientific foundation for operationalizing climate change in planning, ecological restoration, and project management (Peterson et al. 2011; Raymond et al. 2013, 2014; Swanston and Janowiak 2012). After key vulnerabilities were identified for each resource sector, five workshops were convened in October and November 2014 in Bismarck, North Dakota; Bozeman, Montana; Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; Helena, Montana; and

Missoula, Montana, to present and discuss the vulnerability assessment, and to elicit adaptation options from resource managers (see Appendix 1A for workshop participants).

During these workshops, scientists and resource specialists presented information on climate change effects and current management practices for each of the resources. Facilitated dialogue was used to identify key sensitivities and adaptation options. Participants identified strategies (general approaches) and tactics (on-the-ground actions) for adapting resources and management practices to climate change, as well as opportunities and barriers

for incorporating these adaptation actions into projects, management plans, partnerships, and policies. Participants generally focused on adaptation options that can be implemented given our current scientific understanding of climate change effects, but they also identified research and monitoring that would benefit future efforts to assess vulnerability and guide management practices. Information from the regionwide assessment was also downscaled to identify the most significant vulnerabilities to climate change for priority resources in each subregion. Facilitators captured information generated during the workshops with a set of spreadsheets adapted from Swanston and Janowiak (2012). Initial results from the workshops were augmented with continued dialogue with Federal agency resource specialists.

This publication contains a chapter on expected climatic changes in the Northern Rockies, and one chapter for each of the resource sectors covered in the vulnerability assessment (water resources, fisheries, forested and rangeland vegetation and disturbance, wildlife, recreation, ecosystem services, and cultural heritage) (see Appendix 1B for author affiliations). Each of the resource chapters includes a review of climate change effects, sensitivities, current management practices, and results of the discussions on adaptation strategies and tactics.

Resource managers and other decisionmakers can use this publication in several ways. First, the vulnerability assessment will provide information on climate change effects needed for national forest and national park plans, project plans, conservation strategies, restoration, and analysis of environmental effects. Second, climate change sensitivities and adaptation options developed at the regional scale will provide the scientific foundation for subregional and national forest and national park vulnerability assessments, adaptation planning, and resource monitoring. We expect that over time, and as needs and funding align, appropriate adaptation options will be incorporated into plans and programs of Federal management units. Third, we anticipate that resource specialists will apply this assessment to implement climate-smart resource planning and management on lands throughout the region.

Adaptation planning is an ongoing and iterative process. Implementation may occur at critical times in the planning process, such as when managers revise USFS land management plans and other planning documents, or after the occurrence of extreme events and ecological disturbances (e.g., wildfire). We focus on adaptation options for the USFS and NPS, but this publication provides information that can be used by other land management agencies as well. Furthermore, the NRAP process can be emulated by national forests, national parks, and other organizations outside the Northern Rockies, thus propagating climate-smart management across larger landscapes (e.g., the Intermountain Adaptation Partnership in Utah, Nevada, and southern Idaho; http://adaptationpartners.org/iap).

All-Lands Approach to Climate Change Adaptation

The USFS and NPS climate change strategies identify the need to build partnerships and work across jurisdictional boundaries when planning for adaptation. This concept of responding to the challenge of climate change with an "all-lands" approach is frequently mentioned, but a process for doing so is rarely defined. Unique in its effort to implement an all-lands approach to adaptation for a specific region, NRAP is an inclusive partnership of multiple agencies and organizations with an interest in managing natural resources in a changing climate. In addition to representatives from the national forests, grasslands, and parks, several other agencies and organizations participated in the resource sector workshops (Appendix 1A). This type of partnership enables a coordinated and complementary approach to adaptation that crosses jurisdictional boundaries. The NRAP also provides a venue for agencies to learn from the practices of others so that the most effective adaptation strategies can be identified.

Risks and vulnerabilities resulting from climate change and gaps in scientific knowledge and policy need to be assessed. Adaptation is a prominent focus of the NRAP, with emphasis on creating resilience in human and natural systems. Communicating climate change information and engaging employees, partners, and the public in productive discussions are also integral parts of successfully responding to climate change. The need for partnerships and collaborations on climate change issues was also identified in the NRAP. Sharing climate change information, vulnerability assessments, and adaptation strategies across administrative boundaries will contribute to the success of climate change responses in the Northern Rockies.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1A—Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership Workshop Participants

Bozeman, Montana, October 9–10, 2014

Vegetation

Cavan Fitzsimmons – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Andrew Hansen – Montana State University
Bob Keane – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Keith Konen – Gallatin National Forest
Mary Mahalovich – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Kelly McCloskey – Grand Teton National Park
Jill McMurray – USFS, Region 1/Region 4, Air Quality
Traute Parrie – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Ben Poulter – Montana State University
Ann Rodman – Yellowstone National Park
Julie Shea – Custer-Gallatin National Forest

Nonforest Vegetation

Diane Abendroth – Grand Teton National Park
Walt Allen – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Jeff DiBenedetto – Custer National Forest
Susan Lamont – Gallatin National Forest
Rose Lehman – Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Mary Manning – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Matt Reeves – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Jessi Salix – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Kevin Suzuki – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Denice Swanke – Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument
Travis Ziehl – Teton County

Wildlife

Polly Buotte – University of Idaho
Jeff Burrell – Wildlife Conservation Society, Northern Rockies and Yellowstone Program
Jodie Canfield – Gallatin National Forest
Sue Consolo Murphy – Grand Teton National Park
Mary Erickson – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Rachel Feigley – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Kristin Legg – Greater Yellowstone Network
Kevin McKelvey – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Rob Mickelson – Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Amie Shovlain – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Hydrology

Karri Cary – Shoshone National Forest
Pam Fletcher – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Gretchen Hurley – BLM

Richard Raione – Bridger-Teton National Forest
Andy Ray – NPS Inventory and Monitoring
Alex Sienkiewicz – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Ed Snook – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Mike Tercek – Yellowstone National Park
Dave Thoma – NPS Inventory and Monitoring
Eric Winthers – Bridger-Teton National Forest

Fisheries

Robert Al-Chokhachy – USGS, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center
Shawn Anderson – Shoshone National Forest
Scott Barndt – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Yvette Converse – Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative/NPS
Molly Cross – Wildlife Conservation Society
Dave Hallac – Yellowstone National Park
Dan Isaak – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Jessi Kershner – EcoAdapt
Brad Shepard – Wildlife Conservation Society
Lisa Stoeffler – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Gary Tabor – Center for Large Landscape Conservation
Michael Young – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station

Recreation

Krista Gebert – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Virginia Kelly – Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee
Megan Lawson – Headwaters Economics
Natalie Little – USFS, Region 4
Jane Ruchman – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Trey Schillie – USFS, Region 2
Jamie Schoen – Bridger-Teton National Forest
Travis Warziniack – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station

Bismarck, North Dakota, October 15–16, 2014

Nonforest Vegetation

Adnan Akyuz – North Dakota State University
Bernadette Braun – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Chad Prosser – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Karen Dunlap – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Kurt Hansen – Custer National Forest – Sioux Ranger District
Libby Knotts – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Mary Manning – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Meghan Dinkins – Dakota Prairie Grassland

Hydrology

Babete Anderson – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Scott Barndt – Custer-Gallatin National Forest
Andy Efta – Custer National Forest
Pam Fletcher – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Steven Krentz – USFWS, Mountain Prairie Region
Rick Nelson – Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape
    Conservation Cooperative
Mike Philbin – BLM
Karen Ryberg – USGS, North Dakota Water Science Center
Alison Schlag – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Kevin Shelley – USFWS
Robert Swithers – Dakota Prairie Grassland
Meredith Webster – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office

Missoula, Montana,
October 20–21, 2014

Vegetation

Jeremy Amberson – Bitterroot Restoration Committee
Barry Bollenbacher – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
C. Alina Cansler – University of Washington
Rob Carlin – Flathead National Forest
Gregg DeNitto – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Linda Donner – Flathead National Forest
Bruce Erikson – Lolo National Forest
Shelagh Fox – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Sheryl Gunn – Lolo National Forest
Cheri Hartless – Bitterroot National Forest
Melissa Hayes – Montana Forest Restoration Committee
LaWen Hollingsworth – Fire Modeling Institute
Melissa Jenkins – Flathead National Forest
Bob Keane – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Elaine Kennedy Sutherland – USFS, Rocky Mountain
    Research Station
Jerry Kruger – Bitterroot National Forest
Heidi Trechsel – Flathead National Forest

Nonforest Vegetation

Tara Carolin – Glacier National Park
Chantelle Delay – Flathead National Forest
Gil Gale – Bitterroot National Forest
Holger Jensen – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Mary Manning – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Matt Reeves – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Susan Rinehart – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Karen Stockmann – Lolo National Forest

Wildlife

Len Broberg – University of Montana
Polly Buotte – University of Idaho
Renate Bush – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Alan Dohmen – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Kari Eneas – Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Greg Gustina – Lolo National Forest

Whisper Means – Confederate Salish and Kootenai Tribes
Peter Nelson – Defenders of Wildlife
Kuennen Reed – Flathead National Forest
Tom Reed – Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge
Melly Reuling – Center for Large Landscape Conservation

Hydrology

Chris Brick – Clark Fork Coalition
Nate Dieterich – Flathead National Forest
Craig Kendall – Flathead National Forest
Charlie Luce – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Caryn Miske – Flathead Basin Commission
Regan Nelson – Crown of the Continent Conservation
    Initiative
Amber Richardson – Bitterroot National Forest
Ed Snook – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office

Fisheries

Aubree Benson – Lolo National Forest
Dan Brewer – USFWS
Anne Carlson – Wilderness Society
Robert Davies – Flathead National Forest
Bruce Farling – Trout Unlimited
Wade Fredenberg – Montana Ecological Services Suboffice
Dan Isaak – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Ryan Kovach – USGS
Clint Muhlfeld – USGS, Northern Rocky Mountain Science
    Center
David Schmetterling – Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Erin Sexton – University of Montana
Scott Spaulding — USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Cameron Thomas – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Pat Van Eimeren – Flathead National Forest
Sims Wade – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Michael Young – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station

Recreation

Carl Davis – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Krista Gebert – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Michael Hand – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Cynthia Manning – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Marsha Moore – Flathead National Forest
Rosa Nygaard – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Keith Stockmann – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Byron Stringham – Lolo National Forest
Jeff Ward – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Rusty Wilder – Lola National Forest

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho,
October 23–24, 2014

Vegetation

Pat Behrens – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Bob Boeh – Idaho Forest Group
Barry Bollenbacher – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office

Malcolm Edwards – Kootenai National Forest
Mike Giesey – Kootenai National Forest
Kevin Greenleaf – Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Jessie Grossman – Yaak Valley Forest Council
Jason Jerman – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Carol McKenzie – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Lee Pederson – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Christopher Schnepf – University of Idaho Extension
Megan Strom – Kootenai National Forest
Art Zack – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Paul Zambino – USFS Region 1 Regional Office

Nonforest Vegetation

LeAnn Abell – BLM
Derek Antonelli – Idaho Native Plant Society
Jennifer Costich-Thompson – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Valerie Goodnow – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Mike Hays – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Megan Lucas – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Mary Manning – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office

Wildlife

Polly Buotte – University of Idaho
Jason Flory – USFWS, Northern Idaho Field Office
Lynn Johnson – Kootenai National Forest
Kevin McKelvey – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Rema Sadak – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Leona Svancara – Idaho Department of Fish and Game
JJ Teare – Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Guy Wagner – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest

Hydrology

Shandra Dekome – Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Cara Farr – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Laura Jungst – Kootenai National Forest
Ed Snook – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office

Fisheries

Jim Fredericks – Idaho Fish and Game
Greg Hoffman – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Dan Isaak – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Dan Kenny – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Jessi Kershner – EcoAdapt
Katherine Thompson – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Michael Young – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
William Young – Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Recreation

Pam Fletcher – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Krista Gebert – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Morai Helfen – Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Diane Jones – Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest
Timory Peel – Kootenai National Forest
Loretta Stevens – Kootenai National Forest/Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes

Helena, Montana, November 4–5, 2014

Vegetation

Elisa Stamm – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Rob Gump – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Amanda Milburn – Helena National Forest
Tanya Murphy – Helena National Forest
Alicia Torregrosa – USGS
Andrea Woodward – USGS

Nonforest Vegetation

Beth Anderson – Lewis and Clark National Forest
Steve Black – Bighole Battlefield
Tammy Cherullo – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Amanda Hendrix – Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
Casey Johnson – Lewis and Clark National Forest
Mary Manning – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Matt Reeves – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Steve Shelly – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Rowdy Wood – Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest

Wildlife

Bray Beltron – Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Polly Buotte – University of Idaho
Gregg DeNitto – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Justin Gude – Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Kevin McKelvey – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Denise Pengeroth – Helena National Forest
Ryan Quire – Helena National Forest
Anne Roberts – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Hydrology

David Callery – Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest
Larry Dolan – Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Deb Entwistle – Helena National Forest
Pam Fletcher – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Wayne Green – Lewis and Clark National Forest
Sue Higgins – Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent
Robert Ray – Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Sara Rouse – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Ed Snook – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Brian Sugden – Plum Creek

Fisheries

Jim Brammer – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Anne Carlson – Wilderness Society
Kendall Cikanek – Lewis and Clark National Forest
Jessi Kershner – EcoAdapt
David Moser – Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Lee Nelson – Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Scott Spaulding – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office
Peru Suernam – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest

Recreation

Patty Bates – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Charlene Bucha – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
Elizabeth Casselli – Helena-Lewis and Clark National
    Forest
Jocelyn Dodge – Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest
David Fothergill – Helena National Forest
Michael Hand – USFS, Rocky Mountain Research Station
Mike Munoz – Lewis and Clark National Forest
Lis Novack – USFS, Region 1 Regional Office

Acronyms

BLM: Bureau of Land Management
NPS: National Park Service
USFS: U.S. Forest Service
USFWS: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS: U.S. Geological Survey

Organizations Represented in the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership

- Bitterroot Restoration Committee
- Bureau of Land Management
- Center for Large Landscape Conservation
- Clark Fork Coalition
- Climate Impacts Research Consortium
- Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Crown of the Continent Conservation Initiative
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Department of the Interior, North Central Climate Science Center
- EcoAdapt
- Fire Modeling Institute
- Flathead Basin Commission
- Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative
- Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee
- Headwaters Economics
- Heart of the Rockies Initiative
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Idaho Forest Group
- Idaho Native Plant Society
- Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
- Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge
- Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
- Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
- Montana State University
- National Park Service
- North Dakota State University
- Oregon State University
- Plains and Prairie Pothole Landscape Conservation Cooperative
- Plum Creek
- Roundtable on the Crown of the Continent
- Trout Unlimited
- University of Idaho
- University of Montana
- University of Washington
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Geological Survey
- Walking Shadow Ecology
- Wilderness Society
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Yaak Valley Forest Council

Appendix 1B—Author Affiliations

Chapter 1

S. Karen Dante-Wood is a Natural Resource Specialist, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Office of Sustainability and Climate in Washington, DC.

Chapter 2

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Chapter 3

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Marian Talbert is a Biostatistician with the U.S. Department of the Interior, North Central Climate Science Center in Fort Collins, Colorado.

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John Stevenson is a Regional Climate Extension Specialist with Oregon State University, Climate Impacts Research Consortium in Corvallis, Oregon.

Chapter 4

Charles H. Luce is a Research Hydrologist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station in Boise, Idaho.

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Chapter 2: Biogeographic, Cultural, and Historical Setting of the Northern Rocky Mountains

S. Karen Dante-Wood

The Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership (NRAP) includes diverse landscapes, ranging from high mountains to grasslands, from alpine glaciers to broad rivers (fig. 1.1). This region, once inhabited solely by Native Americans, has been altered by two centuries of settlement by Euro-Americans through extractive practices such as timber harvest, grazing, and mining, water diversions, and other activities. Although relatively little urbanization is present in this region, paved and unpaved roads and electrical transmission wires permeate much of the landscape. Federal agencies own and manage a significant portion of the Northern Rockies, including 15 national forests and 3 national parks.

Resource conditions, resource management issues, effects of climatic variability and change, and climate change adaptation options differ greatly from Idaho to North Dakota and from the Canadian border to Wyoming. To capture these differences, the NRAP climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation strategy were conducted for each of five subregions: Western Rockies, Central Rockies, Eastern Rockies, Greater Yellowstone Area, and Grassland. These subregions are briefly described next.

Western Rockies Subregion

The Western Rockies subregion occupies about 17 million acres across portions of Idaho and Montana, including the Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, and Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and several Native American reservations (e.g., Nez Perce Indian Reservation, Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation). Most of this subregion is extremely mountainous and heavily forested; the mountains are broken by river and stream valleys and two large grassland ecosystems, Big Camas Prairie and Palouse country. The subregion also includes 1.7 million acres of wilderness lands.

The Rocky Mountains encompass a large area of Idaho and extend from the Idaho panhandle along the Wyoming border. To the west of the Rockies lie the prairie lands of Washington and Oregon, and the east is home to mountainous western Montana. A distinguishing feature of this region is the rugged mountains that extend lengthwise along the panhandle. The Bitterroot Mountains occupy the Idaho panhandle along the Montana/Idaho border, the Coeur d'Alene Mountains lie in the northern portion of the panhandle from Lake Pend Oreille in the north to Lake Coeur d'Alene in the south, and the Clearwater and Salmon River Mountains are located south of the Coeur d'Alene Mountains.

Continental glaciers shaped the topography of this panhandle region by excavating lake basins and depositing glacial till and outwash. The bedrock found here is composed of sedimentary rocks of the Belt Supergroup, deposited 1,470 to 1,400 million years B.P. Deposition took place in a large basin where space was not a limiting factor and the sediment was able to build up vertically (Idaho State University 2014a). This process created large deposits of silver, lead, and zinc in the Coeur d'Alene area.

The Western Rockies subregion contains many large rivers. Commonly referred to as the "River of No Return," the Salmon River winds 425 miles through central Idaho and divides the northern and southern part of the State. The canyon gorge is deeper than the Grand Canyon of Arizona. It is one of the longest rivers in the State and renowned for its spawning beds for Pacific salmon species. The Clearwater River, also in Idaho, is fed by the Bitterroot Mountains and was preferred by explorers, trappers, miners, and loggers because it was easier to navigate than the turbulent Salmon River (Idaho State University 2014b). Other rivers include the Kootenai and Pend Oreille, which flow into the Columbia River. The Clark Fork of the Columbia River feeds into Lake Pend Oreille; and the Saint Maries, Saint Joe, and Coeur d'Alene Rivers flow into Lake Coeur d'Alene. Priest Lake and Hayden Lake near Pend Oreille are heavily used for recreation because of their scenic setting among forested mountains (Idaho State University 2014b).

Idaho is only 300 miles from the Pacific Ocean, so its climate is affected by a maritime atmospheric pattern that brings more precipitation to northern Idaho than to southern Idaho. Summers are typically hot and dry, and winters are relatively cold due to the high amount of moisture carried through the Columbia River Gorge.

The most actively managed forests in the Western Rockies are found in northern Idaho, which is characterized as a steppe-coniferous forest alpine meadow province (Schnepf and Davis 2013). A 2012 Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS) report used Forest Inventory and Analysis data to describe various forest cover types in the subregion. The six most common forest

groups are Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)/Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*)/mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*), lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta* var. *latifolia*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*)/Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*)/paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*) (Sullivan et al. 1986). Commercially harvested coniferous species in this area include Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce, grand fir (*Abies grandis*), lodgepole pine, ponderosa pine, subalpine fir, western hemlock, western larch (*Larix occidentalis*), western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), and western white pine (*Pinus monticola*). Other species not used for wood products include whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*), alpine larch (*Larix lyallii*), mountain hemlock, and western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*). Quaking aspen, black cottonwood (*Populus nigra*), and paper birch are also commonly found.

Western white pine is an important tree species to this region. It grows on a variety of soil types and slopes and can regenerate across a broad range of environments. Western white pine forests usually originate from wildfires and when the species matures, it can survive fire better than nearly all of its shade-tolerant competitors. Although the species can survive to an age of 300 to 400 years, it is declining due to white pine blister rust (causal agent: *Cronartium ribicola*).

Common shrub species in the subregion include western serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), Lewis mockorange (*Philadelphus lewisii*), huckleberry (*Vaccinium membranaceum*), and smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*). Evergreen shrubs include Oregon-grape (*Berberis aquifolium*), snowbrush ceanothus (*Ceanothus velutinus*), and mountain lover (*Paxistima myrsinites*); evergreen groundcovers include kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), and twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*) (Sullivan et al. 1986).

Ecologically diverse habitats in the Western Rockies subregion also support a large number of rare plant species. The warm, dry grassland areas in the western part of the subregion harbor populations of Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), a Federally threatened species, and Palouse goldenweed (*Pyrrocoma liatriformis*). In contrast, the much wetter forests in the Clearwater River drainage contain several narrowly endemic plants such as Constance's bittercress (*Cardamine constancei*), as well as a number of disjunct species that are geographically isolated from their main ranges in the Cascade Mountains, such as Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*). In the northern part of the subregion, fens (groundwater-dependent wetlands where peat has accumulated) are uncommon habitats that support peripheral populations of more-northern plant species such as spoon-leaved sundew (*Drosera intermedia*) and small cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*).

The Western Rockies provide habitat for more than 300 animal species. Large mammal species include woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), grizzly bear (*U. arctos*), white-tailed deer

(*Odocoileus virginianus*), mule deer (*O. hemionus hemionus*), elk (*Cervus elaphus*), moose (*Alces alces*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), cougar (*Puma concolor*), and wolverine (*Gulo gulo*). Smaller vertebrates include Coeur d'Alene salamander (*Plethodon idahoensis*) and pygmy shrew (*Sorex hoyi*).

Among the broad range of avian taxa are bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), many species of owls, wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), California quail (*Callipepla californica*), greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), blue jay (*Cyanocitta cristata*), and calliope hummingbird (*Stellula calliope*).

Both native and nonnative fish are found in many Western Rockies rivers and lakes, making it a popular area for angling and spawning. Fish species include native cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii*), rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*), the Federally threatened bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), and nonnative brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*). The Kootenai River is home to the endangered white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) and threatened burbot (*Lota lota*).

Wildfire is a dominant influence on the structure, function, and productivity of forest ecosystems in the Western Rockies. Fire frequency varies greatly depending on biogeographic conditions, with stand replacement fires occurring at 50- to 500-year intervals, and surface fires occurring in dry forests at 2- to 50-year intervals. Frequent fires keep many forests in the early stages of succession, as indicated by high numbers of western larch and pine (Schnepf and Davis 2013). In contrast, fire exclusion during the past 80 years or so has reduced fire frequency in lower-elevation dry forests, resulting in dense stands and elevated accumulation of surface fuels.

Mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) kills large numbers of lodgepole pine, often in outbreaks of thousands of acres, and it increasingly kills whitebark pine and limber pine at high elevations as the climate continues to warm. Western spruce budworm (*Choristoneura occidentalis*) causes sporadic outbreaks in Douglas-fir and true firs (*Abies* spp.), and Douglas-fir tussock moth (*Orgyia pseudotsugata*) is a prominent defoliator of Douglas-fir.

White pine blister rust, a nonnative fungus, causes mortality in five-needle pines (western white pine, whitebark pine, limber pine), and has greatly reduced the dominance of western white pine (Schwandt et al. 2013). Forests dominated by Douglas-fir and grand fir have increased as a result, accelerating forest succession toward shade-tolerant, late-successional true firs, western hemlock, and western redcedar (Bollenbacher et al. 2014). Attempts to control the spread of blister rust through removal of currant (*Ribes*), its alternate host, were mostly unsuccessful (Russell and Jain 2007).

Various root diseases kill and reduce the vigor of Douglas-fir and grand fir, especially north of the Salmon River. Parasitic dwarf mistletoes (*Arceuthobium* spp.) reduce the vigor of and sometimes kill several species of conifers,

including western larch, Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, and lodgepole pine (Idaho Forest Products Commission 2011).

Several silvicultural treatments are used to reduce the effects of these disturbances and stressors, including thinning, mechanically mixing the soil, and prescribed burning to favor the regeneration of different species and reduce surface fuels (Graham and Jain 2005). Treatments can be targeted to modify different portions of forest stands, from the soil to the upper canopy. Harvesting larger trees can create canopy openings, and encourage regeneration. Thinning to remove the mid-story of forests can result in various species combinations. Ground-level vegetation treatments can increase the density of small trees, creating a continuous distribution of low-stature fuels.

The economic structure of the Western Rockies integrates northern Idaho, northeastern Washington, and western Montana as "the inland empire." In the early 1950s, the timber industry was the second largest industry after agriculture. Large-scale lumbering operations did not occur until after Weyerhauser Corporation opened plants near Sandpoint and Moscow in northern Idaho. Before 1900, timber was used locally for lumber, fuelwood for homes, railroad ties, and fence posts. After outside markets developed, operating sawmills produced various products such as 2 x 4 studs, plywood, oriented strand board, particleboard, house logs, posts, poles, pulp and paper, wood beams, mobile homes, roof supports, and much more. Although the forest industry maintains a significant presence in the Western Rockies, it has declined in the past 20 years because of changing economic conditions, competition with other markets, and greatly reduced harvest on Federal lands.

Agriculture is a dominant industry on private lands, and cultivation and livestock grazing have occurred continuously on fertile prairie lands since the 1860s. Mining, which began in the 1880s, is another important industry in some areas, especially the Coeur d'Alene region, which leads the Nation in silver production and produces other nonferrous metals such as lead and zinc. Water that originates in high mountains of the Western Rockies is an extremely important resource because of its value for agriculture, hydroelectric power, industry, and municipal consumption. Forests are increasingly recognized and managed for their capacity to produce large amounts of clean water and to reduce erosion that would degrade water quality.

As extractive industries have declined in the past 30 years and affluence of human populations has increased, recreation and aesthetically based activities have increased in popularity and economic importance. Rugged topography, forests, lakes, and streams are a major attraction for primary residences, seasonal residences, and recreational travel (fig. 2.1). Hunting, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, off-road vehicle use, and snow skiing are popular activities for local residents and visitors from throughout North America. Federal management increasingly focuses on providing opportunities for a broad range of recreational activities.

The Western Rockies have large populations of the Nez Perce, Kalispel, Kootenai, and Coeur d'Alene Tribes, who have lived for thousands of years in the terrestrial ecosystems, and more recently urban areas, of this subregion. Most tribes in this area had many villages and camps. They lived in teepees during the warmer months, and in large camps with primarily underground houses during the winter. Hunting, fishing (especially for salmon), and gathering of wild foods occurred year round, and men and women typically had separate duties. Men hunted and fished, and women gathered vegetables and fruits such as chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), huckleberry, wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), and common camas (*Camassia quamash*). Native people in this subregion excelled at making baskets, which were used for collecting nuts, storing fruits and roots, and cooking food. Federal agencies increasingly collaborate with tribal partners to ensure that tribal values (including cultural values) and access to resources are considered in land management planning.

Central Rockies Subregion

The Central Rockies subregion occupies about 12 million acres across portions of western Montana and Idaho and includes the Bitterroot, Flathead, and Lolo National Forests; Glacier National Park; and Flathead Indian Reservation (fig. 1.1). The subregion contains steep mountains, rolling meadows, large rivers and lakes (fig. 2.2), and alpine ecosystems that span the Sapphire Mountains, Bitterroot Mountains, Mission Mountains, and many other ranges. It also contains the largest contiguous area of designated wilderness in the United States outside of Alaska. The northern portion of the Central Rockies is referred to as "the Crown of the Continent," and includes Glacier National Park and the Flathead National Forest.

Figure 2.1—Highly dissected watersheds with mixed conifer forest adjacent to streams are common in the Western Rockies subregion (photo: USDA Forest Service).

Figure 2.2—Glacially carved landscapes, dense coniferous forest, and deep lakes are common in the Central Rockies subregion (photo: National Park Service).

The Bitterroot and Missoula Valleys located in west-central Montana have an inland mountain climate. Air masses that develop over the Pacific Ocean release moisture in the Cascade Range and over the mountains of northern Idaho. West-central Montana occupies the rain-shadow area, which receives dried-out Pacific air and little moisture in the valley bottoms—about 13 inches annually (Lackschewitz 1991). Humidity is high in this region, except during the summer months, and winters are cold and moist. Similarly, the climate in the Flathead and Glacier region is influenced by the Pacific Maritime atmospheric pattern, with warm, dry summers and wet, cold winters.

Alluvial sediments filled the Bitterroot River Valley during the Tertiary period, and glacial Lake Missoula drained and refilled several times as a section of a continental glacier repeatedly washed out and redeveloped. Glacial lake sediments of various depths and qualities cover the slopes, bottomlands, and terraces in west-central Montana today (Lackschewitz 1991). During the Pleistocene era, low elevation valleys were scoured by continental glaciers, while the mountains were shaped by alpine glaciers in the Flathead and Glacier region (Newlon and Burns 2009).

In the Central Rockies, microclimate has a big effect on the distribution, abundance, and productivity of vegetation. For example, steep south-facing slopes with low retention of snow and soil moisture in summer are generally less productive and have different species composition than north-facing slopes. The bottoms of mountain canyons support lush vegetation due to the high level of moisture, whereas ridgetops support vegetation that requires little moisture for growth and survival.

Due to the Pacific-influenced climate, forests found in the west-central region (Bitterroot and Missoula Valleys) are drier than those in Idaho and northwestern Montana. Only a few species typical of the Pacific Coast are found here, such as western redcedar, western white pine, Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*), bride's bonnet (*Clintonia uniflora*), American trail plant (*Adenocaulon bicolor*), and threeleaf foamflower (*Tiarella trifoliata*). Intermountain forest species dominate the west-central Montana landscape, including

western larch, subalpine larch (*Larix lyallii*), ponderosa pine, mock azalea (*Menziesia ferruginea*), Hitchcock's smooth woodrush (*Luzula hitchcockii*), and common beargrass (*Xerophyllum tenax*). Bottomland ponderosa pine and hardwood species are commonly found in moist sites, whereas different types of bunchgrass species (*Agropyron* spp. and *Festuca* spp.) and a mixture of ponderosa pine and bunchgrasses is found in dry sites. Douglas-fir, grand fir, and subalpine fir dominate at higher elevations (Lackschewitz 1991). Extensive stands of lodgepole pine are present at mid-to-upper elevations. Much of the native vegetation in the lower Bitterroot and Missoula Valleys has been lost to pasture or urban development.

In the Flathead Valley and Glacier National Park, lower elevations are dominated by Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, grand fir, Engelmann spruce, and western redcedar. Douglas-fir, western larch, and subalpine fir are common at midelevations, and whitebark pine is found at high elevations (Newlon and Burns 2009). Black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) and quaking aspen are common deciduous trees found at lower elevations near Glacier National Park, often along lakes.

Wildfire is a major disturbance in the Central Rockies. Fires were fairly regular at lower and middle elevations in the Bitterroot and Missoula Valleys before 1900. Seral western larch and lodgepole pine previously dominated north-facing slopes, but fire exclusion has led to increased dominance of shade-tolerant species. As a result, silvicultural and prescribed burning treatments are being used to increase the distribution and abundance of seral tree and shrub species (Lackschewitz 1991).

The Central Rockies contain more than 60 species of mammals, with wilderness locations having relatively intact populations. Species include gray wolf, Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), cougar, elk, mountain goat (*Oreamnos americanus*), bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*), northern bog lemming (*Synaptomys borealis*), grizzly bear, golden-mantled ground squirrel (*Callospermophilus lateralis*), and pygmy shrew. Canada lynx and grizzly bear are on the threatened species list, and gray wolf, bald eagle, and

peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) have been removed from the Federal threatened and endangered species list.

Hundreds of bird species are found in the Central Rockies, including killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) and spotted sandpiper (*Actitis macularius*) in riparian areas, song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) in grassland, willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*) and MacGillivray's warbler (*Geothlypis tolmiei*) in shrubby habitat, and bald eagle and Bullock's oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) in mature forest canopy.

Diverse native cold-water fish and nonnative fish are abundant in Central Rockies rivers. For example, Flathead National Forest is well known for its populations of native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*), which are found in Flathead Lake and the Flathead River. The Bitterroot River is home to many native fish species including bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, northern pike minnow (*Ptychocheilus oregonensis*), and largescale sucker (*Catostomus macrocheilus*). As a result of the diversity and abundance of fish species, angling is a popular recreational activity in this area.

Wildfires and insect outbreaks are disrupting ecosystems in the Central Rockies. Although wildfires play an important ecological role, recently there have been more occurrences of larger wildfires and longer wildfire seasons because of warmer spring and summer temperatures. These fires are becoming increasingly expensive to control as they make their way across the forested landscape but also as they enter the wildland-urban interface, the zone where housing borders forests and woodlands. Insect invasions in this subregion have also damaged and killed trees.

Mountain pine beetle is one of the most destructive bark beetles in North America and has caused severe damage and mortality to whitebark pine in this subregion. Lodgepole pine in the forests of Idaho and Montana were affected by the beetle between 1911 and 1942. These outbreaks originally occurred at lower elevations and moved upward into whitebark pine habitat. This occurred in the Flathead National Forest in the 1970s, where the mountain pine beetle invaded lodgepole pine forests first and then moved upward into whitebark pine (Bartos and Gibson 1990). White pine blister rust has caused extensive mortality in whitebark pine in the Central Rockies, especially in Glacier National Park and adjacent areas, where more than 70 percent of the trees are infected and 30 percent have died.

Many of the aforementioned flora and fauna were documented by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark during their expedition in the early 1800s. The explorers traveled across the Bitterroot River and Lolo Creek Valley twice and never passed through the Flathead Valley. Other early explorers to the region included fur companies and independent trappers. Fur companies obtained fur by trading goods for furs with Native Americans, employing hunters and trappers, and trading furs with hunters and trappers at trading posts (McKay 1994). Hudson's Bay Company had a good rapport with the Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai Tribes, trading products for bison (*Bison bison*) provided by Native Americans.

In 1855, the Hellgate Treaty established the Flathead Indian Reservation for the Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai Tribes. As the tribes began to live on the reservation, Euro-American settlement accelerated. Initially inhabited by quartz miners, fur trappers, and French Canadians, the Upper Flathead Valley was settled more heavily after the Northern Pacific Railroad connected with Missoula in 1883.

Timber harvest was a primary extractive activity in the Central Rockies in the late 1800s. With the passage of the 1891 Forest Reserve Act, the President had authority to create forest reserves to revise public land laws (McKay 1994), and various protections gradually spread across Federal lands. Yellowstone was the first forest reserve established by President Harrison. In 1897, the Flathead, Bitterroot, Lewis and Clark, and Priest River became the first four reserves in the Northern Region established by President Cleveland. Much of the lower elevation land in the Central Rockies today has been converted to agriculture and urban and suburban development. The major industries are agriculture, ranching, forestry, and recreation/tourism.

Eastern Rockies Subregion

The Eastern Rockies subregion occupies about 12 million acres in central, west-central, north-central, and southwestern Montana (fig. 1.1). Included in this area are the Beaverhead-Deerlodge (eastern portion), Helena, and Lewis and Clark National Forests. These forests are mostly found on the eastern side of the Continental Divide. The subregion extends from high mountains (often exceeding 11,000 feet) in the west to broad plains in the east, including several large wilderness areas. It contains numerous mountain ranges—the Beaverhead, Bitterroot, Pioneer, Centennial, Bridger, Madison, Absaroka, Beartooth, Crazy, Gallatin, Elkhorn, and Big Belt Mountains—most of which have reasonably intact ecosystems at higher elevations.

Climate in the Eastern Rockies varies considerably, depending on location relative to the Continental Divide. The western side receives more precipitation as air masses from the west cool and release moisture over the mountain ranges; on the eastern side, the air becomes warmer and drier, often accompanied by downslope air movement known as "Chinook winds," which create a more moderate climate than that of the Great Plains (Phillips 1999). In general, the eastern portion of the subregion experiences a drier continental climate.

The Rocky Mountains were developed from intense plate tectonic movement during the Jurassic, Cenozoic, and Laramide orogeny periods. The Laramide orogeny, which took place approximately 70 to 40 million years B.P., is responsible for elevating the Rocky Mountains. California, Oregon, and Washington were added to North America during the Mesozoic Era, whereas the Rockies were added to the continent much later (70 million years B.P.). Although mountain building usually occurs 200 to 400 miles inland

from the boundary of a tectonic plate (the subduction zone), the Rocky Mountains are several hundred miles inland. In the Rockies, the oceanic plate sank beneath the continental plate at a flat angle that led to mountain building farther inland than might be expected (U.S. Geological Survey 2014).

Numerous rivers flow through the Eastern Rockies, including the Missouri, Blackfoot, and Smith Rivers. The longest river in North America, the Missouri begins at the confluence of the Jefferson and Madison Rivers near Three Forks, Montana and includes three reservoirs (Canyon Ferry, Hauser, and Upper Holter). The Smith River is a tributary of the Missouri River and flows between the Little Belt and Big Belt Mountains. The Blackfoot River, a snow- and spring-fed river, begins at the Continental Divide in Lewis and Clark County, and is the river featured in the book *A River Runs Through It* by Norman Maclean. These rivers are known for their blue ribbon trout fishery status, scenic floats, and other water-based recreational activities.

Vegetation in the Eastern Rockies varies primarily as a function of elevation and aspect. Lower elevations are dominated by grassland and sagebrush steppe that include needle-and-thread grass (*Hesperostipa comata*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.), milkvetch (*Astragalus* spp.), and wildflowers such as lupine (*Lupinus*) and balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza* spp.). Fremont's cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*), yellow willow (*Salix lutea*), coyote willow (*S. exigua*), woods rose (*Rosa woodsii*), and golden currant (*Ribes aureum*) are commonly found along rivers and streams. Dominant species in foothills and woodlands include limber pine, Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*), Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine. Understory species include antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), curl-leaf mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus ledifolius*), and skunkbrush sumac (*Rhus aromatica* var. *simplicifolia*). Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine dominate upper montane

slopes, and lodgepole pine and Engelmann spruce are common at high elevations (Phillips 1999).

Common wildlife species in the Eastern Rockies include mountain goat, bighorn sheep, elk, cougar, Canada lynx, wolverine, and black bear. Hunters from around the world purchase tags to hunt in this subregion for many of these big-game species. Also common are bald eagle, greater sage-grouse, peregrine falcon, and red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*). Fly fishing opportunities are plentiful due to abundant populations of westslope cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brook trout, and northern pike (*Esox lucius*). There are a few populations of grizzly bear and gray wolf in the region, but these species are concentrated in the western section of the Eastern Rockies, particularly in wilderness areas.

Forests in the Eastern Rockies have been subject to widespread drought, wildfire, and insect outbreaks over the past 20 years (Montana Department of Environmental Quality 2013). Several large wildfires have burned with uncharacteristic intensity because the absence of fire for several decades has resulted in elevated accumulation of fuels. Mountain pine beetle has led to extensive mortality of lodgepole pine and some ponderosa pine as older, non-vigorous stands succumb to attacks by elevated beetle populations caused by warmer temperatures. Western spruce budworm has caused mortality and stunted growth in Engelmann spruce and Douglas-fir in some areas.

The travels of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark through the Eastern Rockies have created a prominent historical legacy (fig. 2.3). Their expedition began in 1804 near St. Louis, Missouri and in the spring of 1805, they traveled to Three Forks, Montana, via the Jefferson River. On this route, the explorers interacted with Shoshone Indians, and after passing over the Bitterroot Mountains, they made their way down to Fort Clatsop on the Oregon side of the Columbia River. The Lewis and Clark National Forest and other place names commemorate the expedition.

Figure 2.3—Populations of the grizzly bear, an iconic species in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion, have increased over the past several decades as a result of successful conservation efforts (photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Thousands of years before Euro-Americans arrived, the Blackfoot, Sioux, Cheyenne, Flathead, and Crow Indians used the area as hunting grounds and a place to winter. Prior to 1806, the Blackfoot had exchanged wolf and beaver pelts with Canadian and English settlers for guns and ammunition. The livelihoods and cultures of these tribes were highly dependent on hunting the American bison, which provided food, shelter, and clothing. After horses were introduced to the region in the mid-1700s, hunters had much greater mobility to pursue bison, and horses themselves became part of the livelihood, commerce, and culture. The decimation of bison herds by Euro-Americans in the mid-1800s contributed to a rapid decline in Native American populations.

In the mid-1800s, mining for gold and other precious minerals was a common activity along the Continental Divide, particularly near the town of Helena, which was founded in 1864 and had the second largest placer gold deposit in Montana. Within 4 years, Last Chance Gulch (the original name for Helena) produced $19 million of gold. Because of its location adjacent to major transportation routes, the mining town was able to persist through the gold rush (A&E Television Networks 2009).

Agriculture is the largest industry in Montana, and Beaverhead County is the leading producer of cattle in the State, followed by Gallatin County, Jefferson County, and Madison County (Ranch and Recreational Group 2011). In the past several years, ranchland has been increasingly at risk to subdivision development. The wave of development in this region has transformed the landscape of forests and grasslands into one of towns, farms, and increasingly fragmented forested areas. Several organizations such as The Nature Conservancy are working with private landowners to add conservation easements on their lands to restrict subdivision, thereby limiting the fragmentation of wildlife landscapes and deleterious effects on ranching operations. The USFS often coordinates with the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks on natural resource issues related to landscape connectivity and restoration.

Greater Yellowstone Area Subregion

The Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) subregion occupies about 23 million acres, extending across portions of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho (fig. 1.1). It includes both the United States' first national park (Yellowstone) and first national forest (Shoshone), in addition to Grand Teton National Park and portions of Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Gallatin, Custer, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests. One of the defining features of the subregion is a group of 24 conterminous mountain ranges that wrap around the Yellowstone Plateau (Morgan 2007).

The Yellowstone "hotspot" and associated geological activity have shaped the geography, topography, climate, soils, and biota of the GYA. The hotspot is a thermal disturbance fixed in the Earth's mantle below the North American continental plate, moving to the northeast at the rate of 1 inch per year (Morgan 2007). This volcanic hotspot is responsible for eruptions that have left calderas in Oregon, Nevada, and Idaho and for creating the eastern Snake River plain. Volcanism formed the Yellowstone rhyolite plateau, and faulting formed sediment-filled basins and steep mountains such as the Teton Range/Jackson Hole and Madison Range/Madison Valley. Uplift contributed to the high altitude of the GYA and associated deep valleys (Morgan 2007). The heat of eruptions that created calderas is also the source of heat for hot springs and geysers. These features are a primary reason that Yellowstone National Park was established; more geysers are found here than anywhere else in the world (National Park Service [NPS] 2015a).

The GYA is the source of three major river systems—the Missouri/Mississippi, Snake/Columbia, and Green/Colorado. The Missouri River begins in the northwest corner of the GYA and merges into the Mississippi River, the Snake River begins in the southeast corner of the GYA and merges into the Columbia River, and the Green River is the main tributary of the Colorado River. Anglers are drawn to these river systems for their blue ribbon fishing streams.

The GYA is one of the largest relatively intact and functional natural ecosystems in the temperate zone (Keiter and Boyce 1991). Abiotic factors such as topography and soils strongly influence vegetation composition and structure of the area. Differences in elevation greatly affect local climate, with valley bottoms having substantially higher annual temperatures than higher elevations. Soils are deeper in valley bottoms than on the Yellowstone Plateau, which is more affected by nutrient-poor soils derived from the Yellowstone Caldera (Hansen et al. 1999). Valley bottoms are generally occupied by lodgepole pine (NPS 2013). Lower slopes and richer soils (on basaltic or andesitic volcanic rocks, sedimentary rocks, and Precambrian crystalline rocks) support Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, and Douglas-fir (Morgan 2007).The highest elevations are dominated by whitebark pine (NPS 2012). Quaking aspen, willows, and cottonwoods are also found on richer soils, such as valley toe slopes and bottoms.

In lodgepole pine forests, elk sedge (*Carex geyeri*) and grouse whortleberry (*Vaccinium scoparium*) are dominant understory plants, whereas understories of Douglas-fir forests are dominated by pinegrass (*Calamagrostis rubescens*). Utah honeysuckle (*Lonicera utahensis*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), and buffaloberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*) are dominant understory species around the edge of the northern range of the GYA. Mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* var. *vaseyana*) and Idaho fescue dominate lower elevation grassland and meadows (NPS 2012).

The GYA appears to have retained most of its historical complement of vertebrate wildlife species (NPS 2013). The largest elk and bison herds in North America and the United

Figure 2.4—A rich diversity of grasses and forbs, often mixed with ponds and lakes provide excellent habitat for waterfowl in the Grassland subregion (photo: Jim Ringelman, Ducks Unlimited).

States, respectively, are found in the area. The northern range—the grassland in the northern part of Yellowstone National Park—sustains large populations of these animals. This ecosystem supports other charismatic megafauna such as grizzly bear (fig. 2.4), moose, white-tailed deer, gray wolf, and coyote; distinctive avifauna such as trumpeter swan (*Cygnus columbianus*) and bald eagle; several hundred species of other small mammals and birds; and thousands of species of insects and other invertebrates (Keiter and Boyce 1991). This rich diversity of fauna allows for intact predator-prey interactions and other aspects of trophic dynamics.

Of the many fish species found in the GYA, west-slope cutthroat trout and Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii bouvieri*) are keystone species preyed upon by many wildlife species, including grizzly bears. Cutthroat trout are currently at risk from hybridization and competition with nonnative lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) (NPS 2012). Apart from fishing pressure, water resources will become increasingly important if the population of the 21 counties in the GYA continues to increase.

Climate, soil, and plant productivity are some of the many factors that influence where organisms are found. For example, many bird species are predominantly found at lower elevations, because primary productivity is highest there and climate is moderate (Hansen et al. 1999). In the GYA, plant assemblages dominated by lodgepole pine, cottonwood, quaking aspen, and willow have high bird abundance and diversity.

The topography of the GYA has influenced human use of the region for more than 10,000 years. Native Americans entered the Greater Yellowstone region soon after they entered North America 13,500 to 12,800 years B.P. For their survival, hunter-gatherer groups would forage for seeds, fruit, and animals at lower elevations and follow the maturation of plants and migration of animals into mountainous areas. Around 1872, Native Americans were moved to a

reservation in central Wyoming. Soon after, roads were developed for gold camps in Montana. During the development of roads, Native Americans tried to protect their hunting grounds. Pioneering ranchers eventually settled in the lower valleys of the region. It was the construction of the railroad from Livingston, Montana, to Yellowstone National Park that brought increasing numbers of tourists to the area (Morgan 2007).

Current land allocations and land use in the GYA indicate that human activities are more prevalent at low elevations than at higher elevations. From the Yellowstone Plateau to the Gallatin Valley, land use changes from timber management, grazing, and agriculture to rural and urban residences. Development in urban areas such as Bozeman has increased in the past several years, with most of the population concentrated along the foothills, near streams, or along transportation routes (Hansen et al. 1999).

The GYA has faced many land use changes and disturbances, both natural and human caused. Wildfire has had an enormous impact, especially the fires of 1988, which burned more than 1.2 million acres. These fires helped change how scientists, resource managers, and the public think about the role of large fires in the fire ecology of Western forests. Mountain pine beetle has killed thousands of acres of lodgepole pine in the GYA, although the outbreaks have not been as extensive as in other areas of North America.

One of the most controversial issues in the region to date involves the restoration of wolves to the area. Many scientists consider the reintroduction of wolves to be successful in restoring ecological completeness in the GYA (NPS 2013). However, others consider it to be a disruption to existing conditions and local resources, including big-game species such as elk, and livestock on adjacent private and public lands. As of September 2014, the western gray wolf has been removed from the endangered species list and listed as a nonessential experimental population in Wyoming.

The Yellowstone grizzly bear population is also important to this subregion (fig. 2.4). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed grizzly bears as a threatened species in 1975 as the species range was reduced to 2 percent of its former range. To help the population recover, Federal and State agencies implemented many actions such as placing a stop on grizzly hunting seasons, establishing a Yellowstone grizzly bear recovery area, and forming two interagency teams—Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team and Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee—to coordinate management and increase communication. Although the population has recovered to some extent, the species is back on the threatened species list today. Managers and scientists continue to monitor the population and strive to maintain a viable population (NPS 2015c).

The GYA attracts visitors from all over the world to tour the national parks and participate in recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, skiing, and hiking. The economy of the area is therefore driven by the character and quality of the natural and social environment, which draws permanent residents as well as visitors to the area. Communities such as Gardiner and West Yellowstone depend on Yellowstone National Park for economic activity, whereas communities such as Bozeman, Livingston, and Cody are less dependent on the park and have more diverse economies (Graff 2005).

Grassland Subregion

The Grassland subregion occupies 119 million acres, extending across portions of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, and South Dakota (fig. 1.1). The area includes portions of Custer National Forest, all of the Dakota Prairie National Grassland and several Indian reservations including the Crown Indian, Fort Peck, Standing Rock, Blackfoot, Cheyenne River, and Spirit Lake Reservations.

The Wisconsinan glacier shaped the rolling and flat plains of North Dakota at the end of the last glacial period, about 12,000 years B.P. The southwestern corner of North Dakota was untouched by the glacier, which in turn led to the formation of the Little Missouri Badlands. Although this ice age glacier did not help shape the badlands, a previous glacier did. The Little Missouri River flowed northward until 600,000 years B.P., when a glacier blocked its path and diverted its flow east (Herman and Johnson 2008a). The resulting cycle of erosion and downcutting led to the development of badlands.

Sedimentary layers found here are primarily continental sediments deposited by rivers and streams. Siltstone, claystone, sandstone, and lignite coal are common sediments in this environment (Bluemle 1996). Clinkers (or scoria), rocks produced by burning coal beds, are also commonly found in the Badlands. They are mostly reddish but also include shades of pink to black. The landforms found in the Badlands—hills, valleys, cliffs, buttes—are a result of the differential hardness of minerals and their resistance to erosion (Bluemle 1996). As Theodore Roosevelt remarked,

"The Badlands grade all the way from those that are almost rolling in character to those that are so fantastically broken in form and so bizarre in color as to seem hardly properly to belong to this earth."

The rugged badlands were carved from rocks from the Late Cretaceous through the Eocene period. Cretaceous and Tertiary sedimentary formations mark the period when dinosaurs became extinct. The Hell Creek formation, located in the southern portion of the Little Missouri Badlands, has remnants of the last species of dinosaurs that existed on Earth, the most common of which were *Triceratops* species (Bluemle 1996). Along with dinosaur remains, other common fossils found in the area include those of fish, turtles, alligators, birds, and small mammals. Fossils of broadleaf trees, cycads, palms, and ground ferns are also present, indicating the presence of a subtropical coastal plain environment during the Cretaceous period. Petrified wood is commonly found in the Badlands and is thought to be the remains mostly of dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) (Bluemle 1996).

The Missouri, Red, and Souris (or Mouse) Rivers are the three major river systems in the Dakota Prairie portion of the Grassland subregion. The Missouri River is the largest and longest in North Dakota. The Red River borders North Dakota and Minnesota, and the Souris River begins in eastern Saskatchewan and flows into North Dakota, after which it loops back into Canada. The Tongue and Powder Rivers are the major river systems that flow into the Yellowstone River in the southern portion of the Grassland subregion.

The subregion is characterized by three very different ecosystem types: badlands, prairie, and ponderosa pine forest. The badlands are located mostly along the Little Missouri River. Sioux Indians, who lived in the region before Euro-American settlement, called the badlands "makosika" (land bad), and the French explorers called it "les mauvais terrers a traverser" (bad lands to travel across) (Bluemle 1996). The pine forests are found in "islands of green in a sea or rolling prairie" (Herman and Johnson 2008a). Most of the ponderosa pine forest in the Custer National Forest burned in the last decade.

Most of the vegetation found in the badlands is native and consists of grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs. Shortgrasses are dominant because average precipitation is only 10 to 12 inches annually. Common bunchgrasses include little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and needle-and-thread grass. In areas where precipitation reaches close to 15 inches, western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*) is fairly common. Open areas that can retain moisture throughout the year can support trees and shrubs. Deciduous trees include eastern cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), boxelder (*Acer negundo*), and American elm (*Ulmus americana*). Ponderosa pine and Rocky Mountain juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*) are common in some locations. Drainages dominated by trees also provide habitat for shrubs such as western serviceberry, chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), currant species, and American plum (*P.*

americana). Shrubs found in drier locations include sagebrush, winterfat (*Krascheninnikovia lanata*), rabbitbrush, and buckbrush (*Ceanothus cuneatus*). Prairie wildflowers include gumbo lily (*Mentzelia decapetala*), scarlet globemallow (*Sphaeralcea coccinea*), soapweed yucca (*Yucca glauca*), and brittle pricklypear cactus (*Opuntia fragilis*) (Herman and Johnson 2008a).

The badlands landscape provides wildlife habitat in native prairie, sagebrush, woody draws, shrubby areas, and buttes. Large animals include bighorn sheep, pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), elk, white-tailed deer, and mule deer. When Lewis and Clark passed through North Dakota in 1804, the most abundant animal they encountered was bison, followed by pronghorn. Populations of wildlife considered food and game species were greatly reduced after Euro-American settlement. Other mammals found in the Grassland include black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), cougar, porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), cottontail rabbit (*Lepus sylvaticus*), and bobcat. Common reptiles include prairie rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*), bullsnake (*Pituophis catenifer*), and sagebrush lizard (*Sceloporus graciosus*). Common amphibians include Woodhouse's toad (*Anaxyrus woodhousii*), Great Plains toad (*A. cognatus*), and plains spadefoot toad (*Spea bombifrons*) (Herman and Johnson 2008a).

The badlands support a diversity of bird species such as long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*), yellow-breasted chat (*Icteria virens*), mountain bluebird (*Sialia currucoides*), rock wren (*Salpinctes cabanis*), western kingbird (*Tyrannus verticalis*), eastern kingbird (*T. tyrannus*), black-billed magpie (*Pica hudsonia*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), and burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*). Greater sage-grouse is found in southwestern North Dakota and depends on sagebrush habitat, which is in decline; sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*) is found in similar sagebrush and prairie habitat (Herman and Johnson 2008a).

The native prairie component of the Grassland subregion is dominated by grasses and forbs (fig. 2.5) that tolerate low precipitation, strong winds, cold winters and hot summers, frequent fire, and herbivory. Native grasses have deep and extensive connected root systems that allow them to persist under stressful conditions (Herman and Johnson 2008b). Native prairie is divided into tallgrass, mixed grass, and shortgrass. Tallgrass prairie, which dominates eastern North Dakota, requires the most moisture, and shortgrass prairie requires the least.

The largest remaining tallgrass prairie is in the Red River Valley, dominated by big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), Indian grass (*Sorghastrum* spp.), and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*) (North Dakota Game and Fish Department 2012). Humus, which develops as grasses and forbs decompose, helps retain soil moisture. This fertile soil led to the near extinction of the tallgrass prairie as farmers cultivated the land for wheat and other crops. The Sheyenne National Grassland contains most of the remaining tallgrass prairie

in North Dakota today. Cedar River National Grassland, which connects with Grand River National Grassland in South Dakota, contains both tallgrass and shortgrass species. Warm- and cool-season grasses dominate this area, such as prairie junegrass (*Koeleria macrantha*), crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*), needle-and-thread grass, blue grama, little bluestem, and needleleaf sedge (*Carex duriuscula*). Dominant forbs include eastern pasque flower (*Anemone patens*), western wall-flower (*Erysimum asperum*), prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*), blacksamson (*Echinacea angustifolia*), and common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) (Herman and Johnson 2008b).

Shortgrass prairie, found in the higher elevation region of the Missouri Slope of North Dakota, is dominated by warm-season species that require little rainfall, including spikemoss (*Selaginella* spp.), blue grama, needleleaf sedge, threadleaf sedge (*Carex filifolia*), buffalo grass (*Urochloa mutica*), and needle and thread. These grasses are 3 to 7 inches tall. The Little Missouri National Grassland contains both mixed and shortgrass prairie. Common prairie forbs include wild prairie rose (*Rosa arkansana*), blacksamson, showy milkweed (*Asclepias speciosa*), soapweed yucca, gumbo lily, and tenpetal blazingstar (*Mentzelia decapetala*) (Herman and Johnson 2008b).

American bison was formerly the iconic "ruler of the prairies," and Native Americans depended on bison for their livelihood. However, Euro-American settlement and hunting nearly drove the bison to extinction. Other mammals found in prairie habitat of the Grassland subregion include elk, red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), coyote, American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), several species of ground squirrel (*Spermophilus* spp.) and pocket gopher (*Thomomys* spp.), white-tailed jackrabbit (*Lepus townsendii*), eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), and meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*) (Herman and Johnson 2008b).

Reptiles found in the prairie include garter snakes (*Thamnophis* spp.), smooth green snake (*Opheodrys vernalis*), and western hognose snake (*Heterodon nasicus*). Bird species include greater prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*), sharp-tailed grouse, greater sage-grouse, upland sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*), nonnative ring-necked pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), and many songbird species (Herman and Johnson 2008b).

The Grassland subregion is home to more than 100 species of fish, including northern pike, walleye (*Sander vitreus*), and sauger (*Sander canadensis*). Walleye inhabit large reservoirs such as Lake Sakakawea and Lake Oahe, whereas sauger are found mostly in the Missouri River (Herman and Johnson 2008c). In addition, this subregion contains a variety of endemic prairie fish assemblages, including sensitive species such as northern redbelly dace (*Phoxinus eos*) and associated native macroinvertebrates such as fatmucket mussels (*Lampsilis siliquoidea*).

The Sioux, Assiniboine, Cheyenne, Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara were the first inhabitants of the land. In 1910,

approximately 6,000 Native Americans lived in North Dakota. That number increased to more than 25,000 in 1970 and more than 30,000 today. Today, Federally recognized tribes live in five reservations in North Dakota: Fort Berthold, Lake Traverse Indian Reservation, Standing Rock Indian Reservation, Spirit Lake Reservation, and Turtle Mountain Reservation.

With the majority of the Grassland subregion located on fertile soil, agriculture drives the economy. Wheat, flax-seed, canola, peas, lentils, and oats are some of the many products grown here, especially in the Red River Valley (also known as "the Breadbasket of the World"). Livestock production occurs on the less suitable lands and includes beef, dairy cattle, and hogs. North Dakota is currently in a boom phase of oil production, focused on the Bakken and Three Forks formations, making it the second largest oil-producing State. Petroleum refining and food processing are also major industries.

The declining sage-grouse population is of extreme concern to western States. Over half of the greater sage-grouse habitat has been lost, resulting in sage-grouse population numbers of 200,000 to 500,000. The BLM, USFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to conserve the western sagebrush habitat. These agencies have developed several environmental impact statements to incorporate sage-grouse conservation measures into land use plans (USDOI BLM 2015). Although agencies continue to monitor and evaluate the western landscape, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined in 2015 that protection of the species under the Endangered Species Act was not warranted (USFWS 2015).

Many organizations such as the USFS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, and Ducks Unlimited are working to protect existing grassland and aquatic habitat. Although most of the land is under private ownership, many landowners have converted cropland to grassland under the Conservation Reserve Program, in which the Federal government pays farmers to plant grass on less fertile lands. In many cases, reserve lands produce higher populations of white-tailed deer, ducks, ring-necked pheasant, and many nongame species. Unfortunately, West Nile virus (*Flavivirus* spp.), oil and gas development, and conversion of sagebrush land to cropland have reduced greater sage-grouse range habitat and populations (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2014).

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Chapter 3: Historical and Projected Climate in the Northern Rockies Region

Linda A. Joyce, Marian Talbert, Darrin Sharp, Jeffrey Morisette, and John Stevenson

Introduction

Climate influences the ecosystem services we obtain from forest and rangelands. Climate is described by the long-term characteristics of precipitation, temperature, wind, snowfall, and other measures of weather that occur over a long period in a particular place, and is typically expressed as long-term average conditions. Resource management practices are implemented day-to-day in response to weather conditions; resource management strategies and plans are developed using our understanding of climate. With the need to consider climate change in planning and management, an understanding of how climate may change in the future in a resource management planning area is valuable. In this chapter, we present the current understanding of potential changes in climate for the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS) Northern Region and the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA), hereafter called the Northern Rockies region.

Climate Model Projections: CMIP3 and CMIP5

Global climate models have been used to understand the nature of global climate by modeling how the atmosphere interacts with the ocean and the land surface. Scientists can use these models to pose questions about how changes in the atmospheric chemistry would affect global temperature and precipitation patterns. Given a set of plausible greenhouse gas scenarios, these models can be used to project potential future climate. These projections can be helpful in understanding how the environmental conditions of plants and animals might change in the future; how runoff and seasonal flows might vary with precipitation and timing of snowmelt; how wildfire and outbreaks of insects and disease might be affected by changes in climate; and how humans might respond in their use of the outdoors and natural resources.

The Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP) began in 1995 to coordinate a common set of experiments for evaluating changes in past and future global climate (Meehl et al. 2007). This approach allows comparison of results from different global climate models around the world and improves our understanding of the "range" of possible climate change. The third CMIP modeling experiments, or CMIP3, were used in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (Solomon et al. 2007); the latest experiments, or CMIP5, were used in the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report (Stocker et al. 2013).

A key difference between CMIP3 and CMIP5 is the set of emissions scenarios that drive, or force, the simulations of future climate (fig. 3.1, taken from Walsh et al. 2014). The CMIP3 simulations of the 21st century were forced with emissions scenarios from the Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (SRES) (Nakićenović et al. 2000). The CMIP3 scenarios represent futures with different combinations of global population growth and policies related to alternative energy and conventional fossil fuel sources (Solomon et al. 2007). The CMIP5 simulations of the 21st century are driven by scenarios describing representative concentration pathways (RCPs) (van Vuuren et al. 2011). The RCPs do not define emissions, but instead define concentrations of greenhouse gases and other agents influencing the climate system. RCPs present the range of current estimates for the evolution of radiative forcing, which is the total amount of extra energy entering the climate system throughout the 21st century and beyond. Projections made with RCP 2.6 show a total radiative forcing increase of 2.6 Watts per square meter (2.2 Watts per square yard) by 2100; projected increased radiative forcing through the scenarios of RCP 4.5, RCP 6.0, and RCP 8.5 indicate increases of 4.5, 6.0, and 8.5 Watts per square meter, respectively (3.75, 5.0, and 7.1 Watts per square yard, respectively). Unlike the SRES scenarios used in CMIP3, the RCPs in CMIP5 do not assume any particular climate policy actions. Rather, policy analysts and social scientists are free to develop mitigation scenarios that lead to one of the RCPs. Comparisons between CMIP3 and CMIP5 model results for Oregon and Washington are described in box 3.1.

Climate of the Northern Rockies Region

Historical Climate

For historical data, we drew from and contrasted three common gridded historical datasets; Parameter-elevation
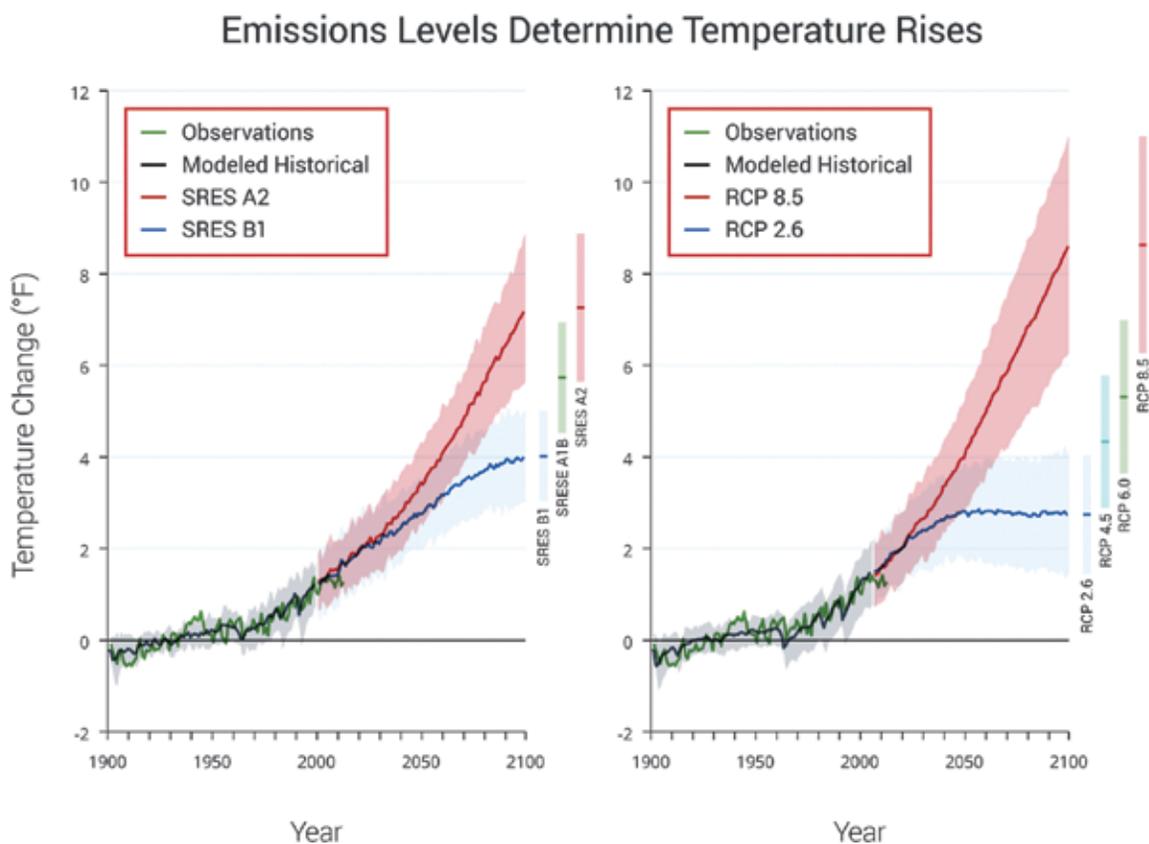
Figure 3.1—Comparison of global temperatures projected with emission levels from CMIP3 (left panel) and with emission levels from CMIP5 (right panel) (figure 2.4 from Walsh et al. 2014). Different amounts of heat-trapping gases released into the atmosphere by human activities produce different projected increases in Earth's temperature. In the figure, the red and blue lines represent a central estimate of global average temperature rise (relative to the 1901–1960 average) for a specific emissions pathway. The shaded areas for a given color indicate the range (5th to 95th percentile) of results from a suite of climate models. The bars to the right of each panel indicate projections in 2099 for additional emissions pathways. In all cases, temperatures are expected to rise, although the difference between lower and higher emissions pathways is substantial. (Left) The panel shows the two main scenarios (SRES – Special Report on Emissions Scenarios): A2 assumes continued increases in emissions throughout this century, and B1 assumes much slower increases in emissions beginning now and significant emissions reductions beginning around 2050, though not due explicitly to climate change policies. (Right) The panel shows results from the most recent generation of climate models (CMIP5) using the most recent emissions pathways (RCPs – Representative Concentration Pathways). The newest set includes both lower and higher pathways than did the previous set. The lowest emissions pathway shown here, RCP 2.6, assumes immediate and rapid reductions in emissions and would result in about 2.5 °F of warming in this century. The highest pathway, RCP 8.5, roughly similar to a continuation of the current path of global emissions increases, is projected to lead to more than 8 °F warming by 2100, with a high-end possibility of more than 11 °F (data from CMIP3, CMIP5, and NOAA NCDC). These results draw on raw GCM data summarized for the entire Earth rather than bias corrected to spatially downscaled GCM models for our regions depicted in all other graphics.

Regressions on Independent Slopes Model (PRISM) (PRISM Climate Group 2014), Maurer (Maurer et al. 2002), and TopoWx (Oyler et al. 2015b). These three gridded historical products are knowledge-based systems that use point measurements of precipitation, temperature, and other climatic factors to produce continuous, digital grid estimates of monthly, yearly, and event-based climatic parameters. Due to differences in the weather-station data used by these gridded products as well as the models and assumptions used to interpolate to a grid, these climate models do not

always agree on the historical climate or trend for a region. This is especially true in the western mountains, where PRISM has been shown to have an artificial amplification of a warming trend (Oyler et al. 2015a). For this reason we chose to compare all models rather than the trend and values produced by a single model.

Box 3.1—Comparing CMIP3 and CMIP5 for Temperature and Precipitation Projections for Oregon and Washington

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Model Evaluation

One way to evaluate a model's "skill" is to have it simulate (recreate) past climate and compare those results to observed climate. Both CMIP3 and CMIP5 models reproduce important characteristics of climate in the NRAP region fairly well, including wet winters, dry summers, annual temperature, and a 20th-century warming trend (~1.4 °F per century). However, both CMIP3 and CMIP5 models predict annual precipitation that is higher than observations (Mote and Salathé 2010; Rupp et al. 2013).

Future Temperature

- CMIP5 climate experiments based on RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 are warmer for the NRAP region, on average, than the CMIP3 scenarios based on SRES-B1 and SRES-A2.

- Most of the difference in temperature projections can be explained through increased forcing between the two sets of emissions-concentration scenarios, rather than modifications to the models between CMIP3 and CMIP5.

Future Precipitation

- CMIP3 and CMIP5 both project a slightly wetter future on average by the mid-21st century.

- CMIP3 and CMIP5 both project slightly drier summers and slightly wetter conditions the rest of the year.

- High natural variability in precipitation masks differences between CMIP3 and CMIP5.

Projected Climate

For an overview of projected climate in the Northern Rockies region, we use downscaled CMIP5 projections based on RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 scenarios (fig. 3.2). Output from global climate models is at a scale too coarse to represent climate dynamics in subregions and management areas relevant for the region. Many methods have been developed to bring climate projection information down to a scale that can be helpful to resource managers. We drew on climate projections that had been downscaled using the bias-correction and spatial disaggregation (BCSD) method (Maurer et al. 2007). We obtained the downscaled projection data from the Downscaled CMIP3 and CMIP5 Climate and Hydrology Projections archive (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation 2013). We use projections from 36 climate models for RCP 4.5 and 34 climate models for RCP 8.5 (table 3.1). The variables available for each BCSD climate projection include monthly precipitation and monthly surface air temperature for the 1950–2099 period. Spatial resolution of the data is 1/8-degree latitude-longitude (~7.5 miles by 7.5 miles) and covers the entire region. We use a base period of 1970–2009 for the historical climate, and compare projections for two periods (2030–2059, 2070–2099) with this historical climate. These time periods were selected in an attempt to summarize climate that has influenced the current conditions (base period) and two future periods that will be relevant to long-term management action (such as road construction, hydrologic infrastructure, or vegetation planting).

The currently cooler climates associated with the Rocky Mountains are evident as are the warmer parts of eastern Montana and South Dakota (fig. 3.2). All areas warmed under both projections, with a greater warming in RCP 8.5.
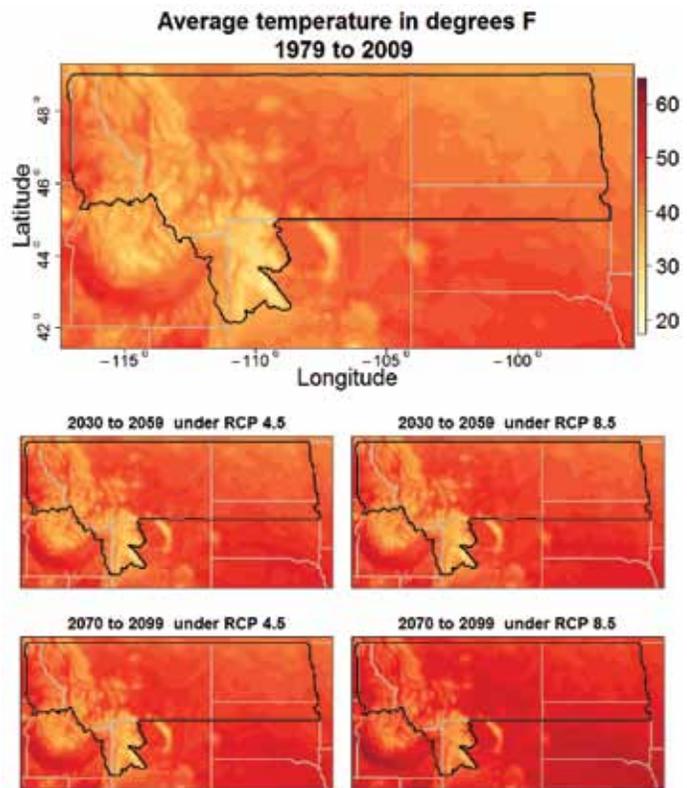
Figure 3.2—Historical (1970–2009) and projected (2030–2059 and 2070–2099) mean annual monthly temperature (°F) for Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership Region (NRAP) under RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 scenarios. Projected climate results are the mean of 36 models for RCP 4.5 and 34 models for RCP 8.5 (see table 3.1). Spatial resolution of the data is 1/8-degree latitude-longitude.

Table 3.1—CMIP5 climate projections for RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 scenarios were obtained for these models using the Downscaled CMIP3 and CMIP5 Climate and Hydrology Projections" archive at: http://gdo-dcp.ucllnl.org/downscaled_cmip_projections. The first model run was selected for this analysis.

Institution	Climate model	RCP 4.5	RCP 8.5
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization and Bureau of Meteorology, Australia	ACCESS1-0	X	X
	ACCESS1-3	X	X
Beijing Climate Center, China Meteorological Administration	bcc-csm1-1	X	X
Beijing Climate Center, China Meteorological Administration	bcc-csm1-1-m	X	X
Canadian Centre for Climate Modelling and Analysis	CanESM2	X	X
National Center for Atmospheric Research	CCSM4	X	X
Community Earth System Model Contributors	CESM1-BGC	X	X
	CESM1-CAM5	X	X
Centro Euro-Mediterraneo per I Cambiamenti Climatici	CMCC-CM	X	X
Centre National de Recherches Météorologiques/ Centre Européen de Recherche et Formation Avancée en Calcul Scientifique	CNRM-CM5	X	X
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence	CSIRO-Mk3-6-0	X	X
EC-EARTH consortium	EC-EARTH	X	X
Laboratory of Numerical Modeling for Atmospheric Sciences and Geophysical Fluid Dynamics, Institute of Atmospheric Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Center for Earth System Science, Tsinghua University	FGOALS-g2	X	X
Laboratory of Numerical Modeling for Atmospheric Sciences and Geophysical Fluid Dynamics, Institute of Atmospheric Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and Center for Earth System Science, Tsinghua University	FGOALS-s2	X	X
The First Institute of Oceanography, State Oceanic Administration, China	FIO-ESM	X	X
NOAA Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory	GFDL-CM3	X	X
	GFDL-ESM2G	X	X
	GFDL-ESM2M	X	X
NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies	GISS-E2-H-CC	X	
	GISS-E2-R	X	X
	GISS-E2-R-CC	X	
Met Office Hadley Centre (additional HadGEM2-ES realizations contributed by Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais)	HADGEM2-AO	X	X
Met Office Hadley Centre (additional HadGEM2-ES realizations contributed by Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais)	HADGEM2-CC	X	X
Met Office Hadley Centre (additional HadGEM2-ES realizations contributed by Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas Espaciais)	HADGEM2-ES	X	X
Institute for Numerical Mathematics	INM-CM4	X	X
Institut Pierre-Simon Laplace	IPSL-CM5A-LR	X	X
	IPSL-CM5A-MR	X	X
	IPSL-CM5B-LR	X	X
Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology, Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute (The University of Tokyo), and National Institute for Environmental Studies	MIROC-ESM	X	X
	MIROC-ESM-CHEM	X	X
Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute (The University of Tokyo), National Institute for Environmental Studies, and Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology	MIROC5	X	X
Max Planck Institute for Meteorology (MPI-M)	MPI-ESM-LR	X	X
Max Planck Institute for Meteorology (MPI-M)	MPI-ESM-MR	X	X
Meteorological Research Institute	MRI-CGCM3	X	X
Norwegian Climate Centre	NorESM1-M	X	X
Norwegian Climate Centre	MorESM1-ME	X	X

Average annual precipitation ranges from less than 6 inches to just over 85 inches with the wetter areas occurring in the northern parts of the mountains in Montana (fig. 3.3). See box 3.2 for key messages associated with the maps for the region.

Comparisons of CMIP5 Projections With the CMIP3 Projections Used in the Resource Chapters

The CMIP3 projections have been widely used in assessments such as the National Climate Assessment (Walsh et al. 2014) and the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS) Resource Planning Act Assessment (USDA FS 2012). Many of the resource chapters in this report are based on published literature using the CMIP3 projections developed by Littell et al. (2011); figure 3.4 compares the CMIP5 results used in this overview with CMIP3 projections of Littell et al. (2011) for use in natural resource assessments. There are many ways to compare projections, for example, by comparing the change in temperature with the change in precipitation over a common period. The downscaled projections from Littell et al. (2011) did not cover the entire Northern Rockies region (they cover the western area but stop at the Continental Divide). However, because we are interested in comparing
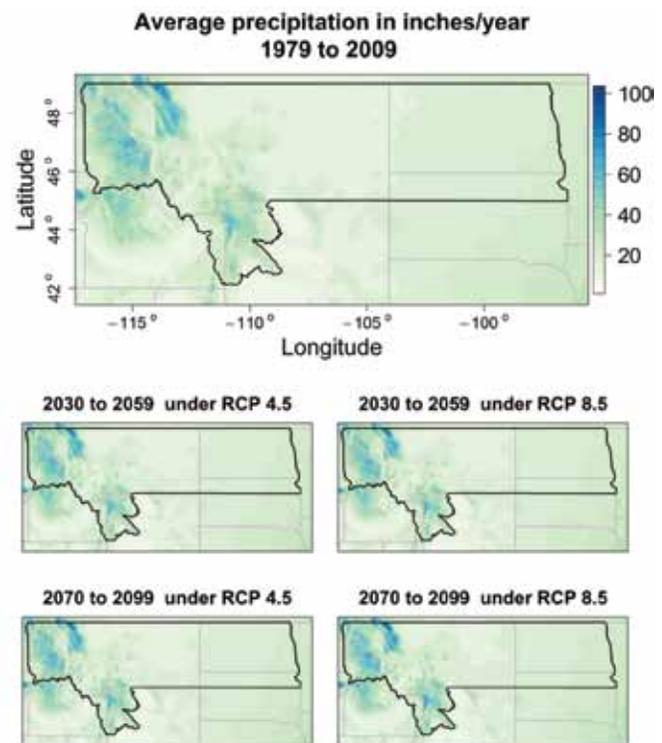

Figure 3.3—Historical (1970–2009) and projected (2030–2059 and 2070–2099) total annual precipitation (inches) under RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5. Projected climate results are the mean of 36 models for RCP 4.5 and 34 models for RCP 8.5 (see table 3.1). Spatial resolution of the data is 1/8 degree latitude-longitude.

Box 3.2—Summary: Climatic Variability and Change for the Northern Rockies Region

- The mountainous Western Rockies, Central Rockies, Eastern Rockies, and Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) subregions sit at the boundary between the warm, wet, maritime airflows from the Pacific Ocean, and the cooler, drier airflows from Canada. The Grassland subregion is influenced primarily by the cooler, drier airflows from Canada.

- Climatic variability in the mountainous areas of Idaho, Montana, and the GYA is strongly influenced by interactions with topography, elevation, and aspect.

- Historically, the coolest areas are found in the GYA, and the warmest areas are associated with grasslands in central Montana and into South Dakota and North Dakota.

- By the 2040s, mean annual monthly temperatures are projected to increase in the Northern Rockies region. The warmest areas continue to be associated with central Montana. For the Grassland subregion, projections show a pattern of a drier west and wetter east, with the mean of climate models showing a slight increase in the extent of the wetter eastern area.

- Projections for precipitation suggest a very slight increase in the future. Precipitation projections, in general, have much higher uncertainty than those for temperature.

- Seasonally, projected winter maximum temperature begins to rise above freezing (32 °F) in the mid-21st century in several of the subregions.

- Projected climate was derived from climate models in the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project version 5 (CMIP5) database, which was used in the most recent IPCC reports.

- Some chapters in this publication draw from existing scientific literature that used climate projections from the 2007 IPCC reports (CMIP3 database). In the mid-21st century (2040–2060), CMIP3 and CMIP5 temperature projections are similar, whereas CMIP5 precipitation projections are slightly wetter than those in CMIP3.
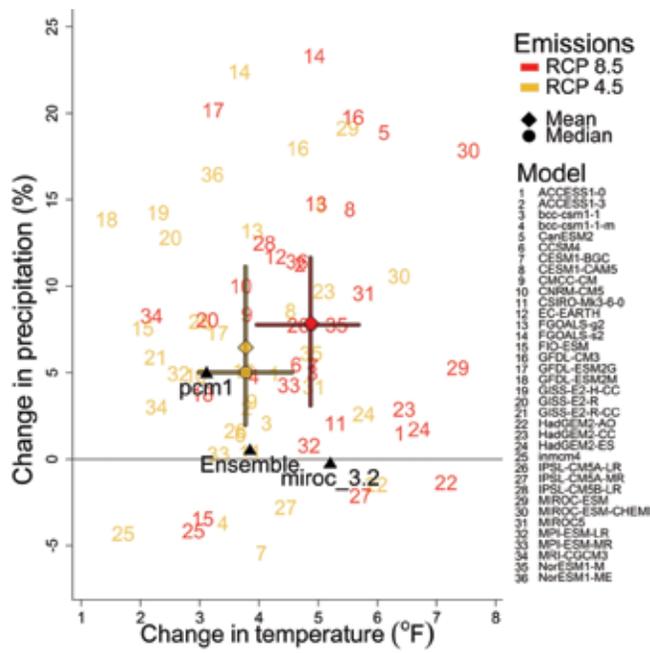
Figure 3.4—For the entire NRAP region, percent change in total annual precipitation (%) and change in mean annual temperature (°F) from the simulated historical climate (1979–2009) and the projected climate (2040–2060) using the CMIP5 RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 scenarios and the CMIP3 A1B scenario. Each CMIP5 model result is labeled by a number with a key in the legend (e.g., 29 is MIROC-ESM) in colors to indicate RCP 4.5 (yellow) and RCP 8.5 (red) (see table 3.1). The crosses in the middle represent the median and 25–75% of the RCP 4.5 and the RCP 8.5 projections used in this study. The mean values for the CMIP5 changes are shown on the figure as colored diamonds. The CMIP3 results are labeled in black triangles (Littell et al. 2011).

the differences in temperature and precipitation between the CMIP3 and CMIP5 models for the entire region, we estimated the change in temperature and precipitation using global results for the models that Littell et al. (2011) used: 10 CMIP3 model projections using the A1B scenario. We obtained these 1-degree global model projections for the entire Northern Rockies region (Jeremy Littell, U.S. Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center, Anchorage, AK, written communication, August 2014). Using these data, we estimate the change in temperature and percent change in precipitation between a future period (2040–2060) and a historical period (1979–2009) for the models that Littell et al. (2011) used and the CMIP5 models that used in this study. In figure 3.4, the projected change in mean annual temperature is shown on the horizontal axis, and the percent change in precipitation is shown on the vertical axis. Change is described as the difference in temperature (future mean annual value minus historical mean annual value) and percent change in precipitation (100 × [future mean annual value minus historical mean annual value]/historical mean annual value).

Across all models, projected change in temperature by the 2040–2060 period ranges from just under 2 °F to nearly 8 °F (fig. 3.4). Generally, the projected change for models using the RCP 8.5 scenario (shown in red) is greater than the change projected for the RCP 4.5 scenario (shown in yellow). Change in precipitation ranges across these CMIP5 models from a decrease of about 5 percent to an increase of 25 percent with a mean projected change of approximately 6 and 8 percent for RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5, respectively. Change in the CMIP3 projections developed by Littell et al. (2011) is shown on this graph as pcm1, Ensemble (average of 10 model projections), and miroc_3.2 (where pcm1 and miroc_3.2 are individual climate models). We conclude that when this set of CMIP3 results (Littell et al. 2011) is compared with CMIP5 results for the Northern Rockies region, the CMIP3 results are in the same temperature range for 2040–2060, although CMIP5 precipitation projections are slightly wetter in the future (fig. 3.4).

Climatic Variability and Change in Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership Subregions

The following five sections summarize historical and projected climate for the five Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership subregions: Western Rockies, Central Rockies, Eastern Rockies, Greater Yellowstone Area, and Grassland (see figure 1.1 for location of subregions). Each section contains a set of figures based on a common template that we describe here. Key messages for each region are given in a series of boxes.

The first figure in each section shows the annual mean daily maximum temperature (°F), the annual mean daily minimum temperature (°F), and the total annual precipitation (inches) for 1949 through 2010. For these historical data, we drew from and contrasted three common gridded historical datasets; PRISM, Maurer, and TopoWx. In both temperature and precipitation there is variability, so we show the 10-year rolling average to highlight any short-term trends (bold lines).

The second figure in each section shows the historical modeled and projected annual mean of the daily maximum and minimum temperatures (°F), and total annual precipitation (inches) for the RCP 4.5 and the RCP 8.5 scenarios based on the CMIP5 1/8th degree BCSD data available on the Green Data Oasis (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory n.d.). Typically, the scenario with the higher greenhouse gas concentrations (RCP 8.5) will show a higher temperature by 2100. In these figures, each model was backcast and we display the modeled historical data, which include all CMIP5 models that are bias corrected and downscaled in the same manner as the model projections. We overlay the 1/8-degree spatial resolution (about 7.5 miles) gridded historical observation dataset (blue line) (Maurer et al. 2002), which was used in the bias correction

of the modeled data. The projections are shown in the colors used in figure 3.6: yellow for RCP 4.5 and red for RCP 8.5. The ensemble median from all models for each scenario is shown in the heavy line; the 5th and 95th percent quantiles for all models are shown by the shaded area. The precipitation projections have a greater variability than either temperature projection, and there is less confidence in any one particular model's projection for precipitation.

The third figure in each section shows the seasonal means of the daily maximum temperature (°F) for the historical and projected period. We use box plots here, where each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data. For example, the box labeled as 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 through 1969. The modeled historical boxes are gray, and boxes for projections use the same colors as in other figures: yellow for RCP 4.5 and red for RCP 8.5. The central line in each box is the median: the same number of modeled historical

or projections lies above and below this line. The hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles. Whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range.

The fourth figure in each section shows the seasonal means of the daily minimum temperature (°F) for the historical and projected period 1950–2100. The figure is set up in the same way as the third figure just described. We do not show the seasonal mean precipitation values as there is large variability and no discernible trend and hence, less confidence overall in the finer-scale precipitation projections.

Western Rockies Subregion

The primary results of analysis of historical and projected climate in the Western Rockies subregion are summarized in box 3.3, with specific detail in figs. 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8.

Box. 3.3—Summary: Historical and Projected Climate for the Western Rockies Subregion

- This mountainous region sits at the boundary between warm, wet, maritime airflows from the Pacific Ocean, and cooler, drier airflows from Canada.

- Changes in climate affecting mountain snowpack will have important hydrologic implications.

- Over the historical period of record (1895–2012), the annual mean monthly minimum temperature increased by about 3.0 °F, while the annual mean monthly maximum temperature increased by about 0.6 °F. During the same period, annual mean monthly precipitation increased slightly, by an average of about 0.1 inch per month.

- Temperature is projected to increase 5 to 10 °F by 2100, including increases in both the annual mean monthly minimum and annual mean monthly maximum.

- Mean monthly maximum and minimum temperatures are projected to increase for all seasons. The mean monthly minimum temperature (spring and fall) and the mean monthly maximum temperature (winter) may rise above freezing.

- Seasonal precipitation is projected to be slightly higher in winter and spring, and slightly lower in summer than during the historical period of record.
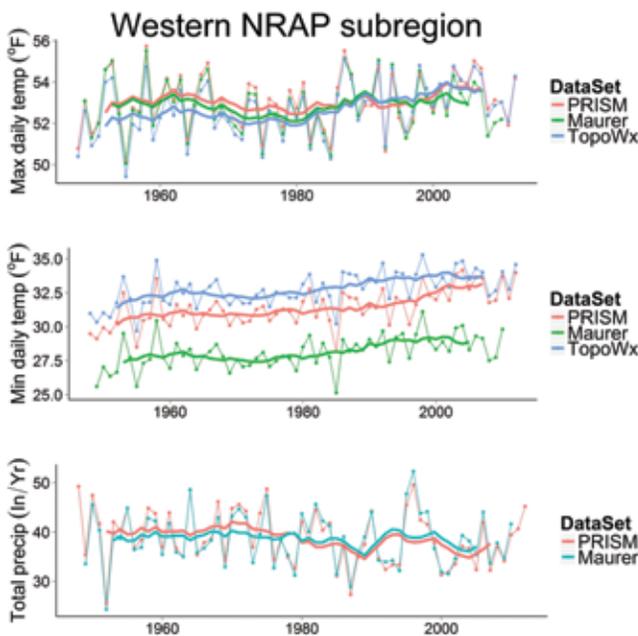
Figure 3.5—Annual historical mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation from monthly gridded PRISM, Maurer and TopoWx for 1949 to 2010 for the NRAP Western subregion. The heavy lines are the 10-year rolling average to show short-term trends.

Western NRAP subregion model projections

Figure 3.6—Historical modeled and projected annual mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation for the RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 emission scenarios based on CMIP5 data for the NRAP Western subregion. Historic modeled results are indicated in gray, projections in colors. The shaded area shows the 5th and 95th percent quantiles for all models. The grey, red, or yellow heavy line illustrate ensemble median; the heavy blue line is the gridded historical observed data from Maurer et al. (2002).
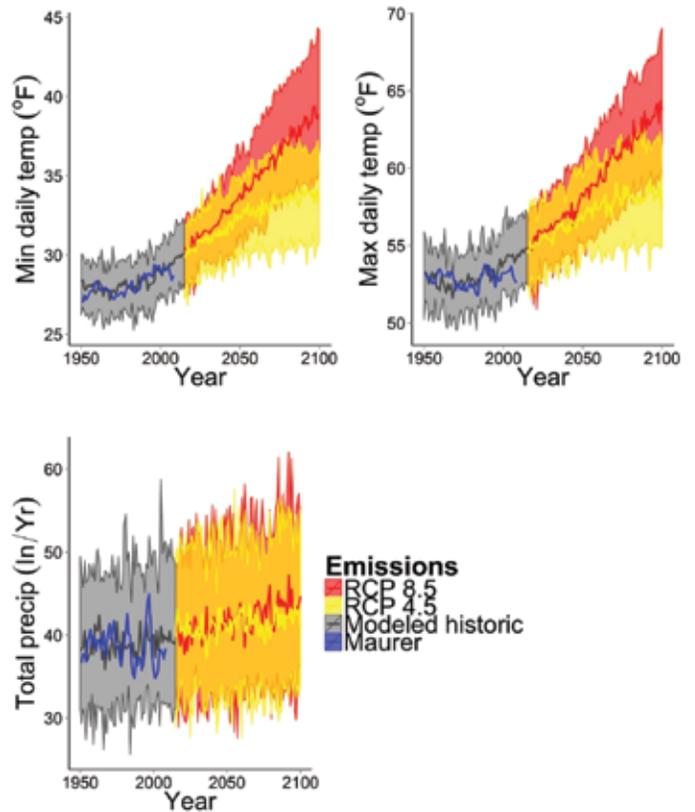
Max daily temp (°F)

Figure 3.7—Seasonal mean monthly maximum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Western subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data centered on the year listed (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.
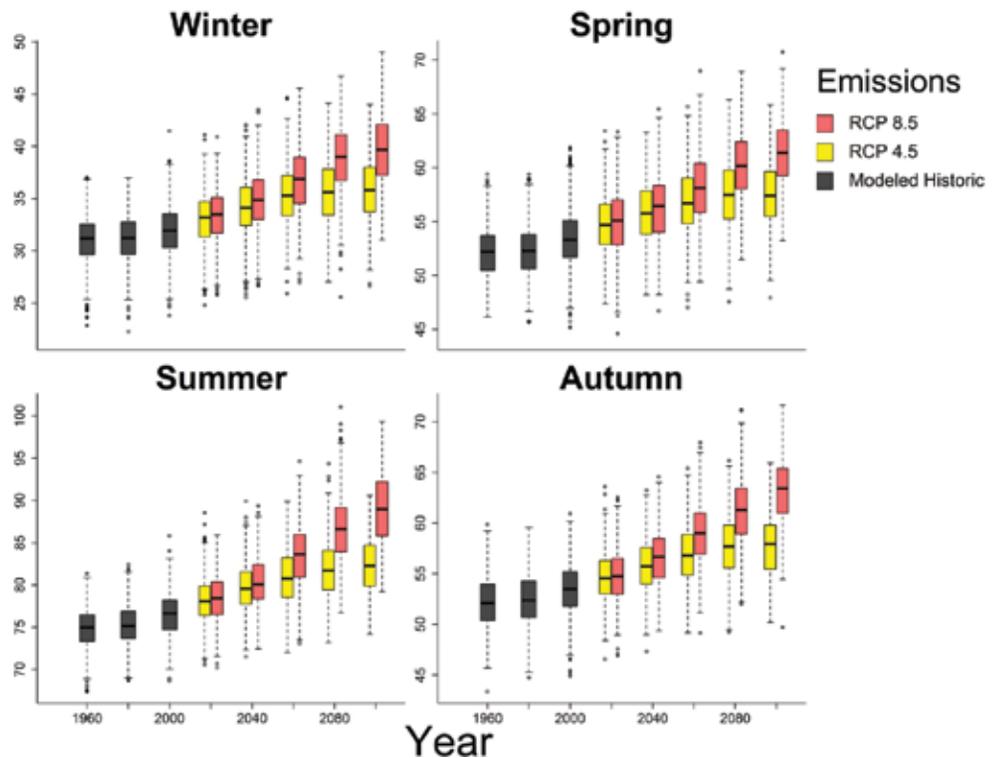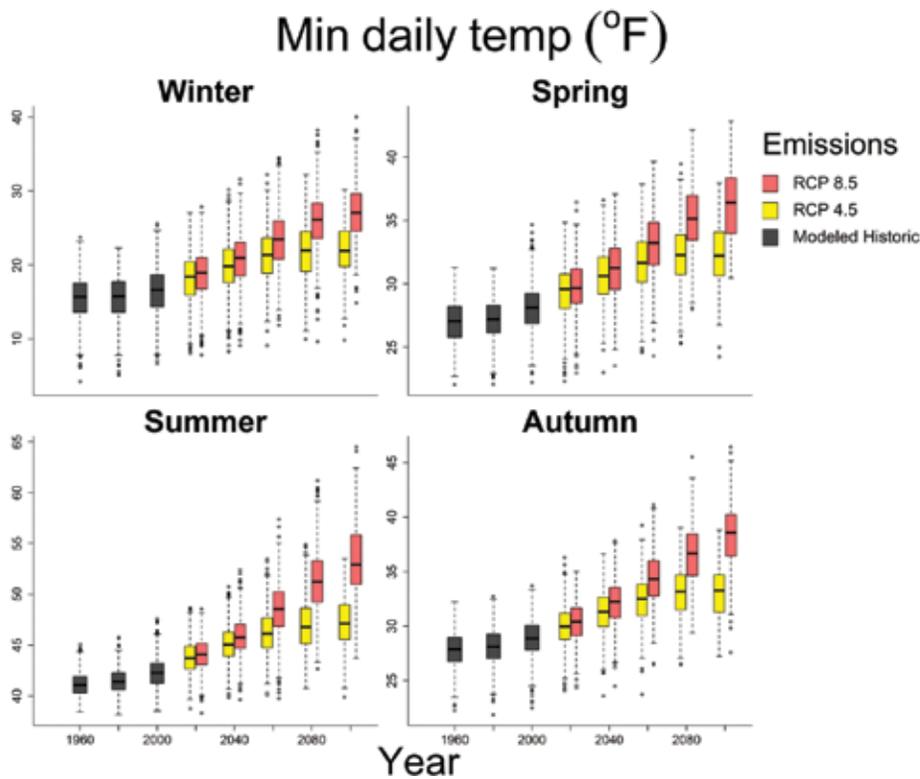
Figure 3.8—Seasonal mean monthly minimum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Western region. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.

Central Rockies Subregion

The primary results of analysis of historical and projected climate in the Central Rockies subregion are summarized in box 3.4, with specific detail in figures 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12.

Box. 3.4—Summary: Historical and Projected Climate for the Central Rockies Subregion

- This mountainous region sits at the boundary between warm, wet, maritime airflows from the Pacific Ocean, and cooler, drier airflows from Canada.

- Changes in climate affecting mountain snowpack will have important hydrologic implications.

- Over the historical period of record (1895–2012), the annual mean monthly minimum temperature increased by about 2.6 °F, while the annual mean monthly maximum temperature increased by about 1.3 °F.

- By 2100, temperature is projected to increase 6 to 12 °F for the annual mean monthly minimum, and 5 to 11 °F for the annual mean monthly maximum.

- Mean monthly minimum and maximum temperatures are projected to increase for all seasons. The mean monthly minimum temperature (spring and autumn) and the mean monthly maximum temperature (winter) may rise above freezing.

- Seasonal precipitation is projected to be slightly higher in winter and spring and slightly lower in summer than during the historical period of record.

Figure 3.9—Annual historical mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation from monthly gridded PRISM, Maurer and TopoWx for 1949 to 2010 for the NRAP Central subregion. The heavy lines are the 10-year rolling average that show short-term trends.
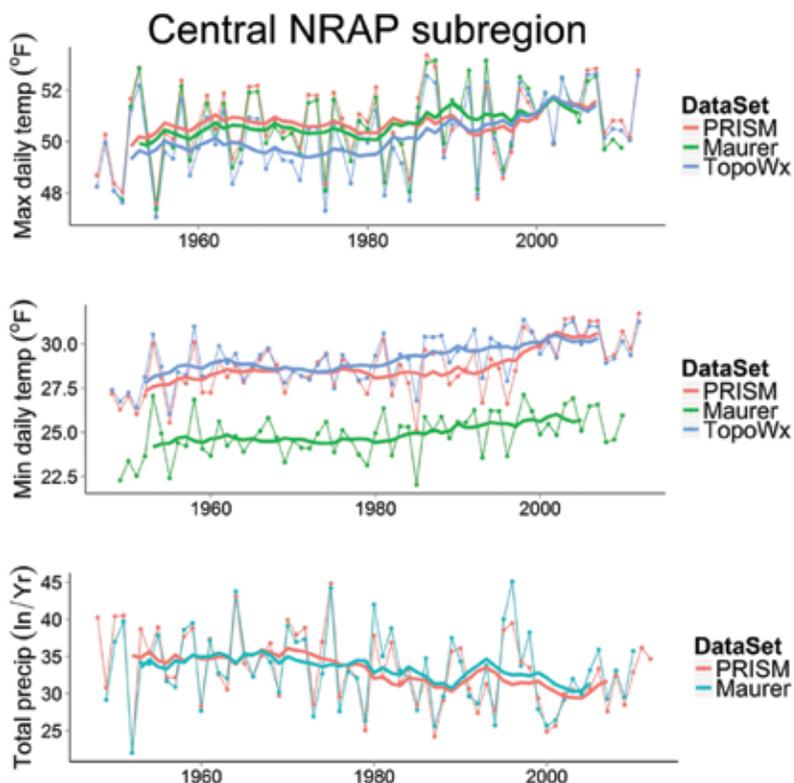
Figure 3.10—Historical modeled and projected annual mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation for the RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 emission scenarios based on CMIP5 data for the NRAP Central subregion. Historic modeled results are indicated in gray, projections in colors. The shaded area shows the 5th and 95th percent quantiles for all models. The grey, red, or yellow heavy line illustrate ensemble median; the heavy blue line is the gridded historical observed data from Maurer et al. (2002).
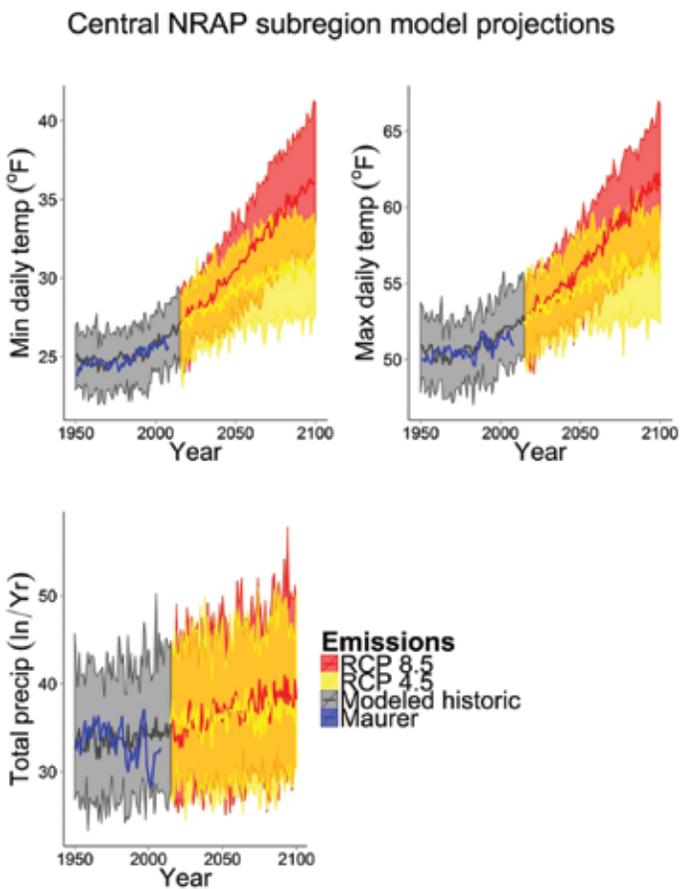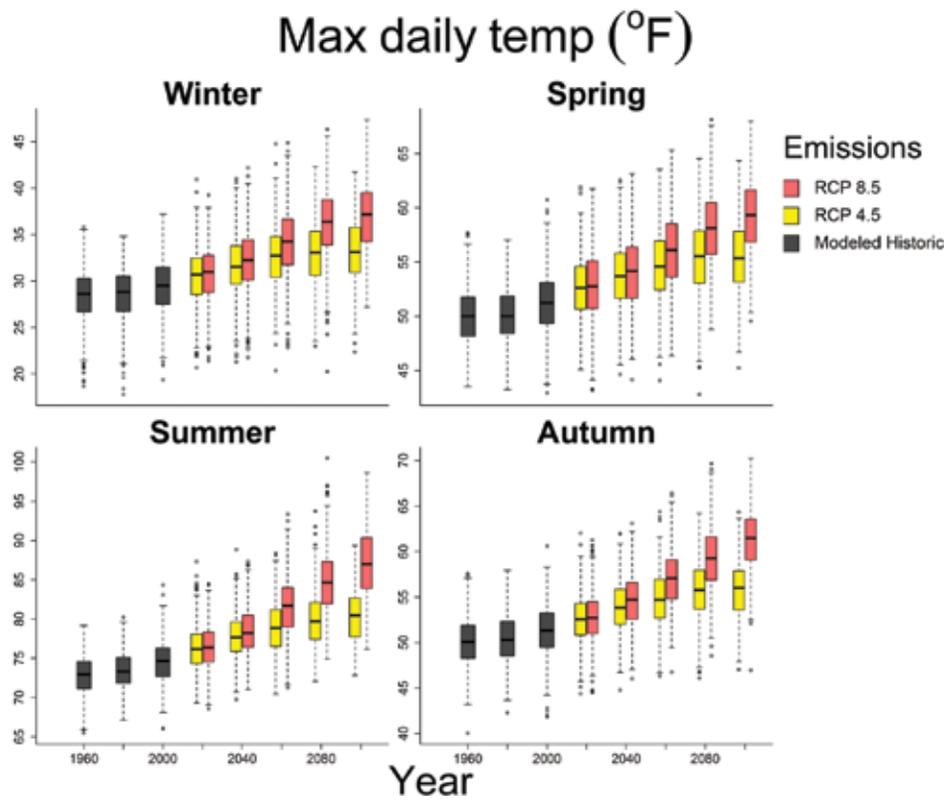
Figure 3.11—Seasonal mean monthly maximum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Central subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.
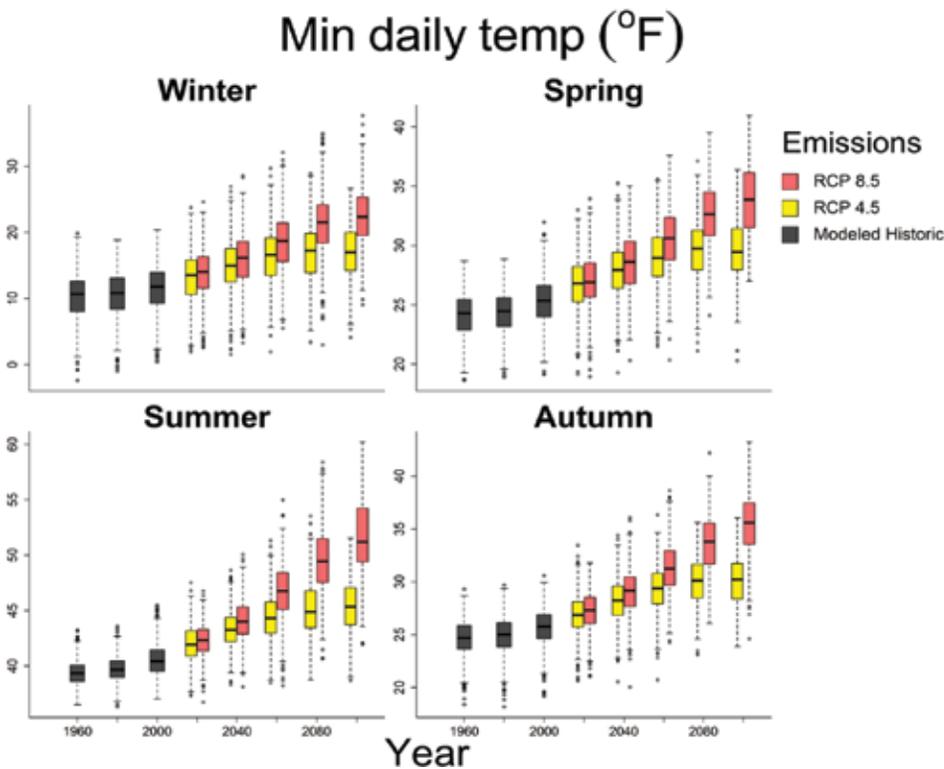
Figure 3.12—Seasonal mean monthly minimum temperature for 1950–2100. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data for the NRAP Central subregion (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.

Eastern Subregion

The primary results of analysis of historical and projected climate in the Eastern Rockies subregion are summarized in box 3.5, with specific detail in figures 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, and 3.16.


**Box. 3.5—Summary: Historical and Projected Climate for the Eastern Rockies Subregion**

- This mountainous region sits at the boundary between warm, wet, maritime airflows from the Pacific Ocean, and cooler, drier airflows from Canada.

- Changes in climate affecting mountain snowpack will have important hydrologic implications.

- Over the historical period of record (1895–2012), the annual mean monthly minimum temperature increased by about 2.2 °F, while the annual mean monthly maximum temperature increased by about 1.8 °F. During the same period, annual mean monthly precipitation was unchanged.

- By 2100, temperature is projected to increase 6 to 11 °F for the annual mean monthly minimum, and 5 to 11 °F for the annual mean monthly maximum.

- Mean monthly minimum and maximum temperatures are projected to increase for all seasons. The mean monthly minimum temperature (spring and fall) and the mean monthly maximum temperature (winter) may rise above freezing.

- Seasonal precipitation is projected to be slightly higher in winter and spring and slightly lower in summer than during the historical period of record.
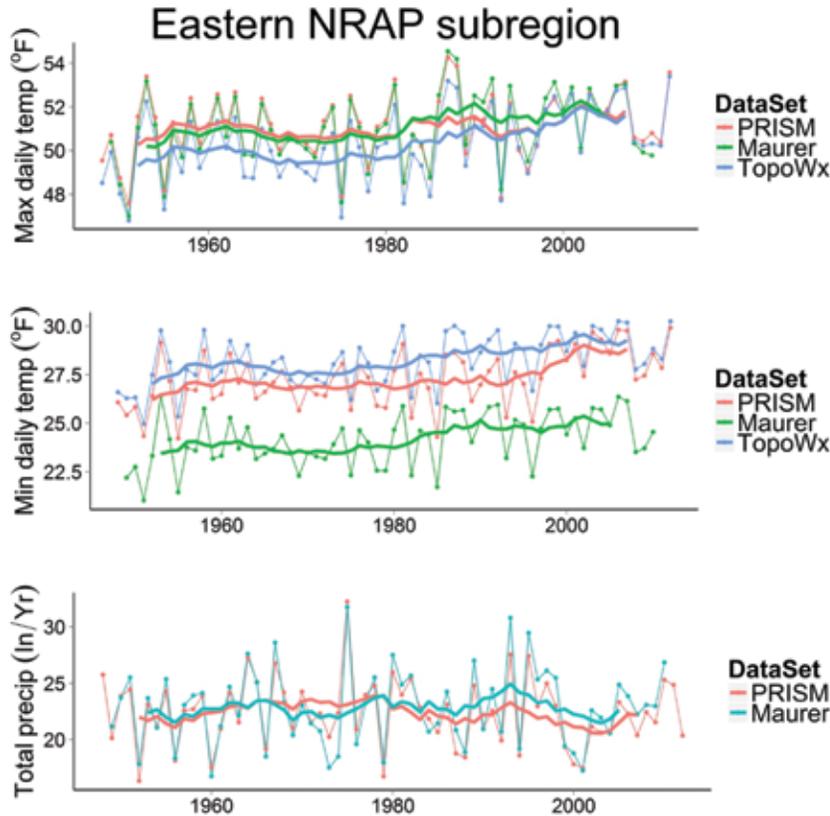
Figure 3.13—Annual historical mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation from monthly gridded PRISM, Maurer and TopoWx for 1949 to 2010 for the NRAP Eastern subregion. The heavy lines are the 10-year rolling average that show short-term trends.

Eastern NRAP subregion model projections
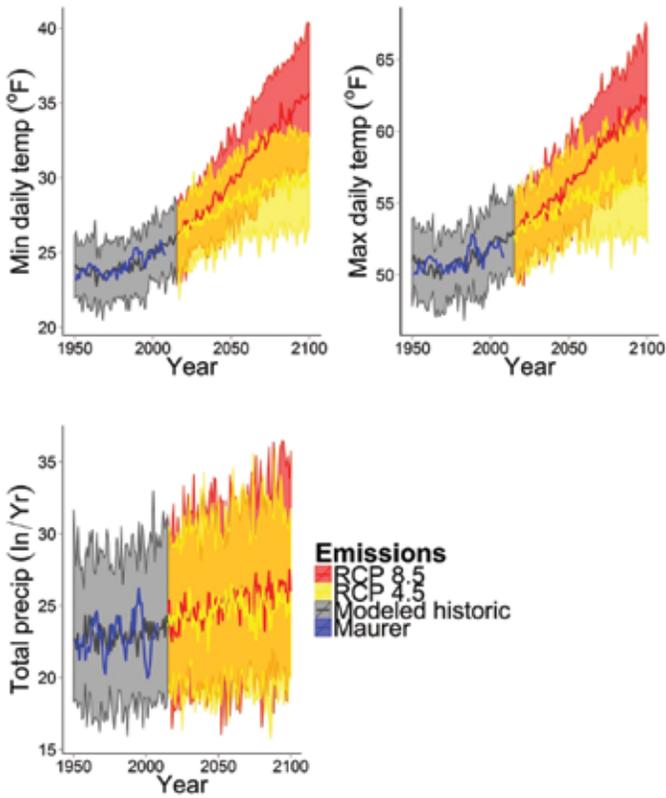
Figure 3.14—Historical modeled and projected annual mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation for the RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 emission scenarios based on CMIP5 data for the NRAP Eastern subregion. Historic modeled results are indicated in gray, projections in colors. The 5th and 95th percent quantiles for all models are shown by the shaded area. The ensemble median is illustrated by the grey, red, or yellow heavy line; the heavy blue line is the gridded historical observed data from Maurer et al. (2002).
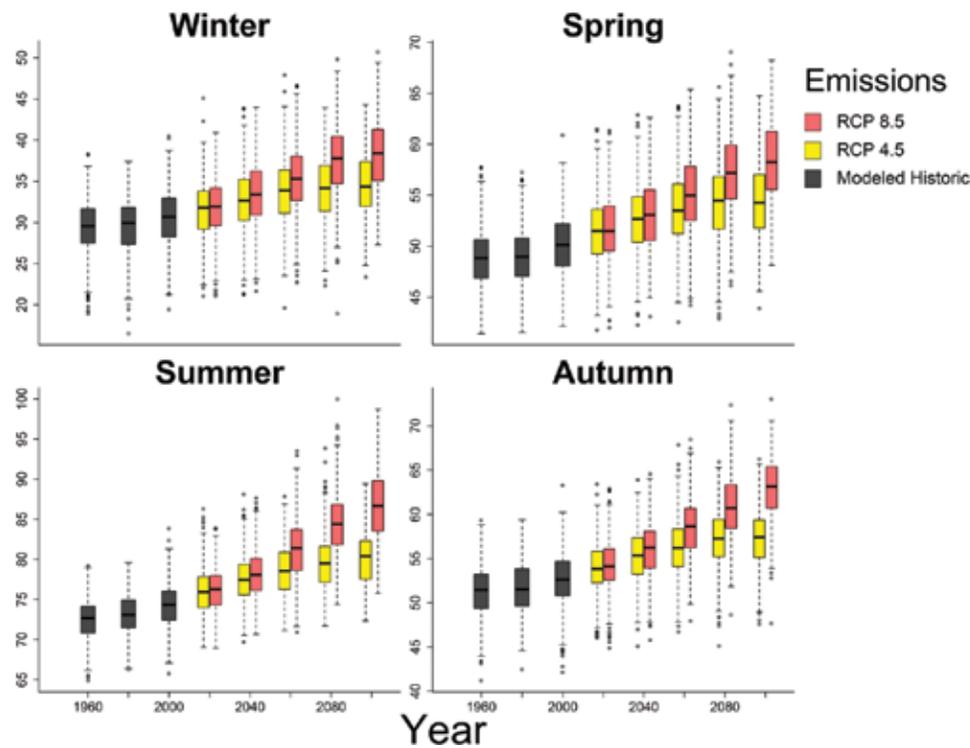
Figure 3.15—Seasonal mean monthly maximum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Eastern subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.

Figure 3.16—Seasonal mean monthly minimum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Eastern subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.

Greater Yellowstone Area Subregion

The primary results of analysis of historical and projected climate in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion are summarized in box 3.6, with specific detail in figures 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, and 3.20.

**Box. 3.6—Summary: Historical and Projected Climate for the Greater Yellowstone Area Subregion**

- In the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion, climatic variability is strongly influenced by interactions with topography, elevation, and aspect.

- Over the historical period of record (1895–2012), the annual mean monthly minimum temperature increased by about 2.9 °F, while the annual mean monthly maximum temperature increased by about 1.2 °F.

- By 2100, temperature is projected to increase 5 to 10 °F for the annual mean monthly minimum, and 7 to 12 °F for the annual mean monthly maximum.

- Annual mean monthly precipitation is projected to increase slightly by 2100, although projections for precipitation have high uncertainty compared to temperature projections.

- Winter maximum temperature is projected to increase above freezing in the mid-21st century. Summer temperatures are projected to increase 5 °F by 2060 and 10 °F by 2100
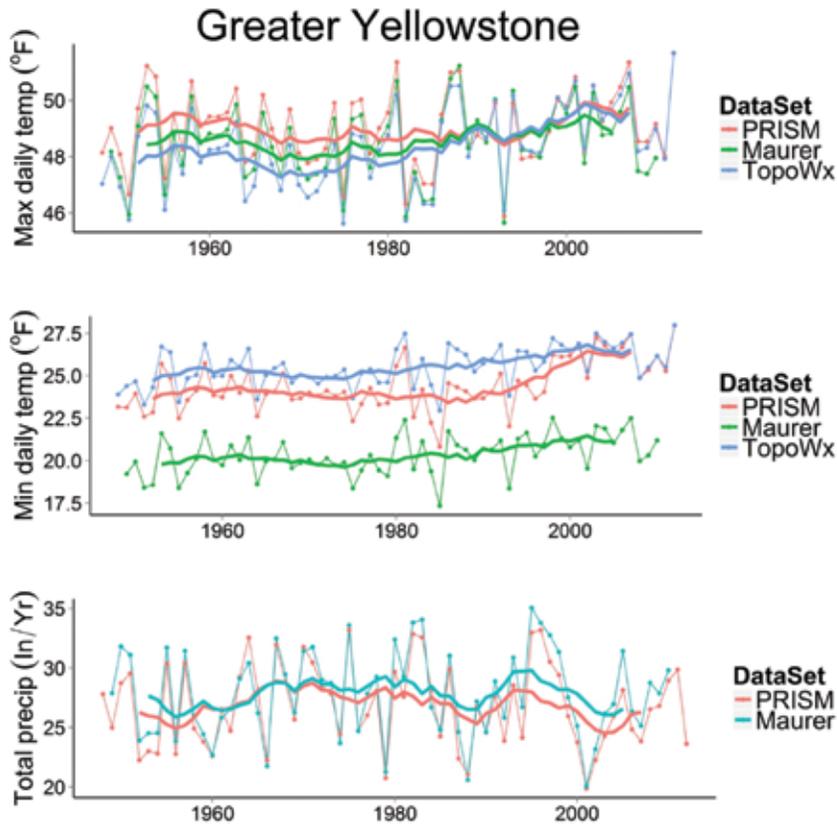
Figure 3.17—Annual historical mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation from monthly gridded PRISM, Maurer and TopoWx for 1949 to 2010 for the NRAP Greater Yellowstone subregion. The heavy lines are the 10-year rolling average that show short-term trends.
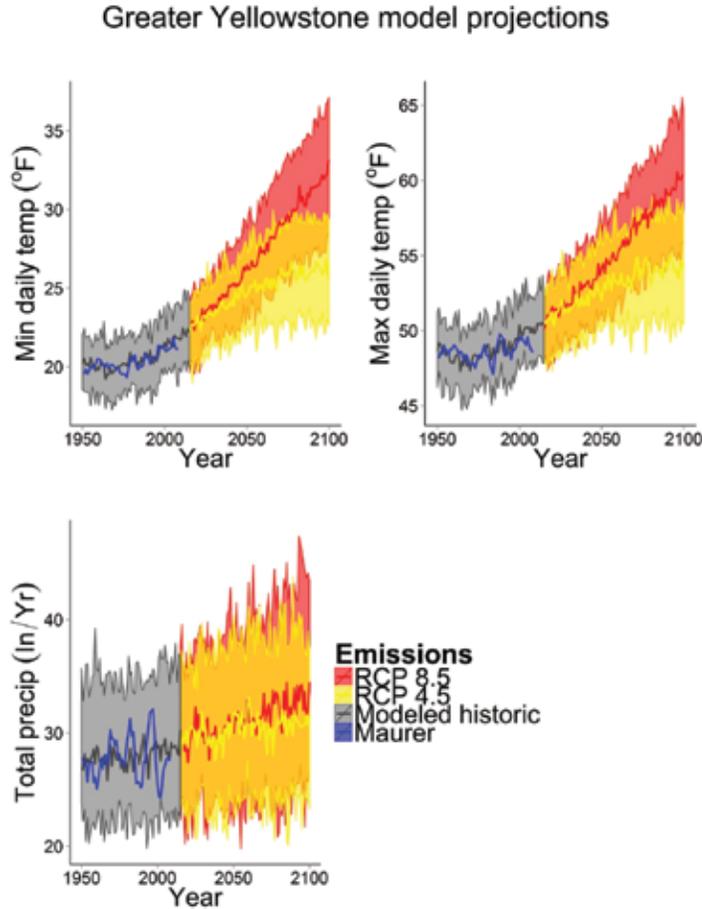
Figure 3.18—Historical modeled and projected annual mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation for the RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 emission scenarios based on CMIP5 data for the NRAP Greater Yellowstone subregion. Historic modeled results are indicated in gray, projections in colors. The shaded area shows the 5th and 95th percent quantiles for all models. The grey, red, or yellow heavy line illustrate ensemble median; the heavy blue line is the gridded historical observed data from Maurer et al. (2002).

Figure 3.19—Seasonal mean monthly maximum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Greater Yellowstone subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.
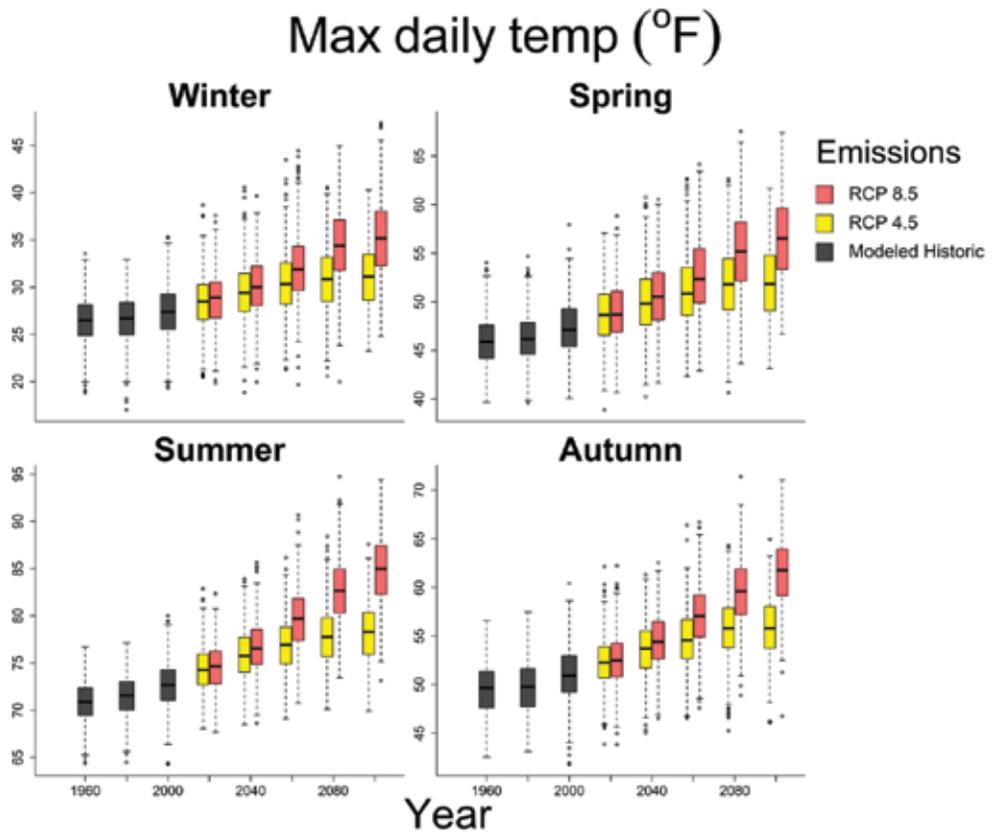
Figure 3.20—Seasonal mean monthly minimum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Greater Yellowstone subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.
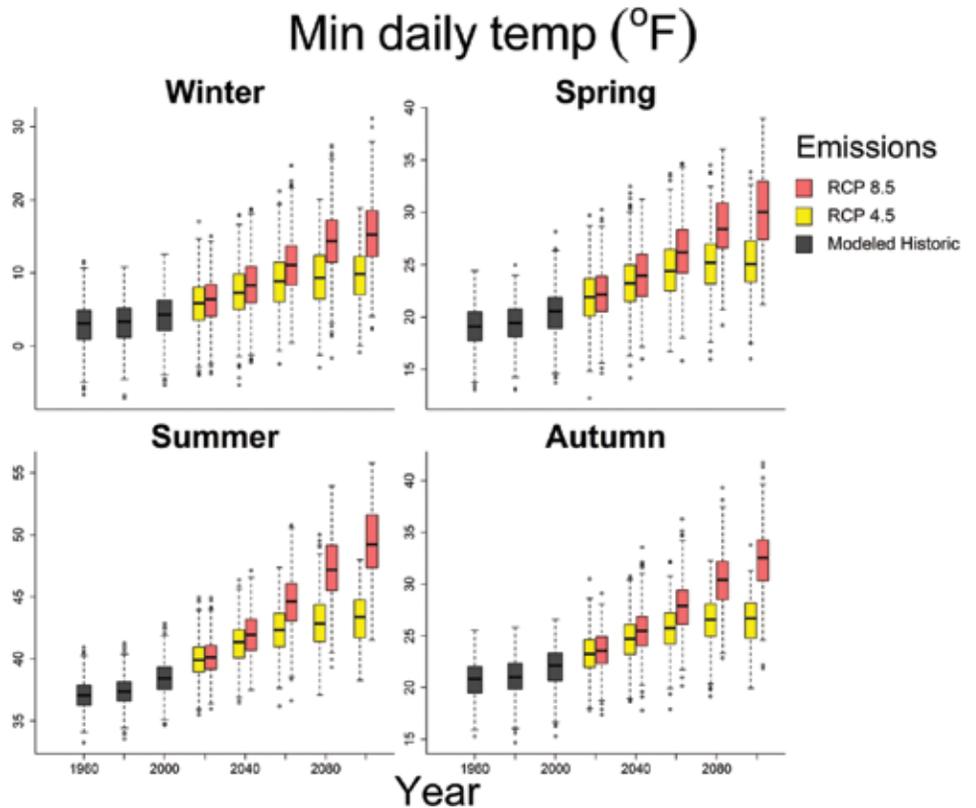
Grassland Subregion

The primary results of analysis of historical and projected climate in the Grassland subregion are summarized in box 3.7, with specific detail in figures 3.21, 3.22, 3.23, and 3.24.


Box. 3.7—Summary: Historical and Projected Climate for the Grassland Subregion

- Warming trends indicate that future climate will be similar to the area south of this subregion.

- Even with little or no change in precipitation, there is the potential for summer drying or drought due to the increased heat and increased evapotranspiration.

- Early snowmelt from the west will imply changes in streamflow, with implications for streamflow and temperature and therefore reservoir management and stream ecology.

- There is a pattern of a drier west and wetter east, with the average of climate models showing a shift toward a slightly larger area of the wetter east.
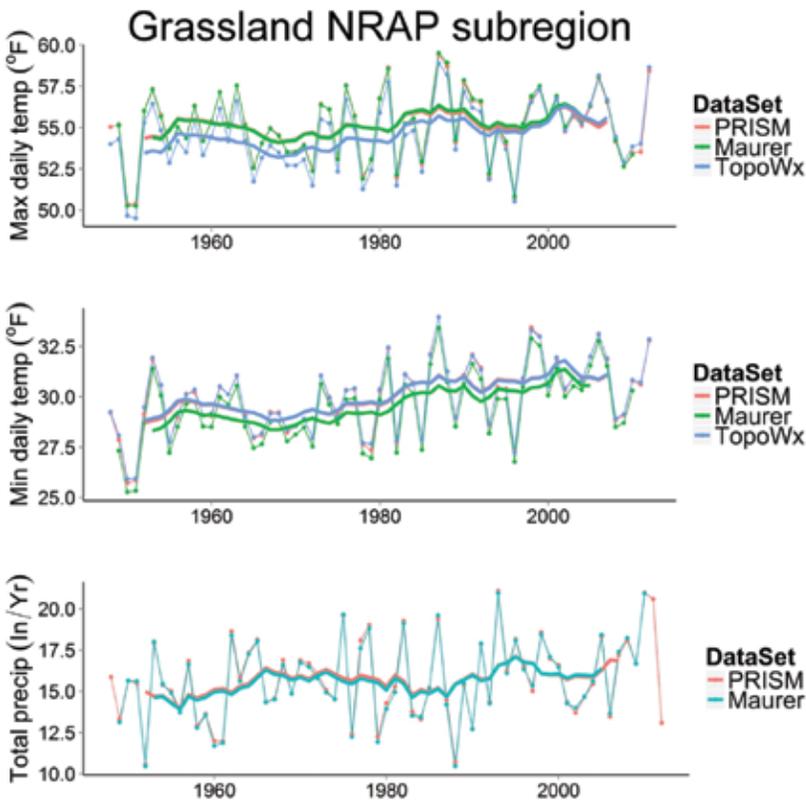

Figure 3.21—Annual historical mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation from monthly gridded PRISM, Maurer and TopoWx for 1949 to 2010 for the NRAP Grassland subregion. The heavy lines are the 10-year rolling average that show short-term trends.

Grassland NRAP subregion model projections
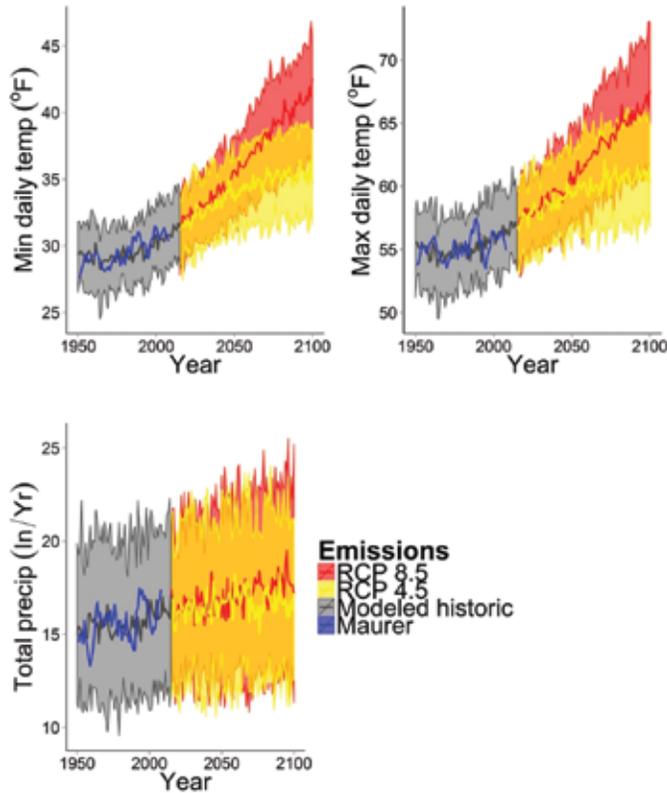
Figure 3.22—Historical modeled and projected annual mean monthly maximum temperature, annual mean monthly minimum temperature, and total annual precipitation for the RCP 4.5 and RCP 8.5 emission scenarios based on CMIP5 data for the NRAP Grassland subregion. Historic modeled results are indicated in gray, projections in colors. The shaded area shows the 5th and 95th percent quantiles for all models. The grey, red, or yellow heavy line illustrate ensemble median; the heavy blue line is the gridded historical observed data from Maurer et al. (2002).
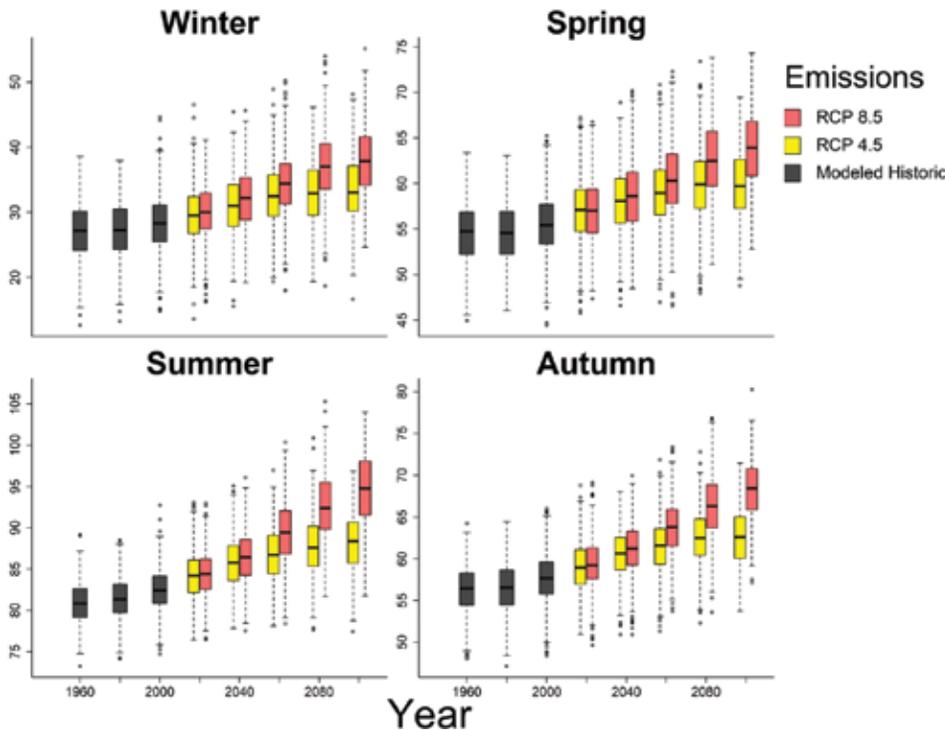

Figure 3.23—Seasonal mean monthly maximum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Grassland subregion. Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.

Figure 3.24—Seasonal mean monthly minimum temperature for 1950–2100 for the NRAP Grassland subregion (historical, grey boxes; RCP 4.5, yellow boxes; RCP 8.5, red boxes). Each box is an aggregation of 20 years of modeled historical or projected seasonal data. For example, 1960 represents the seasonal average of 1950 to 1969. The central line in each box is the median. Hinges or edges of the boxes are the first and third quartiles; whiskers extend past the first and third quartile by 1.5 times the interquartile range (middle 50); points outside of the whiskers are extreme values.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 4: Effects of Climate Change on Snowpack, Glaciers, and Water Resources in the Northern Rockies Region

Charles H. Luce

Introduction

Water is critical to life, and the effects of climate change on ecosystems are mediated through changes in hydrology. Changes in how snow accumulates and melts are one of the more consistently noted climate-induced changes to water in the western United States (Barnett et al. 2005; Service 2004), and these changes affect when water will be available for forests and fish alike. Changes in summer atmospheric circulation patterns may alter the ability of summer precipitation to allow midsummer respite from seasonal drought and dampening of wildfire spread (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] 2013; see chapter 8). Fish will be affected by both lower low flows with earlier snowmelt and higher midwinter floods caused by rain-on-snow events. Declining summer water supplies will likewise challenge municipal and agricultural water supplies. All of these meaningful effects can be traced to interactions between temperature and precipitation changes projected for the future and described in chapter 3. In this chapter, we describe mechanisms of hydrologic change, and provide maps illustrating variations in effects across the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture Northern Region and the Greater Yellowstone Area, hereafter called the Northern Rockies region. We also discuss some uncertainties relevant to these effects. Climate change effects on stream temperature in the region are discussed in chapter 5.

Warming temperatures are the most certain consequence of increased CO_2 in the atmosphere. The hydrologic consequences of warmer temperatures include less snowpack and greater evaporative demand from the atmosphere. Snowpack depth, extent, and duration are expected to decrease due to a combination of less precipitation falling as snow (Pierce et al. 2008), and slightly earlier melt (Luce et al. 2014). The degree of change expected as a result of warming varies dramatically over the landscape as a function of temperature (Luce et al. 2014). Places that are warm (near the melting point of snow) are expected to be more sensitive than places where temperatures remain subfreezing throughout much of the winter despite warming (Woods 2009). In the coldest locations, snowpack may increase with increasing winter precipitation under a changing climate (Hamlet et al. 2013).

The relationship of evapotranspiration to a warming climate is more complicated (Roderick et al. 2014). Warmer air can hold more water, which means that even if the relative humidity stays constant, the vapor pressure deficit, the difference between the actual water content of the air and the water content at saturation, increases. That difference drives a water vapor gradient between leaves and the atmosphere that can draw more moisture out of the leaves. This has led many to expect greater evaporation during climate change (e.g., Cook et al. 2014; Dai 2013) using potential evapotranspiration formulations dependent on temperature, reflecting the increased "demand."

Evaporation, however, is an energy-intensive process, and there is only so much additional energy that will be available for evaporation. In addition, both the water balance and the energy balance need to be considered under future warming (Roderick et al. 2015). The observation that temperatures are warmer during drought is more generally related to the lack of water to evaporate leading to warmer temperatures than to warmer temperatures causing faster evaporation (Yin et al. 2014). Unfortunately, when potential evapotranspiration models based on air temperature (including Penman-Monteith) are applied as post-processing to general circulation model (GCM) calculations, an overestimate of increased evapotranspiration is likely because the energy balance is no longer tracked (Milly 1992; Milly and Dunne 2011). The reality is that most of the increased energy from increased longwave radiation will result in warming rather than increased evaporation (Roderick et al. 2015).

Changing precipitation is less often discussed in climate change projections because it is more uncertain (Blöschl and Montanari 2010; IPCC 2013). Nevertheless, it has a much more direct impact on hydrologic process than temperature and cannot be ignored. On average, across many GCMs, precipitation is expected to increase very slightly in the Northern Rockies. The bounds are quite large, however, ranging from on the order of +30 percent to –20 percent (see chapter 3). Unfortunately, because many hydrologic processes are sensitive to precipitation (e.g., floods, hydrologic drought, snow accumulation), this represents a profoundly large uncertainty. As a consequence, the general approach in this and other analyses is to use an ensemble average (i.e., average across many GCMs) precipitation outcome. In this report, we discuss some of the uncertainty surrounding that mean estimate to illustrate which processes or hydrologic outcomes are most uncertain and where. Not all processes

are sensitive to precipitation, and uncertainty in outcomes caused by uncertainty in precipitation is not the same everywhere for a given process. Acknowledging the substantial quantitative disagreement among models in projected precipitation behavior, we now turn to discussion of the general physical mechanisms behind precipitation change, on which there is some agreement.

Two primary concepts are applied for precipitation change: dynamic and thermodynamic (Seager et al. 2010). Dynamic drivers of precipitation change include changes in global circulation patterns (e.g., the Hadley cell extent) and changes in mid-latitude eddies. Changes in teleconnection patterns, for example the North American Monsoon System (NAMS), would also fall into this category. Thermodynamic changes refer to the fact that the atmosphere can hold more water (Held and Soden 2006) according to a nonlinear Clausius-Clapeyron relationship (saturation vapor pressure vs. temperature), leading to an expectation of roughly a 7-percent increase in precipitation per 1.8 °F of temperature

change. There are, however, other physical limits on the disposition of energy driving the cycling of water in the atmosphere, leading to lesser estimates on the order of 1.6 percent per 1.8 °F at the global scale, with individual grid cells being less or potentially negative, particularly over land (Roderick et al. 2014). Different approaches to scaling the thermodynamic contribution is one of the reasons for differences among models, although the dynamic process modeling differences can be great as well.

When considering the impacts of precipitation change on streamflow, the seasonality of precipitation is important. One key outcome of the thermodynamically driven changes is that when precipitation happens, it is expected to fall with greater intensity. In turn, this is expected to result in longer dry spells between events. This process can be important in determining drought duration (and consequently severity) in locations where summer precipitation is an important component of the summer water budget (Luce et al. 2016), such as much of eastern Montana, and low elevation stations in western Montana (fig. 4.1). Locations with more exposure to
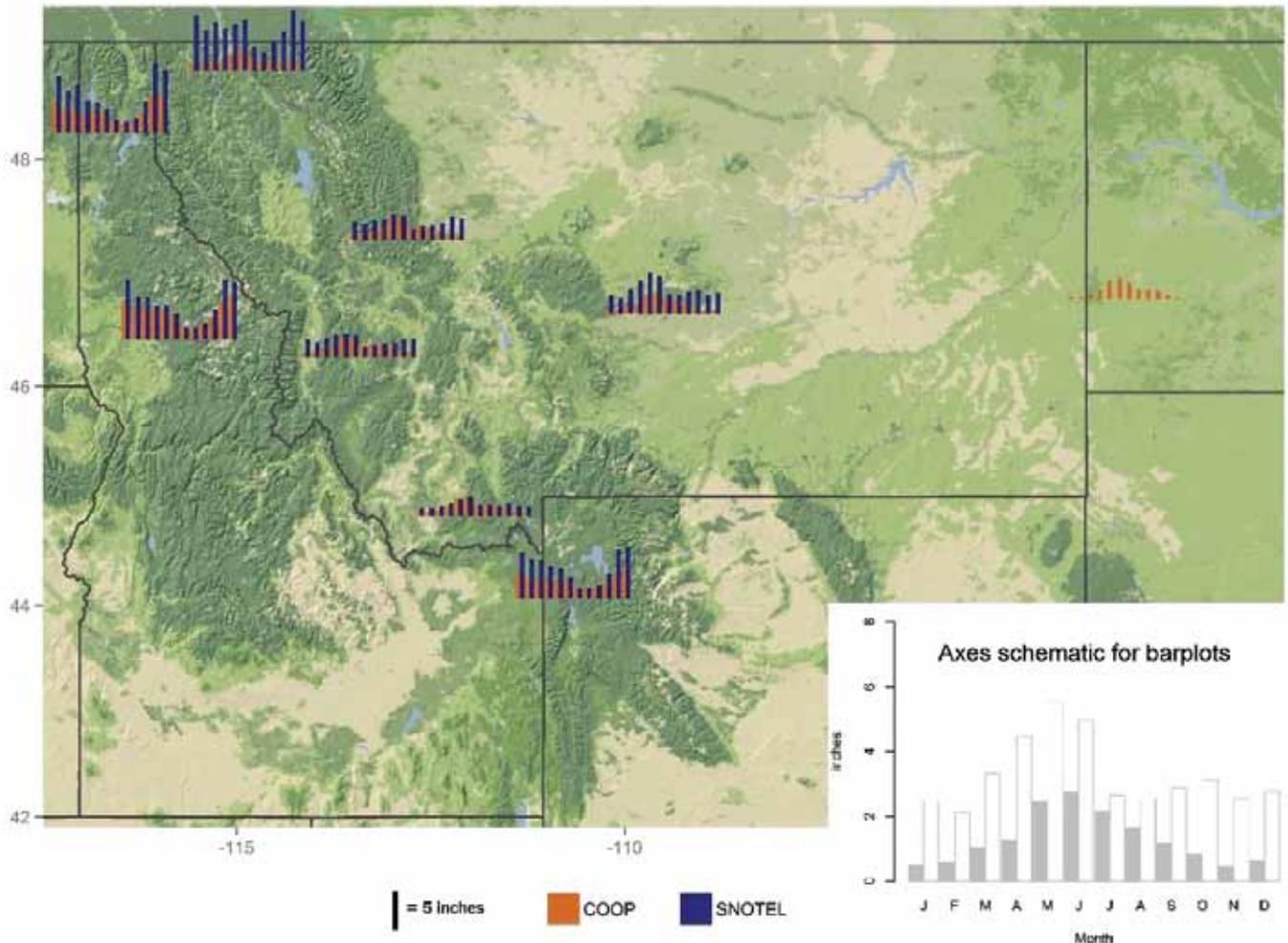
Figure 4.1—Bar graphs of annual precipitation amounts and distribution from several representative locations. More western and higher elevation sites tend to have stronger winter precipitation, with a pronounced lull in July and August. May and June precipitation is generally more pronounced than July and August precipitation and so is likely an important water source for vegetation during the summer drought.
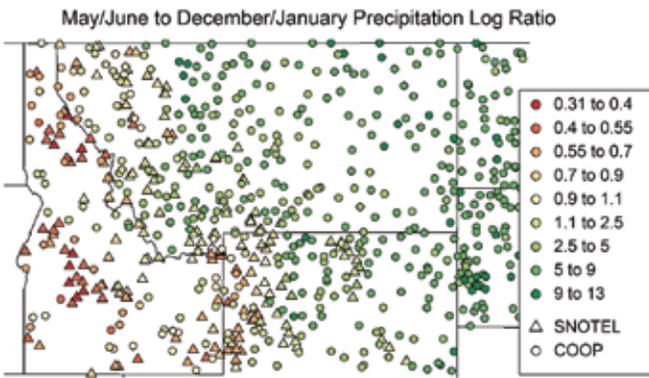
Figure 4.2—An index of precipitation seasonality in the Northern Rockies, a ratio of early summer (May–June) to winter (December–January) precipitation. Greener colors are wetter in May and June. July and August precipitation is low for most locations. Of note is the relative contribution of May through June precipitation in western Montana and central Idaho compared to mountains (SNOTEL sites) further south. There is also a notable difference in mountain versus local valley (COOP sites) seasonality.

westerly windflows (e.g., Idaho stations and the Yellowstone area), and high elevations in northern Montana, show a more pronounced winter-wet pattern, which is broadly more representative of high elevation stations than low elevation stations (figs. 4.1 and 4.2). Note that much of the region has a substantially wetter May and June than July and August, and in some cases, the May through June precipitation is on a par with or exceeds the winter snowpack contribution to the annual water budget (fig. 4.2). In these locations, the snowpack changes may have less consequence than any circulation changes driving summer precipitation, such as expected shifts in NAMS (IPCC 2013). The May through June precipitation contributions, for example, can be an

important determination of the severity of summer drought and the fire season (Abatzoglou and Kolden 2013). Longer periods of precipitation deficit in summer paired with decreasing snowpack may be particularly challenging for vegetation and fishes.

Changes in orographic enhancement of precipitation over mountain areas in the Pacific Northwest is another effect within the class of dynamic effects. Historical changes in westerly windflows have led to a decrease in the enhancement of winter precipitation by orographic lifting over mountain ranges (Luce et al. 2013), raising the important question of whether such a pattern may continue into the future. Westerly winds across the Pacific Northwest are strongly correlated with precipitation in mountainous areas (fig. 4.3), but valley precipitation is not, nor is precipitation in much of eastern Montana. The historical trend in westerlies was driven by pressure and temperature changes spatially consistent with those expected under a changing climate, but were a consequence in part (~50 percent) of normal climate variability. Dynamic downscaling using a regional climate model (RCM) with small (~12.5 miles) cells provides a means to estimate orographically induced precipitation (fig. 4.4b), which cannot be simulated with the large cell size of GCMs (fig. 4.4a). Although the GCM shows general moistening over most of the area, the RCM shows a pattern of drying or no change on the upwind side of major mountain ranges, with moistening limited to valleys in the lee. Because precipitation falls mostly in mountain areas where streamflows originate, this is a potentially important aspect of future changes to consider. The variable infiltration capacity (VIC) model simulations detailed later in this chapter do not include this effect, so for purposes of general discussion, it can be lumped as an additional source of uncertainty for precipitation.

The range of potential changes in climate looks complex, particularly for such a varied landscape as the Northern

Figure 4.3—Correlation of winter precipitation to winter westerly wind speed across the Pacific Northwest (from Luce et al. 2013).
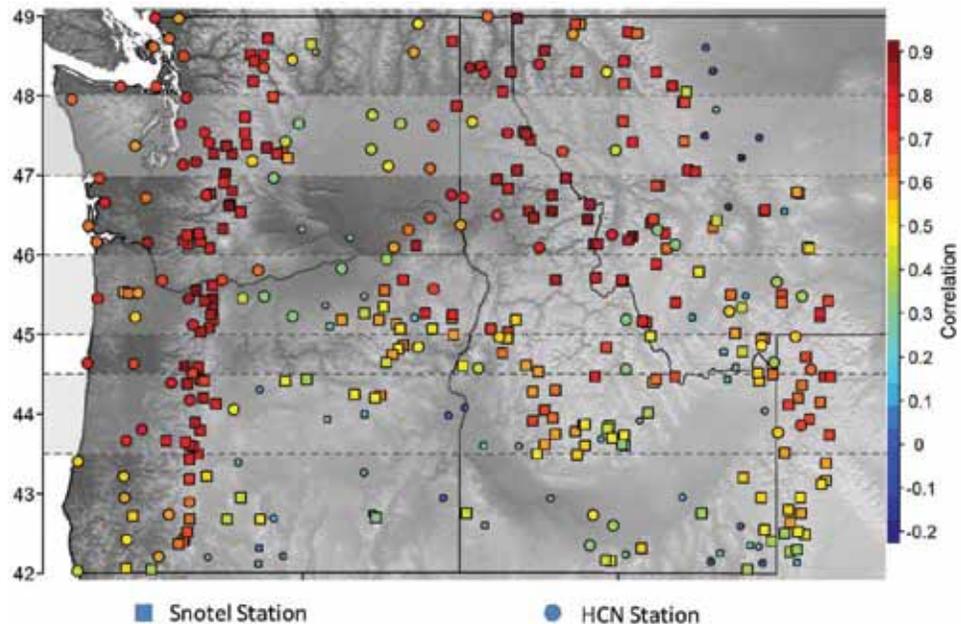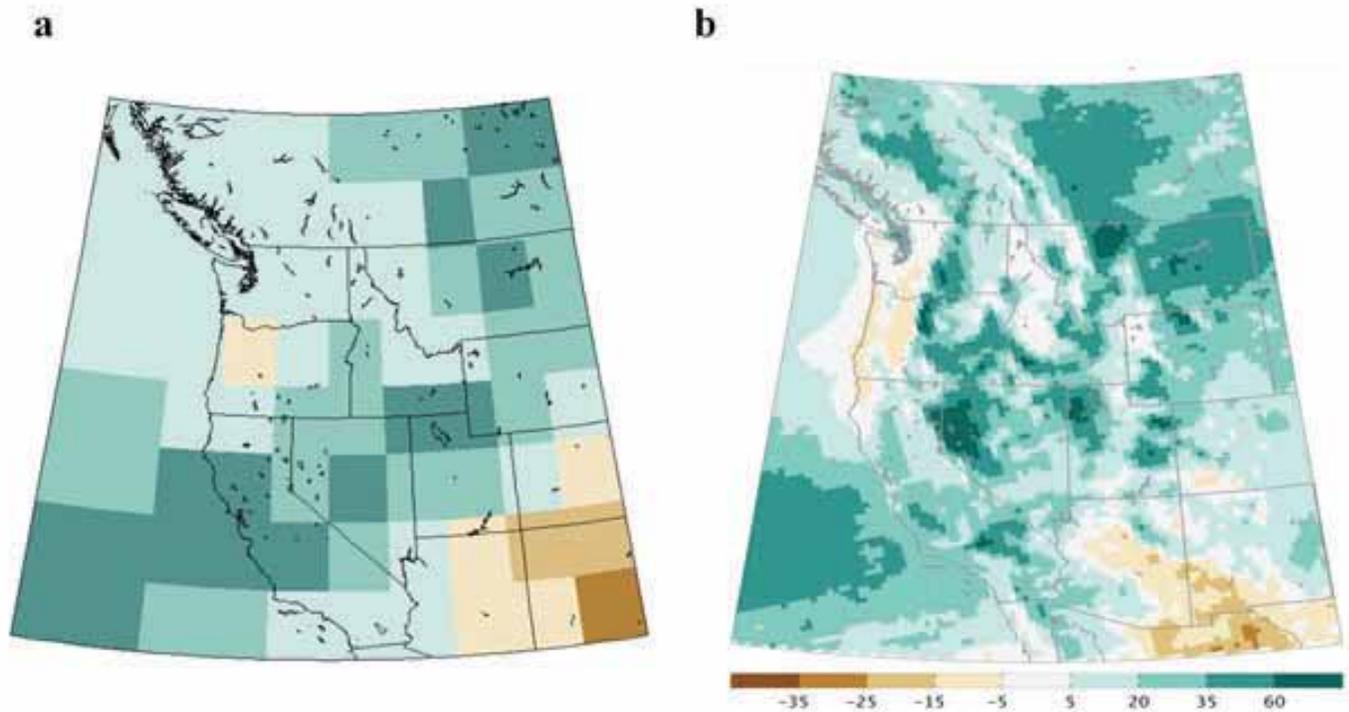
Figure 4.4—October through March precipitation change for 2041–2070 versus 1971–2000 as represented by (a) a global circulation model (CanESM2) and (b) a regional climate model with finer topographic detail.

Rockies. Perhaps the most important point to summarize from the previous discussion is that the current climatic settings vary over the landscape at both macroscales and fine scales. There are broad east-west changes in precipitation seasonality and amount, and local differences between nearby mountain and valley weather stations echo that pattern. Trends and drivers for climate variations will differ greatly from east to west. Fundamentally, topography is an important factor affecting seasonality, precipitation amount, and potential trends. Given that forests and much of the water supply generation are generally in mountain areas, it is important to recognize the role of topography in affecting the climate. Specific hydrologic outcomes of interest are changes to snowpacks and glaciers, streamflow, and drought.

Snowpack and Glaciers

Snowpack

Snowpack declines are among the most widely cited changes occurring with climate change, as warmer temperatures will reduce the fraction of precipitation falling as snow (Klos et al. 2014; Pierce et al. 2008). About 70 percent of the water supply in the western United States is tied to mountain snowpacks (Service 2004); thus, changes in snowpack are particularly relevant to municipal and agricultural water timing (Stewart et al. 2005).

Historical trends in snowpack accumulation have been negative across much of the Northern Rockies region (Mote et al. 2005; Regonda et al. 2005). Although earlier work has ascribed the changes primarily to warming temperatures, the interior parts of the Northern Rockies are cold enough to be relatively insensitive to warming and strongly sensitive to precipitation variation (Luce et al. 2014; Mote 2006). Consequently, decreased interior snowpacks are likely to be primarily a response to reduced precipitation (Luce et al. 2013). In contrast, the low elevation mountains of northern Idaho, the westernmost mountains in the region, are heavily influenced by a maritime snow climate (Armstrong and Armstrong 1987; Mock and Birkeland 2000; Roch 1949), and are still sensitive to temperature variability, particularly with respect to snow durability (Luce et al. 2014) (fig. 4.5).

Precipitation uncertainty can be substantial, but it does not translate into uncertainty in snowpack changes everywhere (fig. 4.6). An index of uncertainty can be calculated as a ratio of the effects of the likely range of precipitation values (about ±7.5 percent for one standard deviation across models) to the relatively certain temperature change (the timing is uncertain, but a change in temperature is certain as long as CO_2 concentrations continue to increase):

$$R_u = \frac{\Delta\,(+7.5\%)}{\Delta}$$

Figure 4.6 shows strong certainty of large changes in April 1 snow water equivalent for the Cascades, but substantial uncertainty in outcomes for the Greater Yellowstone
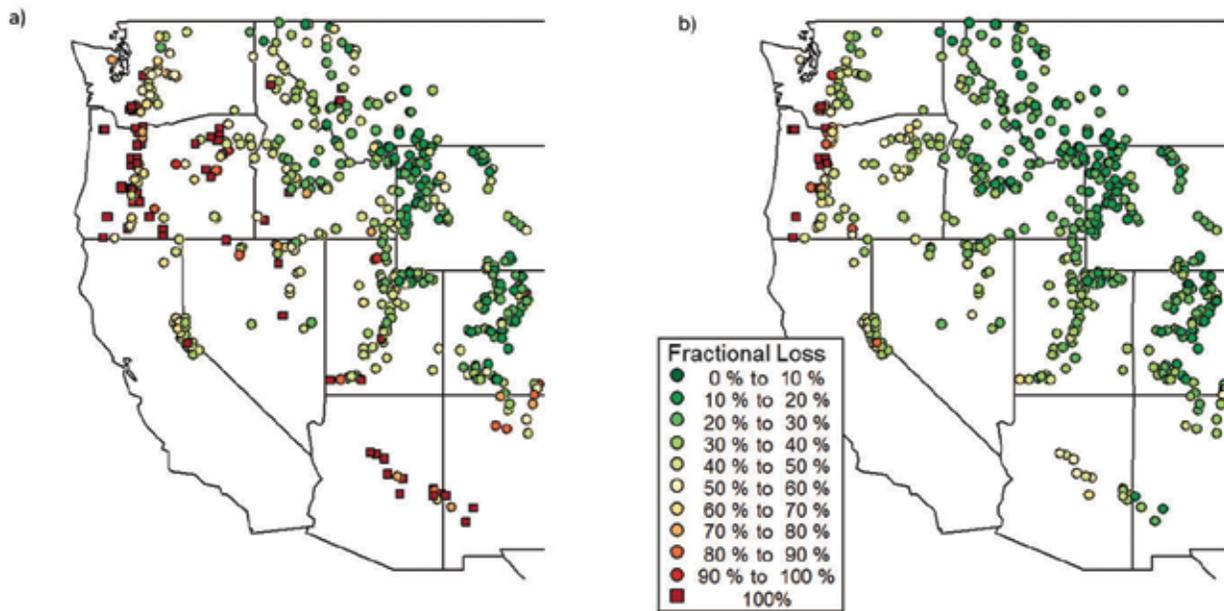
Figure 4.5—Estimated loss of (a) April 1 snow water equivalent and (b) mean snow residence time as related to warming of 5.4 °F (from Luce et al. 2014).
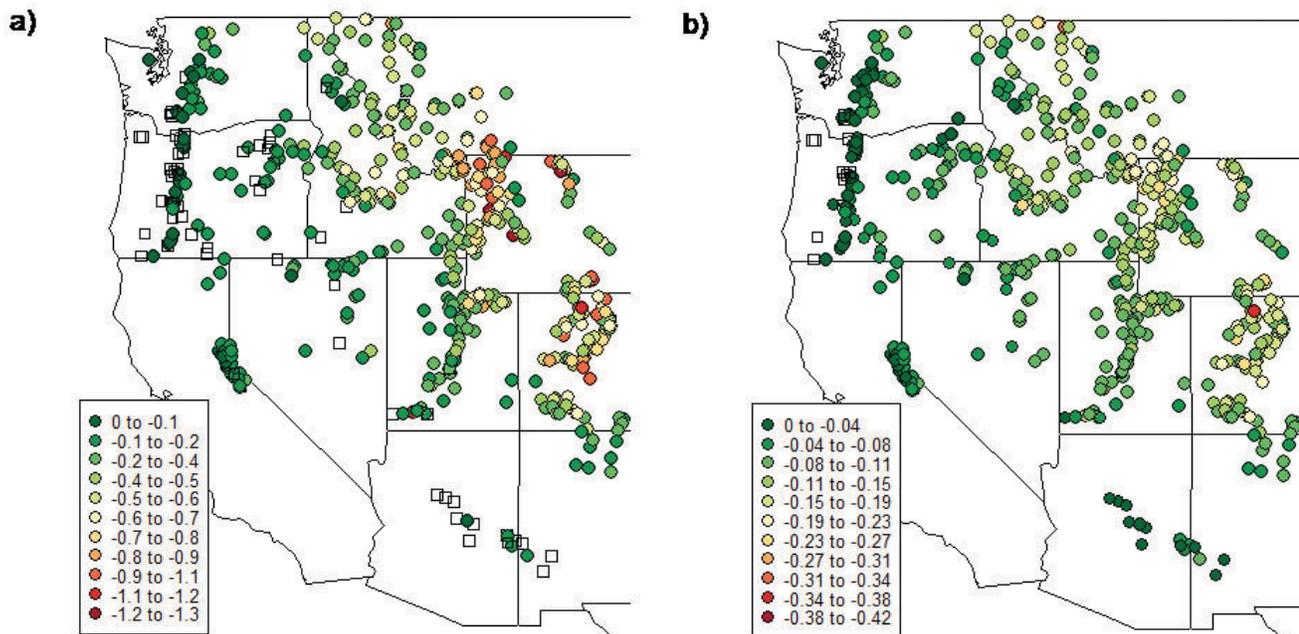
Figure 4.6—Uncertainty ratio for April 1 snow water equivalent. Orange to dark red sites are strongly influenced by precipitation in contrast to temperature. Thus, temperature-based projections in those sites may be inaccurate if precipitation changes are large. At dark green (and white) sites, temperature effects will predominate, and precipitation changes in either direction are inconsequential.

Area, where cold temperatures leave the snowpack more sensitive to precipitation than to temperature changes. The uncertainty ratio in these areas suggests that relatively large increases in precipitation could counter the effects of warming on snowpack loss.

Glaciers

Glaciers are well-known features in the Northern Rockies, with a large number located in and near Glacier National Park, on the northern edge of the region, and in the Wind River, Absaroka, and Beartooth Ranges in and near Yellowstone National Park, at the southern edge.

Figure 4.7—Oblique view of Grinnell Glacier taken from the summit of Mount Gould, Glacier National Park (after Fagre 2005).

They are also found in several other mountain ranges in Montana and Wyoming (see Portland State University [2009] for maps). Significant changes have been noted in the glaciers of Glacier National Park over the course of the 20th century (Fagre 2005), with the Grinnell Glacier having around 10 percent of the ice that it had at its peak in 1850 (fig. 4.7). Declines have also been seen in the Wind River Range over the 20th century (Marston et al. 1991).

Estimating future changes in glaciers is complex (Hall and Fagre 2003), but empirical relationships derived for the glaciers indicate a brief future for them, with many glaciers becoming fragmented or disappearing by the 2030s. Increasing temperatures yield a rising equilibrium line altitude, decreasing the effective contributing area for each glacier as warming progresses. A warming of 5.4 °F can translate into between 1,000 and 1,600 feet of elevation rise in snow-rain partitioning and summer temperatures. Unfortunately, for the sake of simplicity, those changes do not directly equate to shift in equilibrium line altitude, which depends on the geometry and topography of the contributing cirque. Temperate alpine glaciers are well known for being as, or more, sensitive to precipitation variations as they are to temperature changes (McCabe and Fountain 1995), which has probably contributed to changes in glaciers across the Pacific Northwest. Westerlies and their contribution to winter precipitation have changed over the Glacier National Park region since the 1940s (fig. 4.3) and April 1 snow water equivalent at these elevations and latitudes is relatively insensitive to temperature. However, this area receives significant spring and summer precipitation (fig. 4.1), and changing summer temperatures affect both the melt rate and additional summertime mass contributions (new snow) in these glaciers. Thus, summer temperature is a strong predictor of their behavior, and regardless of changes in precipitation, significant reduction in area of glaciers is expected by the end of the 21st century (Hall and Fagre 2003).

Streamflow

Streamflow changes of significance for aquatic species, water supply, and infrastructure include:

- Annual yield
- Summer low flows—average and extreme
- Peakflows—scouring floods
- Peakflow seasonality
- Center of runoff timing

Annual yield, summer low flows, and center of runoff timing are all important metrics with respect to water supply. Irrigation water for crops and urban landscapes is typically needed in summer months, and these metrics are most relevant to surface water supplies rather than groundwater supplies, although changes in long-term annual means could be informative for the latter. For summer low flows, two metrics are used, the mean summer yield (June through September), and the minimum weekly flow with a 10-year recurrence probability (7Q10). Center of runoff timing refers to the timing of water supply, and shifts in runoff earlier in the winter or spring disconnect streamflow timing from water supply needs. Center of timing can be redundant with other metrics that measure impact more directly, but with care in interpretation, it can help clarify different potential causal mechanisms: changing precipitation versus changing temperature.

Peakflows are important to fishes and infrastructure. Scouring flows can damage eggs in fish redds if they occur while the eggs are in the gravel or alevin are emerging (DeVries 1997; Goode et al. 2013; Montgomery et al. 1996; Tonina et al. 2008). Winter peakflows can affect fall-spawning fish: Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tschawytscha*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentes*), and brook trout (*S. fontinalis*). Spring peakflows affect spring-spawning cutthroat trout (*O. clarkia*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), and resident rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*) (Wenger

et al. 2011a,b). Spring peakflows associated with the annual snowmelt pulse are typically muted in magnitude in comparison to winter rain-on-snow events. Scouring is less of a risk to spring-spawning fishes, whereas rain-on-snow events tend to affect much larger portions of a basin at a time. A shift to more midwinter events can yield greater peakflow magnitudes, which can threaten infrastructure such as roads, recreation sites, or water management facilities (diversions, dams).

Historical changes in some of these streamflow metrics have been examined in some of the western and southern basins in the Northern Rockies. For instance, earlier runoff timing was noted by Cayan et al. (2001) and Stewart et al. (2005), and declining annual streamflows were noted by Luce and Holden (2009) and Clark (2010). Declining low flows (7Q10) have also been seen in the western half of the Northern Rockies (Kormos et al. 2016) associated more with declining precipitation than warming temperature effects for the historical period. Projected changes in low flow and timing are generally associated with the expected changes in snowpack related to temperature (e.g., more melt or precipitation as rain in winter, yielding a longer summer dry period).

Streamflow Projections

Streamflow projections were produced from the VIC model (Liang et al. 1994) for the western United States (University of Washington, Climate Impacts Group n.d.). Climate projections are based on Coupled Model Intercomparison Project Phase 3 (CMIP3) GCM runs, the full details of which are discussed in Littell et al. (2011). Differences between the climate described by CMIP3 and CMIP5 are provided in Chapter 3. The gridded data were used to estimate streamflow by using area-weighted averages of runoff from each VIC grid cell within a given basin, following the methods of Wenger et al. (2010), to accumulate flow and validate. Streamflow metrics were calculated for stream segments in the NHD+ V2 stream segments (USDA FS n.d.).

Uncertainty in climate model inputs can be a significant factor in uncertainty for outcomes for natural resources (e.g., Wenger et al. 2013). Besides showing the projected change from the ensemble average, metrics were calculated for two additional climate scenarios; MIROC 3.2 and PCM GCMs were chosen to show warmer-drier and cooler-wetter summers than the ensemble mean, respectively (Littell et al. 2011). The difference between these two runs is shown in the second panel of the figures for each metric to give a sense of the certainty with which the change is projected in a given basin. Downscaling for these runs was done statistically, so GCM expectations for precipitation are implicit. No effects of change in orographic enhancement (e.g., fig. 4.4) are inherent in these images, so readers may wish to consider an additional degree of uncertainty (in a drier direction) on the windward side of mountain ranges.

Although calculations were made for all 6th-level hydrologic units in the Northern Rockies, only the western half of the region is shown in figures 4.8 through 4.13. Trimming the domain allows easier comparison of the uncertainty map to the ensemble mean projection, at the loss of display for eastern Montana and western North Dakota. Fortunately, the easternmost part of the maps that are shown indicate little change going east.

Mean annual flow (fig. 4.8) shows minor increases in the western and southern portions of the domain, with lesser changes across eastern Montana, whereas mean summer flow shows consistent decreases throughout the region (fig. 4.9). Higher mountains in northern Idaho and northwestern Montana show substantial uncertainty in the annual-scale water yield compared to the size of the change. Over much of the rest of the domain, the range of uncertainty is on par with the magnitude of the expected change in runoff. Changes in the ensemble mean are comparable to ensemble changes in precipitation.

Despite projections of increased annual flow, low flows are expected to decline (fig. 4.10). Uncertainty is low compared to the magnitude of changes, particularly in mountain areas. Patterns are nominally similar, with relatively uniform changes, though with somewhat more pronounced changes in mountain areas, particularly in wetter ranges. Those areas showing more pronounced change in low flows generally show a large shift in timing (on the order of 2 months; fig. 4.11), again with uncertainty mostly lower than magnitudes of change in mountain areas, and more substantial changes in mountains with greater precipitation. The primary mechanism expected to drive lower low flows is reduced snowpack in winter, leading to less stored water.

Summer wet portions of the region are more likely to have low flows affected by summer precipitation patterns. Shifts in circulation that affect how moisture flows from the Gulf of Mexico during summer months are expected to have a net negative effect on precipitation, and spacing between precipitation events is likely to increase (IPCC 2013; Luce et al. 2016). These summer wet areas are also more likely to see greater losses in precipitation with increased evaporation, but it is important to recognize the energy balance constraints when estimating the degree of loss (Roderick et al. 2014). This is not done in the VIC modeling, which uses only the temperature outputs from GCMs without reevaluating the change in energy balance from a different hydrologic formulation, which is known to potentially lead to overestimation of loss (Milly and Dunne 2011).

Changes to flood magnitude across the region are much more uncertain and spatially heterogeneous at fine scales (fig. 4.12). The second metric on flood timing shows changes in the number of days in winter that are in the top 5 percent of flows for the year (a maximum of 18.25 days on average; fig. 4.13). Bull trout are sensitive to this metric and tend to be rare when values exceed 5 percent (Wenger et al. 2011a,b). The shift to more midwinter rain and more
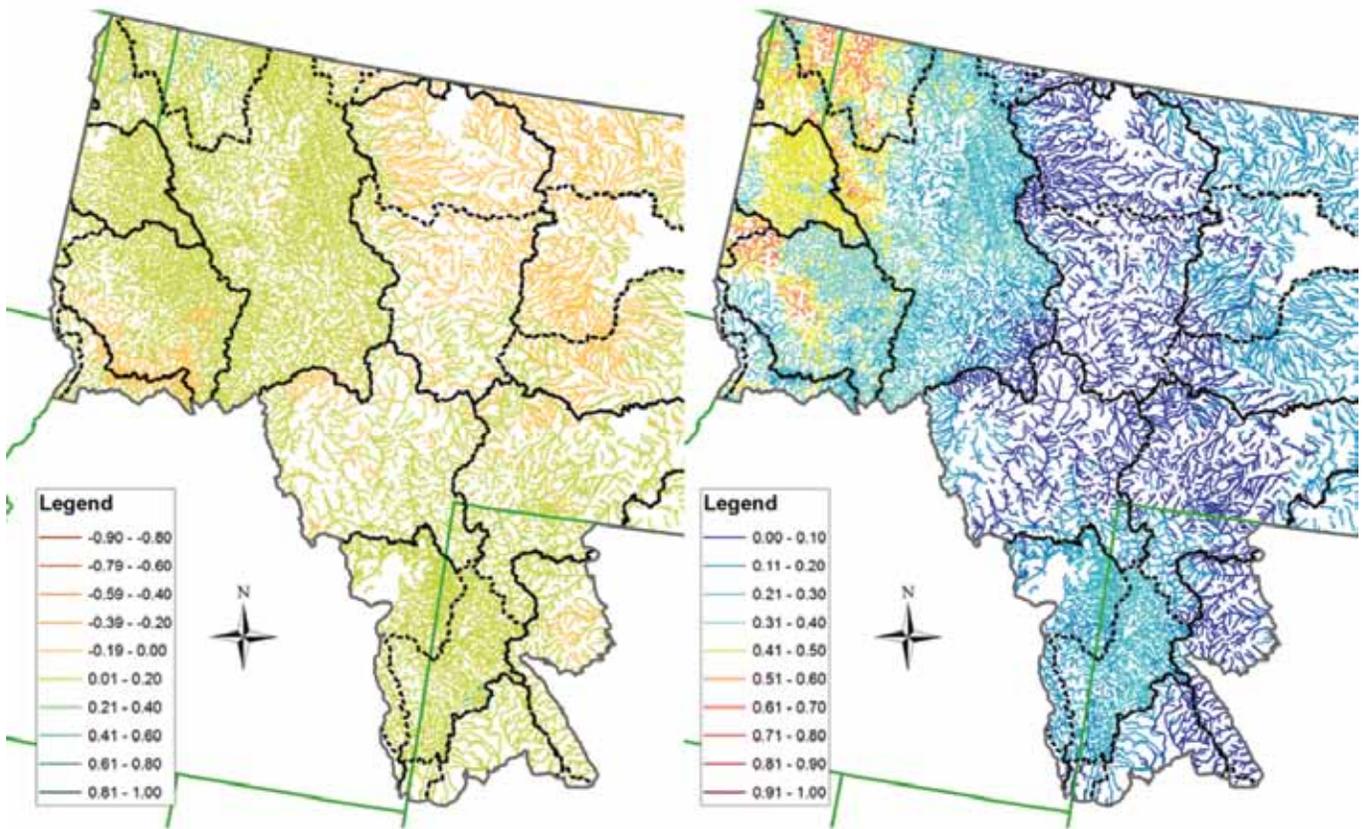
Figure 4.8—Projections for fractional change in mean annual flow for the 2080s compared to 1977–2006. The ensemble mean is on the left, and the range between two disagreeing projections is shown on the right.
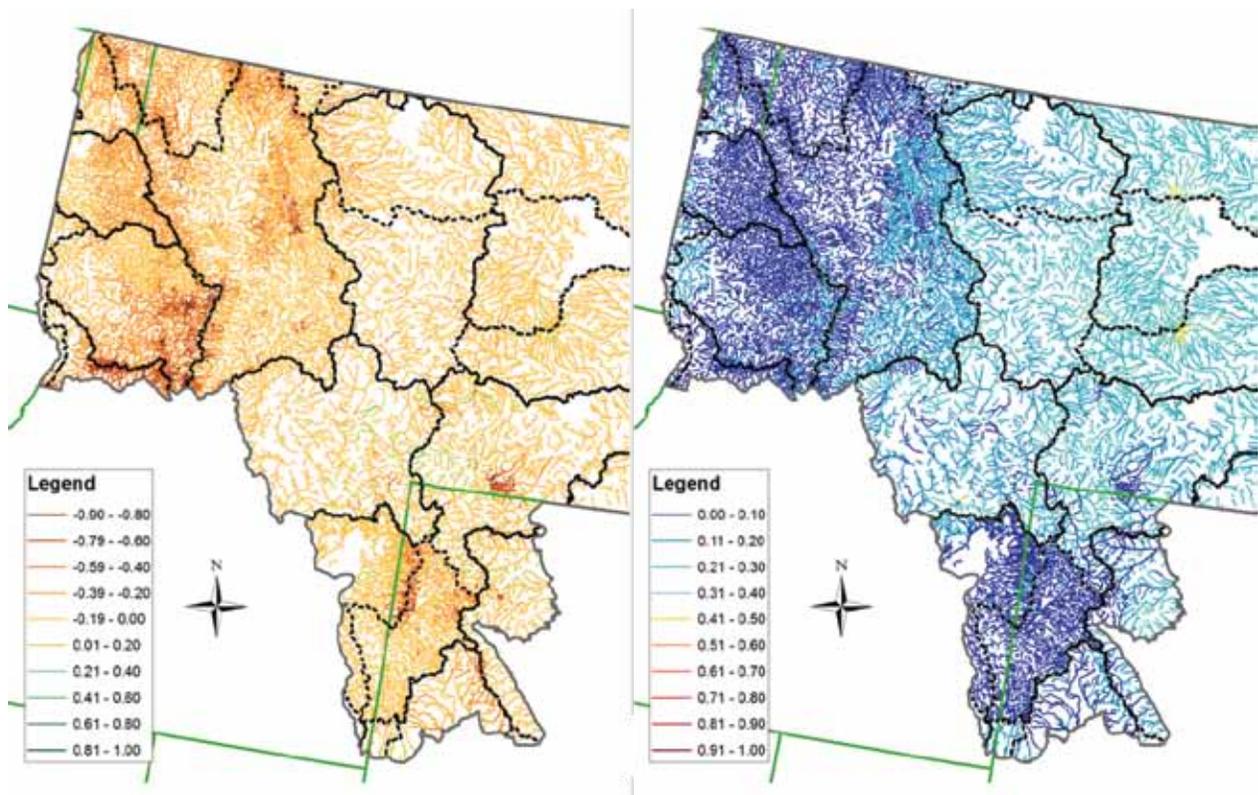
Figure 4.9—Projections for fractional change in mean summer flow (June–September) for the 2080s compared to 1977–2006. The ensemble mean is on the left, and the range between two disagreeing projections is shown on the right.

Legend
- -0.90 - -0.80
- -0.79 - -0.60
- -0.59 - -0.40
- -0.39 - -0.20
- -0.19 - 0.00
- 0.01 - 0.20
- 0.21 - 0.40
- 0.41 - 0.60
- 0.61 - 0.80
- 0.81 - 1.00

Legend
- 0.00 - 0.10
- 0.11 - 0.20
- 0.21 - 0.30
- 0.31 - 0.40
- 0.41 - 0.50
- 0.51 - 0.60
- 0.61 - 0.70
- 0.71 - 0.80
- 0.81 - 0.90
- 0.91 - 1.00
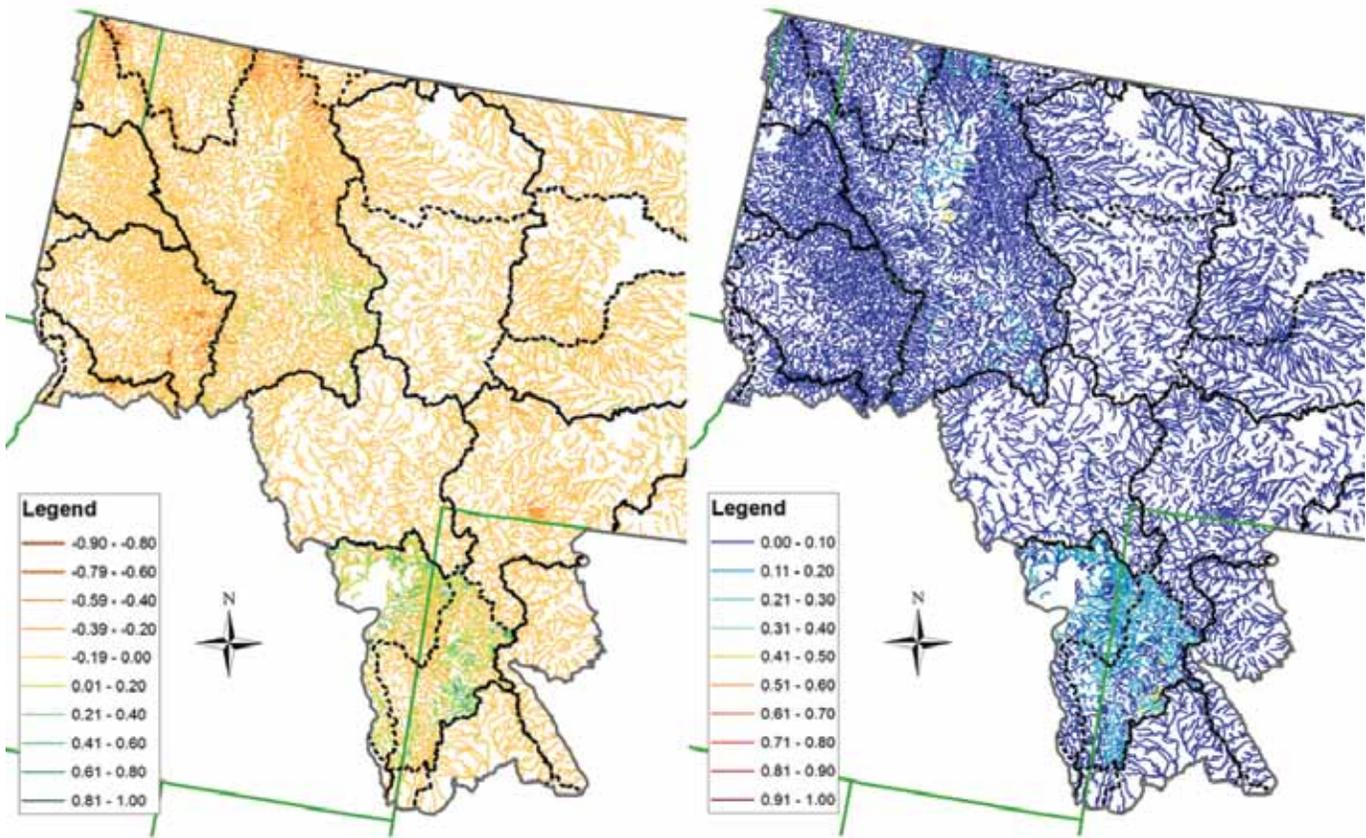
Figure 4.10—Projections for fractional change in minimum weekly flow with a 10-year return probability (7Q10) for the 2080s compared to 1977–2006. The ensemble mean is on the left, and the range between two disagreeing projections is shown on the right.

Legend
- -81 - -70
- -69 - -60
- -59 - -50
- -49 - -40
- -39 - -30
- -29 - -20
- -19 - -10
- -9 - 0

Legend
- 0 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 30
- 31 - 40
- 41 - 50
- 51 - 60
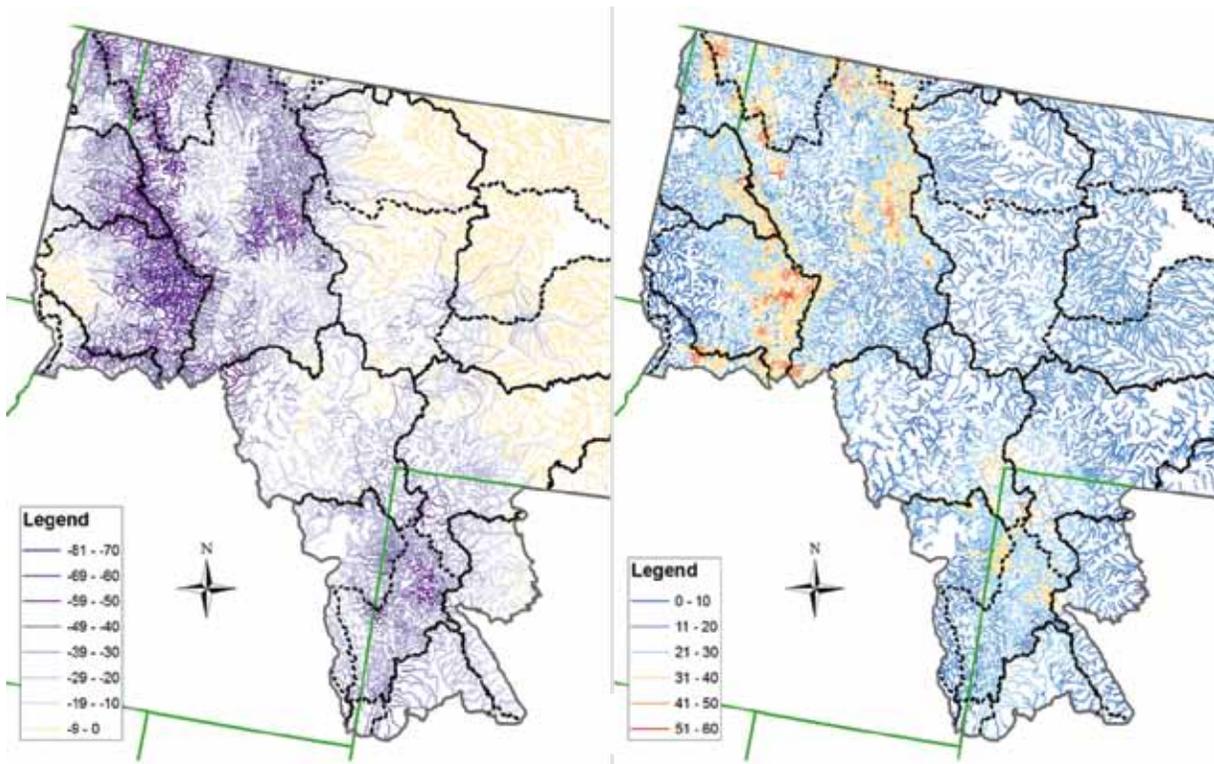
Figure 4.11—Projections for number of days of change in center of streamflow timing for the 2080s compared to 1977–2006. The ensemble mean is on the left, and the range between two disagreeing projections is shown on the right.
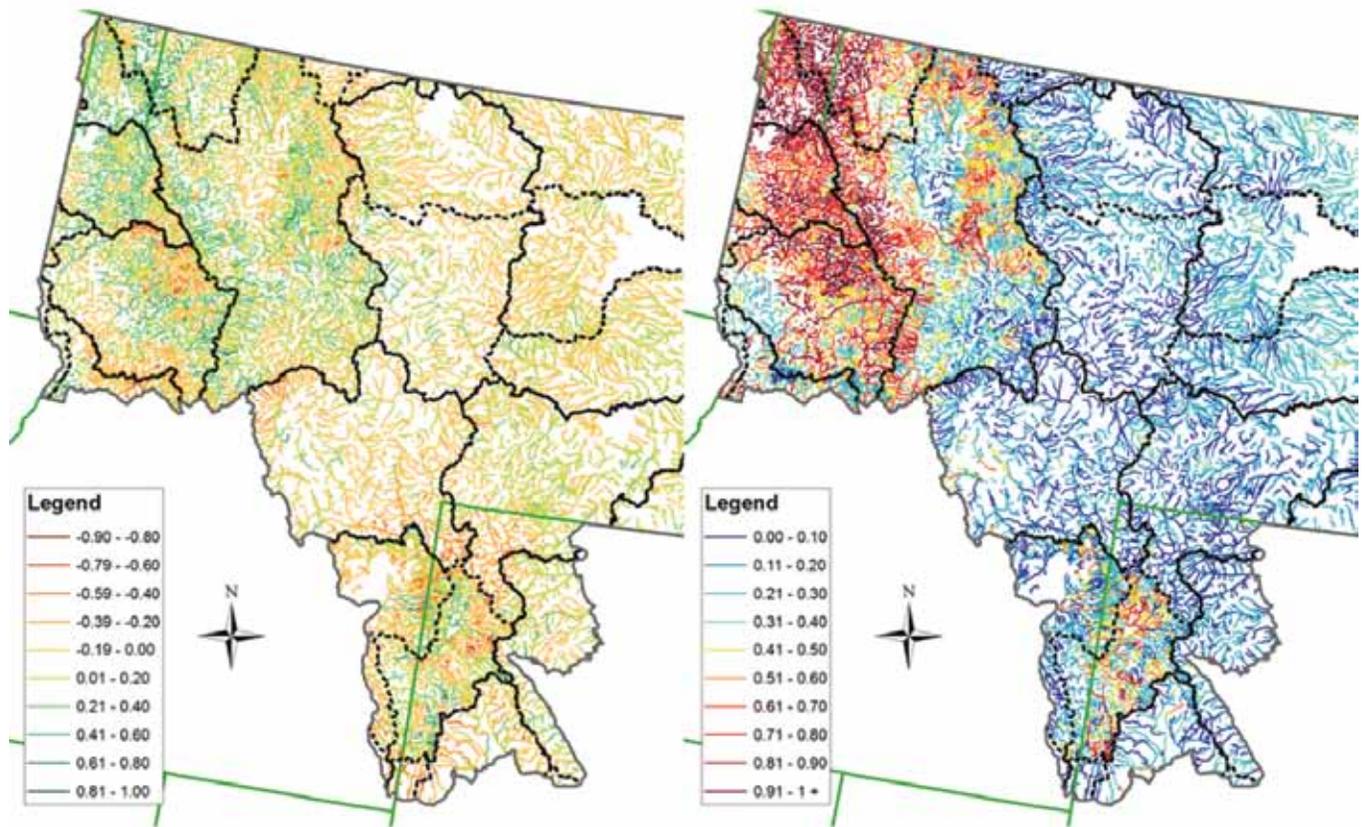
Figure 4.12—Projections for fractional change in 1.5-year flood magnitude (approximate "bankfull" flow) for the 2080s compared to 1977–2006. The ensemble mean is on the left, and the range between two disagreeing projections is shown on the right.

rain-on-snow flooding depends strongly on the elevation range of each given basin. Generally, the maps reflect large declines in flood magnitude in higher elevation basins near the crest of major mountain ranges, with large increases at mid-elevations and little change below that. This matches well with the information on number of midwinter events, which shows the greatest increases at mid-elevations and less pronounced changes at both higher and lower elevations. Although there is less snow and more rain at higher elevations, it is probably more a process of shifting shoulder seasons (Woods 2009) than more midwinter flood events, thus producing more rain or rain-on-spring snowmelt floods, which tend to be less severe (MacDonald and Hoffman 1995). With less snow accumulating, the annual snowmelt and rain events during snowmelt are likely to be smaller because less area will be snow-covered. At mid-elevations, temperatures will increase enough that rain is likely on snowpacks, even in midwinter. Uncertainty in peakflow magnitudes are generally as large as or larger than the expected magnitude of the change. There is less uncertainty in the amount of flooding occurring in midwinter.

Adapting Water Resources to Climatic Variability and Change in the Northern Rockies

With many potential changes in water resources, questions naturally arise about what we might be able to do to shift water and land management practices to reduce the impacts or consequences of a changing climate on water resources. Because the NRAP region includes diverse topography, geology, watershed configurations, and ecosystems, adaptation responses to climatic variability and change vary considerably across the region. However, several themes prevail across most of the region in response to dominant sensitivities to climate change (table 4.1). Many of these strategies and tactics may do little to alleviate some of the more direct consequences of shifting precipitation, snowpack timing, and temperature changes to forests during drought conditions (e.g.,Vose et al. 2016); they are largely directed toward affecting downstream water availability and consequences of drought.

Of greatest concern is reducing the vulnerability of roads and infrastructure to flooding, a phenomenon that is expected to increase considerably as snowpack declines and snow:rain ratios decrease. National forests in particular
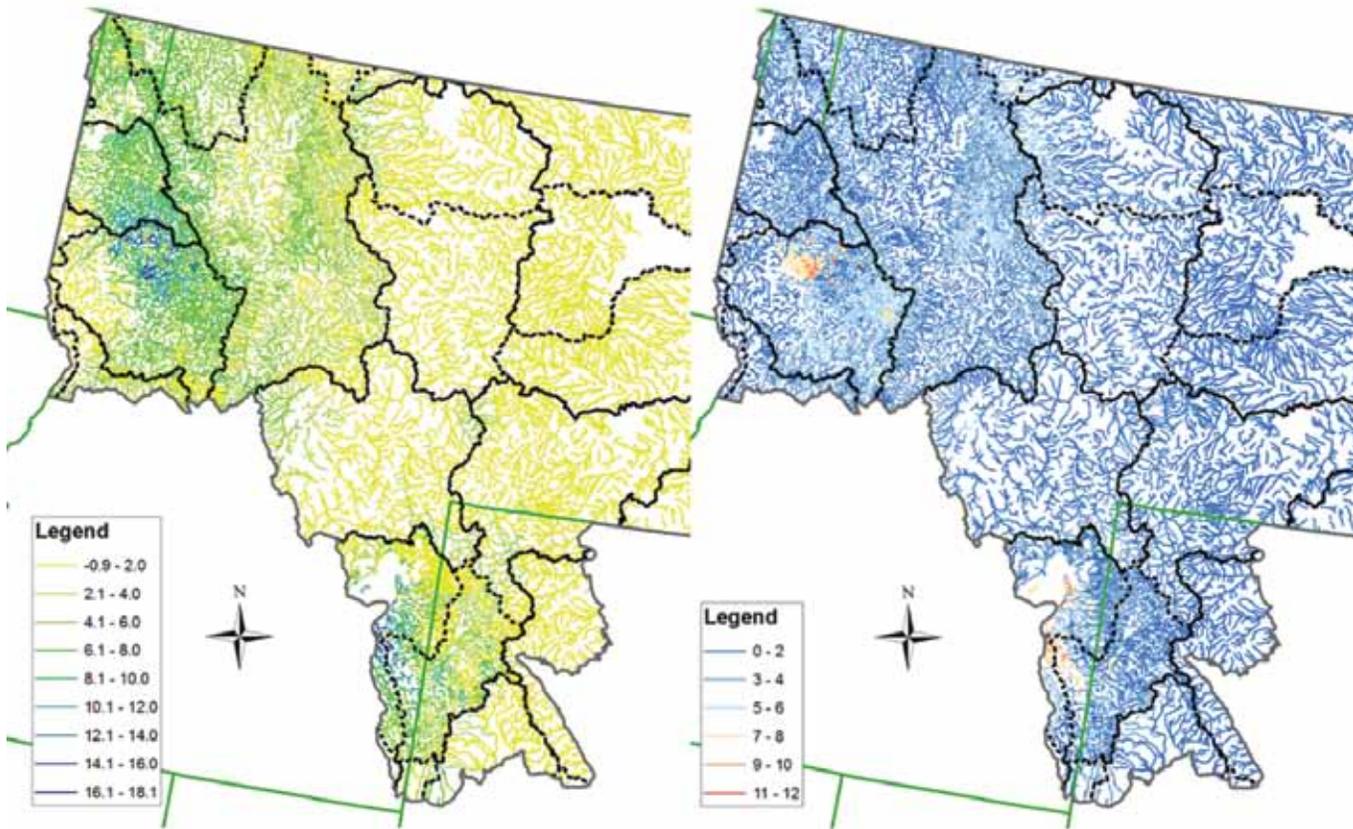
Figure 4.13—Projections for number of days in winter that exceed the 95th percentile flow in each year, an indicator of when floods are likely to happen, for the 2080s compared to 1977–2006. The value of this metric can take on values between 0 and 18.25, and the difference can take on the same range. The ensemble mean is on the, and while the range between two disagreeing projections is shown on the right.

contain thousands of miles of roads, mostly unpaved. Damage to those roads and associated drainage systems reduces access by users and is extremely expensive to repair. Road damage often has direct and deleterious effects on aquatic habitats as well, particularly when roads are adjacent to streams. Resilience to higher peakflows and frequency of flooding can be increased by maintaining the capability of floodplains and riparian areas to retain water, conducting a risk assessment of vulnerable roads and infrastructure, and modifying infrastructure where possible (e.g., increasing culvert size, improving road drainage, relocating vulnerable campgrounds or road segments).

Climate-induced occurrence of disturbances such as drought and flooding are expected to increase, thus reducing water quality. Building an information base on potential locations of and responses to disturbances will help ensure informed and timely decisionmaking when disturbances occur. Within this overall strategy, tactics include prioritizing data collection based on projections of future drought, collecting pre-disturbance data on water resources, and developing a clearinghouse for programs related to fire and other disturbance. All tactics are focused on Federal lands (table 4.1).

In contrast to the effects of winter peakflows, reduced overall base flows (especially in summer) are expected to

reduce riparian habitat, water storage, and shallow aquifers. The primary adaptation strategies in this case are to increase natural storage and build storage where appropriate, as well as increase knowledge about groundwater. Specific tactics focus on (1) increasing storage with constructed wetlands, American beavers (*Castor canadensis*), and obliterated roads; and (2) considering small-scale storage in dams, retention ponds, and swales, where appropriate. In addition, it will be important to map aquifers and alluvial deposits, improve monitoring to provide feedback on water dynamics, and understand the physical and legal availability of water for aquifer recharge.

Public lands are a critical source of municipal water supplies, for which both quantity and quality are expected to decrease as snowpack declines. A critical adaptation strategy is to reduce erosion potential to protect water quality, as well as prioritize municipal water supplies. Water quality can be addressed by: (1) reducing hazardous fuels in dry forests to reduce the risk of crown fires, (2) reducing other types of disturbances (e.g., off-road vehicles, unregulated livestock grazing), and (3) using road management practices that reduce erosion. These tactics should be implemented primarily in high-value locations (near communities and reservoirs) on public and private lands.

Table 4.1—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change:
Increased flooding will increase damage to roads and infrastructure.

Adaptation strategy/approach:
Identify and proactively decrease vulnerability of infrastructure to flooding.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Increase resilience of stream resources by identifying and restoring degraded riparian areas to reduce flooding and increase natural storage; add large woody debris, improve floodplain connectivity, increase riparian roughness, restore beavers.	Conduct a basin-wide risk assessment of hydrologic interactions with roads and other infrastructure where vulnerability of infrastructure is highest.	Increase resilience of infrastructure: culvert sizing, hardened fords, road drainage, etc.; remove or relocate infrastructure (e.g., roads, campgrounds).
Where can tactics be applied?	All lands	Federal and private lands	Mostly Federal lands

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change:
Increased occurrence of disturbances such as drought and flooding will reduce water quality.

Adaptation strategy/approach:
Build an information base for a timely response to disturbance, thus ensuring that data are available to inform decisionmaking.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Prioritize data collection based on projections of future drought.	Collect pre-disturbance data on stream and riparian conditions, including high-quality values and habitat in need of protection.	Develop a clearinghouse for available funding and programs related to fire and other disturbances.
Where can tactics be applied?	Mostly Federal lands	Mostly Federal lands	Mostly Federal lands

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change:
Reduced base flows will cause smaller riparian habitats and morphological changes, affecting groundwater, storage, and shallow alluvial aquifers.

Adaptation strategy/approach:
Increase knowledge about the groundwater resource.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Map aquifers and alluvial deposits	Determine legal availability and better understanding of physical availability of water for aquifer recharge.	Improve monitoring of streamflow and groundwater to improve understanding of surface water-groundwater interactions; obtain real-time data.
Where can tactics be applied?	All lands	All lands	All lands

Table 4.1 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change:
Reduced base flows will cause smaller riparian habitats and morphological changes, affecting groundwater, storage, and shallow alluvial aquifers.

Adaptation strategy Approach:
Increase natural storage and build storage.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Increase natural water storage (mirroring natural processes) with constructed wetlands, beavers, and road obliteration.	Promote distributed small-scale water storage in small dams, retention ponds, and swales in stream channels and uplands.	Improve streamflow and groundwater monitoring to improve understanding of surface water-groundwater interactions and obtain real-time data.
Where can tactics be applied?	Multiple land ownerships	Agricultural lands, headwaters without native fish species	All lands

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change:
Reduced snowpack will reduce the quantity and quality of municipal water supplies.

Adaptation strategy/approach:
Reduce erosion potential to protect municipal water supplies; prioritize municipal systems for protection.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Reduce hazardous fuels.	Reduce disturbances (off-road vehicles, grazing, etc.).	Use road management practices that reduce erosion.
Where can tactics be applied?	High-value locations	High value-locations on public and private lands	High value locations on public lands

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change:
Higher temperatures and decreased snowpack will reduce water availability.

Adaptation strategy/approach:
Reduce water use and increase efficiency; demonstrate leadership in water efficiency; and create outreach opportunities.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Communicate water saving tactics and benefits.	Research successful water saving tactics and apply tactics where appropriate.	Install low-flow appliances at administrative sites; replace landscaping with drought tolerant plants.
Where can tactics be applied?	All lands, where appropriate	All lands, including administrative locations (campgrounds, visitor centers, etc.)	All lands, including administrative locations (campgrounds, visitor centers, etc.); use Internet, press releases, interpretive sign, etc.

Harvesting trees to increase water yield has been a practice of interest for some time (e.g., Bates and Henry 1928). Trees use water, so it is not surprising that water yields generally increase after canopy loss (Brown et al. 2005; Jones and Post 2004; Troendle and King 1987; Troendle et al. 2010). There are, however, certain caveats to be considered. For example, increases in water yield are generally greater in moister environments or years, with less increase in drier locations or years (e.g., Brown et al. 2005), and in some circumstances in drier climates, decreased yields may be seen (Adams et al. 2011; Guardiola-Claramonte et al. 2011). In broad terms, the general places and times one would want to see increases in water yield are the places and times when forest harvest is least effective (Troendle et al. 2010; Vose et al. 2012). Furthermore, thinning has proven to be ineffective in increasing water yield (Lesch and Scott 1997; Wilm and Dunford 1948). But it can be useful in augmenting snow accumulation depths, for example for wildlife or recreation benefit (Sankey et al. 2015; Wilm 1944).

Consequences of canopy removal for streamflow augmentation are likewise not all positive. A negative effect of canopy reduction treatments is that they advance the timing of runoff (Luce et al. 2012). An example of large-scale canopy loss in an area with similar vegetation and climate is the Boise River Basin, where about 45 percent of one basin burned while the other was left relatively unchanged after 46 years of calibration. Water yield from the 494,211-acre basin increased 5 percent, providing an average of an additional 50,000 acre-feet each year. However, the average timing of release advanced by 2 weeks because the exposed snowpack melted faster, and most of the additional runoff was available before April, when it would be of little use in bolstering low flows. In warmer regions of the Northern Rockies, such large-scale canopy removal could increase the magnitude of midwinter rain-on-snow floods (Marks et al. 1998; Tonina et al. 2008). There are also water quality consequences to large-scale canopy treatments, such as warming stream temperatures (Isaak et al. 2010) or sediment from increased road construction and use (Black et al. 2012; Luce and Black 1999).

Conceptually, replacing snowpack storage with storage in constructed reservoirs to carry over water from the winter wet season into the summer could be beneficial to irrigators in regions with significant irrigated agriculture. But the degree of potential benefit varies substantially with context of existing water right regulations, reservoir operating rules, snowpack sensitivity to temperature and precipitation, expectations for future precipitation, and the role and future of summer precipitation. The benefits of replacing snowpack storage with reservoir storage are somewhat built around the notion that the only factor changing is timing and that total volumes are unchanged. If, for instance, precipitation rises, temperature-induced changes could be compensated for in relatively cold regions (Luce et al. 2014), such as those found across most of the Northern Rockies. If, on the other hand,

precipitation declines, total flow volume will be reduced, and it will be harder to fill reservoir storage because of other rights for water farther downstream that might not be fulfilled. Ironically, this would be most difficult in dry years when the timing would be most strongly shifted because of the effect of snow water equivalence on duration of the melt period (Luce and Holden 2009). Given the large expenses, both financial and ecological, of dam construction, and the considerable uncertainties about precipitation, it would be worthwhile to perform a detailed economic and ecological analysis before dam construction is seriously considered.

Shifting dam operation is another possibility, which would cost significantly less, but still requires some infrastructure investment in monitoring upstream snowpack, soil, and weather. Streamflow forecasting allows more informed management of the tension between water storage for irrigation and maintaining empty reservoirs to buffer potential flooding (e.g., Wood and Lettenmaier 2006). Information on current state of the snowpack is a great boon to runoff forecasting in basins with substantial snowmelt contributions (Wood et al. 2015), even more so than climate and weather forecasting. Under such circumstances, it is reasonable to taper reservoir filling in such a way as to bring the reservoir to operational levels without undue flood risks; later in the season, snowpack area is substantially reduced and rain-on-snow during the spring is generally less severe (or variable) than midwinter events, when snowpack coverage over the basin is greater (MacDonald and Hoffman 1995). Predictability is declining in some regions as we lose snowpack, but the Northern Rockies region will still retain significant snowpack, making improved forecasting through investment in instrumentation a viable alternative. Note that besides informing reservoir operation, improved forecasting can be used to better determine downstream financial investments in crops and community choices in how to invest water (Broad et al. 2007).

A final strategy for addressing water availability is to reduce water use by increasing efficiency, an important connection between the source of water on public lands and use of water downstream on public and private lands. First, it will be helpful to identify effective water-saving tactics and where they can be successfully implemented. Second, low water-use appliances can be installed at administrative sites (e.g., restrooms), and drought-tolerant plants can be used for landscaping (e.g., adjacent to management unit buildings). Third, the benefit of water conservation can be communicated to users of public lands (e.g., in campgrounds). These tactics demonstrate leadership in water conservation as an agency, providing outreach and public relations that extend to local communities.

More-specific details on adaptation strategies and tactics that address climate change effects on water resources in each NRAP subregion are in Appendix 4A.

Conclusions

Changes in climate over the Northern Rockies are likely to have substantial impacts on hydrology. A primary change will be shifts in snowpack storage, although other changes in precipitation and atmospheric circulation could have significant consequences for forests, grasslands, streams, fishes, and agriculture in the region. Information is still the best tool for adaptation to a changing climate, and summaries provided here give a sense of both the general expectation for change as well as uncertainties that need to be considered in adaptation planning.

A range of adaptation options exists for the future of water resources, and although there is a bias in human nature toward taking action, information may yet be one of our better choices for future adaptation to an uncertain and varying climate. If we continue to invest in monitoring to track changing climate and outcomes, we can be better prepared, as what are now challenges of the future become current challenges. Armed with better knowledge of how shifting temperatures and circulation have played out on our landscapes, snowpacks, and streams, we can make better decisions.

This effort illustrated that adapting to climate change does not necessarily entail management actions drastically different from those that are currently implemented. Many of the current Federal agency management actions to improve and restore watersheds and riparian areas are consistent with the adaptation strategies and tactics identified here, as fully functional watersheds and riparian areas are more resilient to change. Thus, in many cases, adaptation to climate change involves increasing restoration activities and reprioritizing actions, and agencies are well prepared for these types of shifts in management.

Acknowledgments

References

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Appendix 4A—Adaptation Options for Water Resources in the Northern Rockies.

The following tables describe climate change sensitivities and adaptation strategies and tactics for water resources, developed in a series of workshops as a part of the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership. Tables are organized by subregion within the Northern Rockies. See Chapter 4 for summary tables and discussion of adaptation options for water resources.

Table 4A.1—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased flooding will increase damage to roads and infrastructure.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Identify and proactively decrease vulnerability of infrastructure to flooding.

Strategy objective: Increase resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Identify and restore degraded riparian areas in order to reduce flooding and increase natural storage. Reduce the amount of infrastructure in the floodplain.	Conduct a basin-wide risk assessment of hydrologic interactions with roads and other infrastructure where vulnerability of infrastructure is highest.	Educate private landowners, county managers, and recreational users to increase knowledge on benefits of riparian vegetation, water storage, and effects of floodplain development.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term and ongoing	Near term	Near term and ongoing
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	Federal and private lands	Partnerships with State agencies, county and municipal governments, and private property owners
Opportunities for implementation	Partnerships with other Federal and State agencies, and county and municipal governments	Partnerships with other Federal and State agencies, and county and municipal governments	Partnerships with other Federal and State agencies, and county and municipal governments
Cost	Moderate	Inexpensive, mostly employee time required	Low
Barriers to implementation	Property rights issues	Social resistance to change (e.g., property rights)	Social resistance to change (e.g., property rights)

Table 4A.2—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced base flows will shrink riparian habitats and alter morphology, affecting groundwater, storage, and shallow alluvial aquifers.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase natural storage and built storage.

Strategy objective: Increase resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Increase natural water storage (mirroring natural processes) with constructed wetlands, beavers, and road obliteration.	Promote distributed small-scale water storage, using small dams, retention ponds, and swales in stream channels and uplands.	Use groundwater injection wells and sills to retain water upstream in alluvial deposits (and retain higher water table).
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Highly effective at small scales	Dams – high Swales – low to unknown	Variable
Implementation urgency	Near term	Mid term to long term	Near term to long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Multiple land ownerships	Agricultural lands, headwaters without native fish species	Injection wells, large aquifers, sills
Opportunities for implementation	Collaboration with other land management activities (timber sales, road decommissioning)	Collaboration with Bureau of Reclamation and NGOs, combined with hydropower projects	Areas near high-value water supplies
Cost	Moderate to high	High	High
Barriers to implementation	Lack of available sites, plans for future land use, social acceptance	For dams—significant environmental effects, safety risks, cost, access	Lack of available sites

Table 4A.3—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced base flows will shrink riparian habitats and alter morphology, affecting groundwater, storage, and shallow alluvial aquifers.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge about the groundwater resource.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Map aquifers and alluvial deposits.	Determine legal availability and better understanding of physical availability of water for aquifer recharge.	Improve monitoring of streamflow and groundwater to improve understanding of surface water-groundwater interactions; obtain real-time data.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term—information needed for both water and fisheries	Near term—information needed for both water and fisheries	Near term—information needed for both water and fisheries
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands and locations	All lands and locations	All lands and locations
Opportunities for implementation	Collaboration with USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station	Collaboration with state of Montana Water Court and Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation	Collaboration with USGS; state and research partnerships
Cost	Low to moderate	Moderate	High
Barriers to implementation	Availability of staff and funding	Availability of staff and funding	Availability of staff and funding

Table 4A.4—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced base flows will shrink riparian habitats and alter morphology, affecting groundwater, storage, and shallow alluvial aquifers.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce evaporation and transpiration losses.

Strategy objective: Increase resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B
Tactic	Evaluate how increasing western larch cover would decrease evapotranspiration.	Selectively use forest harvest (patch clearcuts) to increase water yield.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Unknown	Low
Implementation urgency	Near term	Long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic	Areas where western larch is currently present	Areas with moderate to high precipitation
Opportunities for implementation	Projects where western larch is planted	Minimal opportunities
Cost	Moderate for study	Moderate for treatment, high for maintenance
Barriers to implementation	Cost	Environmental consequences (loss of forested habitat, more edge, less interior species, more roads); political and social acceptance

Table 4A.5—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will reduce the quantity and quality of municipal water supplies.		
Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce erosion potential to protect municipal water supplies; prioritize municipal systems for protection.		
Strategy objective: Increase resilience.		
	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B
Tactic	Evaluate how increasing western larch cover would decrease evapotranspiration.	Selectively use forest harvest (patch clearcuts) to increase water yield.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Unknown	Low
Implementation urgency	Near term	Long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Areas where western larch is currently present	Areas with moderate to high precipitation
Opportunities for implementation	Projects where western larch is planted	Minimal opportunities
Cost	Moderate for study	Moderate for treatment, high for maintenance
Barriers to implementation	Cost	Environmental consequences (loss of forested habitat, more edge, less interior species, more roads); political and social acceptance

Table 4A.6—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased occurrence of disturbances such as drought and flooding will reduce water quality.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Build an information base for a timely response to disturbance, thus ensuring that data are available to inform decision making.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Prioritize data collection based on projections of future drought.	Collect pre-disturbance data on stream and riparian conditions, including high-quality values and habitat in need of protection.	Develop a clearinghouse for available funding and programs related to fire and other disturbances.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Mostly Federal lands	Mostly Federal lands	Mostly Federal lands
Opportunities for implementation	NEPA, USFWS	NEPA, ESA, USFWS	Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads; BAER implementation; NRCS, Federal Highway Administration
Cost	Low	Low	Low
Barriers to implementation	Agency culture, staffing, budget	Agency culture, staffing, budget	Agency requirements and time to manage clearinghouse

Table 4A.7—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Large riverine systems are susceptible to a change in timing and quantity of peak flows as well as lower low flows associated with warming temperatures. Lower low flows and flashier flow regimes could lead to bank instability due to loss of vegetation. Changes in precipitation and/or temperature may reduce base flows.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Determine how climate change will alter lakes and reservoirs.

Strategy objective: Increase resilience; reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Optimize grazing management practices to enhance riparian health and stream channel stability, soil water holding capacity, and shallow groundwater storage.	Promote beaver recolonization and maintenance of beavers where appropriate.	Promote cottonwood, willow, and aspen to improve riparian health and support beaver recolonization.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High for riparian health and baseflows	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term—information needed for water, fisheries, and amphibians	Near term—information needed for water, fisheries, and amphibians	Near term—information needed for water, fisheries, and amphibians
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Forest wide, especially priority watersheds and allotments	Where appropriate, based on local knowledge and inventory and monitoring data	Where appropriate, based on local knowledge and inventory and monitoring data
Opportunities for implementation	Collaboration with private partners, local ranchers, permittees, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, grass banking	Collaboration with private partners, local ranchers, permittees, NGOs, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, grass banking	Collaboration with USFS wildlife program, NGOs, and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Moderate
Barriers to implementation	Political and social opposition, concern about offsite water use; education and perhaps incentives needed	Social opposition; need education and identification of appropriate locations	Funding, staff availability, competing priorities

Table 4A.8—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Grassland subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Decreased snowpack will lead to increased frequency of high peak flows.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Maintain hydrological and ecological function of watersheds.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors, engage coordination

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Implement 17 Indicators of rangeland health, and maintain or restore forest vegetation resilience.	Promote/maintain proper functioning condition of riparian areas and wetlands, including: ensure adequate grazing regimes, adequate riparian buffers, beaver colonization, and restoration of riparian vegetation.	Maintain/improve streamflow continuity by optimizing hydrologic connectivity, including: reduce sediment loading, properly design in-channel infrastructure, ensure adequate culvert size, promote beaver colonization, and procure in-stream flow water rights.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All Federal lands	All Federal lands	Where watersheds have been heavily fragmented, prioritizing intact habitat where native guilds exist
Opportunities for implementation	State wildlife action plans, grassland/forest plan direction, interdisciplinary approach to management	Coordination with tribes. Watershed Condition Framework documents where this is an issue at the 6th code scale	Opportunities exist, but need work to be identified; coordination with federal and state agencies, tribes, counties, and watershed restoration plans
Cost	Inexpensive to moderately expensive	Inexpensive to expensive, depending on treatments	Inexpensive to expensive, depending on treatments
Barriers to implementation	Personnel availability, litigation barriers with vegetation management projects, common understanding of purpose	Social barriers—lack of understanding, not valued by some.	Funding, coordination, data gaps

Table 4A.8 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Grassland Subregion

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Decreased snowpack will lead to increased frequency of high peak flows.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Maintain hydrological and ecological function of watersheds.

Strategy Objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors, engage coordination

	Specific Tactic – D	Specific Tactic – E	Specific Tactic – F
Tactic	Minimize expansion of drainage network by disconnecting road system from stream system, including improved road drainage and road decommissioning.	Develop off-channel watering strategies; minimize in-stream dewatering (e.g., horizontal wells), for both livestock and other water uses.	Move infrastructure out of floodplains, and encourage use of best management practices throughout watershed to protect and restore water quality.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Low	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near to mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Prioritize by value of downstream water and associated biota	Priority watersheds	Where assets exist on floodplains
Opportunities for implementation	Prioritize by value of downstream water and associated biota	Coordination with tribes, federal and state agencies, and counties	Prioritize by values at risk associated with assets; public education opportunity
Cost	Inexpensive to expensive	Inexpensive to moderate	Moderate to expensive
Barriers to implementation	Funding, legal authority (including NEPA), social opposition (road access, changing traditional land-use practices)	Water rights, social opposition	Social opposition (effects on recreation sites, public perception), cultural resource concerns

Table 4A.9—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Grassland subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher temperatures will lead to lower low stream flows in the summer.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Maintain hydrological and ecological function of watersheds.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors, engage coordination

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Implement 17 Indicators of rangeland health, and maintain or restore forest vegetation resilience.	Promote/maintain proper functioning condition of riparian areas and wetlands, including: ensure adequate grazing regimes, adequate riparian buffers, beaver colonization, and restoration of riparian vegetation.	Maintain/improve streamflow continuity by optimizing hydrologic connectivity, including: reduce sediment loading, properly design in-channel infrastructure, ensure adequate culvert size, promote beaver colonization, and procure in-stream flow water rights.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All Federal lands	All Federal lands	Where watersheds have been heavily fragmented, prioritizing intact habitat where native guilds exist
Opportunities for implementation	State wildlife action plans, grassland/forest plan direction, interdisciplinary approach to management	Coordination with tribes. Watershed Condition Framework documents where this is an issue at the 6th code scale	Opportunities exist, but need work to be identified; coordination with federal and state agencies, tribes, counties, and watershed restoration plans
Cost	Inexpensive to moderate	Inexpensive to expensive, depending on treatments	Inexpensive to expensive, depending on treatments
Barriers to implementation	Personnel availability, litigation barriers with vegetation management projects, common understanding of purpose	Social barriers – lack of understanding, not valued by some.	Funding, coordination, data gaps

Table 4A.10—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Grassland subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing air temperature will lead to increased stream temperature, changes in the hydrograph, and changes in land use, affecting water quality.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Ensure riparian function and resilience, including groundwater-surface water interactions

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors, engage coordination

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Promote/maintain proper functioning condition of riparian areas and wetlands: ensure adequate grazing regimes and adequate riparian buffers, promote beaver colonization, and restore riparian vegetation.	Develop adequate inventory and promote protection of spring sources and shallow aquifers.	Promote and educate regarding best management practices for agricultural runoff; form/participate in task forces and working groups.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate to high, depending on degree of implementation	Moderate to high	Low to moderate, depending on social factors
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	Priority watersheds	Mostly non-Federal lands
Opportunities for implementation	Coordination with tribes; Watershed Condition Framework documents where this is an issue at the 6th HUC scale	Work with botanists, soil scientists, hydrologists to compile existing information	Partnerships with NRCS, Prairie Potholes Landscape Conservation Cooperative
Cost	Inexpensive to expensive, depending on treatments	Inexpensive to moderate, depending on scale	Inexpensive to moderate
Barriers to implementation	Social opposition—lack of understanding, and not valued by some	Lack of funding and staff time	Social opposition, lack of staff time, crop values

Table 4A.11—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher temperatures and decreased snowpack will reduce water availability.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce water use and increase efficiency; demonstrate leadership in water efficiency; and create outreach opportunities.

Strategy Objective: Reduce stressors, facilitate transition, increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Research successful water saving tactics and apply tactics where appropriate.	Install low-flow appliances at administrative sites; replace landscaping with drought tolerant plants.	Communicate water saving tactics and benefits.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Variable—difficult to measure effects
Implementation urgency	Near term	Mid term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands, where appropriate	All lands, including administrative locations (campgrounds, visitor centers, etc.)	All lands, including administrative locations (campgrounds, visitor centers, etc.); use Internet, press releases, interpretive signing, etc.
Opportunities for implementation	Collaboration with GYCC	Collaboration with GYCC	Collaboration with GYCC
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	None	Resistance to xeriscaping, low-flow toilets	None

Table 4A.12—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Discharge from natural springs and seeps may be reduced, affecting water quantity and quality, wetland plant species, wildlife habitat, and water for livestock.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Protect natural springs and seeps from potential degradation and development.

Strategy objective: Reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Develop map/inventory of springs and seeps locations (6th code level).	Instrument (piezometer) prioritized representative springs to get detailed flow information.	Develop local protection strategies such as fencing, stock fencing; develop alternative water sources; moratoriums on wells where appropriate.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Variable depending on strategy and stakeholder support
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near to mid term	Near to mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	Priority areas with springs and seeps	Priority areas with springs and seeps
Opportunities for implementation	Collaborations with USGS, State agencies that manage water, NOAA, USFS remote sensing center	Collaborations with USGS, State agencies that manage water, NOAA	Collaborations with Federal and State agencies, private landowners, range permittees
Cost	Moderate	Inexpensive to moderate	Inexpensive to moderate
Barriers to implementation	Information may be sensitive	None	Social and legal opposition, especially based on water rights

Table 4A.13—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher flows may lead to flooding of valuable infrastructure (roads, buildings, campgrounds, etc.).

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce risk of damage to infrastructure.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Map and prioritize areas with higher peak flows to determine high-risk locations.	Implement tactic A—replace, remove, adjust, and resize as necessary; implement early warning systems.	Communicate risk with all stakeholders, including affected public and private entities.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Variable, depending on tactic/location. Low—replacing culverts, due to variable nature of stream types and unknown changes in climate affecting flows High—removal of campgrounds from floodplains, installation of bridges, removal of culverts	Variable, depending on reception of information, severity of risk, and ability to implement changes
Implementation urgency	Near term – need this information to take further steps toward adaptation	Near to long term, depending on model predictions and expected flows	Near term, especially where human safety is a concern
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	Priority areas	All locations where stakeholders are at risk
Opportunities for implementation	Collaboration with USGS, FEMA, county emergency management, NOAA	Collaboration with State and local, USGS, FEMA, county emergency management, NOAA	Collaboration with State and local, USGS, FEMA, county emergency management, NOAA
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive to moderate	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	None	Legal—NEPA, Social—removal of favorite recreation spots	None

Table 4A.14—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher temperatures, higher evapotranspiration rates, and earlier runoff may reduce recharge to shallow aquifers, reducing downstream domestic water yields.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Identify and protect shallow aquifer recharge zones by communicating and partnering with stakeholders.

Strategy objective: Reduce stressors, facilitate transition, engage coordination.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Map/inventory recharge zones, especially in areas where water is heavily utilized (municipal watersheds).	Form watershed user groups—coordinated resource management groups (CRM—Federal, State, stakeholders) to identify concerns and solutions.	Improve diversion efficiencies (install headgates, convert from ditch to pipeline, install weirs as needed, etc.).
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High to moderate	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near to mid term	Near to mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Recharge zones and identified CRMs	Identified CRMs; identified watersheds with stakeholders	Site specific within affected watersheds
Opportunities for implementation	GYA partners. USGS, university, GYCC	Conservation districts, NRCS, state agencies that regulate water, advisory groups, landscape conservation cooperatives, Trout Unlimited	Conservation districts, NRCS, state agencies that regulate water, advisory groups, landscape conservation cooperatives, Trout Unlimited
Cost	Moderate	Inexpensive	Inexpensive to moderate
Barriers to implementation	None	Social opposition; need communication to work through barrier	Variable legal and social opposition; concerns about listed fish species and downstream users.

Table 4A.15—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher temperatures and evapotranspiration rates may lead to increased loss of lower elevation, isolated wetlands.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase understanding of location and risk for all wetland types and apply appropriate management actions to reduce loss.

Strategy objective: Reduce stressors, promote resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Update National Wetland Inventory maps for all wetlands, including hydrologic regime and type.	Assess vulnerability of all wetlands.	Increase connectivity of wetlands (e.g., prevent road bisections); avoid degradation of wetlands by new structures; protect beaver dams; consider artificial wetland construction/augmentation of natural wetlands in vulnerable watersheds.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Variable, depending on action
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Mid to long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	All lands	Mostly Federal lands
Opportunities for implementation	Collaborations with GYCC, Ducks Unlimited, National Academy of Sciences, National Science Foundation, USFWS, National Wildlife Federation	Collaborations with GYCC, Ducks Unlimited, National Academy of Sciences, National Science Foundation, USFWS, National Wildlife Federation	Collaborations with State and Federal agencies, private land owners
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Moderate
Barriers to implementation	None	None	Social and legal opposition (road removal, augmenting wetlands)

Table 4A.16—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Decreased snowpack will increase flooding and damage to roads and infrastructure.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Identify and proactively decrease vulnerability of roads and infrastructure to flooding.

Strategy objective: Increase resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Identify and restore degraded riparian areas in order to reduce flooding and increase natural storage; reduce the amount of infrastructure in the floodplain.	Increase resilience of infrastructure: culvert sizing, hardened fords, road drainage; remove and relocate infrastructure (e.g., roads, campgrounds).	Increase resilience of stream resources by identifying and restoring degraded riparian areas to reduce flooding and increase natural storage; add large woody debris, improve floodplain connectivity, increase riparian roughness, restore beavers.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term and ongoing	Near term and ongoing	Near term and ongoing
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Across the Western Rockies subregion	Across the Western Rockies subregion	Across the Western Rockies subregion
Opportunities for implementation	Partnerships with Federal and State agencies, county and municipal governments, NGOs, private landowners	Partnerships with Federal and State agencies, NGOs, Avista, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Idaho Power	Partnerships with Federal and State agencies, NGOs, Avista, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Idaho Power
Cost	Moderate to expensive	Expensive	Inexpensive to expensive
Barriers to implementation	Property rights advocates	Public acceptance; depends on location, scale of project, and partnerships.	Public acceptance; depends on location, scale of project, and partnerships.

Table 4A.17—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Decreased snowpack will reduce base flows and shrink riparian habitats, altering groundwater, storage, and shallow alluvial aquifers.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge of the groundwater resource.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Map aquifers and alluvial deposits; identify groundwater influenced streams.	Determine legal availability and better understanding of physical availability of water for aquifer recharge.	Improve streamflow and groundwater monitoring information to improve understanding of surface water-groundwater interactions; obtain real-time data.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term—Information is needed for both water and fisheries	Near term—Information is needed for both water and fisheries	Near term—Information is needed for both water and fisheries
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	All lands	All lands
Opportunities for implementation	USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station, universities, Montana Bureau of Mines	State agencies	USGS, State and research partnerships
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	High
Barriers to implementation	Availability of staff and funding	Availability of staff and funding	Availability of staff and funding

Table 4A.18—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Decreased snowpack and increased disturbance will reduce municipal water supply and quality.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce erosion potential to protect municipal water supplies; prioritize municipal systems for protection.

Strategy objective: Increase resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Reduce hazardous fuels.	Reduce disturbance (e.g., off-road vehicles, grazing, riparian roads).	Manage roads to reduce erosion.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	High	High, although detecting improvements can be difficult and site dependent
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	High-value locations	High-value locations on public and private lands	High value locations on public lands
Opportunities for implementation	Partnerships with municipalities, counties, NGOs, tribes, private landowners.	Partnerships with municipalities, counties, NGOs, tribes, private landowners.	Partnerships with municipalities, counties, NGOs, tribes, private landowners.
Cost	Expensive	Inexpensive to moderate	Moderate to high
Barriers to implementation	Public acceptance, cost	Public acceptance, cost	Public acceptance, cost, some user groups

Table 4A.19—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased droughts and flooding will reduce water quality.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Build an information base for a timely response to disturbance, thus ensuring data are available to inform decision making.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Prioritize data collection based on forecasted drought.	Collect pre-disturbance data on stream and riparian conditions (high-quality values, habitat most in need of protection).	Develop a directory/checklist for sites where disturbance has a direct effect on water quality (metals).
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Mostly Federal lands	Mostly Federal lands	All lands
Opportunities for implementation	Collaboration with other agencies, universities	Collaboration with other agencies, universities	Collaborate with USEPA (TMDL, CERCLA, Natural Resource Damage Assessment)
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	Expensive
Barriers to implementation	Staffing, budget	Staffing, budget	Agency requirements, time to staff and manage the clearinghouse

Table 4A.20—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on water resources in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Decreased snowpack and increased disturbance will alter water quantity and quality of lakes and reservoirs (including dam operations).

Adaptation strategy/approach: Determine how climate change will alter lakes and reservoirs.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Develop a clearinghouse of information on the effects of climate change from all available sources.	Increase coordination between all partners (Federal, State, tribal, private).	Improve understanding about connectivity and interaction of streams and lakes (temperature, nutrient sinks, sources, etc.).
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term—Information needed for water, fisheries, and amphibians	Near term—Information needed for water, fisheries, and amphibians	Near term—Information needed for water and fisheries
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All lands	All lands	All lands
Opportunities for implementation	Forest or regional level for identified sources of data	Forest or regional level for identified sources of data	Collaborations with USGS, State, and research institutions
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	Expensive
Barriers to implementation	Availability of staff and funding	Availability of staff and funding	Availability of staff and funding

Chapter 5: Climate Vulnerability of Native Cold-Water Salmonids in the Northern Rockies Region

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Introduction

During the 21st century, climate change is expected to alter aquatic habitats throughout the Northern Rocky Mountains, intermountain basins, and western Great Plains. Particularly in montane watersheds, direct changes are likely to include warmer water temperatures, earlier snowmelt-driven runoff, earlier declines to summer baseflow, downhill movement of perennial channel initiation, and more-intermittent flows (see Chapter 4), as well as indirect changes attributable to altered and perhaps novel disturbance regimes. For animals restricted to freshwater aquatic environments for most or all of their lives—fishes, amphibians, crayfish, mussels, and aquatic macroinvertebrates—changes in habitat and in hydrologic regimes are likely to lead to marked shifts in their abundance and distribution. This is primarily because many of these species are ectothermic (cold blooded); thus, environmental conditions dictate their metabolic rates and nearly every aspect of their life stages, including growth rate, migration patterns, reproduction, and mortality (Magnuson et al. 1979).

A vast and growing literature describes the myriad interactions among climate change, aquatic environments, and biotic communities. Rather than revisit this topic, we refer the reader to syntheses of the nexus between climate change and aquatic species in the northwestern United States (especially Rieman and Isaak 2010, but also Independent Science Advisory Board 2007; Isaak et al. 2012a,b; Mantua and Raymond 2014; Mantua et al. 2010; Mote et al. 2003) and beyond (Ficke et al. 2007; Furniss et al. 2010, 2013; Luce et al. 2012; Poff et al. 2002; Schindler et al. 2008). However, assessments rarely provide empirically based, spatially explicit, and precise climate change projections for species across broad geographic regions.

To address this gap, we developed high-resolution stream temperature and flow scenarios that translate outputs from global climate models (GCMs) into reach-scale habitat factors relevant to aquatic biota (Isaak et al. 2015). Those scenarios were coupled with species distribution datasets crowdsourced from the peer-reviewed literature and State and Federal agency reports to develop accurate species distribution models for contemporary relationships between climate and biology. These models were used to project the probability of species habitat occupancy in streams throughout the inland northwestern United States, facilitating the identification of streams that are most likely to be occupied in the future and serve as invasion-resistant climate refugia.

We focused on climate vulnerabilities and current and projected distribution of two native salmonid fishes—bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii*)—because of their importance to society, the large amount of data on their distribution and abundance, and their sensitivity to warm stream temperature (Eby et al. 2014; USDA FS 2013). We confined our inferences to suitable habitat for juveniles of each native species because they are more thermally constrained than adults. We directly addressed how the presence of nonnative species, such as brook trout (*S. fontinalis*), brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), and rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*) (the latter native to a portion of the analysis area) further restricts climate-suitable habitats for native species now and in the future. A full explanation of our rationale, approach, and results are in Isaak et al. (2015). The associated Climate Shield website (USDA FS n.d.a) provides access to a comprehensive archive of user-friendly digital maps and ArcGIS (ESRI, Redlands, CA) databases showing stream-specific model projections for multiple climate and brook trout invasion scenarios across most of the northwestern and interior western United States.

In this assessment, we summarize information for stream populations of bull trout and cutthroat trout in the Northern Rockies and discuss adaptation measures and future research directions (see Rieman and Isaak 2010 for a more comprehensive discussion). We regard our inferences as robust, but foresee the arrival of improved models fostered by ongoing improvements in measuring and modeling the attributes of populations and streams. Databases describing the distributions of many aquatic species via rapid, cost-effective environmental DNA surveys (McKelvey et al. 2016a; Wilcox et al. 2016) are rapidly proliferating and can be used with new geostatistical stream models (Isaak et al. 2014; Ver Hoef et al. 2006) to develop more precise information for many aquatic taxa. This combination of advanced survey methods and sophisticated stream network models has already been adopted for assessing the validity

and refining the predictions of the Climate Shield model for bull trout (M. Young, K. McKelvey, and D. Isaak, unpublished data).

Analysis Area and Methodology

This assessment encompasses all streams in national forests and national parks encompassed by the Northern Region of the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS) (fig. 5.1). To delineate a stream network for this area, geospatial data for the 1:100,000-scale National Hydrography Dataset (NHD)-Plus were downloaded from the Horizons Systems website (Cooter et al. 2010; Horizon Systems Corp. n.d.) and filtered by minimum flow and maximum stream slope criteria. Summer flow values predicted by the Variable Infiltration Capacity (VIC) hydrologic model (USDA FS n.d.; Wenger et al. 2010) were obtained from the Western United States Flow Metrics website (USDA FS n.d.c) and were linked to individual stream reaches.

Stream reaches with summer flows less than 0.2 cubic feet per second, approximating a wetted width of 3.3 feet (based on an empirical relationship developed in Peterson et al. [2013b]), or with slopes greater than 15 percent were trimmed from the network because they tend to be unoccupied or support very low numbers of fish (Isaak et al. 2015). In the case of the stream slope criterion, reaches steeper than 15 percent occur at the top of drainage networks where slopes become progressively steeper, and populations are more vulnerable to disturbances (e.g., post-wildfire debris torrents) that result in periodic extirpations (Bozek and Young 1994; Miller et al. 2003). The slope and flow criteria were set liberally to minimize the exclusion of fish-bearing

reaches from the analysis, but doing so results in the inclusion of many reaches with intermittent flows or migration barriers that prevent fish access. Thus, the network extent of 113,733 miles used as baseline habitat in this assessment probably overestimates potential habitat, but the current resolution of the NHD-Plus hydrology layer and VIC flow model prevents further refinement.

Climate Scenarios

Average summer flow values for three 30-year climate periods were available from the flow metrics website: a baseline period (1970–1999, hereafter 1980s) and two future periods (2030–2059, hereafter 2040s; 2070–2099, hereafter 2080s) associated with the A1B (moderate) emissions scenario. An ensemble of 10 GCMs that best represented historical trends in air temperatures and precipitation for the northwestern United States during the 20th century was used for future projections (table 5.1). Due to the significant uncertainties about the timing of change in the future, we deemphasize the dates associated with scenarios and refer to them instead as baseline (1980s), moderate change (2040s), and extreme change scenarios (2080s). With respect to scenarios used in other chapters of this publication, the A1B scenario is similar to the RCP 6.0 scenario associated with Coupled Model Intercomparison Project 5 (CMIP5) simulations (see chapter 3).

To complement the streamflow information, geospatial data for August mean stream temperatures were downloaded for the same A1B trajectory and climate periods from the NorWeST website and linked to the stream hydrology layer (USDA FS n.d.b). Within the study area, the NorWeST scenarios were developed using spatial statistical network models (Isaak et al. 2010; Ver Hoef et al. 2006) applied to
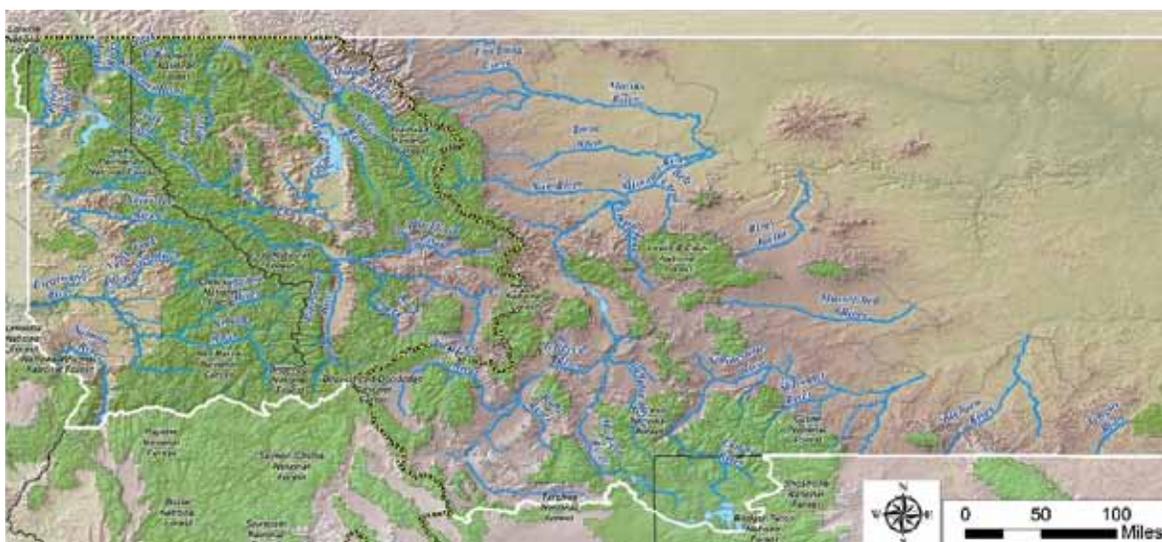
Figure 5.1—Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership analysis area for cutthroat trout and bull trout, including the U.S. Forest Service Northern Region (white border). Bull trout range encompasses basins west of the Continental Divide and the St. Mary River basin (yellow dashed line), whereas historical cutthroat trout range includes most of the analysis area.

Table 5.1—Projected changes in mean August air temperature, stream temperature, and streamflow for major river basins in the Northern Rockies.

NorWeST unit[a]	2040s (2030–2059)			2080s (2070–2099)		
	Air temperature[b] change	Streamflow[b,c] change	Stream temperature[d] change	Air temperature change	Streamflow change	Stream temperature change
	°F	*Percent*	°F	°F	*Percent*	°F
Yellowstone	5.06	- 4.1	1.82	9.14	- 5.4	3.26
Clearwater	5.71	-23.9	2.92	9.81	-34.2	5.00
Spokane-Kootenai	5.49	-20.1	2.29	9.59	-31.5	3.94
Upper Missouri	5.85	-14.9	2.11	9.85	-21.3	3.49
Marias-Missouri	5.24	-10.0	1.35	9.54	-18.7	2.47

[a] For boundaries of NorWeST production units, see the NorWeST Web site (USDA FS n,d,b).

[b] Changes in air temperature and streamflow are expressed relative to the 1980s (1970–1999) baseline climate period. Projections are based on the A1B emissions scenario represented by an ensemble of 10 global climate models that best projected historical climate conditions during the 20th century in the northwestern United States (Hamlet et al. 2013; Mote and Salathé 2010). Additional details about the scenarios are provided elsewhere (Hamlet et al. 2013; Wenger et al. 2010).

[c] For more information on streamflow, see the western United States flow metrics website (USDA FS n,d,c) and the Pacific Northwest Hydroclimate Scenarios Project website (University of Washington, Climate Impacts Group 2010).

[d] Changes in stream temperatures account for differential sensitivity to climate forcing within and among river basins as described in Luce et al. (2014) and at the NorWeST website (USDA FS n,d,b). For more information on stream temperatures, see Isaak et al. (2010), Luce et al. (2014), and the NorWeST website (USDA FS n,d,b).

data at 5,461 unique stream sites monitored with digital sensors during the summer from 1993 through 2011. The density and spatial extent of the temperature dataset, combined with the predictive accuracy ($r^2 = 0.91$; RMSE = 1.8 °F) and resolution (~0.62 mile) of the NorWeST model across those sites, were deemed sufficient for this assessment. Details about the rationales associated with climate scenarios and the stream temperature model are discussed in Isaak et al. (2015).

Focal Species

Bull trout in the Northern Rockies are largely from an inland lineage (Ardren et al. 2011) primarily west of the Continental Divide (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 2014). Bull trout may exhibit migratory or resident life histories. Migratory fish travel long distances as subadults to more-productive habitats and achieve larger sizes and greater fecundity as adults before returning to natal habitats to spawn. Resident fish remain in natal habitats and mature at smaller sizes, although often at the same age as migratory adults. Adults spawn and juveniles rear almost exclusively in streams with average summer water temperatures less than 54 °F and flows greater than 1.2 cubic feet per second (Isaak et al. 2010; Rieman et al. 2007). Relative to its historical distribution, this species has undergone substantial declines because of water development and habitat degradation (particularly activities leading to water temperature increases, but also cumulative losses of in-channel habitat complexity), elimination of migratory life histories by human-created barriers, harvest

by anglers, and interactions with introduced nonnative fishes (Rieman et al. 1997). Nonnative species such as brook trout, brown trout, and lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) may compete with or prey on bull trout (Al-Chokhachy et al. 2016; Martinez et al. 2009), or lead to wasted reproductive opportunities (Kanda et al. 2002). As a consequence, bull trout was listed as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) by the USFWS in 1998 (USFWS 2015).

Cutthroat trout are represented by two subspecies. Westslope cutthroat trout (*O. clarki lewisi*) has a complicated lineage structure that can be roughly broken into a single lineage in the north and east that occupied and colonized river basins directly influenced by glaciation or glacial dams, and a southern and western group of several presumably older lineages in basins never directly influenced by glaciation (M. Young, unpublished data). These fish also exhibit resident and migratory life history strategies. Spawning and juvenile rearing can occur in streams smaller (<2 feet wide) and warmer (up to 57 °F) than those used by bull trout (Isaak et al. 2015; Peterson et al. 2013a,b; M. Young, unpublished data). Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*O. c. bouvieri*) has an unresolved distribution because certain lineages are found in portions of the Bonneville basin (Campbell et al. 2011; Loxterman and Keeley 2012), probably because of periodic hydrologic connectivity between the Bonneville and Upper Snake River basins associated with passage of the North American plate across the Yellowstone mantle plume, Basin and Range faulting, and stream drainage reversals (Smith et al. 2002). Undisputed members of this taxon are

represented by a single mtDNA clade found throughout the analysis area in the Yellowstone River basin (Campbell et al. 2011). For this analysis, we assume that life histories and presumably spawning and juvenile habitats are the same as for westslope cutthroat trout.

The distributions of both subspecies have declined substantially (>50 percent) in response to the same stressors affecting bull trout (Gresswell 2011; Shepard et al. 2005), although each subspecies appears to occupy a larger proportion of its historical habitat and is often found in larger populations at higher densities than are bull trout. Both subspecies of cutthroat trout have been petitioned under the ESA, but found not warranted for listing. Brook trout have replaced cutthroat trout in many waters in the region, disproportionately so in the Upper Missouri River basin (Shepard et al. 1997). These invasions in part seem influenced by the distribution of low-gradient alluvial valleys that may serve as nurseries for brook trout (Benjamin et al. 2007; Wenger et al. 2011a). Where rainbow trout have been introduced outside their native range, introgressive hybridization occurs with both taxa of cutthroat trout at lower elevations and in warmer waters (Rasmussen et al. 2012), similar to patterns where westslope cutthroat trout occurred historically with native rainbow trout (the Clearwater River basin in Idaho and the Kootenai River basin in Idaho-Montana) (McKelvey et al. 2016b). Yellowstone cutthroat trout have also been widely stocked throughout the historical range of westslope cutthroat trout (Gresswell and Varley 1988) and these two taxa readily hybridize to form hybrid swarms (Forbes and Allendorf 1991; McKelvey et al. 2016b). Lake trout predation decimated adfluvial populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake at the beginning of the 21st century, but predator control efforts are enabling cutthroat trout populations to rebound (Syslo et al. 2011).

Trout Distribution Models

Species distribution models were developed that predicted the occurrence probabilities of juvenile bull trout and cutthroat trout. We focused on juveniles as indicators of important natal habitats and the presence of locally reproducing populations (Dunham et al. 2002; Rieman and McIntyre 1995). This approach provides more precision than also considering distributions of subadults and adults, which migrate widely, occupy an array of habitats, and occur with many other fish species (Behnke 2010). Juvenile distributions, by contrast, are restricted in ecological scope and geographic extent, especially with respect to temperature (Elliott 1994). For example, juvenile bull trout are rarely found where mean summer temperatures exceed 54 °F (Dunham et al. 2003; Isaak et al. 2010), whereas adult bull trout sometimes occupy habitats as much as 9 to 18 °F warmer (Howell et al. 2010). Similar patterns are evident with cutthroat trout (Peterson et al. 2013a; Schrank et al. 2003). Therefore, we used a thermal criterion to delimit potentially suitable habitats for juvenile native trout.
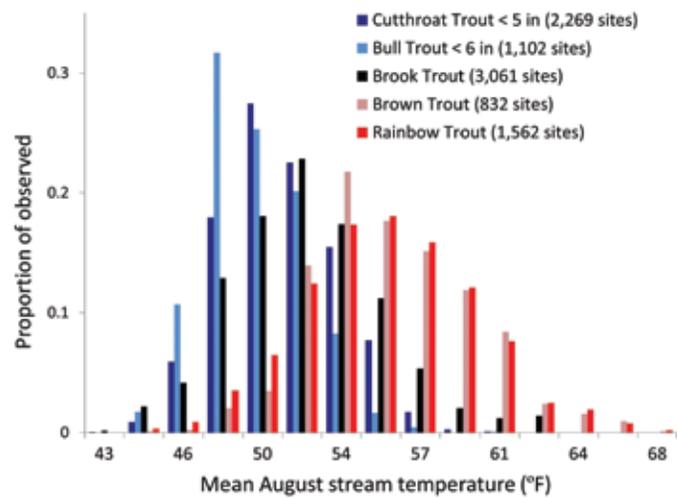
Figure 5.2—Presence of juvenile bull trout and cutthroat trout and all age classes of other trout species at sampling sites relative to temperature projections from the NorWeST baseline scenario of mean August temperature (figure reproduced from Isaak et al. (2015).

Temperature Criterion for Juvenile Trout Habitat

A mean August stream temperature of 52 °F was selected as the temperature criterion from a set of standardized thermal niches that were developed by cross-referencing thousands of species occurrence locations in Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming with the NorWeST baseline scenario (fig. 5.2). Fish data were contributed by national forest monitoring programs; Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Isaak et al. 2015). These niches revealed that most juvenile native trout (90 percent of bull trout observations and 75 percent of cutthroat trout observations) occurred at sites with temperatures less than 52 °F, whereas nonnative species such as brown trout and rainbow trout were rare at those sites. The thermal niche of brook trout overlapped that of the native species, but its occurrence peaked at a slightly warmer temperature and declined thereafter. Just as especially cold temperatures limit rainbow trout incursions, colder temperatures also restrict introgression with rainbow trout, such that stream reaches with temperatures less than 48 °F usually support only genetically pure cutthroat trout (McKelvey et al. 2016b; Rasmussen et al. 2012; Yau and Taylor 2013; M. Young, unpublished data).

Habitat Attributes and Logistic Regression Models

Spatially contiguous 0.6-mile reaches of stream with temperatures less than 52 °F were aggregated into discrete cold-water habitats (CWHs), and occupancy status (present or absent) of native trout juveniles and brook trout within a subset of those CWHs (bull trout, $n = 512$; cutthroat trout, $n = 566$) was determined using the fish survey database

described earlier. Logistic regressions were used to model the probability of native trout occupancy as a function of CWH size, stream slope, brook trout prevalence, and stream temperature. Habitat size was represented as the channel length of each CWH, stream slope as the average value across all the reaches within a CWH, and brook trout prevalence as the percentage of sample sites within a CWH where they occurred. Temperature was represented as mean August temperature averaged across all 0.6-mile sections constituting a CWH or the lowest mean temperature of any 0.6-mile section within a CWH.

The four variables were good predictors of juvenile trout occurrence within the training dataset; classification accuracy of the models at a 50 percent occupancy threshold was 78.1 percent for bull trout and 84.6 percent for cutthroat trout. The final logistic regression models included the four main predictor variables and some interactions among those variables. Plots of species response curves from the final models matched expectations based on the ecology of bull trout and cutthroat trout, but also revealed important differences between the species (fig. 5.3). Habitat occupancy for both native trout was positively related to CWH size, but bull trout required habitats five times larger than cutthroat trout to achieve comparable probabilities of occupancy. Bull trout occupancy declined as minimum temperature warmed, whereas cutthroat trout occupancy was positively related to mean temperature. Stream slope negatively affected both species, as did their co-occurrence with brook trout, especially in small streams. The presence of brook trout masked

the apparent preference of cutthroat trout for habitats with low slopes. Additional details on modeling procedures and variable selection are summarized in Isaak et al. (2015).

Application of Models for Status and Vulnerability Assessment

The logistic regression models were applied to the full set of CWHs within the historical range of each native species across the Northern Rockies to project probabilities of native trout occupancy. Projections were made for the baseline and future climate periods. To account for uncertainties in brook trout distributions, occupancy probabilities were calculated and mapped for a pristine scenario (no brook trout) and a broad invasion scenario that assumed brook trout would be present at half the sites within each CWH (50 percent brook trout). For this exercise, we did not map a scenario in which brook trout were present at all sites for two reasons. First, their prevalence rarely exceeded 50 percent in the large CWHs (i.e., >25 miles) that were most likely to serve as strongholds for native trout (Isaak et al. 2015) show brook trout prevalence in more than 500 streams; further, not all locations appear suitable for brook trout (Wenger et al. 2011a). In some small streams with native trout, brook trout prevalence occasionally reaches 100 percent, so probabilities for a full range of invasion scenarios were integrated into the ArcGIS databases at the Climate Shield website (USDA FS n.d.a) and can be used for stream-specific assessments of brook trout invasions.

After species probability maps were developed for all streams, the information was cross-referenced with land administrative status using geospatial data from the U.S. Geological Survey Gap Analysis Program (Gergely and McKerrow 2013). The total length and percentage of CWHs and stream temperatures were summarized by jurisdiction for different climate periods. Also noted were the proportions of CWHs that were administratively protected within national parks and wilderness areas. Finally, we denoted those CWHs with probabilities of occupancy exceeding 90 percent as climate refugia.

Native Trout Vulnerability to Climate Change

Stream Temperature Status and Projected Trends

Considerable thermal heterogeneity exists across Northern Rockies streams because of the complex topography and range of elevations in this region (fig. 5.4). Of the 114,000 miles of stream habitat within the analysis area, 43,000 miles (38 percent) had mean temperatures less than 52 °F (table 5.2). Most of those CWHs (86 percent) were in publicly administered lands, primarily (69 percent) in national forests. Areas with concentrations of cold streams were generally associated with high-elevation, high-relief

Figure 5.3—Relations between environmental covariates and probability of occupancy of juvenile native trout developed from 512 bull trout (a, b, c) and 566 cutthroat trout (d, e, f) cold-water habitats. Relations are conditioned on mean values of two independent variables not shown in a panel. An exception occurs for cutthroat trout with regard to stream slope (f) where brook trout values of 0% and 100% were used to highlight the interaction between these covariates (figure reproduced from Isaak et al. (2015).

Figure 5.4—NorWeST August mean stream temperature maps interpolated from 11,703 summers of monitoring data at 5,461 unique stream sites across the 114,000 mi of streams in the analysis area. Map panels show conditions during baseline (a, 1980s), moderate (b, 2040s), and extreme change scenarios (c, 2080s). Networks were trimmed to represent potential fish-bearing streams by excluding reaches with slopes greater than 15 percent and Variable Infiltration Capacity model summer flows less than 0.20 ft^3 s^{-1}. High-resolution digital images of these maps and ArcGIS databases with reach-scale predictions are available at the NorWeST website (http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/AWAE/projects/NorWeST.html).

mountain ranges in Montana (e.g., Whitefish Range, Mission Mountains, Swan Range, Flathead Range, Lewis and Clark Range, Sawtooth Range, Anaconda Range, Flint Creek Range, Big and Little Belt Mountains, Crazy Mountains, and ranges associated with the topographic rise produced by the Yellowstone mantle plume). In contrast, comparable mountain ranges and clusters of CWHs are absent in most of northern Idaho.

Mean August stream temperatures were projected to increase across the Northern Rockies by an average of 2.2 °F in the 2040s and 3.6 °F in the 2080s (table 5.1, fig. 5.4). Larger than average increases are expected in the warmest streams at low elevations, and smaller than average increases are expected for the coldest streams. Differential warming occurs because cold streams tend to be buffered by local influxes of groundwater (Luce et al. 2014), a trend

represented in the NorWeST scenarios we used. Averaged across all streams, future projections imply faster rates of warming (0.4–0.5 °F per decade) than were observed in recent decades (0.2–0.3 °F per decade) (Isaak et al. 2012a). If future projections are accurate, the length of streams with temperature less than 52 °F will decrease to 27,000 miles in the 2040s and 17,000 miles in the 2080s (table 5.3). In both scenarios, more than 75 percent of these cold streams are in national forests. Groups of exceptionally cold streams still likely to support bull trout or cutthroat trout would originate from the Sawtooth and Lewis and Clark Ranges along the Continental Divide in northern Montana, several smaller mountain ranges scattered throughout central Montana, and along the northern flank of the Yellowstone topographic high (fig. 5.4). Persistent CWHs are more isolated elsewhere.

Table 5.2—Length of streams in the Northern Rockies, categorized by mean August stream temperature during the baseline climate period and by land administrative status. Values in parentheses are percentages of the total in the last row.

Land status [a,b]	<46 °F	46–52 °F	52–57 °F	57–63 °F	63–68 °F	>68 °F	Total
				Miles (percent of total)			
Private	274 (3.2)	5,494 (15.8)	16,524 (47.2)	14,465 (64.4)	8,178 (73)	1,067 (66.1)	46,002 (40.4)
The Nature Conservancy	1 (0)	191 (0.5)	99 (0.3)	9 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	301 (0.3)
Tribal	170 (2.0)	769 (2.2)	3,371 (9.6)	4,181 (18.6)	1,593 (14.2)	380 (23.5)	10,464 (9.2)
State/City	137 (1.6)	1,578 (4.5)	2,529 (7.2)	1,156 (5.1)	723 (6.5)	62 (3.8)	6,185 (5.4)
Bureau of Land Management	49 (0.6)	826 (2.4)	838 (2.5)	268 (1.2)	207 (1.8)	55 (3.4)	2,243 (2.0)
National Park Service	537 (6.2)	1,689 (4.9)	654 (1.9)	296 (1.3)	70 (0.6)	1 (0.1)	3,247 (2.9)
Forest Service Wilderness	2,269 (26.2)	3,516 (10.1)	1,174 (3.4)	175 (0.8)	39 (0.3)	1 (0)	7,174 (6.3)
Forest Service Non-Wilderness	4,825 (55.8)	19,299 (55.5)	8,168 (23.3)	1,041 (4.6)	206 (1.8)	16 (1)	33,555 (29.5)
Other	386 (4.5)	1,438 (4.1)	1,596 (4.6)	876 (3.9)	193 (1.7)	33 (2.1)	4,522 (4.0)
Total	8,648	34,800	34,953	22,467	11,210	1,615	113,693

[a] Stream reaches with slope less than 15 percent and summer flows greater than 0.20 ft³ s⁻¹, based on the Variable Infiltration Capacity model (see text).
[b] Other category includes U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and lands with undesignated status.

Table 5.3—Length of streams in the Northern Rockies, categorized by mean August stream temperature during the baseline and two future climate periods and by land administrative status (Forest Service [FS] and non-Forest Service [Non-FSl]). Values in parentheses are percentages of the total in the last column.

Land status [a]	<46 °F	46–52 °F	52–57 °F	57–63 °F	63–68 °F	>68 °F	Total
				Miles (percent of total) [b]			
FS lands							
1980s	7,094 (17.4)	22,815 (56.0)	9,342 (22.9)	1,216 (3.0)	244 (0.6)	17 (0)	40,728
2040s	2,504 (6.3)	17,858 (44.7)	15,911 (39.8)	3,092 (7.7)	445 (1.1)	121 (0.3)	39,931
2080s	961 (2.4)	12,701 (32.3)	19,051 (48.5)	5,525 (14.1)	836 (2.1)	237 (0.6)	39,311
Non-FS lands							
1980s	1,554 (2.1)	11,986 (16.4)	25,645 (35.1)	21,260 (29.1)	10,963 (15.0)	1,597 (2.2)	73,005
2040s	569 (0.8)	5,960 (8.4)	20,980 (29.5)	24,422 (34.3)	15,434 (21.7)	3,820 (5.4)	71,185
2080s	253 (0.4)	3,448 (4.9)	16,401 (23.3)	25,128 (35.7)	18,410 (26.1)	6,798 (9.7)	70,438

[a] Stream reaches with slope less than 15 percent and summer flows greater than 0.20 ft³ s⁻¹, based on the Variable Infiltration Capacity model (see text).
[b] Reductions in network extent result from projected decreases in summer flows as described in table 5.1.

Table 5.4—Number and length of cold-water habitats for juvenile cutthroat trout by probability of occurrence for three climate periods and two brook trout invasion scenarios across the Northern Rockies.

		Probability of occurrence (percent)					
		<25	**25–50**	**50–75**	**75–90**	**>90**	**Total**
Cold-water habitat number							
0% brook trout prevalence	1980s	71	392	1,140	1,817	1,739	5,159
	2040s	41	328	1,405	1,505	1,148	4,427
	2080s	86	659	949	977	770	3,441
50% brook trout prevalence	1980s	73	501	2,790	1,384	581	5,329
	2040s	41	382	2,571	1,065	367	4,426
	2080s	86	684	1,837	673	161	3,441
Cold-water habitat length				*Miles*			
0% brook trout prevalence	1980s	268	794	4,068	7,730	32,646	45,506
	2040s	78	558	3,832	6,034	17,964	28,466
	2080s	142	1,031	2,938	4,151	10,459	18,721
50% brook trout prevalence	1980s	387	1,456	6,413	8,203	12,023	28,482
	2040s	126	855	5,079	5,451	6,404	17,915
	2080s	228	1,238	3,931	3,908	2,857	12,162

Cutthroat Trout Status and Projected Trends

The historical range of cutthroat trout extends through most of the Northern Rockies. The number of discrete CWHs for cutthroat trout during the baseline climate period was estimated to exceed 5,000 and encompass over 28,000 miles of streams (table 5.4, fig. 5.5). More than 90 percent of the CWHs were predicted to have probabilities of occupancy exceeding 50 percent (table 5.4), largely because of the relatively small stream networks that cutthroat trout populations require for persistence (6 miles is associated with a 90-percent probability of occupancy) (Peterson et al. 2013a) (fig. 5.3). Nonetheless, the largest CWHs accounted for a disproportionate amount of the habitat most likely to be occupied; 32.6 percent of CWHs were climate refugia, but these accounted for 70.7 percent of the length of CWHs. As expected, the number and extent of CWHs decreased by 20 to 60 percent in future periods, but nearly 3,500 potential habitats encompassing over 12,000 miles were projected to remain under the extreme scenario.

Some streams are currently too cold for cutthroat trout, so future warming will increase the probability of occupancy in some basins (e.g., the Teton River basin along the Rocky Mountain Front and streams in the northern portion of Yellowstone National Park). Assuming that brook trout were present within half of each CWH did not affect the number or amount of CWHs, because the habitats remained potentially suitable for cutthroat trout, but occupancy probabilities declined (table 5.4). Reductions were particularly severe in categories with the highest probabilities of occupancy (>75 percent). The sensitivity of streams to brook trout invasions varied with local conditions, but reductions were most pronounced in small streams with relatively low slopes.

Bull Trout Status and Projected Trends

The historical range of bull trout covers a smaller portion of the Northern Rockies than cutthroat trout, but the number of discrete CWHs for bull trout during the baseline climate period was still estimated to exceed 1,800 and encompass over 14,000 miles (table 5.5, fig. 5.6). Probabilities of occupancy for most bull trout CWHs were less than 50 percent because of the relatively large stream networks that bull trout require for persistence (30 miles is associated with a 90 percent probability of occupancy; fig 5.3). Although fewer than 6 percent of CWHs constituted climate refugia, they provided 30 percent of the total length of CWHs, emphasizing the contribution of large CWHs to the amount of habitat projected to be occupied. The requirement for larger CWHs caused projected decreases in the number and network extent of bull trout CWHs to be more substantial (38–71 percent) than those for cutthroat trout, particularly
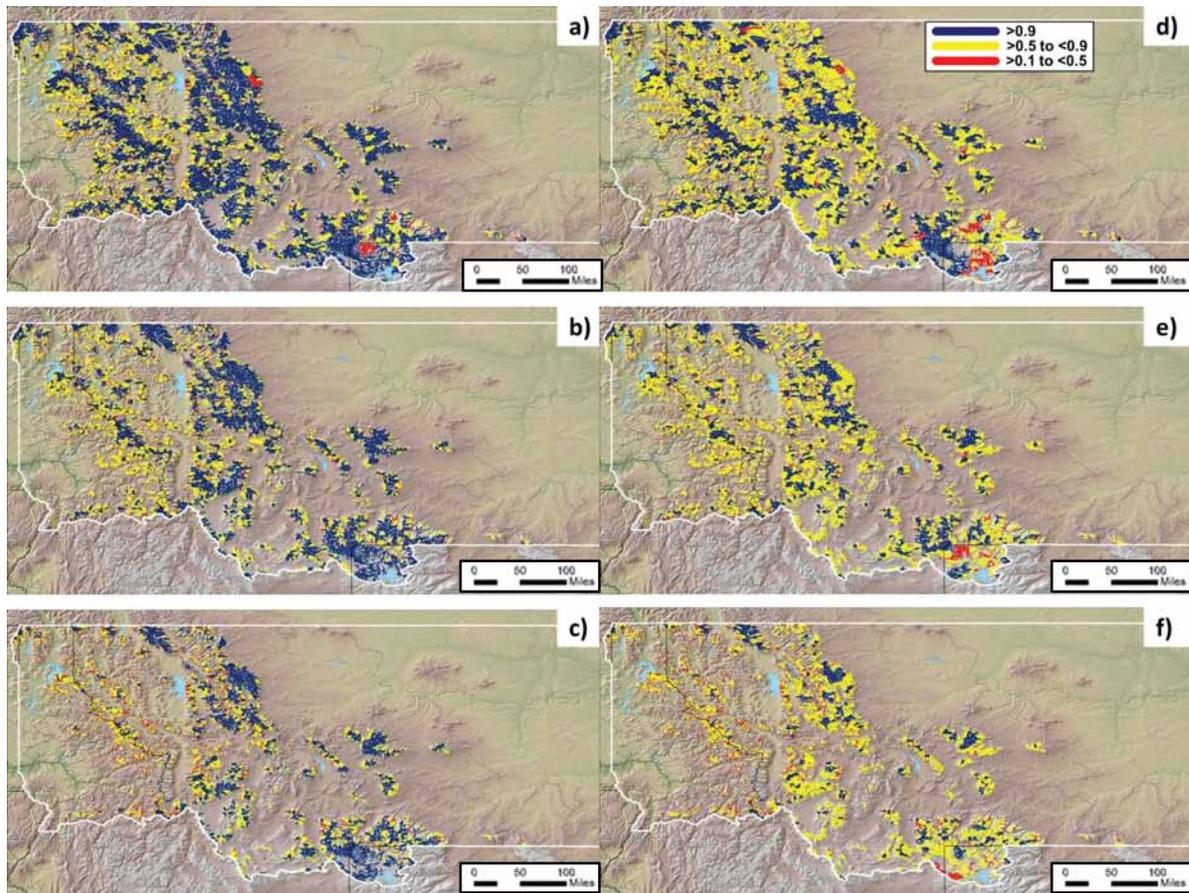
Figure 5.5—Distribution of cold-water habitats with probabilities of occupancy greater than 0.1 for juvenile cutthroat trout during baseline (a and d, 1980s), moderate change (b and e, 2040s), and extreme change scenarios (c and f, 2080s). Panels a–c illustrate occupancy when brook trout are absent. Panels d–f illustrate occupancy when brook trout prevalence is 50 percent. High-resolution digital images and ArcGIS databases of these maps with stream-specific projections are available at the Climate Shield website (http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/AWAE/projects/ClimateShield/maps.html).

for the CWHs with the highest probabilities of occupancy. More than 800 CWHs representing over 4,200 miles were projected to remain, even in the extreme scenario.

Brook trout invasions reduced bull trout occupancy rates. These declines were more pronounced for bull trout than cutthroat trout, especially in the CWHs most likely to be occupied (those with greater than 50-percent probability of occupancy); fewer than 10 climate refugia for juvenile bull trout are projected to remain under any warming scenario if brook trout occupy half of each CWH. However, many of the large habitats that bull trout require appear less susceptible to broad-scale brook trout invasions (Isaak et al. 2015). As expected, CWHs with the highest bull trout occupancy probabilities during all climate periods and brook trout invasion scenarios coincided with river networks with the largest number of cold streams: headwater portions of the North and Middle Forks of the Flathead River, the Whitefish River, and the North Fork Blackfoot River (figs. 5.4, 5.6). Due to the lower elevations and warmer streams in northern Idaho, few or no climate refugia were projected to remain under either warming scenario.

Additional Fish Species

See boxes 5.1 and 5.2 for narratives on other fish species in the Northern Rockies that are at risk from climate change and are candidates for the habitat occupancy-climate vulnerability approach described here.

Interpreting and Applying the Assessment

The assessment just described provides accurate, spatially explicit projections of habitat occupancy in the Northern Rockies by combining (1) ecological understanding of cutthroat trout and bull trout, (2) distribution data from public data sources, and (3) broad-scale, high-resolution stream temperature and flow projections. Assuming that species responses are related to the effects of climate on stream ecosystems—and the accuracy of the models supports this contention—the models also provide reasonably robust projections of habitat occupancy in light of anticipated climate

Table 5.5—Number and length of cold-water habitats for juvenile bull trout by probability of occurrence during three climate periods and two brook trout invasion scenarios in the Northern Rockies.

		Probability of occurrence (percent)					
		<25	25–50	50–75	75–90	>90	Total
Cold-water habitat number							
0% brook trout prevalence	1980s	875	534	248	92	106	1,855
	2040s	664	314	98	41	32	1,149
	2080s	474	274	81	24	13	866
50% brook trout prevalence	1980s	995	484	181	65	28	1,753
	2040s	697	270	63	17	5	1,052
	2080s	535	260	49	5	3	852
Cold-water habitat length				*Miles*			
0% brook trout prevalence	1980s	2,906	3,168	2,565	1,616	4,657	14,912
	2040s	2,222	1,934	1,129	769	1,340	7,394
	2080s	1,310	1,324	773	386	579	4,372
50% brook trout prevalence	1980s	3,920	3,762	2,712	1,891	2,351	14,636
	2040s	2,728	2,208	1,191	589	408	7,124
	2080s	1,569	1,645	704	153	266	4,337
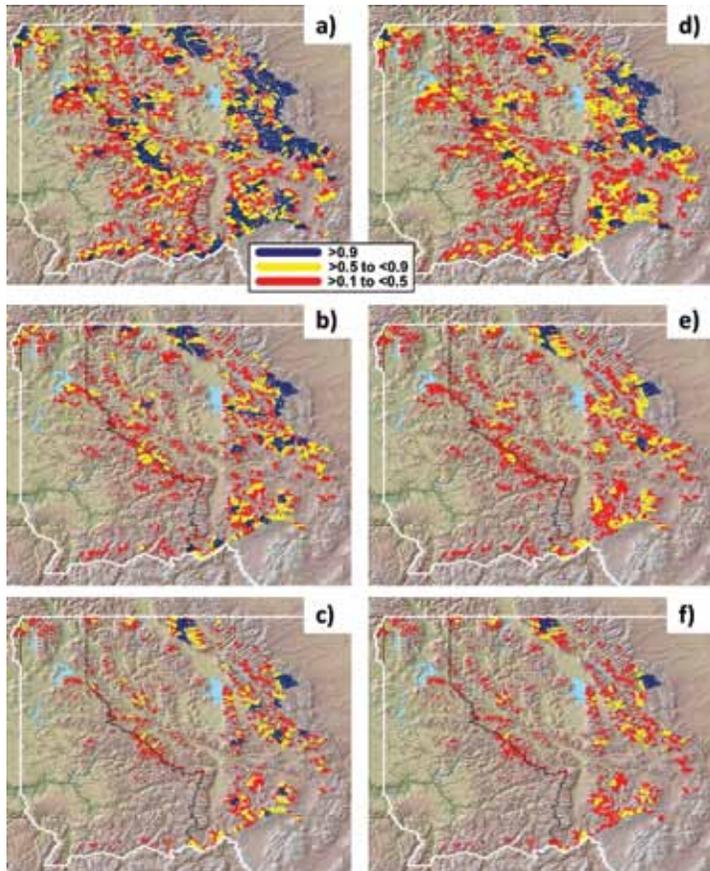
Figure 5.6—Distribution of cold-water habitats with probabilities of occupancy greater than 0.1 for juvenile bull trout during baseline (a and d, 1980s), moderate change (b and e, 2040s), and extreme change scenarios (c and f, 2080s). Panels a–c illustrate occupancy when brook trout are absent. Panels d–f illustrate occupancy when brook trout prevalence is 50 percent. High-resolution digital images and ArcGIS databases of these maps with stream-specific predictions are available at the Climate Shield website (http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/AWAE/projects/ClimateShield/maps.html).

Box 5.1—Effects of Climate Change on Arctic Grayling

Arctic grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*) is a salmonid species native to Arctic Ocean drainages in North America and northern Eurasia, and Pacific Ocean basins in Alaska and British Columbia, with two disjunct inland groups in Michigan (now extinct) and the Upper Missouri River basin in Montana and Wyoming (Kaya 1992; Scott and Crossman 1998). Within its range in Montana and Wyoming, grayling was represented by four adfluvial (lake-living, stream-spawning) populations in the Red Rock and Big Hole River basins, and by fluvial populations widely but irregularly distributed in the Missouri River basin above the Great Falls (USFWS 2014). Relative to this historical distribution, the current range and abundance of Arctic grayling have decreased greatly. Lacustrine populations are more common recently because of introductions inside and outside its historical range (Kaya 1992). Declines of riverine populations were caused by habitat degradation and fragmentation, inundation by reservoirs, overharvest, and interactions with nonnative fish, particularly rainbow trout, brook trout, and brown trout (Kaya 1992). The distinct population segment in the Upper Missouri River basin was petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act, but has not been listed (USFWS 2014). Evidence indicates that recent activities focused on increasing instream flows, improving habitat connectivity, supplementing existing populations, and founding new populations (some in historically fishless lakes) have arrested declines in most grayling populations in this basin (USFWS 2014).

Arctic grayling is regarded as a cold-water species (Elliott and Elliott 2010). Grayling life histories are often characterized by extensive movements to habitats for growth, reproduction, and overwintering, especially in riverine systems (Northcote 1995). Access to thermal refugia may be important to population persistence at the southern extreme of its range; many of the fluvial systems that retain grayling in the Upper Missouri River basin are heavily influenced by groundwater inputs (USFWS 2014). Although the thermal preferences of this species are uncertain, the upper thermal limits of grayling in the Big Hole River basin are comparable to those of cutthroat trout (Johnstone and Rahel 2003; Lohr et al. 1996; Wagner et al. 2001).

The influence of climate change on Arctic grayling is uncertain because of insufficient data, but its reliance on mobility emphasizes the need for connectivity among complementary habitats. Ameliorating the effects of low summer discharge has been a target of management (USFWS 2014), but this problem may become more severe and difficult to overcome if projected climate-related changes in discharge (Chapter 4) are realized. Many of the extant populations are in high-elevation lakes that are presumed to be less vulnerable to the effects of warming or reduced streamflow (USFWS 2014).

Responses to warmer stream temperatures may be complex. With warming summer water temperatures, initiation of the spawning season advanced by more than 3 weeks during four decades in a population of adfluvial European grayling (*T. thymallus*) in Switzerland (Wedekind and Küng 2010). Paradoxically, earlier spawning meant a longer exposure of incubating eggs and fry to colder spring water temperatures, patterns that coincide with substantial declines in the number of female spawners. This pattern may reflect declining survival of juvenile fish (Wedekind and Küng 2010) or sex-specific vulnerability to changes in thermal regimes (Pompini et al. 2013). Whether this is symptomatic of a broader trend or case study is unknown, but warming stream temperatures, population declines, and sex ratio shifts in salmonids have been observed elsewhere in Europe (Hari et al. 2006). Regardless, the few Arctic grayling populations extant in their historical range are likely to remain the focus of management efforts (USFWS 2014), and the continuation of these efforts may play a significant role in the near-term persistence of grayling in the Upper Missouri River basin. At longer time scales, the "climate velocity" associated with warming of low-gradient stream habitats (Isaak and Rieman 2013) may challenge our ability to maintain recent improvements in the conservation status of this species.

change. These projections have several implications for the future viability of native fish populations in the Northern Rockies and for developing management strategies targeted at conservation of these species.

Although both native trout species require cold-water habitat, their response to a changing climate is expected to differ. Bull trout, and most members of the genus *Salvelinus*, are adapted to some of the coldest freshwater environments in the Northern Hemisphere (Klemetsen et al. 2003). These species also tend to inhabit variable environments, often with strong gradients in productivity that appear to favor migration as a life history tactic (Klemetsen 2010). It is unsurprising that a species near the southern end of its distribution that relies on large

areas of CWHs and is often found at low density (High et al. 2008) would be susceptible to range contraction as temperatures warm. In the Northern Rockies, we anticipate large declines in their distribution because relatively few areas have the capability to serve as climate refugia. Nevertheless, retention of at least some climate refugia implies that bull trout will not be extirpated from the region. However, the conditions favoring migratory or resident life histories may change, although how to accommodate or exploit this is uncertain. As we learn more about the extent and prevalence of populations occupying CWHs with varying probabilities of occupancy, a better understanding of environmental drivers of bull trout life history may emerge.

Box 5.2—Effects of Climate Change on Fish Species in the Grassland Subregion

Several native fish species are found in the Grassland subregion of the NRAP. Located in the eastern portions of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest and the Dakota Prairies National Grassland, these species have received little scientific study and monitoring compared to cold-water salmonids and warm-water sportfish. Many prairie streams have never been sampled or are sampled sporadically at best. As a result, fish distribution and aquatic habitat are poorly understood at all spatial scales. However, as in most dendritic stream networks, small streams constitute the majority of fish habitat, and species favoring those habitats are likely to be the most common. Small streams may also provide seasonal habitats for spawning and rearing of species favoring larger streams, rivers, and lakes (Thornbrugh and Gido 2009).

Prairie streams are dynamic, tending to vary between periods of floods and flow intermittency, among and sometimes within years (Dodds et al. 2004). Extirpation and recolonization of local habitats by fish species is typical (Falke et al. 2012), and patterns of occupancy by fish species can be considered in the context of metapopulation theory, in which the presence of subpopulations of each species depends on habitat connectivity and duration (Falke and Fausch 2010). Although it is typical for prairie streams to be reduced to sets of disconnected pools in some years, this pattern is more prevalent in agricultural landscapes where surface and groundwater withdrawals are common (Falke et al. 2011; Gido et al. 2010). Climate change is expected to exacerbate these patterns (Jaeger et al. 2014) and lead to greater extremes, including severe droughts and more-intense storms and wet intervals in plains and dryland systems (Michels et al. 2007; Starks et al. 2014).

Projecting the responses of prairie fishes to climate change is complicated by difficulty in identifying habitat preferences, partly because many fish species are habitat generalists (Wuellner et al. 2013) and because the dynamics of prairie streams lead to difficulties in predicting interannual habitat occupancy (Falke et al. 2012). Prairie fish assemblages in the analysis area are represented by four species guilds—northern headwaters, darter, madtom, and turbid river guilds (Clingerman et al. 2013)—that are likely to differ in their vulnerability to climate change. Annual air temperature and various indicators of streamflow are strong predictors of presence for the northern headwaters, madtom, and darter guilds.

Observed and modeled patterns allow some inferences to be made about climate vulnerability and adaptation for prairie fishes. First, the northern headwaters guild may be most vulnerable to increasing temperature, as well as to climate-related decreases in groundwater recharge (Clingerman et al. 2013). This guild includes the northern redbelly dace (*Chrosomus eos*), a sensitive species in the USFS Northern Region, that occupies small, stable, and relatively cool headwater streams (Stasiak 2006). Accurate mapping of habitat types and species assemblages present in them, and monitoring of habitat conditions will help refine possible climate change effects on both habitat and species, as well as define appropriate management responses. Buffering variations in flow extremes (e.g., securing instream flows) and encouraging the presence of riparian vegetation are practical responses to climate change where the northern headwaters guild is present. Although the other prairie fish guilds seem less vulnerable to changes to temperature, all are influenced by amount and timing of flow. Therefore, climate change adaptation strategies for the northern headwater guild should also be appropriate for the other guilds. Finally, all guilds are currently at risk, and may become more so if flow regimes become more variable, especially if migration barriers prevent fish from moving along stream courses. Many of these species may be ill-adapted to surmounting either height or velocity barriers (Perkin and Gido 2012; Rosenthal 2007). Therefore, removing barriers to fish passage between habitats is a prudent adaptation strategy. This strategy carries the risk of allowing nonnative species to invade, so it should be implemented within the larger context of conservation of a site (Fausch et al. 2009).

By contrast, cutthroat trout can accommodate a wider range of thermal environments, commensurate with its broad latitudinal distribution and an evolutionary history (since the late Miocene or early Pliocene) that exposed them to fluctuation in warm/arid and cold/moist periods in western North America (McPhail and Lindsey 1986; Minckley et al. 1986). They are relatively flexible with respect to life history strategies, ranging from highly migratory populations dependent on large rivers or lakes for growth and fecundity, to resident populations that move little and have been isolated for many decades (Northcote 1992; Peterson et al. 2013a). Although we anticipate net losses in their distribution within the Northern Rockies, losses are not expected to be as severe as for bull trout, and some basins that are currently too cold to support cutthroat trout will become high-quality climate refugia (Coleman and Fausch 2007; Cooney et al. 2005). Of greater importance may be how nonnative salmonids, which often displace or replace cutthroat trout, respond to warming conditions (Wenger et al. 2011a).

The presence of brook trout is problematic for both native species. The tolerance of brook trout to cold temperature is nearly equivalent to that of cutthroat trout, and brook trout favor the low-gradient environments preferred by cutthroat trout and bull trout (Wenger et al. 2011a). Nonetheless, larger habitats (e.g., those >40 miles long)

appear less susceptible to invasion by this species, which may be attributed to their preference for small streams but also to the likelihood that large systems will contain other salmonid species, such as rainbow trout or brown trout, that constrain brook trout distributions in their native range in eastern North America (Fausch et al. 2009). Rainbow trout and brown trout are expected to shift their distribution upstream as temperature isotherms optimal for these species move in that direction (Isaak and Rieman 2013; Wenger et al. 2011b). Both species appear to have negative effects on cutthroat trout, but cold headwaters that thwart their invasions are expected to remain widespread.

Most CWHs in the Northern Rockies are in national forests (tables 5.2, 5.3). This emphasizes the critical role that the USFS will play in the conservation of populations of native fish. Active management that conserves native fish will be possible, because most of the CWHs are outside designated wilderness areas and national parks that limit many management activities. Conservation options will vary by location. For example, even under extreme warming, some CWHs are expected to persist in some river basins in Montana. Maintaining those conditions may be all that is necessary to ensure the persistence of native fish populations. By contrast, very few habitats regarded as climate refugia are anticipated to remain in the Clearwater, Spokane, and Kootenai River basins in Idaho. Those circumstances favor more active yet strategic management to promote population persistence through manipulation of habitat, fish populations, or both. Many CWHs in Montana and Idaho are situated in landscapes where multiple resource values and ecosystem services are important (see chapter 11), so fish conservation strategies that are compatible with other resource objectives will be an important issue in public land management (Rieman et al. 2010). Retaining native trout populations in some areas may require conservation investments that are unacceptably high or that could prove ineffective as climate warms. In these circumstances, reallocating those investments to areas where native populations are more likely to persist may be preferable.

The model projections described earlier contain uncertainties associated with emissions scenarios and unanticipated characteristics of future climate (Hallegatte et al. 2012). The future scenarios we considered reflect trends qualitatively similar to those that have been occurring in the Northern Rockies during the last 50 years: summer streamflow decreases, air temperature increases, and stream temperature increases (Isaak et al. 2010, 2012a,b; Leppi et al. 2012; Luce and Holden 2009). Consequently, these estimates of occupancy probabilities should be a biologically robust and spatially explicit ranking of habitats critical to the persistence of native trout. The Climate Shield fish distribution maps (fig. 5.7) and databases developed in association with this project were designed for ease of use, allowing users to gauge the amount, distribution, and persistence of native trout habitats. In addition, this information can be summarized for multiple spatial scales and

biogeographic entities (e.g., stream, river network, national forest, species or subspecies, State, region).

As with all models, current predictions and future projections of occupancy by juvenile native trout are estimates. These projections could be improved by including more local information on habitat conditions (Peterson et al. 2013a), the presence of barriers that influence habitat size and connectivity among populations (Erős et al. 2012), and the application of spatial statistical network models (Isaak et al. 2014). The potential for improvement notwithstanding, the accuracy of these simple models suggests that environmental gradients are the primary drivers of habitat occupancy by juvenile native trout.

The next step in an ongoing assessment process is to continue to reduce uncertainties associated with the distribution of aquatic species and their responses to a changing climate. Although we used data from thousands of sites to develop occupancy models, data on thousands of other sites would improve existing models and help build new ones for additional species. Compiling a comprehensive aquatic species database from all national forests has the potential to provide information on the recent presence of species in locations from which they may have disappeared, or from which they may have been absent but now exist. These data, and outputs from occupancy models, form the basis for projecting and detecting trends in aquatic species distributions, especially if coupled with new surveys, such as those based on rapid and reliable environmental DNA surveys (McKelvey et al. 2016a). Although DNA surveys are often conducted with one or a few species in mind, the samples constitute a snapshot of the entire aquatic community and can be archived to support future analyses of multiple species. Finally, better distribution data, an understanding of changes in occupancy, and geospatial analysis will improve the accuracy of existing species occupancy models and facilitate the development of new ones, ranging from an individual reach to an entire species range.

Adapting Fisheries to Climatic Variability and Change

Adaptation Strategies and Tactics

Many options are available to facilitate climate change adaptation and improve the resilience of fish populations, perhaps more options than for any other resource assessed in the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership (NRAP). Adaptation for fish conservation has been the subject of comprehensive reviews, including for the Northern Rockies (Rieman and Isaak 2010, especially table 2) and other parts of the Northwest (Beechie et al. 2013; Independent Science Advisory Board 2007; Isaak et al. 2012a; Luce et al. 2013; Williams et al. 2015). Having a relatively well-known set of climate sensitivities and adaptation options (Isaak et al. 2015; Mantua and Raymond 2014; Rieman et al. 2007) provides for credibility and consistency in sustainable
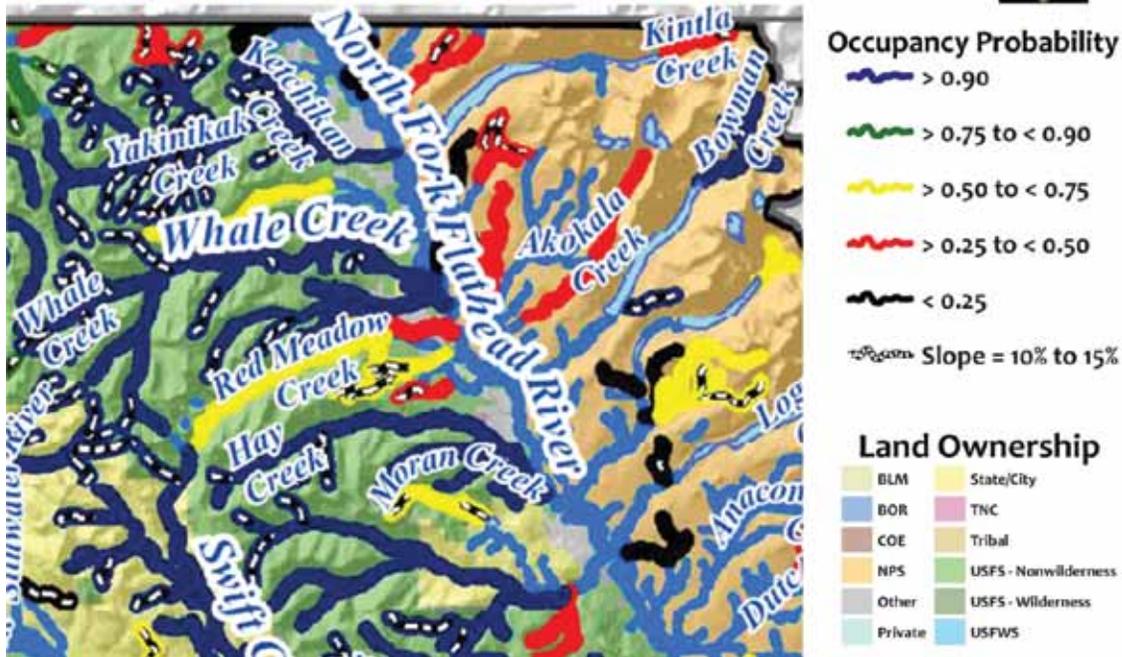
Figure 5.7—Example of a detailed Climate Shield map available at the project website that shows probabilities of juvenile bull trout occupancy in cold-water habitats during the 1980s baseline period in the North Fork Flathead River basin. Maps with identical formats for three climate periods and five brook trout invasion scenarios are available as .pdf and ArcGIS files for all bull trout and cutthroat trout streams across the northwestern United States.

management of fisheries in the Northern Rockies and beyond.

The Western Rockies, Central Rockies, Eastern Rockies, and Greater Yellowstone Area subregions within NRAP all have steep mountain topography, complex stream systems, and cold-water fish populations. Therefore, climate change sensitivities and adaptation options across this broad area tend to be similar (table 5.6), although the effects of livestock grazing as a stressor are more important in the Eastern Rockies subregion. The Grassland subregion has no cold-water fish species and is dominated by warm-water species, many of which are nonnatives. Although some concern exists about aquatic systems in this subregion, no adaptation options were developed for fisheries at the Grassland workshop (but see box 5.2).

Reduced snowpack is one of the best-documented effects of warmer temperatures in mountainous regions (see chapter 4), resulting in lower summer streamflows and warmer stream temperatures. Adaptation strategies can attempt to either maintain higher summer flows or mitigate the effects of lower flows (table 5.6). Specific adaptation tactics include pulsing flows from regulated streams when temperature is high, reducing water withdrawals for various human uses,

and securing water rights for instream flows to maintain more control of overall water supply.

Another strategy is to increase CWH resilience by maintaining and restoring the structure and function of streams. Specific tactics include restoring the functionality of channels and floodplains to retain (cool) water and riparian vegetation, and ensuring that passages for aquatic organisms are effective. These tactics could be particularly appropriate in areas where restoration activities are already underway and where habitat is limiting or declining, especially near roads and where high peakflows are frequent. In addition, accelerating riparian restoration may be a particularly effective and long-lasting way to improve hydrologic function and water retention. Maintaining or restoring American beaver (*Castor canadensis*) populations provides a "natural" engineering alternative for retention of cool water. In conjunction with restoration, road removal and relocation from sensitive locations near stream channels and floodplains can significantly improve local hydrologic function.

Interactions with nonnative fish species and other aquatic organisms are a significant stress for native cold-water fish species in the Northern Rockies. One adaptation strategy is to facilitate movement of native fish to locations with

Table 5.6—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will decrease summer streamflows.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Increase streamflows and moderate changes in instream flows.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Pulse flows from regulated streams during critical times (high temperatures)	Reduce water withdrawals and improve efficiency for agriculture (especially irrigation), municipal, and industrial uses	Secure water rights for instream flows
Where can tactics be applied?	All regulated streams	Where water demands overlap with current and future suitable habitat	Where fish and suitable habitat overlap

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will increase stream temperatures and alter flow regimes.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Increase habitat resilience for cold-water aquatic organisms by restoring structure and function of streams.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Restore natural channel and floodplain form and function (e.g., restore areas with human-caused bank and bed instability)	Restore aquatic organism passage structures through design and placement of appropriate structures.	Maintain functional stream channel morphology with adequate width:depth ratios, pool frequency, and healthy riparian vegetation
Where can tactics be applied?	Areas with ongoing restoration activities and where habitat is a primary limiting factor (especially where roads are present)	Drainages with frequent high peakflows, areas with sensitive geology, areas with important rearing streams	Areas with ongoing restoration activities and where habitat is a primary limiting factor (especially where roads are present)

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will increase stream temperatures and alter flow regimes.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Increase habitat resilience for cold-water aquatic organisms by restoring structure and function of streams.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Restore riparian areas to increase hydrologic function and retain cold water	Reintroduce beaver where beaver and management of westslope cutthroat trout are compatible	Remove or relocate roads adjacent to riparian areas, channels, and floodplains where they inhibit complexity; minimize cumulative effect of road network on surface and subsurface flow
Where can tactics be applied?	Where riparian areas limit the availability of cold-water habitat	Where beaver will not affect barriers; in stream reaches >1 mile; in larger population conservation networks; where brook trout are absent	Where roads currently cause problems or may do so in the future, especially where roads occupy lengthy portions of the riparian zone

Table 5.6 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will increase stream temperatures, affecting native species and interactions between natives and nonnatives.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Provide opportunities for native fish to move and find suitable stream temperatures.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Increase the patch size of favorable habitat to enhance viable populations and allow migratory life histories	Modify or remove barriers to increase connectivity between areas of cold-water habitat	Identify and map where groundwater inputs provide cold water
Where can tactics be applied?	Where native fish currently exist; where suitable habitat is nearby; where nonnatives are not present or can be effectively managed; where populations are fragmented and need greater connectivity	Where barriers prevent movement to suitable habitat, and where removal will not increase invasion of nonnatives	All locations

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Warmer temperatures will increase stream temperature and risk of invasion by nonnative fish species.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Manage nonnative fish populations to eliminate or reduce their impact on native fish.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Encourage increased take/harvest of nonnatives, especially near long-term strongholds for natives	Remove nonnatives with manual or chemical techniques	Exclude nonnatives with physical or electrical barriers
Where can tactics be applied?	Areas with heavy recreation and sport fishing; most effective at the front of invasions	Where long-term suitable habitat for natives is available and nonnatives are present	Where long-term suitable habitat for natives is available and nonnatives are present

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Continued livestock grazing will compound stress caused by increased stream temperatures.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Manage livestock grazing to restore ecological function of riparian vegetation and channels.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Comply with all existing standards and guidelines for maintaining water quality in streams and riparian areas; facilitate compliance through monitoring	Use innovative techniques to fund, maintain, and implement improvements (e.g., riparian fencing, rest-rotation systems, off-channel water, exclosures)	Identify and prioritize vacant allotments for retirement
Where can tactics be applied?	All locations, with emphasis on areas that are important in terms of ecological value and large financial investment	All locations, with emphasis on areas that are important in terms of ecological value and prior financial investment; prioritize areas with core conservation fish populations that are under imminent threat	All locations where vacant allotments exist and opportunities allow

Table 5.6 (cont.) —Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher temperatures will increase wildfire occurrence that can lead to erosion and mass wasting.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Increase resilience to fire-related disturbance.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Implement fuel treatments (thinning, prescribed burning) to reduce wildfire severity and size	Disconnect roads from stream networks to reduce erosion and sediment delivery to streams	Install erosion control structures following wildfires
Where can tactics be applied?	Areas where canopy and surface fuels are high, adjacent to known native fish populations and habitat	Areas adjacent to known native fish populations and habitat	Where wildfire has occurred and erosion would affect known native fish populations and habitat

suitable stream temperatures. Adaptation tactics include increasing the patch size of suitable habitat, modifying or removing barriers to fish passage, and documenting where groundwater inputs provide cold water. All of these tactics will be more effective if native fish populations are healthy and nonnative species are not already dominant. Another adaptation strategy is to focus management on reduction of nonnative fish species. Adaptation tactics include increased harvest of nonnative fish (e.g., sport fishing), manual or chemical removal of nonnative species, and excluding non-natives with physical or electrical barriers where feasible. These tactics will generally be more effective if nonnative species are not already well established.

In stream systems adjacent to grasslands and shrublands, livestock grazing can damage aquatic habitat, causing stress that may be compounded by warmer stream temperatures. An important adaptation strategy is to manage grazing to restore as much ecological and hydrologic function of ripar-ian systems as possible. Specific adaptation tactics include ensuring that standards and guidelines for water quality are adhered to and monitored, making improvements that ben-efit water quality (e.g., fencing), and reducing the presence of cattle through the retirement of vacant grazing allotments. It will make sense to prioritize these actions for locations that have high ecological value.

In a warmer climate, it is almost certain that increased wildfire occurrence will contribute to erosion and sedi-ment delivery to streams, thus reducing water quality for fisheries. Increasing resilience of vegetation to wildfire may reduce the frequency and severity of fires when they occur. Hazardous fuels treatments that reduce forest stand densi-ties and surface fuels are an adaptation tactic that is already widely used in dry forest ecosystems. Disconnecting roads from stream networks, another tactic already in practice, is especially important, because most sediment delivery following wildfire is derived from roads. Finally, erosion control structures can reduce postfire sediment delivery and are often a component of Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation on Federal lands.

More-specific details on adaptation strategies and tactics that address climate change effects on fisheries in NRAP subregions are in Appendix 5A. The process used to elicit adaptation options differed among subregions; some infor-mation was general and some was geographically specific.

Toward Climate-Smart Management

The broad range of adaptation options summarized in table 5.6 and Appendix 5A provides a diverse toolkit for fisheries managers. In addition to specific strategies and tactics, several overarching issues help guide applications in Federal lands.

Be Strategic

Prioritizing watershed restoration such that the most important work is done in the most important places is criti-cal because funds, labor, and time for management of native fish populations are limited (Peterson et al. 2013b). For example, climate refugia for native trout in wilderness areas may not require or be amenable to habitat modification to ensure the persistence of those populations. Similar refugia outside wilderness might be targeted to improve habitat conditions or reduce nonnative species, particularly if doing so increases the probability of occupancy of such habitats. Regardless of such efforts, some basins are unlikely to provide suitable habitat for native trout in the future, so directing conservation investments elsewhere, or for other species, may be prudent.

Implement Monitoring Programs

Being strategic means reducing current and future uncer-tainties for decisionmaking. In the case of fisheries, more data are needed for streamflow (more sites), stream tempera-ture (annual data from sensors maintained over many years), and fish distributions. These data can be used for better status-and-trend descriptions, and to develop robust (more accurate and precise) models for species to understand the interaction of climate change, natural variation, and land management. The feasibility of monitoring at small to broad scales is increasing with the advent of rapid, reliable eDNA inventories of aquatic organisms (Thomsen et al. 2012) and the availability of inexpensive, reliable temperature and flow sensors (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency 2014).

Restore and Maintain Cold Stream Temperatures in Summer

Persistence of native trout species will depend on a variety of management techniques to restore and maintain stream shade and narrow unnaturally widened channels. Actions may include relocating roads away from streams, limiting seasonal grazing in some areas, and managing streamside riparian forest buffer zones to maintain effective shade and cool, moist riparian microclimates. The tactics de-scribed in this chapter have implications and consequences far beyond enhancing the persistence of native fish popula-tions, but being open to opportunities to do so is part of strategic thinking.

Manage Connectivity

Beyond climate change concerns, obstacles to fish migra-tion are often removed in hopes of enhancing the success of migratory life history forms, or permitting native species to reoccupy former habitat or supplement existing populations. However, this presents a dilemma: Accessible waters can be invaded by nonnative fish species that can replace native species (Fausch et al. 2009). In some cases, barriers can be installed to prevent these invasions. Native populations above barriers may be secure if they can adopt resident life histories, but could be susceptible to loss from extreme disturbance events in small habitats, requiring human inter-vention to reestablish or supplement populations. Barriers are usually temporary, and may require reconstruction if nonnative species remain downstream.

Remove Nonnative Species

Removal of nonnative fish species, although challenging in some locations, may be the best option for maintaining or restoring some native fish populations. These efforts typically consist of chemical treatments or electrofishing, and both tend to be feasible only in smaller, simpler habitats. Both are also costly, in part because they need to be conducted on multiple occasions to be effective. Chemical treatment can be controversial because of its perceived effects on water quality. Furthermore, any method of removal is successful only if the source of nonnative species is removed, often by installation of a migration barrier (see "Manage Connectivity"). Public resistance to removal of nonnative fishes may also be an obstacle, particularly if sport fish are involved. Unauthorized introductions are also common, and can undermine conservation efforts. Finally, using control measures to manage the abundance of nonnative species rather than removing all of them has been helpful in some areas (e.g., removal of lake trout to promote bull trout persistence, electrofishing to depress brook trout and favor cutthroat trout). Such activities will be successful only if conducted at regular intervals for the foreseeable future, which assumes social acceptance and indefinite availability of project funding.

Implement Assisted Migration?

Moving native fish species from one location to another, a historically common activity in fish management, has typically been used to found populations in previously fishless waters. This practice, alternately termed "assisted migration" or "managed relocation," has become controversial for some taxa in recent years. However, assisted migration may be useful in the Northern Rockies where basins are currently fishless (or contain nonnative species only in limited numbers) because of natural barriers such as waterfalls, and may constitute high-quality climate refugia in the future. Moving native fish to such areas is feasible, but potential effects on other native taxa (e.g., amphibians or invertebrates) must be considered. Reintroductions of native species may also be warranted when natural refounding is not an option, such as when populations in a specific location are isolated and periodically fail or suffer population bottlenecks (Dunham et al. 2011). This degree of management intervention requires a thorough understanding of genetic principles and broodstock establishment.

In conclusion, fisheries managers responding to the environmental trends associated with climate change will require a diverse portfolio comprising many of the actions described in this chapter. Equally important is adapting our mindsets—and our administrative processes—to a new paradigm of dynamic disequilibrium for the 21st century. Under this paradigm, stream habitats will become more variable, undergo gradual shifts through time, and sometimes decline. Many populations will retain enough flexibility to adapt and track their habitats, but others could be overwhelmed by future changes. It is unlikely that we will be able to preserve all populations of all fish species as they currently exist. However, as better information continues to be developed in the future, managers will have increasingly precise tools at their disposal to know when and where resource commitments are best made to enhance the resilience of existing fish populations or to benefit other species for which management was previously not a priority. There is much to do as climate change adaptation continues in future years, and Federal lands will play a critical role in providing important refuge habitats for aquatic resources.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 5A—Adaptation Options for Fisheries in the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership Subregions

Geographically specific adaptation options for fisheries were compiled for four subregions of the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership.

Western Rockies Subregion

Adaptation options for fisheries in the Western Rockies subregion are summarized by climate change stressor.

Temperature

Adaptation tactics

- Identify and protect groundwater areas and side channels
  - Increase density of temperature sensor network
  - Develop GIS layer and incorporate into stream temperature maps
    - Action application: where groundwater has not yet been captured; everywhere native cold-water fish species occur
  - Remote sensing at microscale (longitudinal profile of larger rivers), which provides more fine-scale temperature mapping to help identify areas of groundwater inputs
    - Action application: Clearwater, St. Joe; anywhere there is private land or proposed development (feeds into floodplain or road development issues); rivers large enough to support this kind of sampling
- Restrict floodplain development and channelization
  - Action application: 3rd-order streams
- Remove/relocate roads from creeks/streams
  - Action application: prioritize areas based on proximity to and presence of fish doing well. For example, the Clearwater has one HUC 6 with no human effects that is prioritized for restoration. In contrast, the Selway is connected to large areas of good habitat so less important to prioritize for road removal/relocation.
    - At a site-specific scale, prioritize similarly to watershed but on smaller scale; look at the potential of that habitat to support native fish both now and in the future
- Limit exploitation of groundwater/water withdrawals
  - Action application: anywhere tied to groundwater upwelling
- Hypolimnitic withdrawal
  - Action application: where possible (e.g., Priest Lake, Libby Dam, Albany Falls, Dworshak and Clark Fork dams)
  In some cases (e.g., Kootenai) the water has been too cold for fish species, but this may change in the future
- Use beaver or large woody debris, or both, to increase groundwater storage
  - Action application: headwaters/headwater storage in high elevation areas
- Maintain current shade and microclimate characteristics
  - Action application: everywhere
- Identify, prioritize, and protect high-quality watersheds (HUC 6/7) and generate specific standards and guidelines for the area
  - Implement in national forest land management plans. Use this as an overarching strategy to identify high, moderate, and low priority watersheds with specific actions in each
- Reduce grazing effects
  - Identify thresholds that, once exceeded, trigger movement of the cattle to another pasture
  - Generate and implement adaptive management scenarios (similar to those just described)
  - Reevaluate timing of grazing and the amount of time between grazing activities
  - Riparian fencing (not as feasible in forested environments)
  - Retire allotments
    - Action application: target areas most susceptible to grazing (low elevation meadows) (especially on Nez Perce-Clearwater NF)
- Remove barriers to fish passage
  - Action application: remove if barrier prevents bull trout migration (not necessarily westslope cutthroat trout)
  - Other: westslope cutthroat trout database can be compared with stream temperature maps

- Water temperature management through dams. For example, Dworshak dam has contributed to resilience of down-stream fish because of temperature mitigations (i.e., by creating thermal refugia downstream of these facilities).
  - Need to match fish migration with thermal window (i.e., when fish migrate and when temperatures occur that are necessary to sustain that migration) and consider the possibility of longer periods of warmer stream temperatures in the future and how they may affect fish migration ability
  - Reexamine water temperature release in light of climate change (e.g., Kootenai)
  - Develop temperature models to better inform this action
- Install snowpack sensors to better anticipate changes in stream temperature and flow regimes

Runoff Regime

- Address site-specific activities that make narrower and deeper channels and affect runoff characteristics and peak flow (e.g., clearcutting) by reducing ratio of surface area to depth
  - Action application: anywhere with narrow and deep channels, clearcut areas
- Limit actions (e.g., vegetation removal) that contribute to peak yield
  - Action application: primarily in rain-on-snow areas; north end of Clearwater has private/State/Federal lands interspersed; need an analysis to determine effects from management activities (e.g., vegetation removal) on all lands to understand potential impacts on runoff characteristics and sedimentation
- Reconnect floodplains to improve the ability of system to deal with large flow events
  - Consider using beavers and large woody debris to facilitate this process
  - Action application: prioritize areas of past dredge mining, where possible/feasible given social/financial constraints
- Restore water holding capacity using beaver or mechanical storage methods
  - Action application: degraded headwater streams
- Reexamine flow release (variable Q) from dams with projected climate changes (currently use from 1999 and earlier)
  - Action application: dams
- Increase connectivity, where possible, to allow fish to move to cope with changing conditions
  - Action application: remove mainstem dam passages/impoundments (although these may also be selectors favoring nonnative species, so this needs to be considered at site level)
- Increase capacity of infrastructure to handle flows (e.g., upsizing culverts/structures to 100-year flood)
  - Action application: take advantage of Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation and other vegetation projects to replace culverts; relocate roads and trails outside of 100-year floodplain
- Conduct roads analysis within proposed timber harvest areas, considering riparian/aquatic habitat and fish impacts (e.g., road density is a concern for fish)
- Hydrologically disconnect roads from streams (e.g., by adding cross-drains or culverts or outsloping roads)
- Examine current and proposed future campgrounds/dispersed campgrounds on creeks and potential future changes in flow regimes (permanent disturbance regimes for fish habitat)

Invasive Species

- Remove brook trout in higher elevations that are likely to be cold-water refugia for bull trout
  - Action application: headwater lakes in wilderness (rotenone can be used for brook trout suppression in wilderness); when removing fish, we need to provide an alternative for recreational fisheries
- Create an integrated strategy across the subregion that supports multiple species. For example, leave some lakes fishless for amphibians, incorporate brook trout strategy (following) at basin scale (HUC 5) to balance public need (i.e., recreational fishery) with ecological need (i.e., bull trout)
- Identify brook trout locations and prioritize where to eradicate
  - Need: strong partnership with State and other wildlife agencies to do a cross-agency effort (see preceding action as well); also support from leadership and funding
  - Eradication and preventing re-invasion by:
    - Installing barriers
    - Avoiding rotenone by using a combination of electrofishing and tiger muskie (*Esox masquinongy* × *Esox lucius*) (although may be difficult to eliminate source entirely)
    - Expanding options for brook trout management (e.g., gill netting)
    - Manipulating gametes and "swamping" current population so species essentially eradicates itself
  - Action application: meadow creeks in upper North Fork Clearwater
- Public education and outreach
- Brown trout and pike are newer invasive species, although management options are limited
  - Take limit off the fisheries (already done)

- ○ Where feasible and biology of species lends itself to it (e.g., Pend d'Oreille), can do some suppression
- Manage reservoirs and lakes (e.g., suppression efforts) to protect adult bull trout breeders from smallmouth bass and lake trout
- Utilize changing flow regimes and temperatures to keep invasives out
  - ○ This has been used in Pend d'Oreille to keep pike out
  - ○ Action application: dams/reservoirs
- Reservoir manipulation
  - ○ Fertilization of species (kokanee; *Oncorhynchus nerka*); <u>application</u>: putting kokanee in headwater areas
- Establish barriers to invasive species movement
  - ○ Have to make conscious decision to write off fluvial form of bull trout
  - ○ Many factors have to coincide to make this work
  - ○ Small-scale application for cutthroat (e.g., above barriers and more opportunistic)

In areas projected to be cold-water refugia until 2040:
- Suppress nonnative fish
- Conduct a status assessment of current species and management actions
- Manage fire and fire effects
- Note: many of these areas in Nez Perce-Clearwater NF are in wilderness, so fewer management options
- Aggressive fish management (e.g., hatcheries)
  - ○ <u>Action application</u>: Lake Coeur d'Alene drainage is historical drainage and critical habitat for bull trout, but none there now
    - ▪ Questions: where to get fish and how many
    - ▪ This is a viable future habitat but there may be social barriers (cattlemen's association, political/social will) to implementation
    - ▪ Use this as template for future
  - ○ <u>Action application:</u> in areas with nonnative species, use hatcheries to bring fish in, apply rotenone to habitat, and aggressively restock

In areas with fish currently, but projected to be gone by 2040:
- Suppress nonnative fish
- Improve connectivity
- Address higher river mainstem temperatures that act as barrier
- Monitor areas (fish present now, historical records, eDNA, presence/absence of juveniles, physical characteristics)

During warm phases of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation
- Warmer, drier conditions may affect year-class strength; potential barometer of how populations may respond in the future

High-severity wildfire areas
- With connectivity, fire effects and debris torrents may not be an issue
- Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest probably would not move fish unless they were spawning populations with limited connectivity
  - ○ Strategy: monitor over time to understand distributions of spawning populations and how they respond to disturbances
  - ○ <u>Action application</u>: translocate brood stocks only in certain situations (no connectivity)

Valued Species Other Than Cold-Water Fish

- Sturgeon and burbot
  - ○ Opportunities: management of dam (temperature and flow), specifically temperature for these species (dependent on season and species)
  - ○ Potential conflict: want to reduce flow in winter for water to cool off, but Bonneville Power Administration wants to release more flow during this time to generate power
- Western pearlshell mussel: increased peak flows may wipe out colonies

Central Rockies Subregion

Following are adaptation tactics and other issues summarized for locations in the Central Rockies subregion as a complement to table 5A.1.

Table 5A.1—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will alter the thermal regime of streams in space and time.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Improve riparian function and increase functional riparian areas.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Re-vegetate denuded sections of riparian areas (leading to additional refined tactics for grazing effects, fire effects, etc.).	Strategically relocate, eliminate, and minimize the effects of riparian and upland road segments.	Restore groundwater and hyporheic exchange through beaver reintroduction/protection, channel restoration, and re-establishment of fire regimes.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied?	All locations where riparian areas have been damaged, especially if native fish populations are present or nearby	All locations where streams have been or could be damaged, especially if native fish populations are present or nearby	All locations where each specific tactic is appropriate and likely to be effective
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Flathead National Forest

- Need aggressive suppression and eradication of nonnative fish
- More brook trout are in the Middle Fork Flathead than in the North Fork; bull trout populations dropped sharply on the west side of Glacier National Park (Bowman, Logging, Kintla) because of brook trout; Quartz Lake has very active suppression of nonnative fish species
- Some effects from logging (lack of wood in streams, some roads) in Coal Creek, Big Creek, Whale, Red Meadow; active logging in Canada in same drainage has effects (nonnative fish going upstream, logging effects coming downstream)
- To protect westslope cutthroat trout, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) is focused on eradicating rainbow trout through rotenone application and other techniques
- Efforts to slow spread of hybrids; targeting rainbow trout sources in lower Flathead
- Barriers being installed or removed in North Fork Flathead; removing barriers in Rose Creek; removing culverts in Langford tributary to Big Creek
- Ongoing habitat work by Montana FWP in South Fork of Cold Creek
- Suppression of brook trout in Flathead Lake is a high priority
- Translocated bull trout this year; can use stocks to move them above barriers
- Genetic rescue of westslope cutthroat trout (tributary to Swan Lake)
- Land acquisition presents huge opportunities for protection of habitat

South Fork of the Flathead River

- Try to maintain the status quo in Hungry Horse Reservoir, a genetic refuge for bull trout
- Try to manage more natural burns in South Fork of the Flathead; could apply this tactic to land around Hungry Horse Reservoir
- Need a check station at the dam and ranger station to prevent introduction of nonnative fish, in combination with public outreach on this issue
- Montana FWP restored connectivity around Hungry Horse reservoir (also around Emery Creek) that was severed when road was constructed, but additional opportunities exist

Swan River

- Nonnative issues are similar to Flathead River
- Westslope cutthroat trout are more hybridized with more brook trout characteristics
- Need small barriers to protect bull trout headwater populations
- Need to explore passage barrier issues
- Consider pulling road segments back from streams in critical locations
- Major road management issues exist on former Plum Creek lands, which have a large amount of spawning and rearing habitat relative to size
- Need thermographs throughout floodplains because of the importance of groundwater upwelling for bull trout; this will help improve models of these cold-water systems

Clearwater River, Blackfoot River

- Long-term effects of timber harvest and roads, including the effects of roads on connectivity of the hydrologic system
- Unmanaged roads deliver low amounts of sediment
- Continuing work with The Blackfoot Challenge to expand voluntary drought response plans; irrigation efficiency programs are addressing dewatering issues (particularly in drought years)
- Livestock grazing issues in Monture Creek
- Need to address contaminants issues near Mike Horse Mine
- Conservation easements need to be added more strategically (rather than only opportunistically)
- Restorative work is needed to narrow and deepen creeks to significantly reduce stream temperatures (Nevada Creek); could be applied strategically in other areas (Shanley Creek), as suggested by bull trout recovery plan
- Restoration of the main stem of the Blackfoot River is needed to reduce channel simplification and restore functionality and complexity
- One option is to identify reaches on private land and work to connect landscape and habitat up to higher elevation habitat on public lands

- Ongoing efforts to connect cold-water tributaries in the Upper Blackfoot; also need to restore streambanks in locations with land conversion
- This area has high use for recreation and fishing; this level of use may not be sustainable if habitat quality declines in the future

Upper Clark Fork River, Bitterroot River

- Heavy fishing pressure (catch and release) in this location
- East side of Bitterroot is a stronghold for native fish, but west side has no apparent occupancy (need to confirm)
- Dewatering events in tributaries are important, including issues for mitigation of water quality and quantity
- West Fork of Bitterroot above Painted Rocks Dam has been affected by forest management; road mitigation and removal are helping
- Sleeping Child/Darby timber land restoration is removing roads
- Habitat in Daily Creek (strong producer of bull trout out of Skalkaho) is being improved by placing woody debris in streams
- South Fork Lolo Creek is probably a native fish stronghold, although Highway 12 and private land management limit potential restoration options

Middle and Lower Clark Fork River

- Fish passage at the reservoir dams has a huge effect on downstream rearing of westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout
- Legacy effects of management (e.g., placer mining) on cold-water patches (Cedar Creek, Trout Creek) have degraded habitat, requiring structural channel remediation and road relocation and mitigation
- Thompson River native fish strongholds (Fish Trap, West Fork Thompson) provide options for improving channel complexity and habitat
- Little Joe River is a very cold water patch but with seasonal disconnection; unclear if this hinders access by bull trout
- Moore Lake is a source of brook trout to the South Fork Little Joe River

Rock Creek

- Bull trout populations are decreasing faster here than anywhere else; brown trout numbers are correspondingly increasing; East Fork above the reservoir has agricultural issues including effects of dewatering events caused by irrigation withdrawals
- Easy restoration options have already been implemented to improve connectivity
- Options on east side for road relocation (Burnt Fork)
- Lower Rock Creek has heavy angling pressure
- Water and land restoration options on Ranch Creek

Rattlesnake Creek

Current bull trout producer, but warming with few options for improving management
Large wood and channel complexity, especially in the urban interface.

Eastern Rockies Subregion

Adaptation options for fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion are summarized in tables 5A-2 through 5A-7

Table 5A.2—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will increase stream temperatures and alter flow regimes.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase habitat resilience for cold-water aquatic organisms by restoring structure and function of streams.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Restore natural channel and floodplain form and function (e.g., restore areas with human-caused bank and bed instability).	Restore aquatic organism passage structures through design and placement of appropriate structures.	Maintain functional stream channel morphology with adequate width:depth ratios, pool frequency, and healthy riparian vegetation.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate–high	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term (gradual process, but need to get started)	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Areas with ongoing restoration activities and where habitat is a primary limiting factor (especially where roads are present)	Drainages with frequent high peak flows, areas with sensitive geology, areas with important rearing streams	Areas with ongoing restoration activities and where habitat is a primary limiting factor (especially where roads are present)
Opportunities for implementation	Mining restoration projects	Talk to insurance companies to see if they will fund replacements (e.g., in locations where flows can affect downstream communities)	
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.3—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will increase stream temperatures and alter flow regimes.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase habitat resilience for cold-water aquatic organisms by restoring structure and function of streams.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Restore riparian areas to increase hydrologic function and retain cold water.	Reintroduce beaver where beaver and management of westslope cutthroat trout are compatible.	Remove or relocate roads adjacent to riparian areas, channels, and floodplains where they inhibit complexity; minimize cumulative effect of road network on surface and subsurface flow.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Moderate	High, but spatially limited
Implementation urgency	Near term	Long term	Near-medium term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Where riparian areas limit the availability of cold-water habitat	Where beaver will not affect barriers; in stream reaches >1 mile; in larger population conservation networks; where brook trout are absent	Where roads currently cause problems or may in the future, especially where roads have substantial linear effects
Opportunities for implementation	Mining restoration projects	Talk to insurance companies to see if they will fund replacements (e.g., in locations where flows can affect downstream communities)	
Cost			Very high cost
Barriers to implementation		Beaver habitat can enhance brook trout populations	

Table 5A.4—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will increase stream temperatures and alter flow regimes.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase habitat resilience for cold-water aquatic organisms by restoring structure and function of streams.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B
Tactic	Acquire Montana water compact/rights in a strategic way.	Increase efficiency of irrigation techniques.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Low–moderate (for instream flows)	Low–moderate
Implementation urgency	Long term	Long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Where future plans for water development may overlap with areas where native fish populations may be declining	Where future plans for water development may overlap with areas where native fish populations may be declining
Opportunities for implementation		
Cost		
Barriers to implementation		

Table 5A.5—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Continued livestock grazing will compound stress caused by increased stream temperatures.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Manage livestock grazing to restore ecological function of riparian vegetation and channels.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Comply with all existing standards and guidelines for maintaining water quality in streams and riparian areas; facilitate compliance through monitoring.	Use innovative techniques to fund and maintain and implement improvements (e.g., riparian fencing, rest-rotation systems, off-channel water, exclosures).	Identify and prioritize vacant allotments for retirement.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	Moderate–high (high for techniques that physically prevent access)	High, but spatially limited and opportunistic
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All locations, with emphasis on areas that are important in terms of ecological value and large financial investment	All locations, with emphasis on areas that are important in terms of ecological value and prior financial investment; prioritize areas with pure native fish populations that are under imminent threat	All locations where vacant allotments exist and opportunities allow
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation	Lack of public support	Beetle-killed trees damage fences	

Table 5A.6—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Continued livestock grazing will compound stress caused by increased stream temperatures.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Manage livestock grazing to restore ecological function of riparian vegetation and channels.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Incorporate aquatic resource values in prioritization and implementation of land management plans.	Convene regional meeting to identify and prioritize key fisheries areas; develop implementation plan that describes line officer actions.	Continue and formalize agency coordination for fish habitat conservation (where projects are planned).
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate–high, depending on how well values are incorporated	High, but depends on spatial extent and number of stakeholders involved	High, but spatially dependent
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All locations, as management plan revisions occur	All areas of Montana	Where projects are planned and where existing conservation issues related to grazing exist
Opportunities for implementation		East-side range meetings; efforts to avoid listing of westside cutthroat trout populations; monitoring plans	
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.7—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Warmer temperatures will increase stream temperature and risk of invasion by nonnative fish species.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Manage nonnative fish populations to eliminate or reduce their impact on native fish.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Construct barriers to restrict nonnative fish.	Remove nonnative fish and re-establish or restore western cutthroat trout populations.	Secure, maintain, and improve riparian stream function and flows, including temperature.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term (Big Hole and other locations with urgent issues); Long term (everywhere else)	Near term (Big Hole and other locations with urgent issues); Long term (everywhere else)	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Where feasible and necessary (Big Hole, Selway Meadows-Red Rock, all drainages on Rocky Mountains front)	Where feasible and necessary (Big Hole, Selway Meadows-Red Rock, all drainages on Rocky Mountains front)	Where native fish populations and impaired riparian function exist, as identified in annual coordination meetings
Opportunities for implementation		East-side range meetings; efforts to avoid listing of westside cutthroat trout populations; monitoring plans	
Cost		Potentially high	
Barriers to implementation	Not socially feasible	Not socially feasible (e.g., high value recreational fishery) or may be unacceptable to kill all nonnatives	

Greater Yellowstone Area Subregion

Adaptation options for fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area are summarized in tables 5A-8 through 5A-5A-13.

Table 5A.8—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will reduce summer streamflows.		
Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase streamflows and moderate changes in instream flows.		
Strategy objective: Promote resilience.		
	Specific tactic – A	**Specific tactic – B**	**Specific tactic – C**
Tactic	Pulse flows during critical times (high temperatures) from regulated streams.	Reduce water withdrawals and improve efficiency for agriculture (especially irrigation), municipal, and industrial uses.	Secure water rights for instream flows.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate–high	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	All regulated streams	Where water demands overlap with current and future suitable habitat	Where fish and suitable habitat overlap
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.9—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Reduced snowpack will reduce summer streamflows.			
Adaptation strategy/approach: Provide opportunities for native fish to move and find suitable stream temperatures.			
Strategy objective: Promote resilience.			
Tactic	Increase the patch size of favorable habitat to enhance viable populations and allow adfluvial life histories.	Modify or remove barriers to increase connectivity between areas of cold-water habitat.	Identify and map where groundwater inputs provide cold water.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Where native fish currently exist; where suitable habitat is nearby; where non-natives are not present or can be effectively managed; where populations are fragmented and need greater connectivity	Where barriers prevent movement to suitable habitat, and where removal will not increase invasion of non-natives	All locations
Opportunities for implementation		Locations that are economically advantageous	
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.10—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Water temperature will increase, and the hydrograph will change in terms of magnitude and seasonality.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Protect and enhance fish habitat.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Restore degraded riparian vegetation, reconnect floodplains to rivers.	Reintroduce beaver, encourage beaver recolonization.	Disconnect roads from stream networks to reduce sedimentation.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate–high	Moderate	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Smaller streams will be most effective, especially in lower-elevation valleys; prioritize areas with native fish or potentially suitable habitat	Where brook trout do not occur (beaver dams tend to facilitate brook trout) and where suitable beaver habitat exists	Where roads adjacent to streams have the potential to erode and deliver sediment
Opportunities for implementation	Smaller streams	Locations that are economically advantageous	
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.11—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Water temperature will increase, and cold-water fish habitat will decline.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce stress on native fish species to enhance their ability to tolerate climate-induced stress.

Strategy objective: Reduce stressors

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Limit angling pressures on native fish.	Reduce effects of recreation and grazing disturbance in streams.	Reduce nonnative (non-fish) aquatic species and diseases.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Mid term	Mid term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Locations that are at or near temperature thresholds for native fish	Where recreation and grazing activities are high, coincident with occupied or projected suitable fish habitat	Where nonnative aquatic species and diseases occur, coincident with occupied or projected suitable fish habitat
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.12—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Warmer temperatures will increase stream temperature and risk of invasion by nonnative fish species.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Manage nonnative fish populations to eliminate or reduce their impact on native fish.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Encourage increased take/harvest of nonnatives, especially near long-term strongholds for natives.	Remove nonnatives with manual or chemical techniques.	Implement physical or electrical barriers to exclude nonnatives.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Low–moderate (need heavy harvest at the invasion front)	Moderate–high	Moderate–high
Implementation urgency	Mid term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Areas with heavy recreation and sport fishing; most effective at the front of invasions	Where long-term suitable habitat for natives is available and non-natives are present	Where long-term suitable habitat for natives is available and nonnatives are present
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 5A.13—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on fisheries in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Higher temperatures will increase wildfire occurrence that can lead to erosion and mass wasting.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase resilience to fire-related disturbance.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Implement fuel treatments (thinning, prescribed burning) to reduce wildfire severity and size.	Disconnect roads from stream networks to reduce erosion and sediment delivery to streams.	Install erosion control structures following wildfires.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Mid term	Mid term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Areas where canopy and surface fuels are high, adjacent to known native fish populations and habitat	Areas adjacent to known native fish populations and habitat	Where wildfire has occurred and erosion would affect known native fish populations and habitat
Opportunities for implementation	Areas that are already being targeted for fuel treatment, especially in the wildland-urban interface		
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Chapter 6: Effects of Climate Change on Forest Vegetation in the Northern Rockies Region

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Introduction

The projected rapid changes in climate will affect the unique vegetation assemblages of the Northern Rockies region in myriad ways, both directly through shifts in vegetation growth, mortality, and regeneration, and indirectly through changes in disturbance regimes and interactions with changes in other ecosystem processes, such as hydrology, snow dynamics, and exotic invasions (Bonan 2008; Hansen and Phillips 2015; Hansen et al. 2001; Notaro et al. 2007). These impacts, taken collectively, could change the way vegetation is managed by public land agencies in this area. Some species may be in danger of rapid decreases in abundance, while others may undergo range expansion (Landhäusser et al. 2010). New vegetation communities may form, while historical vegetation complexes may

simply shift to other areas of the landscape or become rare. Juxtaposed with climate change concerns are the consequences of other land management policies and past activities, such as fire exclusion, fuels treatments, and grazing. A thorough assessment of the responses of vegetation to projected climate change is needed, along with an evaluation of the vulnerability of important species, communities, and vegetation-related resources that may be influenced by the effects, both direct and indirect, of climate change. This assessment must also account for past management actions and current vegetation conditions and their interactions with future climates.

This chapter addresses the potential impacts of climate change on forest vegetation in the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USFS) Northern Region and the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA), hereafter called the Northern Rockies region (fig. 6.1). Then, based on the

Figure 6.1—The Northern Rockies (NR) assessment area that includes the Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service and the Greater Yellowstone Area (Yellowstone National Park and surrounding areas). Presented are existing vegetation types by the five geographic sub-areas used to stratify assessments in this report. This map was created from the LANDFIRE Existing Vegetation Type map by aggregating the National Vegetation Classification Standard vegetation types into a set of vegetation types that has some meaning across the NR at this coarse scale. This map is intended to convey current vegetation of the NR.

Existing Vegetation Types

- Dry Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-fir Forests
- Eastern grasslands (C3/C4 Mix)
- Lodgepole Pine and Aspen Mixed Conifer Forests
- Mixed Mesic White Pine, Cedar, Hemlock, Grand Fir Forests
- Montane shrubs
- Palouse (western grassland)
- Riparian
- Sagebrush dominated systems
- Sparsely vegetated
- Western Larch Mixed Conifer Forests
- Whitebark Pine-Spruce-Fir Forests
- Woodland
- Agriculture
- Barren-Rock/Sand/Clay
- Developed
- Exotics
- Open water
- Perrenial Ice/Snow
- Northern Rockies Subregional Areas

climate impacts assessment, we present an evaluation of the vulnerability of important tree species, vegetation types, and resources of concern to projected climate change effects. Last, we present various adaptation actions to address climate change vulnerabilities.

This chapter has six major sections. In the introductory section, we define terminology used throughout the chapter and provide background material on the details of the assessment including the scales, geographic areas, and pertinent information used to make our assessments. We discuss how to evaluate uncertainty in climate change projections and vegetation response. We also summarize the methods used to make projections of vegetation response to changing climate. The second section contains important ecological background information that was used to assess climate change impacts and projected climate change responses for 17 tree species, 5 forest vegetation types, and 3 resources of concern. The third section presents information on the tree species, types, or resources of concern that are important when evaluating climate change responses. In the fourth section, we rate the vulnerability of the species, vegetation types, and resources of concern to climate change using information from the third section. In the fifth section, we discuss adaptation strategies and management actions that can be used to address likely impacts of climate change. The final section is a concluding discussion.

This chapter uses the best available information about climate change effects on vegetation in the Northern Rockies. We have integrated broad-scale modeling results with a detailed synthesis of climate change literature for the region. This chapter was written to aid land managers in addressing climate change effects on forest vegetation in land management planning and development of management strategies. This chapter does *not* include the detail needed to address climate change effects at the project level, but it does include valuable information and syntheses that can be used in project planning and in addressing broad concerns at large spatial scales.

Terminology

Climate

Evaluations of climatic trends can be confusing, mostly because weather and climate vary at different spatial and temporal scales. To reduce this confusion, it is often helpful to clearly define the terms and explain the scales that distinguish weather, climate variability, and climate change. *Weather* is the hourly, daily, weekly, or monthly summaries in temperature, precipitation, wind, humidity, and other atmospheric conditions observed at a given place or across a large region. Weather changes at relatively small temporal scales (quickly) and it can change significantly as one moves north or south, east or west, or up and down in elevation. Weather is difficult to predict more than a few days in advance. *Climate* is a statistical characterization of the weather, averaged over many years. The World Meteorological Organization defines it as the average

30-year weather patterns of a region. *Climate variability* is the variation in weather statistics over relatively broad regions and long time periods. Climate variability can be caused by underlying climatic processes, such as changes in patterns of ocean temperatures. The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), for example, are two sources of climate variability in western North America (Newman et al. 2003). ENSO oscillations occur over 2- to 7-year periods (Gershunov and Barnett 1998), while PDO oscillations occur on a longer cycle (20–50 years) (Heyerdahl et al. 2002). External forcings, such as changes in solar radiation, large volcanic eruptions, and increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, also influence climate variability. *Climate change* is a nonrandom change in climate that is measured over several decades or longer. It is technically defined as a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the climate or in its variability, persisting for an extended period (decades or longer). Like climate variability, climate change may be due to natural internal processes or to external forcings. A *climate scenario* is a plausible and often simplified representation of one possible future climate, based on a consistent set of known principles about the climate system used as input to climate models.

Vegetation

Several general terms are used in vegetation ecology to describe how ecosystems respond to climate change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] 2007). *Adaptive capacity* is the ability of a plant, species, or system to adjust to climate change (including climate variability and extremes) to moderate potential damages, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences. *Exposure* is the nature and degree to which a system is exposed to significant climate variations (Glick et al. 2010). *Sensitivity* is the degree to which a system is affected, either adversely or beneficially, by climate variability or change. The effect may be direct, such as crop yield decreases in response to a higher temperature, or indirect, such as damage caused by an increase in the frequency of coastal flooding due to sea-level rise. *Resilience* is the degree to which ecosystems can recover from one or more disturbances without a major shift in composition or function, whereas *resistance* is the ability of an organism, population, community, or ecosystem to withstand perturbations without significant loss of structure or function (i.e., remain unchanged) (Holling 1973; Seidl et al. 2016). From a management perspective, resistance includes (1) the degree to which communities are able to resist change, such as that from warming climates, and (2) the manipulation of the physical environment to counteract and resist physical and biological change (i.e., cutting, burning, harvest treatments). *Vulnerability* is the degree to which a system is susceptible to, and unable to cope with, the adverse effects of climate change, including associated climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude, and rate of climate

change and variation to which a system is exposed, its sensitivity, and its adaptive capacity.

Other terms describe how ecosystem processes that are affected by climate change will influence vegetation. In general, *stressors* are any physical, chemical, or biological entity that can induce an adverse ecosystem response. Stressors can arise from physical and biological alterations of natural disturbances, increased unmanaged demand for ecosystem services (such as recreation), alterations of the surrounding landscape, chemical alterations in regional air quality, or a legacy of past management actions (Joyce et al. 2008).

Management

Climate change *adaptation* is an adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which is intended to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities (Spittlehouse and Stewart 2004). Adaptation is often referred to as "preparedness," and is based on scientifically supported strategic and tactical activities that support sustainable resource management. Adaptation addresses specific aspects of the sensitivity of resources to an altered climate. An *adaptation tactic* is a specific action described in management and planning documents that supports adaptation strategies and is implemented on the ground (e.g., reducing stem density and surface fuels in a dry mixed-conifer forest, or increasing culvert size on roads along a stream that is expected to have higher flood volumes) (Joyce et al. 2008; Millar et al. 2007a; West et al. 2009). *Assisted migration* is deliberately planting species to colonize new habitats.

In an ideal sense, *ecological restoration* is defined as the practice of reestablishing historical plant and animal communities in a given area and the renewal of ecosystem and cultural functions necessary to maintain these communities now and into the future (Egan and Howell 2001). However, this ideal may be impossible to manage because: (1) little is known about historical conditions; (2) many key species may already be lost; (3) some efforts may be prohibitively expensive; and most importantly, (4) future climates will create novel ecosystems. As a result, The Society for Ecological Restoration has opted for a definition that states that ecological restoration is "the process of renewing and maintaining ecosystem health".

The USFS manual (FSM) direction contained in FSM 2020 includes objectives and a policy for restoration. The objectives of the USFS ecosystem restoration policy are to:

1. *Restore and maintain ecosystems* that have been damaged, degraded, or destroyed by reestablishing the composition, structure, pattern, and ecological processes.

2. *Manage for resilient ecosystems* that have a greater capacity to withstand stressors, absorb and recover from disturbances, and reorganize and renew themselves, especially under changing and uncertain environmental conditions.

3. *Achieve long-term ecological sustainability* and provide a broad range of ecosystem services to society.

The USFS emphasizes ecosystem restoration across all National Forest System lands with the goal of attaining resilient ecosystems. All strategic plans, including the USFS Strategic Plan, land and resource management plans, and area plans, must include goals and objectives to sustain the resilience and adaptive capacity of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems by reestablishing, maintaining, or modifying their composition, structure, function, and connectivity. The goals and objectives must be established within this framework as defined by laws, Indian treaties and tribal values and desires, and regulations. The goals and objectives also must consider public values and desires, social concerns, economic sustainability, the historical range of variability, ecological integrity, current and likely future ecological capabilities, a range of climate and other environmental change projections, the best available scientific information, and technical and economic feasibility to achieve desired conditions for National Forest System lands. A primary element of an integrated approach is to identify and eliminate or reduce stressors that degrade or impair the ecosystem. Restoration activities should also take into account social and ecological influences at multiple scales and incorporate the concept of a dynamic system and ecological trajectory. Some ecosystems may have been altered to such an extent that reestablishing components of the historical range of variability may not be ecologically or economically possible. Therefore, goals and activities should focus on restoring the underlying processes that create functioning ecosystems.

Functional restoration, which is the restoration of abiotic and biotic processes in degraded ecosystems, focuses on the underlying processes that may be degraded, regardless of the structural condition of the ecosystem. Whereas ecological restoration tends to seek a historical reference condition, functional restoration focuses on the dynamic processes that drive structural and compositional patterns. Functional restoration aims to restore functions and improve structures with a long-term goal of restoring interactions between function and structure. It may be, however, that a functionally restored system will look very different from the historical reference condition in terms of structure and composition, and these disparities cannot be easily corrected because some threshold of degradation has been crossed or the environmental drivers, such as climate, that influenced structural and (especially) compositional development have changed.

Assessment Levels

This chapter uses three levels to assess the impacts of climate change on forest vegetation: species, vegetation types, and resource concerns. We selected these levels and their elements to ensure flexibility when considering the complex ecological concerns across the Northern Rockies. Not only did this structure facilitate consistent and comprehensive

assessments for the major management concerns identified in this chapter, but it also allows for the addition of new elements that may be identified in the future.

Species

At the finest level of assessment, we address climate change effects at the species or species group level. We allowed for the use of species groups by aggregating species by genera, guilds, plant functional types, or lifeforms. In this chapter we had only one species group: all cottonwood species (*Populus trichocarpa*, *P. angustifolia, P. deltoides*). This allows us to address regional concerns about important individual species or species groups that might be adversely affected by climate change. All tree species cannot be addressed, so the list of species and species groups included here represents only those species that are identified by the government agencies in the Northern Rockies as critical for addressing both management and climate change concerns.

Vegetation Types

Vegetation type assessment addresses climate change concerns at a coarse vegetation community type level so that future evaulations can be spatially described using a map or geographic information system layer. Five forest vegetation types are assessed to summarize potential climate change impacts: dry ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)/Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) forests; western larch (*Larix occidentalis*) mixed mesic forests; mixed mesic western white pine (*Pinus monticola*), western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*), western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), and grand fir (*Abies grandis*) forests; lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) mixed subalpine forests; and whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) mixed

upper subalpine forests. These types are shown in both an existing vegetation map (fig. 6.1) and a potential vegetation map (fig. 6.2). Both maps and resultant categories were derived from LANDFIRE data (Rollins 2009), which covered the entire Northern Rockies region. Many of the estimated effects of climate change were based on evaluations of MC2 model simulations (see MC2 section), and figure 6.3 portrays the MC2 vegetation types used to generate the model results in Appendix 6A. The potential vegetation type map and MC2 map can be used to estimate species assemblages in the absence of disturbance.

Resource Concerns

Three resource concerns related to forest vegetation are also addressed in this report. First, we considered the impact of climate change and vegetation response on *landscape heterogeneity*, defined as the diversity in landscape structure or patch characteristics. We assume that landscapes with high heterogeneity are more resilient to disturbance (Ahlqvist and Shortridge 2010; Oliver et al. 2010; Turner 1987). The second resource concern is *timber production,* as represented by timber volume. We attempted to address impacts of climate change on timber production solely via vegetation response, not from disturbance. Finally, we describe climate impacts on *carbon reserves* across the Northern Rockies. Resource specialists in the Northern Rockies region selected these resource concerns.

Geographic Stratification

The Northern Rockies region was stratified into five geographic subregions (fig. 6.1). The Western Rockies subregion includes northwestern Montana and northern

Figure 6.2—Potential vegetation types for the entire NRAP assessment area by the five geographic subregions. This map was created from the LANDFIRE Biophysical settings map by aggregating the National Vegetation Classification Standard vegetation types into a set of vegetation types that has some meaning at this coarse scale.

Vegetation Types

Dry Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-fir Forests
Eastern grasslands (C3/C4 Mix)
Lodgepole Pine and Aspen Mixed Conifer Forests
Mixed Mesic White Pine, Cedar, Hemlock, Grand Fir Forests
Montane shrubs
○ Northern Rockies Subregional Areas

Palouse (western grassland)
Riparian
Sagebrush dominated systems
Sparsely vegetated
Western Larch Mixed Conifer Forests

Whitebark Pine-Spruce-Fir Forests
Woodland
Barren-Rock/Sand/Clay
Open Water
Perrennial Ice/Snow

Figure 6.3—The MC2 vegetation types for the assessment area by the five geographic subregions. This map was created from an MC2 modeling effort (see appendix 6A).

and central Idaho. The Central Rockies subregion includes west-central Montana and all lands west of the Continental Divide and north to Canada. The Eastern Rockies subregion includes the Rocky Mountain Front and southwestern Montana. The GYA includes all lands that have been officially designated as part of this high-profile area, including Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, the southern end of the Gallatin National Forest and the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, the western side of the Custer National Forest, and parts of the Shoshone, Bridger-Teton, Caribou, and Targhee National Forests. Last, the Grassland area includes all lands east of the Eastern Rockies subregion boundary to the eastern border of the USFS Northern Region.

The main purpose of dividing the assessment area into five subregions was to restrict climate change projections, impacts, and adaptation options to a specific part of the Northern Rockies region. The five subregions shown in figure 6.1 were included for all authors to standardize the spatial scales of their sections, but some authors of this chapter chose to evaluate climate change impacts at the national forest or finer scale. As a result, this chapter does not include formal sections for each subregion. Instead, the authors tuned their material to the subregion if the data and information allowed.

Uncertainty

Uncertainty is an expression of the degree to which something is unknown. Uncertainty can result from a lack of information or from a disagreement about what is known or even knowable. Uncertainty can also result from known

and unknown errors. It may have many types of sources, from quantifiable errors in data to ambiguously defined concepts or terms, or uncertain projections of human behavior. Uncertainty can therefore be represented by quantitative measures, such as a range of values, or by qualitative statements, such as assessment of the judgment of a team of experts. Uncertainty differs from variability; variability is the actual range of a value or ecosystem variable.

All the climate models (global circulation models or GCMs) that predict rapidly warming climates have a high degree of uncertainty (IPCC 2007). Although there is little debate that atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO_2) is increasing and that this increase will cause major changes in climate (IPCC 2007), there is a great deal of uncertainty about the magnitude and rate of climate change (Roe and Baker 2007; Stainforth et al. 2005). This uncertainty will almost undoubtedly increase as climate projections are made at finer resolutions, for different geographic areas, and for longer time periods (Knutti and Sedlacek 2013). The range of possible projections of future climate from GCMs (an increase in global average annual temperature of anywhere from 2.9 to 14.4 °F) is much greater than the variability of climate over the past two or three centuries (Stainforth et al. 2005), and the variability across GCMs is greater than the variability in the climate projections of each model. Because it is impossible to know whether society will respond to climate change by employing technological innovations to minimize CO_2 emissions or to mitigate its effects, most GCMs also simulate a suite of scenarios that capture a range of possible strategies to deal with climate change, introducing yet another source of uncertainty. Moreover, it is the high variability of climate extremes, not the gradual change of

average climate, that will drive most ecosystem responses to the climate-mitigated disturbance and plant dynamics, and these rare, extreme events are the most difficult to predict (Easterling et al. 2000).

Yet another source of uncertainty in attempting to predict ecosystem change is introduced when we try to predict how the Earth's vegetation and ecosystems will respond to highly uncertain climate change (Araujo et al. 2005). Mechanistic ecological simulation of climate, vegetation, and disturbance dynamics across landscapes is still in its infancy (Keane and Finney 2003; Sklar and Costanza 1991; Walker 1994). Many current ecosystem simulation models are missing the important direct interactions of disturbance, hydrology, and land use with climate that will surely dictate effects on plant distributions (Notaro et al. 2007). Little is known about the interactions among climate, vegetation, and disturbance, and interactions among different disturbance regimes (fire and beetles, for example) could create novel landscape behaviors. It is also difficult to determine how the critical plant and animal life cycle processes of reproduction, growth, and mortality will respond to changing climate (Gworek et al. 2007; Ibáñez et al. 2007; Keane et al. 2001; Lambrecht et al. 2007). These modeling uncertainties greatly increase as projections are made further into the future and at finer spatial scales (Xu et al. 2009).

Managers must account for these uncertainties when using the information in this report in any land management plan or analysis. Sometimes there is less uncertainty in implementing conventional restoration designs than in designing restoration or treatment plans that attempt to account for climate change impacts. For some areas or resources, such as the restoration of western larch ecosystems, addressing climate change in management plans may require only minor changes to current management practices. In other situations, major changes to current treatment designs may be needed, such as in ponderosa pine ecosystems. All climate effects will be manifested in different ways on different landscapes, and as a result, there is no magic "one size fits all" prescription that can be adopted everywhere. The decision to modify management actions to include climate change effects must always include an assessment of the uncertainty of that modification and, most importantly, local conditions.

Climate Change Assessment Techniques

Anticipating ongoing rapid climate change, ecologists are attempting to project the effects of those changes on myriad ecosystem processes across various scales (Clark et al. 2001; Joyce et al. 2014; Schumacher et al. 2006). Using traditional ecological field methods to explore climate change response may be difficult because of the complex interactions among ecological processes, disturbance, and climate at multiple temporal and spatial scales (McKenzie et al. 2014). It would simply be too costly and time-intensive to sample at the large spatial scales and long timespans need to quantify vegetation response (Keane and Finney 2003).

In general, there are four techniques to assess and project the effects of climate change on vegetation and other resource concerns. The first is *expert opinion,* and it involves having experts in the fields of climate change, ecology, and vegetation dynamics qualitatively assess what will happen to vegetation under various climate change scenarios. Most of the papers about climate change effects on vegetation used in this report were written by experts who have evaluated future climate projections and used their experience to deduce how vegetation will respond to different climates. Information from these papers was included in this report, but expert opinions were used only when there was no other information from the other assessment techniques.

The second technique is *field assessment*, where extensive field sampling or remote sensing projects monitor vegetation change in response to changing climate. Field sampling involves establishing plots in networks across the landscape, detecting change between plot measurements, and correlating these changes to climate data. Van Mantgem and Stephenson (2007), for example, related high tree mortalities to climate change using a network of monitoring plots. Demography studies track individuals over time, rather than using periodic plot-level inventories, to fully understand the role of climate relative to other risk factors such as competition, variation in physiology and function, and vulnerability to insects and pathogens. Such demography datasets are rare (Iverson and McKenzie 2013), but one study has tracked more than 27,000 individuals of 40 species for about a decade to address interactions over an area of the southeastern United States (Clark et al. 2011). The only demographic dataset available for the Northern Rockies region is the USFS Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) database. The extensive FIA dataset has been summarized to describe vegetation shifts due to climate change elsewhere (McNulty et al. 1994) but not in the Northern Rockies region. Although field assessment techniques are the most reliable and most useful, they are often intractable (see previous paragraphs) because of the large areas and long time periods needed to properly sample vegetation at the appropriate scales to detect changes as a result of climate.

The third method involves the use of statistical analysis to create empirical models that project climate change response. Most of the studies that project the habitat, range, or occupational shifts of Northern Rockies tree species from climate warming use species distribution models (SDMs) to project future geographic ranges (Hansen and Phillips 2015; Iverson and Prasad 2002; Warwell et al. 2007). SDMs, also called bioclimatic envelope models, niche models, and species envelope models, are developed by linking current climate with the current distribution of a species of interest by means of advanced statistical modeling (Guisan and Zimmermann 2000; Watling et al. 2012). Then, using the statistical model, a future species distribution is computed using projected future climate data as inputs rather than the past climate. However, SDMs are inherently flawed for projecting future species distributions in that they relate past

species occurrence to climate, resulting in predictions of potential species habitat, not species distribution (Iverson and McKenzie 2013). The projected potential habitat is only reflective of the distribution of species today and does not relate climate to historical distributions. One of the biggest limitations to this approach is that many studies have now found that most species distributions are not in equilibrium with climate, thereby causing SDMs to miss those areas conducive to occupation by the species but where the species is currently absent. Moritz and Agudo (2013), for example, found many species in the fossil record existed over a wider range of climates than is recorded today.

Another limitation of empirical models is that the critical ecological processes, such as pollination, cone production, seed dispersal, seed germination, seedling establishment, tree growth, mycorrhizae influences, competitive interactions, disturbance, mutualism, and mortality, as well as the many disturbance processes, are not represented in SDMs, yet these are the main processes that control species abundance and presence (Iverson and McKenzie 2013; Watling et al. 2012). Dullinger et al. (2012), for example, found that range shifts predicted by SDMs retracted by more than 40 percent when seed dispersal was included in the prediction process. Girardin et al. (2008) found that process models were much better at projecting climate change effects on tree growth because they accounted for changes in soil moisture and growing season. Moreover, the climates used to develop SDMs represent a very small slice of time (50–100 years) relative to the long time periods that existing trees, such as the long-lived whitebark pine (>1,000 years of age), have survived on the landscape today, so SDMs cannot capture the climate for all stages in the life cycle of today's trees. Most mature trees used to evaluate species occurrence in statistical models may have lived for hundreds to thousands of years and continued to survive despite major changes in climate. Along those same lines, one of the major problems of SDM modeling is that there is no sense of how long it will take for a species to be eliminated from one site and effectively populate a new site; because migration is a slow process, the timing of SDM model results are often incompatible with management timeframes. In addition, SDMs assume that the current distribution of the species is a consequence of climate alone, yet we know that fire exclusion, exotic diseases, and management actions have also influenced species occurrence (Gustafson 2013; Iverson and McKenzie 2013). Therefore, it is difficult to have confidence in SDM projections for fine-scale applications; they are informative, but not prognostic, especially on the short time scales of decades and half-centuries required by land management. This is especially true when addressing the high uncertainty of the GCM-derived climate used by the SDMs.

The last and perhaps the most effective technique uses simulation modeling to assess climate-mediated vegetation responses (Gustafson 2013; Iverson and McKenzie 2013; McKenzie et al. 2014). Here, future projections of climate are used as inputs to simple-to-complex ecological models to simulate the climate change effects (Baker 1989; He et

al. 2008; Merriam et al. 1992; Perry and Millington 2008). A variety of existing models simulate ecological change at broad (global, regional) and fine (ecosystem, stand, point) scales (Bugmann 2001; Cramer et al. 2001). However, landscape-scale (40–400 square miles) models are perhaps the most critical for predicting effects of climate change because this is a key scale at which most ecosystem processes and links are manifested and the scale at which most management decisions are made (Cushman et al. 2007; Littell et al. 2011; McKenzie et al. 2014). Finer-scale stand models cannot incorporate important exogenous disturbance regimes because of their limited spatial extent, and coarse-scale dynamic global vegetation models (DGVMs) are unable to simulate important plant-, species- and canopy-level competition and disturbance effects, such as successional shifts, community dynamics, and differential disturbance effects among species (McKenzie et al. 2014).

To realistically model species composition changes, a mechanistic, process-driven simulation approach might be preferable to emphasize those physical drivers of vegetation dynamics that are directly related to climate (Gustafson 2013). However, mechanistic model design is often overly complex and therefore currently intractable because of (1) overly detailed parameterization of life histories and physiologies for all species, (2) high complexity of many interacting disturbance factors, and (3) necessarily high-resolution modeling over large areas (Lawler et al. 2006). Dynamic global vegetation models, such as the MC2 model used in this report (see next subsection), operate at scales from regional (hundreds of miles) to global (degrees of latitude and longitude). Although DGVMs are valuable for projections of climate change across large domains, these models aggregate species into lifeforms or plant functional types (PFTs) using structural or functional attributes, which may be useless to local managers (Bachelet et al. 2003; Bonan 2008; Neilson et al. 2005). Most of these models project shifts to more drought-tolerant and disturbance-tolerant species or PFTs for future climates. This general shift in vegetation may be offset by physiological changes induced by CO_2 fertilization, as suggested by a DGVM (MC1) that links water use efficiency to CO_2-simulated expansion of forests into areas where the climate is currently too dry (Bachelet et al. 2003). This issue deserves further study to resolve the extent and duration of such mitigating effects of CO_2; projected effects could differ substantially depending on how relationships are modeled.

To be effective at realistically predicting climate change effects, ecosystem models must simulate disturbances, vegetation, and climate, and also their interactions across multiple scales (Purves and Pacala 2008). Yet few models simulate ecosystem processes with the mechanistic detail needed to realistically represent important interactions among landscape processes, vegetation dynamics, disturbance regimes, and climate (Keane et al. 2015b; Riggs et al. 2015). Direct interactions between climate and vegetation, for example, may be more realistically represented by simulating daily carbon (photosynthesis, respiration), water

(evapotranspiration), and nutrient (nitrogen, phosphorus) dynamics at the plant level than by simulating vegetation development annually using state-and-transition modeling approaches (Keane et al. 2015a). A fully mechanistic approach, however, may be difficult for both conceptual and computational reasons, and some simulated processes may always require a stochastic or empirical approach (Falk et al. 2007; McKenzie et al. 2014).

We used output from the DGVM MC2 to standardize our evaluation of change and vegetation responses for the Northern Rockies region. Output from this model is presented in Appendix 6A, and this output was used by all authors in developing the material on future climate effects on vegetation and in the vulnerability assessment. We did not use MC2 simulated species projections in the following sections.

MC2 Model

MC2 is a new implementation of the MC1 DGVM, which was created to assess the impacts of global climate change on ecosystem structure and function at a wide range of spatial scales from landscape to global (Bachelet et al. 2001; Peterman et al. 2014). MC2 is short for "MC1 version 2." MC1 was produced by combining physiologically based biogeographic rules, originally defined in the Mapped Atmosphere-Plant-Soil System (MAPSS) model (Neilson 1995), with biogeochemical processes packaged in a modified version of CENTURY (Parton et al. 1987) and a new fire disturbance model, MCFIRE (Lenihan et al. 1998, 2003). The three linked modules simulate biogeography (lifeform interpreter and vegetation classifier), biogeochemistry, and fire. The main functions of the biogeographic module are to (1) predict lifeforms, that is, the composition of deciduous-evergreen tree and C3-C4 grass lifeform mixtures; and (2) classify those lifeforms and their associated biomass into different vegetation classes using a climatologic rule base. The biogeochemical module simulates monthly carbon and nutrient dynamics for a given ecosystem. Aboveground and belowground processes are modeled in detail and include plant production, soil organic matter decomposition, and water and nutrient cycling. Parameterization of this module is based on the lifeform composition of the ecosystems, which is updated annually by the biogeographic module. The fire module simulates the occurrence, behavior, and effects of severe fire. Allometric equations, keyed to the lifeform composition supplied by the biogeographic module, are used to convert aboveground biomass to fuel classes. Fire effects, specifically plant mortality and live and dead biomass consumption, are estimated as a function of simulated fire behavior (fire spread and fire line intensity) and vegetation structure. Fire effects feed back to the biogeochemical module to adjust levels of various carbon and nutrient pools to alter vegetation structure (e.g., leaf area index levels and woody vs. grass-dominated vegetation).

The MC2 model simulations were generated by Tim Sheehan (Conservation Biology Institute). Inputs to the MC2 model include soil (depth, texture, and bulk density), annual average atmospheric CO_2 concentration, and monthly average climate variables (monthly precipitation, mean vapor pressure, and means of daily maximum and minimum temperatures). Historical climate data (1895–2008) were obtained from the PRISM group (Daly et al. 2008) and were upscaled to 30-arc-second resolution (~0.23 square mile). Soils data were derived from STATSGO (Soil Conservation Service 1991) by Kern (1995, 2000) and were scaled to the resolution of the climate data. Future climate projections were available from various GCMs, and we chose the MIROC 3.2 medres (Hasumi and Emori 2004) based on its relatively high overall ranking according to Mote and Salathé (2010). GCM future projections were downscaled to 0.23 square mile using the delta or anomaly method (Fowler et al. 2007). Anomalies between future and mean monthly historical (1971–2000) values were calculated to project estimates for each climate variable and each future month across the study area. We evaluated model output based on two greenhouse gas emissions scenarios described in the IPCC Special Report on Emissions Scenarios (Nakićenović et al. 2000): A1B and A2. Future projections based on the most recent generation of emissions scenarios, the Representative Concentration Pathways, were not available across the entire Northern Rockies region, but the two generations of models are relatively similar in their estimates of global temperature change and spatial patterns of temperature and precipitation change (Knutti and Sedláček 2013).

To evaluate potential climate effects on vegetation assemblages and disturbance regimes and the interaction with land management, we evaluated a suite of vegetation-related and fire occurrence variables output by the MC2 model under historical (1971–2000) conditions and future projections for mid-century and end-of-century. Specifically, we compared past vegetation distributions across the Northern Rockies with fire suppression and without, and made similar comparisons for two future years, 2050 and 2100, under both the A1B and the A2 emissions scenario (Appendix 6A). Aboveground processes were examined by comparing the amount of carbon in live and dead biomass for three time periods (historical, 2030–2050, 2080–2100) and with and without fire suppression (Appendix 6A). Potential evapotranspiration was also evaluated to compare possible changes in aridity (over similar timespans and land management measures). Finally, projected changes in fire disturbance were examined by comparing estimated fire rotation and the percentage of the Northern Rockies burned by time period and suppression management (Appendix 6A).

Forest Vegetation Responses to Climate

In general, many scientists expect the effects of climate change on forest vegetation to be primarily driven by vegetation responses to shifts in disturbance regimes, and then secondarily, through direct effects of vegetation interactions with climate through shifts in regeneration, growth, and mortality processes at both individual plant and community scales (Dale et al. 2001; Flannigan et al. 2009; Temperli et al. 2013). Most of the expected climate changes are reduced precipitation and increased temperatures (see chapter 3), resulting in a reduction in water available to trees and understory plants. These effects will be highly variable across time, from year to year and day to day, and across space, as the footprint of the new climate is manifested at fine to coarse scales. Trees will respond to projected reduced water availability, higher temperatures, and changes in growing season in diverse manners, but because trees cannot pick up their roots and move, any changes in vegetation composition and structure will be the result of changes in both the life cycle processes and responses of a plant to disturbance. This section discusses some possible general responses of trees and forest vegetation to projected climates.

Individual Plant

The effects of climate on forest vegetation can occur as both direct and indirect effects. Direct effects are the immediate and long-term impacts of increased temperature and decreasing water availability on vegetation life cycle processes, as discussed in detail throughout this document. But indirect effects, such as changes to fire, insect, and disease regimes, may be more important and long-lasting than direct effects.

In short, there are several important modes of response of plants to changing climates (Joyce and Birdsey 2000). The first is changes in *productivity*; plant productivity may increase in the future because of increasing temperatures, longer growing seasons, more variable precipitation, and CO_2 fertilization (Aston 2010; Joyce 1995). Increases and decreases in productivity are related to changes in cone crops, tree vigor, and tree defenses. The window of successful seedling *establishment* will change (Ibáñez et al. 2007); increasing drought and high temperatures may narrow the time for effective regeneration in low- elevation Northern Rockies forests and widen the window in high elevation forests. Climate may directly cause tree *mortality* due to temperature or moisture stress on trees; there have been increases in tree mortality around the world from increasing temperatures and drought (Allen et al. 2010; Williams et al. 2010). This of course is related to productivity, but not entirely. Extreme climate events, such as late growing-season frosts and high winds causing blowdowns, may increase because of the predicted increases in climate variability (Notaro 2008), and these events may cause *mortality*

events (Joyce et al. 2014). There will also be disruptions in *phenology* as climates change; many plants may sustain considerable damage or mortality as phenological cues and events are mistimed with new climates (e.g., flowering occurring during dry portions of the growing season) (Cayan et al. 2001). Another related mode is the *genetic* limitation of the species or tree to respond to climate change (Hamrick 2004); specialists may become maladapted to new climates (St. Clair and Howe 2007). Last, plants can respond to climate-mediated changes in *disturbance* in myriad ways (Aitken et al. 2008). This section deals only with those causal mechanisms that drive direct climate responses; the indirect climate-mediated disturbances and responses are detailed in a later section.

Direct effects of temperature on plant growth may increase both photosynthesis and respiration (Waring and Running 1998). Plant photosynthesis rates increase with temperature up to an optimum and then decline thereafter, with the optimum being species-dependent. If projected temperatures exceed the photosynthetic optima for Northern Rockies tree species, such as those in the lower elevation forests, then plant growth might suffer. However, there may be many portions of the Northern Rockies where temperature increases probably will not exceed optima, and there may be photosynthetic gains, such as in montane and subalpine areas. This, of course, depends on whether sufficient water is available to support increased photosynthesis. Respiration also increases with temperature; thus, photosynthetic gains may be lost through growth and maintenance respiration. Respiration occurs even when stomata are closed, so high temperatures coupled with low water availability may result in high respirational losses with few photosynthetic gains (Ryan et al. 1995).

Increased atmospheric CO_2 levels may also directly modify ecophysiological growth processes. Oxygen and CO_2 compete for active Rubisco (primary enzyme used in photosynthesis) sites. Higher atmospheric CO_2 concentrations may increase internal leaf CO_2 concentrations, thereby ensuring CO_2 reaches most of the Rubisco sites, which can result in photosynthetic increases of 2 to 250 percent depending on site and species (Ehleringer and Cerling 1995). Conifers may also have increased water use efficiency in future water-limited environments, and increased water use efficiency may compensate for decreases in water availability and increase growth rates in water-rich environments (Waring and Running 1998). Water use efficiency is the ratio of water used for plant metabolism (photosynthesis and respiration) to the water lost to transpiration. With higher CO_2 concentrations in the atmosphere, the plant would obtain more CO_2 during the time the stomata are open, resulting in less loss through transpiration. Leaf biomass is usually the first to increase as plants attempt to optimize photosynthesis by growing more photosynthetically active tissue (i.e., more leaf area). However, increases in leaf area index are often transitory and greatly dependent on available nitrogen and water. Increases in leaf area might also result in greater rainfall interception, higher snow collection, and greater

canopy evaporation. Increased atmospheric CO_2 levels and increasing temperatures can also interact to increase growth. Photosynthesis has temperature optima that differ by tree species, and warmer temperatures might be closer to the new temperature optima, especially during the cooler early growing season, perhaps resulting in faster growth.

Another major direct effect of warming temperatures is longer growing seasons (Cayan et al. 2001; McKenzie et al. 2008); that is, increases in temperatures often lengthen growing seasons for forest plants. There are concerns that future climates are projected to be highly variable, and the coupling of highly variable daily weather with highly variable growing seasons may increase the chances that plants will be more susceptible to adverse weather during fragile phenological stages (Hanninen 1995). Warm conditions in the early spring, for example, might stimulate bud burst and early growth, only to have these expanding tissues frozen by subsequent frost events. Plant phenological cues may be disrupted or triggered inappropriately because of high weather variability, and while this variability might result in minor damage for mature individuals, it may be fatal for seedlings. This may be especially true in localized frost pockets and narrow valleys that accumulate cold air, resulting in frequent frost during the early growing season. Warmer temperatures may reduce and perhaps eliminate growing season frosts in mountain valleys, thereby allowing more frost-susceptible species, such as ponderosa pine and western larch, to exist in traditional lodgepole pine, subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*), and Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) habitats. Chmura et al. (2011) note that increased temperatures may result in decreased winter chilling that could result in delayed bud burst, reduced flowering, and lower seed germination. Winter dormancy prevents trees from growth flushes during warm winter periods, and future climates may trigger changes in winter dormancy and subject trees to high mortality during those cold snaps after the winter warming.

Snowpack dynamics are also directly influenced by changes in temperature and precipitation and declining snowpacks are expected under future climates (Mote et al. 2005). Most of the water used by Northern Rockies trees usually comes from snowmelt (Waring and Running 1998), so the amount and duration of snowpack have the potential to influence regeneration and growth patterns of forest communities throughout the region. Warming temperatures may cause earlier snowmelt, leading to an earlier start of the growing season. However, earlier snowmelt could also result in longer periods of low soil water during the remaining part of the growing season, effectively shortening the growing season. Earlier snowmelt may also result in greater competition for water across the plants and species that make up the complex plant communities of the Northern Rockies. Plants with roots in the topmost layers of the soil might be able to more effectively capture the rainfall that used to occur as snowfall. This may favor grasses and some forbs over shrubs and trees (Daly et al. 2000). The lower snowpack may allow longer growing seasons in those subalpine and upper subalpine communities where cold and snowpack duration govern tree regeneration and growth; production and regeneration are likely to increase with decreasing snowpacks, especially in those high mountain environments where water is rarely limiting.

An indirect effect of climate change will be the shift in distribution of microsites that facilitate tree regeneration (Jones 2013). While effects of climate change at coarser scales mostly relate to tree growth and mortality, changes to microsite conditions will be likely to govern tree regeneration (Petrie et al. 2016). Microsites suitable for tree regeneration must be addressed in a spatial and temporal context. For example, conditions for tree establishment may be suitable all year on small microsites of up to 1.2 square yards, whereas larger microsites may be conducive to regeneration only during the spring. Researchers in Washington State found that even with major changes in climate, there probably will be ample microsites that are suitable for regeneration of trees (Little et al. 1994). In the Northern Rockies, however, projected climate changes will probably result in smaller and more ephemeral microsites for regeneration. The size, distribution, and duration of suitable microsites potentially will vary more each year and most regeneration might occur only during "wave" years (i.e., years with favorable weather conditions) where plentiful suitable microsites are widely available for long periods of time (see next subsection).

Climate change can also indirectly affect vegetation by altering mycorrhizae dynamics (Amaranthus et al. 1999). Nearly all Northern Rockies conifers depend on mycorrhizae for enhanced water use and nutrient absorption. Even whitebark pine, a species that lives in areas with the highest precipitation in the Northern Rockies, has a mutualistic relationship with several species of fungi (Mohatt et al. 2008). Many trees, particularly those in the seedling and sapling stages, need mycorrhizae to survive, especially in areas of periodically severe water shortage (Walker et al. 1995). The migration of Northern Rockies tree species to more favorable sites in future climates may be entirely governed by the ability of the mycorrhizae to also populate these areas to allow or facilitate tree species establishment (Lankau et al. 2015). Allison and Treseder (2008) found warming increased fungal interactions, but drying caused significant decreases. Without viable populations of mycorrhizae, tree species movement might be significantly slowed or stopped. New microsite conditions created by predicted future climates may be inhospitable to mycorrhizae, but so little is known about how these fungi shift with climate that it is difficult to evaluate how they will respond to climate change (Fitter et al. 2000). Mycorrhizae responses to climate change after increased fire may be more important; fire may reduce the fungi in some areas. This may be especially true if the large, severe fires projected for the future actually occur (Stephens et al. 2014). Severe fires may kill all trees in a large burn, thereby eliminating the host for the mycorrhizae, and perhaps eventually the mycorrhizae themselves. Establishment of trees into these burned areas can be delayed for long periods, decades or even centuries,

as mycorrhizae and trees revegetate the area together (Schowalter et al. 1997).

Perhaps the most important future indirect ecological concern is the role of today's forest conditions and how they affect the ability of tree species to respond to future climate change. Ample research has shown that past and future human land use activities often result in ecological impacts that overwhelm any direct or indirect climate change effects (Moritz and Agudo 2013). Nearly a hundred years of fire suppression activities have resulted in increased tree regeneration and denser forest canopies, coupled with increases in duff, litter, and down dead woody fuels (Arno 1998; Ferry et al. 1995; Keane et al. 2002). Trees in these dense forests are in greater competition for the little water that is available for growth. As a result, trees in many fire-excluded stands are stressed, making them highly susceptible to mortality from secondary stressors, such as insect and disease outbreaks (Anderegg et al. 2012; Wikars and Schimmel 2001), drought (Allen et al. 2010), and fire (Hood et al. 2007). Increased tree densities may also foster increased severity of subsequent disturbances, resulting in more individuals dying and creating larger patches of mortality.

Another ecological concern closely related to fire exclusion is the current climate-mediated decline in forest communities that have recently become established as a result of fire exclusion. Some forests in the region, including the limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) communities along the Rocky Mountain front, became established during the fire exclusion era but may now be declining in some portions of the Northern Rockies region because of increased drought and nonative disease (white pine blister rust). Other Northern Rockies forests, such as ponderosa pine, now have atypical forest compositions and structures due to the century of fire exclusion, and these now denser forests are stressed from both overcrowding and climate change (Millar et al. 2007b). Had fires been allowed to burn, there would probably be significantly less mortality, from either climate change or disturbance, compared to what we are experiencing today, and the mortality levels probably would not be projected to be as high in the future (Holsinger et al. 2014). Moreover, there are areas in the region where trees have encroached into dry grasslands (Arno and Gruell 1986), montane meadows, and subalpine forb fields (Butler 1986). Now, due to increased temperatures and decreased water availability, some of these recently established trees are dying. Examples include the limber pine expansion along the Rocky Mountain front (Taylor and Sturdevant 1998), Douglas-fir encroachment into dry prairie (Arno and Gruell 1986), and subalpine fir encroachment into GYA forb fields (Bigler et al. 2005). There is concern as to whether climate change represents a threat to these modern forest types, which were probably rare in the historical record. Does increased vulnerability in 100-year-old limber pine forests really constitute a management concern? Or is the increase in mortality expected because the forests established in wet periods of the fire exclusion era?

Many forest species in the Northern Rockies region may respond to direct climate warming and drying by expanding their range into new habitats. Migrating to a new site has historically been the primary response of plants to climate change (Huntley 1991). Migration requires that the species be able to quickly occupy newly desirable sites of the future before other species get there or to outcompete other species once they are there. Neilson et al. (2005) detail four basic components of migration (moving to a new site): fecundity, dispersal, establishment, and growth. To be successful in the future, a species must produce enough seeds or propagules (*fecundity*) that are easily dispersed to new sites (*dispersal*), and the seedlings that become established on these sites must be able to grow (*establishment*) so that they can also produce ample propagules that are then dispersed even further (*growth*). As Davis et al. (2005) note, however, the species also must have the genetic capacity to migrate to the new climate and survive into maturity. Adapting in situ can take many forms, such as reducing leaf area to minimize transpiration losses, or surviving perturbations in the new disturbance regimes created by climate change. Most Northern Rockies tree species are long-lived and genetically plastic so that they can survive the wide fluctuations of weather in the future, but the ability to handle both deep drought and modified disturbance regimes may be the most important factor dictating future distributions of forest species (Allen et al. 2010).

It is widely thought that warming climates will result in upward shifts in the elevational distribution of plant species. For example, Lenoir et al. (2008) found that some plant species have moved upward in elevation at a rate of 95 feet per decade. However, it is unclear whether such elevational shifts will drive long-term changes in forest communities, or if other predominating forces will outweigh these upward trends. For example, fire plays a dominant role in most Northern Rockies ecosystems, determining landscape structure and processes. Because even more wildfires are expected as climates change, effects of these large events may overwhelm any shifts in distributional ranges of forest species resulting from climate warming. Further, most plants in the region have slow migration rates, mostly because they are adapted to fire and as such rely more on regenerative organs (e.g., sprouting) than seed dispersal. Finally, implications of an upward elevational migration on forest communities need to be considered within a temporal and spatial context. That is, it may take a century or two for tree species to demonstrate significant elevational shifts due to long life cycles, old maturation ages, highly variable weather, and low dispersal potentials. The potential for tree species to migrate may be entirely different in each of the unique mountain ranges in the region, depending on a host of abiotic and biotic factors (e.g., precipitation levels, invasive species) and available colonizing species.

Most projections for the response of vegetation to climate shifts are for populations of species, not for communities. Little is known about how composition and abundance of biota will change at a community level in response to

climate shifts. Will new plant communities be dominated by generalist species that can exist across a wide variety of biophysical settings? Or will future communities be similar to historical analogs where fire-adapted species dominate? Will future communities be composed of species collections that were historically rare? Answers to these questions have important implications for future land management in that there is a great deal of synergy between plants and species in historical communities, such as interacting via root-grafting, sharing mycorrhizae, and relying on common pollinators, and future community composition may not have as many interactions. Moreover, future communities may not be as diverse because they may be dominated by a limited suite of species.

Climate change can affect important phases of the life cycle processes of plants: reproduction, regeneration, growth, and mortality. Moreover, it can affect plants at various scales from the needle to the tree to the forest, and over seconds to days to years to centuries (Eamus and Jarvis 1989). The following subsections detail possible climate change effects by life cycle processes.

Reproduction

Cone and seed crops for many Northern Rockies trees could be both adversely and beneficially affected by climate change (Ibáñez et al. 2007; LaDeau and Clark 2001). Low-elevation xeric forests might have fewer and smaller cone crops because of increased stand density and water stress. Cone crops might also have a lower percentage of viable seed because of increased tree stress. The infrequency of cone crops coupled with low seed numbers may result in the lack of regeneration in recently burned areas, thereby causing a shift to nonforest vegetation.

The opposite might be true in higher, colder environments where increased temperatures will increase growing season length and thereby increase potential for more cone crops with greater number of seeds. Spruce-fir communities might produce so much seed that they may overwhelm regeneration of other conifers, especially after mixed-severity fires. Subalpine pine species such as whitebark and lodgepole pine have unique cone characteristics (whitebark pine cones facilitate seed dispersal by birds, whereas lodgepole pine cones may be serotinous and opened only by fire), so they may need to rely on disturbance for increased cone abundance.

An indirect result of the interaction of fire, vegetation, and climate is that as fire becomes frequent, some species, primarily trees, may be killed by fire before they reach reproductive maturity and may fail to set cones. Holsinger et al. (2014), for example, found that fires were projected to be so frequent in a western Montana watershed that lodgepole pine seedlings would be killed by fire before they were reproductively mature (around 15 years). Keane et al. (1990) found that ponderosa pine forests needed occasional interfire periods to be greater than 35 years to allow pine seedlings to grow above the lethal scorch height. If fire is too frequent,

plants will not be able to grow to reproductive maturity or the reproductive organs might always be scorched by fire.

Climate warming and increased variability will also affect the phenology of cone crops, but effects may be minimal as plants adapt to new conditions. Some predict higher frost mortality of emerging cones due to an earlier onset of the growing season coupled with high daily temperature variability and lower flowering and seed germination because chilling requirements will not be met (Chmura et al. 2011). Others suggest that frequency and abundance of cone crops will be reduced in the future because of high tree stress from drought (Ibáñez et al. 2007). However, the increased productivity projected for many Northern Rockies forests may overwhelm minor losses from extreme weather events over the long run.

With changing climate, some tree species might be excluded from their current range because warmer temperatures may not allow chilling requirements for the seed (Shafer et al. 2001). The chilling requirement was a major evaluation factor in determining climate change vulnerability in Devine et al. (2012). Similarly, new climates may be asynchronous with the phenology of many tree species. Seed dispersal, for example, may occur at the driest and warmest times. Phenological keys may be out of sync in new climates, especially in a highly variable future, resulting in reduced flowering, growth, and reproduction. On the other hand, these phenological miscues may also occur in disturbance agents; highly variable weather may result in occasional deep frosts that kill beetle larvae, for example.

Regeneration

The life cycle phase in which most tree species are vulnerable to climate is regeneration (Solomon and West 1993). Most tree species in the region reproduce by producing seeds that fall to the ground to germinate and grow into seedlings that then become mature trees. Microsite conditions needed for successful establishment are so demanding that seed germination and survival, especially for seeds that are wind dispersed, are rarely successful (Anderson and Winterton 1996). The successfully germinated seed produces a fragile radicle (embryonic root) that must penetrate the litter, then duff, then soil to put down a root system that will eventually feed the growing aboveground tissue. This penetration process demands moist soil conditions or the radicle and associated cotyledon (developing leaves) and hypocotyl (stem) will dry and die. To become a seedling, the seed requires suitable moisture conditions for long periods of time. Because few seeds become seedlings, many tree species often rely on high seed production to overcome mesic site conditions to ensure successful regeneration; of the millions of seed produced, perhaps at least some will land on moist microsites suitable for establishment. For dry xeric forests, most of the successful regeneration occurs in those wet years when soils are moist for a suitable time and solar insulation does not kill developing leaves and stems. These moist years are often called wave years, and the pulses of regeneration that occur in these years results in even-aged

patches. Projected climate change is likely to decrease the frequency of these wave years, and on the driest sites, the frequency of wave years may be so low that no regeneration may occur, depending on the species. Planting on these newly dry sites may also be ineffective because of the short window of high soil moisture.

At the highest elevations, where the depth and duration of snow cover often governs tree regeneration, warming may enhance regeneration. Most years are moist enough for regeneration at high elevations, but snow remains on sites too long for successful regeneration in many years. With warming temperatures, snow is likely to melt earlier, giving more time for seedlings to survive and grow. Previous warm wave years in upper subalpine ecosystems are often dated by using seedling and sapling ages. Recent observations of invasions of subalpine meadows and balds by subalpine fir, alpine larch (*Larix lyallii*), and Engelmann spruce attest to a high number of sequential warm years over the last decade, which have facilitated regeneration in the high-mountain landscape (Butler 1986). Therefore, climate warming is expected to enhance regeneration at the subalpine and upper subalpine forest ecosystems.

Future climates and their high variability may also affect the ability of forest species to successfully germinate. Seed chilling requirements may not be met during mild winters, thereby reducing germination, and germination could be delayed until the driest parts of the growing season. Nitschke and Innes (2008) found that the chilling requirements were not being met for most low-elevation tree species in British Columbia. Soil temperatures may be too high, causing greater mortality of both germinants and established seedlings (Rochefort et al. 1994).

Climate change may also affect the dispersal properties of the reproductive propagules. Rodents that disperse seeds of ponderosa and western white pine, for example, may migrate or decline because of warmer, drier habitat conditions. Whitebark pine is dispersed by the Clark's nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*), which might shift habitats because of climate-mediated changes; nutcrackers usually nest in high elevation areas with ample snowpack (Tomback 1998), and these nesting habitats are predicted to decline in the future (Westerling et al. 2006). Longer and drier summers and falls also mean that seed dispersal may take place when the ground and litter are the driest and least hospitable for seed germination and establishment (Neilson et al. 2005). Human- and ungulate-mediated seed dispersal of exotic species could also be different in future climates; warmer, drier climates might reduce human and ungulate use to lower exotic seed dispersal. Changes in landscape spatial heterogeneity may also influence mechanisms of nonwind seed dispersal by shifting potential seed sources and changing patch sizes.

Growth and Mortality

Productivity potentially could increase in some Northern Rockies forests with warming climate, resulting in increased vigor and more resistance to stressors (Joyce

1995). Worldwide, Lin et al. (2010) compute increases in biomass of more than 12 percent (20 percent in forests) with climate warming. However, Chmura et al. (2011) note that even with increased productivity, most forests will undergo reduced growth and survival as the climate interacts with the entire tree species life cycle.

Climate can adversely influence growth and mortality in many ways (Bugmann and Cramer 1998; Keane et al. 2001). Projected decreases in water availability may result in shorter effective growing seasons and longer periods of continuous drought in the drier Northern Rockies forests (Williams et al. 2010). Longer drought might require Northern Rockies conifers to close stomata longer to conserve the little water available. Some xeric conifers, such as ponderosa pine and limber pine, have excellent stomatal control and are able to remain closed for long periods of time. Other conifers, such as Douglas-fir, have poor stomatal control, and this may drive leaf water potentials to extremely low values, which might result in intercellular cavitation, tissue damage, and perhaps plant mortality (Sala et al. 2005). The projected increased temperatures will increase both maintenance and growth respiration, especially when stomata are closed. Increased respiration will require additional photosynthetic gains to counterbalance respiration losses, thus demanding even more water in a drier future. If photosynthetic production cannot exceed respiration demands, then the plant becomes stressed, thereby increasing the probability of mortality and susceptibility to insects and disease.

In the most mesic and montane ecosystems, a warming climate is likely to enhance growth and decrease mortality. Wu et al. (2011) found increases in plant growth for many forest and rangeland ecosystems with warming worldwide. Earlier growing seasons with ample moisture, such as that predicted for mesic montane forests in the Northern Rockies, will probably lead to increased productivity and greater growth. Although this increased biomass could result in additional foliar material to increase canopy bulk density and therefore result in higher crown fire potential, it could also result in higher growth rates for timber production and forage. This will be especially true in the higher mountain environments where cold temperatures, not moisture, limit tree growth. Longer, warmer growing seasons might result in higher productivities and greater biomass. The increased biomass will also increase competitive interactions between species, thereby favoring the more shade-tolerant individuals in the absence of disturbance. However, increased biomass could foster more-intense fires, and maybe greater insect and disease outbreaks, such that the more disturbance-tolerant species might ultimately inherit the landscape.

Genetics Concerns

It is widely accepted that climate limits species distributions. Climate is also a major environmental factor affecting plant phenotypes and a critical agent of natural selection, molding among-population genetic variation. Plant

adaptations to local environments have often developed a clinal or continuous response to abiotic and biotic factors such as temperature, frost-free periods, precipitation, fire, insects, and disease. More recently, ecotypic or a discontinuous response to environmental gradients is being recognized based on different soil or edaphic properties. The combination of clinal and ecotypic environmental gradients across the landscape enhances or limits plant survival and long-term persistence.

The hardiness of a plant is determined by its genetic background. Ecological genetics is a field of study investigating the genetic architecture, phenotypic plasticity (ability of an organism to change its phenotype in response to changes in the environment), and adaptive capacity of a species in the context of interactions among and between plant populations and environmental gradients. Ecological genetics and common garden studies are employed to study individual species. Well-designed common garden studies provide information on the adaptive strategy of a species (e.g., generalist, intermediate, or specialist; table 6.1) (Rehfeldt 1994). Processes that shape the genetic architecture of a species include natural selection, migration, genetic drift, and its mating system. Thus, the ability of plant populations to respond to climate change is influenced by the underlying patterns of genetic variation.

Molecular markers can reveal significant genetic diversity and divergence among populations associated with variation among populations (table 6.1). Past historical events affecting divergence among populations can be shaped by a variety of factors. Examples of abiotic factors are fire, glaciation (Hamrick 2004), and volcanic activity; for instance, range shifts east of the Cascades indicated ponderosa pine was replaced with lodgepole pine, and later repopulated by ponderosa pine after the Pleistocene (Hansen 1942, 1947, 1949). Other factors include abiotic and biotic seed dispersal agents (for whitebark pine, limber pine, and ponderosa pine) (Lorenz and Sullivan 2009) and pollinator history. Plants that are insect-pollinated or rely on animal-dispersed seed are more vulnerable to climate change because of the requirement for interaction with another organism.

Genetic diversity enables a species to adapt to changing environments, colonize new areas, occupy new ecological niches (USDA FS 2006), and produce substantial and robust progeny that persist in the long term (Ledig and Kitzmiller 1992). The entire species does not adapt to environmental change over time, but populations within a species do. Species and populations of plants most vulnerable to climate change are rare species, genetic specialists, species with limited phenotypic plasticity, species or populations with low genetic variation, populations with low dispersal or colonization potential, populations at the trailing edge of climate change, populations at the upper elevational limit of their distribution, and populations threatened by habitat loss, fire, disease, or insects (Spittlehouse and Stewart 2004; St. Clair and Howe 2011). The underlying assumption about forest and rangeland species is that as climate continues to change, populations will become poorly adapted to their local climates, thus becoming stressed. But the ability of a species to respond to environmental change is closely tied to its adaptive strategy and the mechanisms that shape its genetic structure; therefore, this assumption may be false. Some species such as Douglas-fir, juniper (*Juniperus* spp.), and sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) may show range expansion in the future (Hansen and Phillips 2015).

Historical gene flow (seed and pollen movement) creates patterns of genetic differentiation that may allow some populations to be more predisposed to respond to climate change than others. Fragmentation is a critical issue for plant populations because isolation and the occurrence of a relatively few number of individuals can lead to inbreeding and loss of genetic diversity (Broadhurst et al. 2008; Potter et al. 2015). This field of study also informs research and management of the adaptive capacity and vulnerability to climate change (i.e., its direction and magnitude) of each species. Gene flow from adjacent populations that are more typical of future climates has the ability to increase the rate of adaptation by introducing genetic variation that is pre-adapted to warmer or drier climates (Aitken et al. 2008). A practical application of this field of study facilitates evaluating options for responding to environmental gradients and climate change, for example, choice of the appropriate

Table 6.1—Comparison of attributes characterizing a species' adaptive strategy.[a]

Attributes	Adaptive strategy	
	Specialist	Generalist
Factor controlling phenotypic expression of adaptive traits	Genotype	Environment
Mechanisms for accommodating environmental heterogeneity	Genetic variation	Phenotypic plasticity
Range of environments where physiological processes function optimally	Small	Large
Slope of clines for adaptive traits	Steep	Flat
Partitioning of genetic variation in adaptive traits	Largely among populations	Largely within populations

[a] Modified after Rehfeldt (1994).

population or seed source to increase the likelihood of attaining a desired reforestation, restoration, or revegetation outcome.

Most species may not be able to adapt quickly enough to keep pace with projected migration rates of 328 to 3,280 feet per year with climate change (Davis 1989; Malcolm et al. 2002). Davis and Shaw (2001) and Davis et al. (2005) suggest plant adaptation may be a more important factor in response to climate change due to the slow rates of plant migration impeded by population fragmentation as a result of land use patterns. Although Hamrick et al. (1992) and Hamrick (2004) suggest that long-lived species with high levels of genetic variation are well positioned for climate change, Etterson and Shaw (2001), Jump and Peñuelas (2005), and Parmesan (2006) argue that the ability of forest trees to adapt or migrate and follow climatic shifts may be *restricted* by their long lifespans, long generation intervals, and long juvenile phases.

Long-lived species often maintain high levels of genetic variation and gene flow, which facilitates their ability to evolve in response to changing climates (Hamrick 2004; Hamrick et al. 1992). Whitebark pine is an example of a long-lived species with high levels of genetic variation (Mahalovich and Hipkins 2011) and extensive gene flow (Richardson et al. 2002) attributed both to long-distance seed caching by Clark's nutcracker and an outcrossed mating system involving wind pollination (Richardson et al. 2002). Because plant populations are genetically adapted to local climates, the climatic tolerance of individual populations is often considerably narrower than the tolerance of the entire species.

Knowledge of the adaptation of Northern Rockies plant species is well documented for conifers (Rehfeldt 1994) but incomplete or lacking for other native plants. A species does not necessarily have only one adaptive strategy, though most do. Differences in adaptive strategy can be characterized by differences in variety (e.g., *P. ponderosa* var. *ponderosa* or Rocky Mountain ponderosa pine [*P. ponderosa* var. *scopulorum*]), elevation, and geography. For example, *P. ponderosa* var. *ponderosa* is characterized as having an intermediate adaptive strategy; however, at high elevations (>5,000 feet), ponderosa pine has a specialist adaptive strategy. Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *glauca*) is characterized as having a specialist adaptive strategy; that is, its genetic variation is organized into numerous local populations, finely tuned to site-specific gradients. At higher elevations east of the Continental Divide, however, Douglas-fir has a generalist adaptive strategy; its genetic variation is organized into one or a few populations capable of surviving, growing, and reproducing over a broad range of environments (Rehfeldt 1989). Species possessing a generalist adaptive strategy are proposed to fare better than their intermediate and specialist counterparts in changing climate.

Patterns of adaptive variation for other native plants (e.g., shrubs, forbs, grasses, and sedges) are more complex, being both clinal and ecotypic. These species differ in lifeform (e.g., annual, biennial, and perennial) and ploidy level (number of copies of DNA, such as 4X, 6X, or 8X). The base ploidy level is 2X, where one copy of DNA is inherited on both the maternal and paternal sides. Grasses are hypothesized to be largely generalists and less vulnerable to climate change; however, ecotypic variation can overlay the generalist adaptive strategy. Forbs, which are largely insect-pollinated, are more vulnerable to the changes in phenology and longer growing seasons expected with climate change.

Soil Responses

Each soil in the Northern Rockies region has an inherent ability to produce vegetation based on climate, parent material, topography, soil biology, and soil development (Armson 1977). Soil supports production of vegetation through interactions of nutrient cycling, soil hydrology, soil biology, physical support, and filtering (or buffering) (Attiwill and Leeper 1987). The quality and quantity of soil organic matter, the timing and amount of moisture, temperature, and acidity may all be altered by climate change, which will ultimately affect functional properties of soils and perhaps productivity (Bonan 2008).

Climate change affects the growth, mortality, and decomposition of vegetation, which in turn influence soil biology (Waring and Running 1998). Warmer temperatures, increased CO_2, and longer growing season contribute to higher vegetative growth. Warmer temperatures, increased drought, and greater susceptibility to insects and disease may lead to increased mortality. Although higher temperatures will increase decomposition rates, the moisture required for decomposition may increase or decrease, leading to variable changes in decomposition rates (Davidson and Janssens 2006). Decomposition will increase with a combination of warmer temperature and higher moisture, whereas decomposition will decrease if summer droughts extend later (Rustad et al. 2000). Increased fire frequency and severity would generally reduce soil organic matter across large landscapes (Dooley and Treseder 2012).

Higher air temperatures will directly increase soil temperature. Increased vegetative cover would provide dense shade, thus decreasing soil temperature, whereas decreased vegetative cover would result in more heating at the soil surface. Dry soil, which is expected to be more common during future drought, would have wider temperature fluctuations than wet soil, which is buffered by the high heat capacity of water. In addition, if snow cover is lower but extreme cold periods continue to occur, soils will have lower minimum temperatures (Davidson and Janssens 2006).

The vulnerability of soils to future climate change is summarized in table 6.2. Effects will differ greatly, depending on local soil characteristics, the magnitude and trend of climate change, and vegetation response.

Stressors—Biotic and Abiotic Disturbances

A warming climate will rarely be the direct agent of change for Northern Rockies tree species and communities. Most of the changes in vegetation are likely to result from

Table 6.2—Assessment for soils to apply to vegetation concerns in the Northern Rockies.

Broad-scale climate change effect	Ecosystem function	Current condition, existing stressors	Sensitivity to climatic variability and change	Expected effects of climate change	Risk assessment	
					Magnitude of effects	Likelihood of effects
Mainly changes in summer precipitation Higher summer temperatures	Available water (for vegetation)	Relative effective annual precipitation has been mapped for MT. Current condition has not been assessed for ID and ND. Existing stressors: extremes in water year (more frequent droughts), high stand densities.	Variable, depending on species, subregion and slope position.	In western Northern Rockies, decreased precipitation is projected at low elevations; increased summer drought may result. High elevations may have increased precipitation. In eastern Northern Rockies, the higher interannual variation of precipitation would lead to years of increased drought. No trend projected for annual or seasonal precipitation.	High	High
Increased atmospheric CO_2	Nutrient cycling for vegetation production	Variable. Nitrogen is the most common nutrient deficiency, but other nutrients (phosphorus, potassium, boron) are also limiting. Existing stressors: severe fires, erosion.	Unknown. Potassium is easily lost on some metasediments, during whole-tree yarding.	Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and boron will become less available if soils become more acidic. Increased acidity of leachate would contribute to faster parent material decomposition, which would release inherent mineral nutrients in soil.	Unknown	High
Soil temperature, moisture, and CO_2 levels	Soil biota	Most soils have healthy soil biota. Exceptions occur on abandoned roads and landings. Some stands have reduced biotic health from past management. Existing stressors: severe fires, erosion	Moderate	Alteration of soil biota (fungi, microbes, nematodes) as well as the communities.	Variable	Very high

Table 6.2(cont.)—Assessment for soils to apply to vegetation concerns in the Northern Rockies.

Broad-scale climate change effect	Ecosystem function	Current condition, existing stressors	Sensitivity to climatic variability and change	Expected effects of climate change	Risk assessment	
					Magnitude of effects	Likelihood of effects
Everything that contributes to increased fire and flood (e.g., more frequent high-intensity storms)	Soil stability	Little surface erosion occurs in the Northern Rockies Existing stressors: Most erosion occurs after severe wildfires or floods. Small amounts may occur in conjunction with roads, timber sales, grazing, and other land management activities.	High—existing stressors will become more prevalent.	Areas with decreased ground cover will be susceptible to increased surface erosion from wind and water.	Moderate	Very high
Changes in spring and autumn precipitation (rain rather than snow, period of saturation longer)	Slope stability	Landslide prone areas have been mapped. Existing stressor: long period of saturation in some years.	Variable	Size and frequency of landslides will increase.	Broad	Very high
Temperature, precipitation and CO_2 concentrations	Soil carbon storage and dynamics	Soil is currently a major carbon storage pool and will continue to be a carbon sink as long as young stands continue to mature. Current stressors: periodic wildfires and insect outbreaks.	High in areas where disturbances become more prevalent.	If wildfire increases in frequency and extent as much as projected, this will maintain forests in younger age classes with less potential for carbon storage but higher carbon uptake.	Potentially high in drier forests	High in dry forests

responses to climate change-induced disturbance or to some combination of other climate-exacerbated stressors (Keane et al. 2015a). Climate change has marginally to severely altered disturbance regimes in the western United States (Liu et al. 2011). As we consider past climate variability and then add the projections in temperature and precipitation, there may be significant changes occurring across Northern Rockies forests because of a changing water balance and the role of disturbances such as wildfires, insects, and diseases. Whether it is invasive species (e.g., white pine blister rust; causal agent: *Cronartium ribicola*), drought, uncharacteristic wildfires, elevated native insect and disease levels, loss of historically fire-adapted tree species, unusually high forest densities compared to historical conditions, or some other combination of disturbance agents that serves to stress trees and forest ecosystems, recent research suggests that climate change is likely to further exacerbate those stressors and "stress complexes" (Iverson and McKenzie 2013). The following subsections present a short summary on four major classes of stressors important in the region. More-detailed summaries of disturbance responses and their interactions to climate change are presented in Chapter 8 of this report.

Wildland Fire

Wildland fire is pervasive throughout Northern Rockies forest ecosystems and was historically the dominant landscape disturbance in the region (Baker 2009; Barrows et al. 1977; Wellner 1970). Fire exclusion since the 1920s has disrupted annual occurrence, spatial extent, and cumulative area burned by wildfires. Climate change impacts to fire regimes are overlaid on a century of ecological changes to forest vegetation and fuels; thus, observed differences between current fire patterns and historical ones are a product of management legacies as well as anthropogenic changes to climate.

Wildland fire regimes, defined by fire frequency, annual area burned, severity, and pattern, are greatly influenced by variability in landscape environmental conditions including vegetation distribution, climate, weather, and topography (McKenzie et al. 2011). Climate and fuels are the two most important factors controlling patterns of fire within forest ecosystems. Climate controls the frequency of weather conditions that promote fire, whereas the amount and arrangement of fuels influence fire intensity and spread. These wildland fuels—the live and dead biomass that burns in fires—lose moisture and become flammable in the region's typically warm and dry summers, during which there are ample sources of ignition from lightning strikes and humans. Therefore, the active fire season (period conducive to active burning) is in the summer, typically from late June through October, with shorter seasons at higher elevation sites where snowpack can persist well into July. Regionally, widespread fire years are correlated with drought (Heyerdahl et al. 2008). At large spatial scales, topography can influence the spatial pattern of fire spread. For example, in dissected mountainous areas, topographic features (e.g., barren slopes) can form barriers to fire spread

(Grissino-Mayer et al. 2004), but where drainages are aligned with prevailing winds, topography can facilitate the spread of large fires (Sharples 2009).

Compositions and structures of forests in the Northern Rockies region are strongly determined by fire history. In general, fire regimes vary along environmental gradients, with fire frequency decreasing and fire severity increasing with elevation. For example, at the lowest and driest elevations, where forests are dominated by ponderosa pine, frequent surface fires historically consumed litter and dead wood and killed seedlings and smaller trees. Adaptive traits such as thick bark allowed mature ponderosa pines to survive many repeated fires over time and tree densities were kept low. Fire exclusion since the 1920s has increased surface fuel loads, tree densities, and ladder fuels, especially in low-elevation dry conifer forests (Schoennagel et al. 2004). As a result, fires at the lowest and driest elevations may be larger and more intense, and may cause higher rates of tree mortality, than historical fire. But in mid- and higher elevation forests, where fires were historically infrequent because of relatively cold, wet conditions, fire exclusion has not affected the fire regimes (Romme and Despain 1989; Schoennagel et al. 2004). However, earlier onset of snowmelt, predicted to occur with changing regional climate, will reduce fuel moisture during fire season, making mid- to high-elevation forested systems flammable for longer periods of time (Miller et al. 2009). As these forested systems are not fuel-limited, fire occurrence and extent are likely to increase in the future (Littell et al. 2009, 2010; Westerling et al. 2006).

Insect Outbreaks

Regional insect activity and outbreaks are highly correlated with climate drivers, and potential climate change-induced insect activity will be an important influence on future forest composition and structure. The mountain pine beetle (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*) is an integral component of forest ecosystem processes because of its role in stand thinning and redistribution of resources and nutrients important for tree regeneration. It is also recognized as an aggressive and economically important forest insect responsible for tree mortality across large areas (Logan et al. 2003). Both bark beetle populations and their host trees are being influenced by changing climate. Many bark beetle life history traits that influence population success are temperature-dependent (Bentz and Jönsson 2015), and warming temperatures associated with climate change have directly influenced bark beetle-caused tree mortality in some areas of western North America (Safranyik et al. 2010; Weed et al. 2015). Host tree distribution across the Northern Rockies region, and tree vigor, which influences susceptibility to bark beetle attack (Chapman et al. 2012; Hart et al. 2013), will also be influenced as climate continues to change. Future bark beetle-caused tree mortality will therefore depend not only on the spatial distribution of live host trees and heterogeneity of future landscapes, as described in this chapter, but also on the ability of beetle populations and

their associates to adapt to changing conditions when existing phenotypic plasticity is surpassed.

Pathogens

Forest diseases are found in all forest ecosystems of the Northern Rockies region. They are one of three major disturbance groups that affect ecosystem development and change, yet impacts of forest diseases on various resources and services in the region are difficult to estimate. The major groups of forest diseases in the region that affect ecosystems and ecosystem services are fungi and rusts (fungi that infect needles and causes damage and mortality, the most important being white pine blister rust), dwarf mistletoes (*Arceuthobium* spp.; a group of parasitic seed plants that are widespread across the region and that mostly cause reduced tree growth and productivity), root diseases (a major cause of growth loss and mortality), needle casts and blights (diseases that cause crown thinning and loss of lower branches), and abiotic diseases (damage to trees resulting from impacts of adverse environmental factors on tree physiology or structure).

Effects of climate changes on forest diseases are difficult to predict. Climate change can alter pathogens through direct effects on the development and survival of the pathogen, physiological changes in tree defenses, or indirect effects on the abundance of natural enemies, mutualists, and competitors (Ayres and Lombardero 2000). These dynamics are not well captured by GCMs because the ecology and impacts of pathogens are based on local site and environmental conditions. Epidemics also depend on local conditions for spread and infection to occur. Although models usually generate mean climatic conditions, it is often the extremes that have the greatest influence on pest conditions (Hepting 1963), and these are also not well represented by GCMs. However, modeling efforts to date suggest that among the major Northern Rockies diseases, root disease is projected to cause the highest basal area loss as a percentage of total basal area in the region. Projected losses from root diseases ranged from zero percent on most national forests east of the Continental Divide to 15–19 percent on westside forests (Krist et al. 2014). Klopfenstein et al. (2009) used a subset of GCMs to predict how the geographic distribution of the climate envelope for Armillaria root rot (*Armillaria solidipes,* formerly *A. ostoyae*) and Douglas-fir could change in the interior northwestern United States. Their analysis suggests that Douglas-fir will have a considerably smaller geographic space that matches its current climate envelope and that this space will shift, while only minor changes are projected for *A. solidipes*. They suggest that areas where Douglas-fir is maladapted could increase, which could increase its susceptibility to Armillaria root rot. Climate-mediated changes to forest tree diseases will be dictated by disease and host responses to new climates, and their interactions (Sturrock et al. 2010); the interactions among biotic diseases, abiotic stressors, and host status will drive future pathogen outbreaks. Predicted increases in temperature and drought will probably serve to increase pathogen populations in the future (Chakraborty et al. 2008). The role of pathogens as important disturbance agents is likely to increase in the future because they are able to migrate to new environments at a faster rate than trees.

Drought

Soil type and depth, aspect, and elevation all contribute to effective moisture availability for tree establishment and growth, producing patterns of forests in the Northern Rockies region. Additionally, the impact of stand condition on overall water balance and the effect of site and soil conditions on moisture availability are important to consider. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Natural Resource Information System of the Montana State Library have mapped the relative effective annual precipitation (REAP) for the State of Montana (Montana State Library and NRCS n.d.). REAP is an indicator of the amount of moisture available at a location, taking into account precipitation, slope and aspect, and soil properties. For example, two sites that receive the same amount of precipitation may have different effective precipitation due to unique soil and landform factors at each site. Depending on the geographic location within Montana and degree of slope, the actual precipitation for southerly aspects may be adjusted downward while northerly aspects may be adjusted upward.

Future climate change models indicate that the Northern Rockies region will have longer, drier summers and warmer conditions. Pioneer (seral) species such as ponderosa pine have the unique ability to establish on bare soil surfaces where high surface temperatures (>149 °F) exclude other species. One of the adaptations of these seral species is a capability for deep rooting, which allows the tree to find an adequate water supply and avoid extensive competition with shallow- and fibrous-rooted grasses and forbs. As the shade from these species limits sun-loving grasses and forbs, shade-tolerant tree species establish and grow. Grass and forb species usually have a shallower rooting characteristic that allows them to gather soil water from the nutrient-rich soil surface; in contrast, the overall rooting structure of shade-tolerant tree species in essence becomes much more competitive as succession progresses. In addition, the overall leaf surface area that develops over time on a given site increases. Lands dominated by grasses/forbs or shrubs usually develop a maximum total leaf area of about 3.3 square feet per square foot of soil surface area. Forests can develop leaf areas in excess of 6.5 square feet per square foot of soil surface area. With increasing leaf area comes increased water transpiration, which can deplete the soil water storage capacity needed to keep trees hydrated throughout the summer. The additional canopy interception of rain and snow in dense forests, which directly evaporates into the atmosphere, further compounds this effect, reducing soil water recharge. The result is a water-stressed forest that not only becomes more susceptible to insects and disease, but also more prone to supporting severe wildfires because live fuel moisture is relatively low.

Climate Change Assessments

This section contains the information that was used to assess vulnerability for all tree species, vegetation types, and resources of concern. There are four subsections for each item (e.g., tree species) to detail the (1) ecology, (2) disturbance interactions, (3) current and historical conditions, and (4) potential climate change responses. The first subsection presents important ecological information needed to understand how a species, type, or resource of concern might respond to future changes in climates, such as its drought- and shade-tolerance. The subsection on disturbance interactions contains information on those agents that affect the species, type, or concern, and important projections of how those disturbance agents might change in the future. Historical and current conditions are included as a subsection because any climate change response is greatly dependent on current status and past actions. Last, the anticipated climate change responses for the species, types, and concerns are included in perhaps the most important subsection. This material was ultimately the basis for evaluations of vulnerability or development of potential adaptation actions.

Most of the material in this section was taken from the literature, but substantial amounts of anecdotal and observational information were also included for context. However, due to imperfect knowledge across the evaluated entities and the high uncertainty in climate predictions and ecosystem responses, we admit that many of our projected climate change responses and resultant vulnerability assessments are based on our own professional experience. Moreover, some climate change response material may appear uneven across species, types, and concerns because detailed information is not available for all of them; for example, more information is available for timber tree species than nontimber species.

Tree Species

Most of the background information used in this subsection was synthesized from three primary sources. The Bollenbacher (2012) report presents characteristics of the major tree species of the Northern Rockies region, adapted from the autecological synthesis developed by Minore (1979). The commonly used silviculture reference edited by Burns and Honkala (1990) was used throughout, and the climate change report compiled by Devine et al. (2012) for the Pacific Northwest was also used for genetics and autecological information. Table 6.3 provides a general summary of ecological and genetic characteristics by tree species that will be important under future climate change. In this subsection, we attempted to integrate the genetic, morphological, ecological, and disturbance response characteristics summarized in table 6.3 to predict how a tree species would respond under future climate warming. We also integrated any material available in the literature to aid and support our predictions.

Discussion on climate change responses was synthesized from information in the literature and the MC2 modeling results (Appendix 6A) to evaluate the effects of climate change on important species, vegetation types, and resource concerns. This material forms the foundation for our vulnerability assessments and the adaptation strategies and tactics. Many of these climate change responses are based on the species characteristics and current ecosystem condition presented in this section.

The most astonishing finding in this section is that the literature is inconsistent on the response of tree species to future climate change. Results from SDM modeling are often, but not always, different from most other sources that include gap modeling, mechanistic ecosystem simulation, and field data summaries. As a result, we put less emphasis on the SDM results in our vulnerability assessment evaluations in Appendix 6B. Another finding is that the amount of climate change really matters. Most climate change studies predict few species changes after moderate warming (e.g., the B1, B2, A1B, and RCP 4.5 scenarios), but major species shifts under the most extreme emissions scenarios (e.g., the A1 and RCP 8.5 scenarios). Third, the timeframe used in the climate change study is also important. Management timeframes of 10 to 50 years are not long enough to effectively evaluate changes in fire, beetles, and tree growth. Ecosystem response to disturbance takes time, often two to five times the disturbance return interval. Last, climate change study results and subsequent ecosystem responses depend tremendously on the choice of GCMs used to simulate and quantify climate change. Some GCMs predict minor warming for the Northern Rockies region, while others predict major changes.

Based on a thorough review of the literature, we propose three basic modes of response to climate change for the major tree species of the region: modification, contraction, and expansion. First, the species could increase or decrease in productivity in situ within its current range due to increasing temperatures and adequate precipitation (*acclimatization*); for example, the majority of information seems to support the inference that most lands in the Northern Rockies region will increase in productivity (Aston 2010). Next, the species could die in those parts of its range where conditions will change enough to become inhospitable to that species (Allen et al. 2010) (*contraction*). Last, the species could migrate to areas that are more conducive to establishment and growth (Johnstone and Chapin 2003) (*expansion*). Any species can have multiple modes of response to climate change, and most species will respond to future climates via all three modes.

Application of these three modes to determine future species dynamics demands a thorough integration of variability and scale. For example, the ebb and flow of species migration demands a relatively long temporal scope to properly evaluate species range shifts (Prentice et al. 1991). A tree species could become established in a "new" environment made suitable by climate change, such as subalpine tree expansion into snow glades, but the great variability in climate may result in 1 year of drought or high snow that kills all

Table 6.3—Summary of tree characteristics that indicate possible responses to future climate change. All fields are rated on a scale from one to five, with 1 generally indicating low levels and five generally indicating high levels of the variable (see specific notes below).

Species	Distribution[a]	Tolerances[b]			Genetics			Mycorrhizal dependence[f]	Insect and disease exposure[g]	Seed dissemination strategy[h]
		Shade	Drought	Fire	Diversity[c]	Geographic differentiation[d]	Strategy[e]			
Limber pine	1	1	5	2	3	3	I	4	4	5,4
Ponderosa pine—var. scopulorum	3	2	4	4	3	2	I	3	2	3,4
Ponderosa pine—var. ponderosa	3	2	4	5	3	2	I,S	3	4	3,4
Douglas-fir	4	4	4	4	2	2	S,G	3	3	3
Western larch	2	2	2	5	3	2	I	2	2	3
Western white pine	1	2	2	5	3	3	G	2	4	3,4
Aspen	2	1	4	1	5	2	G	2	3	3,2
Grand fir	2	4	2	2	2	2	G	2	4	3
Western redcedar	2	5	5	2	1	2	S	1	2	3
Western hemlock	2	5	5	2	2	2	S	2	2	3
Lodgepole pine	4	2	3	3	4	2	S	3	4	6
Whitebark pine	3	3	2	3	4	3	G	3	4	5
Subalpine fir	4	4	4	1	3	2	I	2	3	3
Engelmann spruce	3	4	4	2	3	2	I	2	2	3
Mountain hemlock	1	4	5	1	2	2	S	2	2	3
Alpine larch	1	1	5	1	2	3	S	3	1	3
Green ash	2	1	2	1	2	3	G	4	1	3
Cottonwood	2	1	4	3	3	3	G	3	2	1

[a] Distribution of 1 indicates narrow distribution in the Northern Rockies, while distribution of 5 indicates wide distribution.

[b] Shade, drought, and fire tolerance of 1 indicates high intolerance, while 5 indicates high tolerance.

[c] Genetic diversity of 1 indicates low diversity and 5 indicates high diversity.

[d] Geographic differentiation of 1 indicates low genetic differentiation (narrow seed zones) and 5 indicates wide differentiation (large seed zones).

[e] Genetic adaptive strategy of G indicates a generalist species (grows under wide range of conditions), I indicates an intermediate species (grows over a moderate range of conditions), and S indicates a specialist species (grows under a narrow range of conditions) (from Scott et al. 2013).

[f] Mycorrhizal dependence of 1 indicates that the species is not dependent on mycorrhizae, while 5 indicates that the species is highly dependent on mycorrhizae.

[g] Insect/disease exposure of 1 indicates that the species is not susceptible to many damaging agents, while 5 indicates that the species is highly susceptible to insects and disease.

[h] Seed dissemination is the primary means of seed dispersal where 1-water, 2-sprouts, 3-wind/gravity, 4-rodent, 5-bird, 6-serotinous.

established seedlings. Conversely, 1 year of drought could kill many individuals in the grassland-woodland ecotone, but several wet years in a row might facilitate reestablishment of tree species into the high mortality zone. Further, the rate of climate change shifts will be governed by disturbance, not competition, so disturbance adaptations will be more important than climatic niches. Management actions, such as fire exclusion, may facilitate species expansion into areas that will eventually burn, causing extensive mortality.

All of the climate change response evaluations in this chapter have a high level of uncertainty; they are essentially best guesses from a wide variety of resource specialists and a review of the literature. The following information may provide a starting place, a possible prioritization, or assistance in addressing climate change in forest plans, but it is in no way accurate enough to provide valid predictions of what will happen in the future.

Limber Pine

Autecology

Limber pine (*Pinus flexilis*) is a shade-intolerant, early seral to pioneer species in the Northern Rockies (Steele 1990). Its seeds are dispersed by rodents, but more importantly, by a bird (Clark's nutcracker) that will cache limber pine seed anywhere there is microsite pattern that it uses for finding the seed (Lanner 1980; Lanner and Vander Wall 1980). Limber pine has difficulty in competing with other encroaching species on more productive mesic sites and is often succeeded by Douglas-fir and subalpine fir. There is often little to no reproduction once tree densities are below 10 trees per acre, mostly because of the lack of an effective pollination cloud, and those seeds that are produced have increased likelihood of inbreeding. Moreover, a minimum of 10 cone-bearing trees per acre is needed for dispersal by Clark's nutcracker (McKinney et al. 2009). This tree species is very slow growing but long-lived, and some of the oldest trees in the region are limber pine.

Limber pine is a puzzling species in the context of ecosystem land management. It occupies xeric sites across a wide range of elevations (2,600 to 8,900 feet in elevation) in the Northern Rockies region that are often marginal for timber production (Jackson et al. 2010). Historically, it was often found on the margins between grasslands and forest ecosystems at the lower treeline on fire refugia (Steele 1990). Because limber pine is easily killed by fire, the species was mostly found in fire-protected cove sites where fire was rare and of low severity, such as rocky outcrops, barren areas, and moist north slopes (Steele 1990). In these lower treeline areas, limber pine is often associated with Douglas-fir, Rocky Mountain ponderosa pine, and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*). On upland montane sites, it can often be found on limestone substrates and droughty soils, but in these areas it is associated with many other Northern Rockies conifers, especially lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce (Langor 2007; Steele 1990). Limber

pine seedlings are poor competitors with grass, but do well on rocky substrates and in shrub environments.

Limber pine is very tolerant of drought and can establish and grow in some of the most arid environments in the Northern Rockies region (Steele 1990) (table 6.3). It is associated with both ectomycorrhizae and arbuscular mycorrhizae that facilitate its ability to exist in extremely dry environments. Seedlings are very drought tolerant but have a low tolerance to competition, especially from herbaceous plants.

Genetically, limber pine has high outcrossing rates with average genetic diversity and average population differentiation (Devine et al. 2012). The fundamental and realized niche for limber pine is very broad in the region, indicating that this species has a generalist adaptive strategy with wide phenotypic plasticity.

Disturbance Interactions

As mentioned, the thin bark and low foliage of limber pine make the species highly susceptible to damage from wildland fire. Limber pine is also highly susceptible to white pine blister rust, and many communities suffer high mortality when the disease infects trees in a new region (Smith et al. 2013). Limber pine also facilitates the expansion of currant (*Ribes* spp.; an alternate host for the pathogen *Cronartium ribicola*) into traditional grasslands (Baumeister and Callaway 2006), thus increasing rust infections and mortality.

Other insects and pathogens are also impacting limber pine, but at a severity much lower than *C. ribicola*. Some researchers have detected mortality from mountain pine beetle in parts of the limber pine range (Jackson et al. 2010). Others have noted that limber pine stands on mesic sites may have severe dwarf mistletoe infections that could result in mortality levels similar to those observed from white pine blister rust. Porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*) damage is also prevalent east of the Continental Divide.

Historical and Current Conditions

With fire exclusion, limber pine has expanded its range from fire-protected cove sites into areas where it was historically restricted by frequent fires (Arno and Gruell 1983; Brown and Schoettle 2008). As a result of the diminished fire activity and active nutcracker caching, limber pine has expanded into grass and shrub rangelands, and this expansion has also allowed other species to inhabit historically nonforest areas (Jackson et al. 2010). Evidence suggests that limber pine can facilitate the establishment of other forest species, especially Douglas-fir, in rangeland settings (Baumeister and Callaway 2006). As a result, limber pine in the Northern Rockies region is currently occupying areas that were traditionally grasslands, and it is difficult to determine if this is inside or outside the range of variability of this ecosystem.

Ironically, the newly established limber pine forests throughout the Northern Rockies region are undergoing dramatic declines due to white pine blister rust, mountain

pine beetle, and wind-caused red belt (Jackson et al. 2010; Langor 2007; Taylor and Sturdevant 1998). Increasing fires are also burning some of the stands that have become established since 1910. There is some white pine blister rust resistance in the species, but it is low, perhaps lower than 1 in 100 individuals (Steele 1990).

Climate Change Responses

Some anticipate that warming temperatures on the east side of the region, along with increasing but more-variable precipitation, especially during the growing season, and waning snowpack will result in increased growth in many limber pine communities (Aston 2010). Increases in vigor are usually accompanied by larger cone crops, higher seed viability, greater number of seeds per cone, wider seed dispersal, and greater resistance to disease. Increased seed dispersal includes denser caching by birds and mammals, and probably more distant caching by Clark's nutcracker. Increases in vigor might also extend to competitors of limber pine, so there could be increased competition from wind-dispersed conifers, especially on the more mesic portions of the limber pine range.

Warm temperatures, even with increased precipitation, could also result in drier conditions, especially for seed germination and seedling growth. Even if more seeds are cached by mammals and birds, the subsequent establishment of seedlings from the unclaimed caches might be low because of longer drought seasons and hotter ground temperatures. Any dispersal of limber pine seed to new areas, especially nonforested stands, might have limited regeneration success because of the lack of ectomycorrhizal associations and increased competition from grasses and dense shrubs (Coop and Schoettle 2009).

Disturbance interactions with warming climates are likely to be important to future limber pine dynamics. Increasing fire frequency and intensity may result in the burning of more limber pine stands, causing higher mortality (Coop and Schoettle 2009). Increased fire may stem the encroachment of limber pine into grasslands in areas where grazing is low. Warmer, drier conditions may also reduce blister rust infection by disrupting the blister rust cycle, especially during the late summer when *Ribes* species-to-pine infection occurs, and there may be fewer wave years where temperature and humidity are optimal for pine infection by white pine blister rust. Where precipitation is projected to increase, such as in the eastern portions of the Northern Rockies region, there may be higher rates of blister rust and dwarf mistletoe infection, which may cause higher limber pine mortality. Continued fire exclusion could enhance establishment of currant under mature limber pines and result in even greater white pine blister rust infection and mortality. Warmer temperatures also favor expansion of alternate host species such as currant, lousewort (*Pedicularis* spp.) and Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja* spp.) (Keane et al. 2015a).

Limber pine has an intermediate genetic adaptive strategy under changing climates largely driven by timing of pollen cloud dispersal (elevational effect) and seed dispersal by

birds (Feldman et al. 1999). The species is highly adapted to populating the increasing burned areas projected for the future because of mammal- and corvid-mediated dispersal (Lanner and Vander Wall 1980). If future fires are larger and more severe, there may be less competition from other competing conifers, especially in the eastern portions of the Northern Rockies region along the timber-grassland ecotone. Limber pine has moderate genetic variation (capacity) in blister rust resistance, but major gene resistance to blister rust has not been identified in several studies of interior populations. There is probably little to no opportunity to hybridize with western white pine due to non-overlapping species distributions, and it will probably not hybridize with whitebark pine because the two species overlap only on limestone substrates. There is a high risk of loss of disjunct and isolated populations due to genetic drift, ineffective pollen cloud, and limited substrate availability.

Given all available information, limber pine responses to future climates may be minor and governed mostly by wildland fire and white pine blister rust. If fires increase, limber pine forests, some of which are already declining from rust, will suffer major declines, especially where they have encroached as a result of fire exclusion. Given its minor role in the Northern Rockies region prior to European settlement, we consider this species to be at most moderately vulnerable to climate change based on its high tolerance to drought and ability to populate severe environments, but high susceptibility to the introduced white pine blister rust and fire damage may put this species in peril.

Ponderosa Pine

Autecology

Ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) shows distinct geographic variation over its range. The ponderosa variety (*P. ponderosa* var. *ponderosa*) ranges from the Fraser River drainage of southern British Columbia south through Washington and Oregon and into northern California (Oliver and Ryker 1990). In the Northern Rockies, it extends from the Canadian border to the central part of Montana on the west side of the Continental Divide. Rocky Mountain ponderosa pine (*P. ponderosa* var. *scopulorum*) extends east of the Continental Divide to North Dakota and South Dakota and south into Wyoming and farther. Within the wide range of both ponderosa pine variants, it is absent from several areas, including a large portion of southwestern Montana. This may be due to the lack of rainfall in the summer months, which prevents establishment except at higher elevations; however, it is also limited by the shorter growing season at these elevations.

In most of western Montana and Idaho, the upper elevational limit of the ponderosa variety is around 4,900 feet, depending on latitude (Pfister et al. 1977). Moisture is the factor most often limiting growth, especially in the summer. Seasonal rainfall deficiency is evident from July and August precipitation (Fowells and Kirk 1945; Tarrant 1953). The distribution of ponderosa pine on drier sites is

closely related to supply of available soil moisture, which is closely related to soil texture and depth. Low temperatures, however, may dictate the success of ponderosa pine regeneration; seedlings of the species are highly susceptible to frost damage and the occurrence of frosts often excludes the pine from low valley settings, especially in frost pockets and cold air drainages (Shearer and Schmidt 1970).

Ponderosa pine is a shade-intolerant, drought-adapted species of the low-elevation dry forests of the Northern Rockies (Minore 1979) (table 6.3). It can be a climax species at the lower elevational limits of Northern Rockies coniferous forests, or a seral species in the higher elevation mesic forests, especially the Pacific variety. In dry climax forests, there is generally a mosaic of small even-aged groups. As a seral species, it is often associated with Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, grand fir, and, in the northwestern Northern Rockies, western larch. Ponderosa pine is mostly intolerant of shade, but it is generally more tolerant than western larch and less tolerant than grand fir and western white pine. Although it reaches its greatest site indices on the mesic grand fir, western redcedar, and western hemlock sites (Cooper et al. 1991), it is rapidly replaced by a suite of more shade-tolerant competitors.

Ponderosa pine is a "drought avoider," meaning it tolerates dry soil conditions by efficiently closing stomata to avoid water loss and xylem cavitation and stay alive during deep droughts (Sala et al. 2005) (table 6.3). This allows the species to tolerate intense drought better than its associates, specifically Douglas-fir, which is a "drought tolerator" and able to obtain water at lower moisture conditions. Although drought tolerators may be able to obtain water at lower moisture conditions, they may attempt to draw groundwater at such low soil water potentials that they experience extreme xylem cavitation, which may cause death. Ponderosa pine has been associated with several species of ectomycorrhizae, giving it a high capacity to survive in dry environments.

Cone crop periodicity varies greatly with ponderosa pine; observations indicate it is a poor seeder west of the Continental Divide and a fair seeder east of the divide. Throughout the region, natural regeneration is sporadic; it is best when there is a heavy seed crop followed by favorable weather during the next growing season (Heidmann 1983; Shearer and Schmidt 1970). Potter et al. (2015) performed molecular work that indicates that Rocky Mountain ponderosa pine is one of the most inbred conifers in the Northern Rockies, and its vulnerability could be further compromised with limited gene flow between populations. With cone crop periodicity or masting events that occur only every 7 to 10 years, increasing natural regeneration problems may be developing on the east side of the Continental Divide. Soil texture, plant competition, and seedbed conditions have the greatest effect on seedling survival. Moisture stress reduces seed germination and limits seedling survival and growth. Competing vegetation deters seedlings. As mentioned, young seedlings (<36 days old) are susceptible to cold night temperatures and deep frosts, and occasionally the pine trees

suffer winter desiccation in drying winds. Older seedlings (>110 days) can often withstand higher temperatures than Douglas-fir, grand fir, and Engelmann spruce, making it likely they will be more successful under future climates.

Ponderosa pine has a moderate potential for outcrossing with a high outcrossing rate. It has average genetic variation, but is weakly differentiated geographically. Although it has a strong population differentiation, it may be considered to be intermediate in adaptive strategy because both individuals and populations may be suited to diverse environments. There are steep clines (ecotypes or forms of species that exhibit gradual phenotypic and genetic differences over a geographic area as a result of environmental heterogeneity) in elevation, but gentle clines in latitude and longitude. There is high genetic variation between eastside and westside ponderosa pine in growth, survival, needle length, seasonal pattern of root growth, and ability to germinate under moisture stress (Oliver and Ryker 1990).

Disturbance Interactions

Fires have a profound effect on ponderosa pine where competing tree species are considerably less fire tolerant; this allows ponderosa pine to maintain dominance over large areas (Arno 1988; Steele et al. 1986). Fires historically allowed ponderosa pine to maintain its dominance across most of the low elevation savannas by killing competitors. Ponderosa pine has a great capacity to survive fire, better than nearly all of its competitors (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988).

There are about 108 species of insects that attack westside ponderosa pine and over 59 species that attack eastside ponderosa pine. The most damaging of the tree-killing insects are several species of *Dendroctonus* (Oliver and Ryker 1990). Among bark beetles, *Ips* species are second in destructiveness only to *Dendroctonus*. *Ips* are present naturally in all stands, where they usually breed in slash. Dwarf mistletoe is the most widespread disease on ponderosa pine but is rarely fatal in the region. Western pine shoot borer (*Eucosma sonomana*) is also a concern in the future.

Historical and Current Conditions

Ponderosa pine forests have been undergoing a severe decline due to the combination of logging and fire exclusion. Large pine trees in open pine savannas were harvested from nearly all but the most remote, inaccessible, or protected areas in the Northern Rockies region. Wildland fires have been excluded from remaining pine forests, causing advanced succession that was most rapid in the mesic habitat types (Arno 1988; Gruell et al. 1982). This has resulted in dense forests with overstories of stressed ponderosa pine and dense understories of its shade-tolerant competitors, most commonly Douglas-fir. There are often buildups of duff and litter, and an atypical accumulation of down dead woody fuels on the soil surface. The dense crowns, coupled with high surface fuel loadings, ensure that when these forests are burned by wildfires, the damage from the fire will be severe with high tree mortality, deep soil heating, high fuel consumption, and abundant smoke (Keane et al. 2002).

Climate Change Responses

We expect ponderosa pine in the Northern Rockies region to handle increasing temperatures and deeper, longer droughts with only moderate difficulty. Its ability as a "drought avoider" to close stomata when soil water potential is low makes it the only forest species besides juniper to maintain its presence in many low elevation settings (Stout and Sala 2003). Morales et al. (2015) projected an 11-percent increase in the range of ponderosa pine in the western United States, and Nitschke and Innes (2008), using a gap modeling approach, projected the replacement of dry Douglas-fir dominated communities of British Columbia with ponderosa pine. Hansen et al. (2001) projected an expansion of ponderosa pine across the western United States and specifically in the Pacific Northwest, when most other tree species ranges were retracting in area. Rocky Mountain ponderosa pine is more intermediate in adaptive strategy than the *ponderosa* variety; it therefore has a high phenotypic plasticity and is better adapted to drought (table 6.3).

However, declining precipitation and variable spatial and temporal rainfall patterns may cause declines in ponderosa pine regeneration and range contractions, except in the eastern portions of the Northern Rockies region, where precipitation is expected to increase. Crimmins et al. (2011) estimated that ponderosa pine environments may rise more than 2,300 feet in elevation by 2050 in its range. Similarly, Gray and Hamann (2013) estimated ponderosa pine might move more than 1,600 feet northward and almost 1,000 feet higher in elevation in the Northern Rockies by 2050. However, Franklin et al. (1991) projected future forests of ponderosa pine will cover about a third of its current range in landscapes of the eastern Cascades, and Bell et al. (2014) projected losses of more than 60 percent of its range by 2090.

Increases in mountain pine beetle outbreaks, advancing competition resulting from fire exclusion, western pine shoot borer occurrence, and increases in fire severity and intensity will dictate the future of ponderosa pine in the Northern Rockies. If fires are too frequent, established regeneration will never grow above the lethal scorch height, and mature individuals will not become established. Increasing fire severity and occurrence could also eliminate many of the Northern Rockies relict ponderosa pine trees that provide the critical seed sources for populating future burns.

Douglas-fir

Autecology

Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) has been a major component of forests of western North American since the mid-Pleistocene era (Hermann and Lavender 1990). Only Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir (*P. menziesii* var. *glauca*) is found in the Northern Rockies. The range of this variety extends from central British Columbia through the Rocky Mountains into central Mexico. The range is fairly continuous in northern Idaho, western Montana, and northwestern Wyoming, with several outlying areas in east-central Montana and Wyoming. In the Northern Rockies, Douglas-fir grows in areas with maritime influence and mild climate in all seasons except a dry period in July and August. In the central Rocky Mountains, the winters are long and severe, and summers are hot and in some parts very dry. West of the Continental Divide in the region, the rainfall may be evenly divided between winter and summer. The altitudinal distribution of Douglas-fir increases from north to south, due to the effect of climate on the distribution. The limiting factors are temperature in the northern part of the range and moisture to the south. Thus, Douglas-fir prefers southerly slopes in the northern part of its range, and northerly exposures in the southern part of its range (Pfister et al. 1977).

Douglas-fir in the Northern Rockies grows in pure stands on dry, cold sites, in both an even- and uneven-aged condition (Hermann and Lavender 1990). On other sites, the associated species are dependent on the climate, and by proxy, elevation and region. Montane low-elevation mesic Douglas-fir is often associated with western larch, western white pine, grand fir, western redcedar, and western hemlock, whereas on low-elevation xeric sites, Douglas-fir is associated with ponderosa pine, juniper, and quaking aspen. At upper elevational limits, the species is often found with lodgepole pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce. In rare cases it is found at the highest elevations associated with mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*), whitebark pine, and alpine larch. Most of the Northern Rockies Douglas-fir forests are found on droughty sites, and the species is often associated with ponderosa pine; Douglas-fir is often the primary climax species whenever it is found with ponderosa pine (Keane 1985; Ryker and Losensky 1983; Steele and Geier-Hayers 1989). Again, proportion of other species growing with Douglas-fir varies widely depending on aspect, elevation, soil type, and history, particularly fire history, of the area.

Regeneration is most successful where Douglas-fir is seral, especially in the area of strong maritime influence in northern Idaho and western Montana, where it is associated with more montane species (e.g., grand fir, western redcedar, and western larch). Regeneration is poor where it has attained climax status in the cool, dry habitats (Ryker and Losensky 1983). Seedling growth the first year is relatively slow, limited generally by moisture, which triggers initiation of dormancy in midsummer. Competing vegetation may promote the establishment of a variety of seedlings by reducing temperature stress, but may inhibit seedling growth by competing strongly for moisture; this is most pronounced in the southern portion of the range. In the Rocky Mountains, it is a seral species in moist habitats and climax in the warmer, drier areas of its range.

In the interior portion of its Northern Rockies range, Douglas-fir ranks intermediate in shade tolerance, being more tolerant than western larch, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, and aspen (table 6.3). Old-growth Douglas-fir shows a

wide range of age classes, indicating it became established over long periods after major fires. It is gradually replaced by more tolerant western hemlock, western redcedar, and true fir on mesic montane sites. Douglas-fir tolerates drought better than nearly all of its competitors except for ponderosa pine. The species is a "drought tolerator" in that it keeps stomata open to extract soil water at extremely low soil water potentials, thereby subjecting it to potential xylem cavitation and potential death (Sala et al. 2005; Stout and Sala 2003).

The species exhibits a great deal of genetic differentiation, which is strongly associated with geographic or topographic features (Rehfeldt 1978). The pattern of genetic variation in growth and phenological traits among clines has been observed along north-south, east-west, and elevational transects. There is evidence of low genetic variation within local regions. For example, in southern Oregon, seed collected on the more xeric southerly aspects grew slower, set bud earlier, and had larger roots compared to seedlings grown from north-facing slopes. Seedlings from seed sources on southerly aspects have adaptive characteristics for a shorter growing season and drier soils and may survive under drought stress better than seedlings from seed sources on northerly aspects.

Disturbance Interactions

Douglas-fir has a great capacity to survive fire because of its thick corky bark and its deep main roots. The capacity of the species to form adventitious roots is another adaptation that has enabled Douglas-fir to survive fire. However, young Douglas-fir have thin bark and low height to live crown, greatly increasing mortality from fire (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988). Ponderosa pine and western larch have better ability to survive fire across all life stages, so on sites with frequent fires where Douglas-fir is associated with other species, its cover is usually kept low by fire (Agee 1991). However, on cold, dry sites where the species is the indicated climax, frequent fire may create Douglas-fir savannas, especially east of the Continental Divide, such as in the high valleys of southwestern Montana.

Douglas-fir is subject to serious damage from a variety of agents that may increase under future climates (Hermann and Lavender 1990). Western spruce budworm (*Choristoneura occidentalis*) and Douglas-fir tussock moth (*Orgyia pseudotsugata*) are the most important insects affecting Douglas-fir. Both insects attack trees of all ages periodically throughout the range of interior Douglas-fir, often resulting in severe defoliation of stands. Many Douglas-fir stands in the central Northern Rockies are currently devastated by budworm and beetle. The Douglas-fir beetle (*Dendroctonus pseudotsugae*) is a destructive insect pest in old-growth stands of coastal and interior Douglas-fir. Armillaria and annosus (*Heterobasidion annosum*) root diseases may intensify in infection rate and widen in distribution to cause high tree mortality. Annosus root disease is particularly lethal in Douglas-fir (Hagle 2003). Of the many heart rot fungi (>300 species) attacking Douglas-fir, the most damaging and widespread is red ring rot

(*Porodaedalea pini* Murrill, 1905). Knots and scars resulting from fire, lightning, and falling trees are the main paths of infection. Losses from this heart rot far exceed those from any other decay. Other important heart rot fungi in the Northern Rockies are *Fomitopsis officinalis, F. cajanderi*, and *Phaeolus schweinitzii*.

Historical and Current Conditions

Historical frequent wildland fires kept Douglas-fir from becoming established on those dry sites where it was associated with ponderosa pine as frequent fires favored ponderosa pine establishment. It often became established after long interfire periods, such as during the Little Ice Age, and easily attained dominance if fire frequency was decreased. However, in the more montane portions of the Northern Rockies range of the species, Douglas-fir was often one of the major dominants, as it was a major competitor under historical mixed-severity fire regimes (Arno et al. 2000).

Today, though, cumulative effects of the fire exclusion era coupled with logging have allowed Douglas-fir to become the dominant species across its range, especially where it successively replaced the historically dominant ponderosa pine forests (Arno and Gruell 1983; Arno et al. 2000; Gruell et al. 1982). As a result, we have seen an expansion of Douglas-fir into areas where fire was frequent historically, but also an increase in the density of the forests where it is associated with more mesic species. This has created large, contiguous areas where canopy fuels have increased and become denser, and surface fuels that have been converted from grass and shrubs to heavy down dead woody fuels (Keane et al. 2002). These conditions predispose many Douglas-fir forests to severe future fires. Moreover, these dense stand conditions have contributed to decreased vigor that predisposes the species to western spruce budworm and Douglas-fir beetle outbreaks. Many Douglas-fir forests of southwestern and central Montana are currently experiencing high budworm and beetle mortality.

Climate Change Responses

Several studies suggest that Douglas-fir will respond positively with future changes in climate. Morales et al. (2015) projected a 7-percent increase in the range of the species in the western United States by 2060. Soulé and Knapp (2013) found almost doubled radial growth in Douglas-fir in the western portions of the Northern Rockies in the latter half of the 20th century, but they attributed some of this increase to other factors such as CO_2 fertilization. Rose and Burton (2009), using SDMs, projected that Douglas-fir forests in British Columbia will nearly triple in area by 2080, while Franklin et al. (1991) project no net loss of Douglas-fir habitat in the future in the Pacific Northwest. Using a gap model, Cumming and Burton (1996) also projected little change in the Douglas-fir zone in British Columbia.

However, it is likely that myriad factors will contribute to decline of Douglas-fir forests in some parts of the Northern Rockies region in the future. USFS Northern Region survey results from 2014 show significant increases

in Douglas-fir 3-year seedling mortality (about 50 percent) due to increasing drought, high temperatures, and severe conditions, presumably related to climate change. In addition, Kemp (2015) found that natural postfire regeneration of Douglas-fir on sites that burned in 2000 and 2007 varied across gradients in elevation, aspect, and burn severity, and findings indicated that Douglas-fir regeneration was significantly reduced with increased heat loading (incoming solar radiation derived from site latitude, aspect, and slope). Specifically, the probability of successful Douglas-fir regeneration was lower at lower elevation sites and on sites with higher heat load (steep, southwest aspects). Likewise, Douglas-fir abundance was lower on sites at lower elevations and with higher heat loads.

On dry lower elevation southerly aspects in the southern Northern Rockies, ponderosa pine is likely to cope with moisture deficits better than Douglas-fir because it does not have the high potential for xylem cavitation (Stout and Sala 2003). In addition, Douglas-fir might not have the genetic potential to rapidly migrate to more-suitable sites (Aitken et al. 2008). More importantly, a suite of insects and diseases is increasing in Northern Rockies Douglas-fir forests and creating heavy mortality, especially in southwestern portions of the region. The spruce budworm is killing many Douglas-fir stands in southwestern Montana, while the Douglas-fir bark beetle is attacking stands in other parts of the Northern Region. Nitschke and Innes (2008) predict major losses of Douglas-fir from parts of British Columbia because of hot, dry conditions, while Shafer et al. (2001) predict major transitions in Douglas-fir in most of the U.S. Pacific Northwest, and raise some major concerns that the climate might be too warm to meet the chilling requirements of Douglas-fir seed. Using SDM approaches, Gray and Hamann (2013) projected that Douglas-fir will migrate more than 1,300 feet north and 560 feet upwards in elevation by 2050, and Bell et al. (2014) projected losses of more than 40 percent of its range in the Northern Rockies by 2090.

Increases in wildland fires, coupled with adverse effects of the fire exclusion era in Northern Rockies forests, could also present some problems for Douglas-fir. Increasing fire danger in Douglas-fir stands with high canopy and surface fuels may promote wildland fires that kill the majority of Douglas-fir, even the most mature individuals. If fires increase in the future, regardless of fire suppression efforts, they may be so frequent that Douglas-fir seedlings cannot become established and grow to maturity.

Douglas-fir might be one of the Northern Rockies tree species most limited in range expansion because of its limited genetic diversity and structure (St. Clair and Howe 2007). The species has a specialist genetic adaptive strategy at low-to-mid elevations and a more generalist strategy at higher elevations. With warming temperatures and a possible decrease in summer moisture conditions, Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir may contract from the driest portions of its range. Current natural regeneration failures may be exacerbated by reduced seed sources owing to large wildfires and hot and dry microclimate conditions, especially

on southerly exposures at lower elevations. On moist sites (mixed mesic forest), mortality from root disease may increase because of increasing moisture stress.

Western Larch

Autecology

Western larch (*Larix occidentalis*) grows in the Upper Columbia River basin of northwestern Montana, and in northern and west-central Idaho (Schmidt and Shearer 1990). It grows in the relatively moist-cool climatic zone. Limiting factors to western larch are low temperatures at the upper elevations, and lack of moisture at the lower extremes (Habeck 1990). Western larch grows on a wide variety of soils; most soils suitable for growth are deep and well drained. It is commonly found on valley bottoms, benches, and northeast-facing mountain slopes (Schmidt et al. 1976).

Western larch is adapted to extreme environmental heterogeneity, from maritime climates in the west and northwest to more continental climates, as westerly air masses move across the Bitterroot and Cabinet Mountains (Rehfeldt 1982). At comparable elevations, the frost-free period in western Montana is 30 days shorter than in northern Idaho, and thus populations from western Montana are better adapted genetically to short frost-free growing seasons as compared to similar elevations in northern Idaho (Rehfeldt 1995a). Moreover, as elevation increases and frost-free periods decrease, growth potential decreases. Early fall cold snaps are a major temperature factor affecting seedling and sapling survival, before resting buds have had an opportunity to fully lignify (Rehfeldt 1995b). Drought is another major climatic factor affecting mid-to-late season survival (Schmidt and Shearer1995). It is most likely to affect seedlings under heavy shade because of the heavy moisture use by the overstory and other competing vegetation. Zhang and Marshall (1994) and Zhang et al. (1994) characterize western larch as having low water use efficiency, as compared to other conifers in the Northern Rockies. Plants that have low water use efficiency tend to be larger in stature and produce more biomass, which may be trait-limiting in future warmer and more arid or variable-precipitation climates. The lower water use efficiency of western larch may explain its absence on xeric sites (Gower et al. 1995).

Cone and seed production in western larch is most prolific at ages older than 30 to 50 years, with seed crops occurring every 14 years in Idaho and every 10 years in Montana (Owens 2008). Good cone crops may occur in successive years if conditions are favorable (Owens and Molder 1979). Spring frosts often reduce pollen, cone, and seed production in western larch, leading to sporadic seed years. Cone production is higher in stands that have larger crowns, such as stands that have been thinned (Shearer 1976). Cooler, wetter springs favor foliar diseases such as larch needle cast (*Meria larisis*); successive years of infection lead to reductions in available cone crops. Cone maturation follows elevation gradients; cones at lower elevations are generally mature in mid-August and seed dispersal occurs

into September. As such, seed may be available for dispersal during the fire season.

Seed germinates best on seedbeds exposed by burning or mechanical scarification (Antos and Shearer 1980; Beaufait et al. 1977; Schmidt 1969; Shearer 1976). Western larch seedlings survive poorly on undisturbed litter, humus, or sod or with heavy root competition; seedlings germinated on duff do not often survive (Beaufait et al. 1977). High solar irradiation is the most important physical factor affecting seedling survival (Shearer 1976). Southerly and west exposures are generally too severe for western larch seedlings to establish, particularly in drier sites at the lower elevational limits of its range. In the middle and northern portion of its ranges, western larch grows well on all exposures. Young seedlings grow fast on desirable sites. Only lodgepole pine is similar to western larch in seedling growth; Douglas-fir grows at about half the rate, and spruce and subalpine fir at about one-quarter the rate, of western larch. Site productivity has the most effect on height growth on western larch sites (Shearer 1976).

Western larch is a long-lived early seral species. It is a fast-growing species with tall, open crowns, making the species easily able to outgrow all of its competitors on the more mesic sites (Milner 1992). It is also the most shade-intolerant conifer in the Northern Rockies (Minore 1979) (table 6.3); it can tolerate partial shading only in the seedling stage. Western larch is replaced through succession by all other conifers except for ponderosa pine. Western larch is moderately drought tolerant and can survive seasonal drought, but performs poorly when droughts last more than 1 or 2 years. Douglas-fir is the most common associate, but others include ponderosa pine on lower drier sites; western hemlock, western redcedar, and western white pine on moist sites; and Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir, lodgepole pine, and mountain hemlock on cool, moist subalpine sites (Schmidt and Shearer 1990). It has been associated with mycorrhizal fungi in many portions of the region (Harvey et al. 1978).

Western larch has average genetic diversity with a weak population differentiation. Its low levels of differentiation indicate that it is more a generalist than a specialist. The species has a moderate outcrossing rate, and the patterns of genetic variation are mostly dominated by latitude and longitude. Populations need to be separated by 1,640 feet in elevation before genetic differentiation is expected.

Disturbance Interactions

Wildland fire is essential to the maintenance of western larch populations. Western larch depends on the open-canopy high light environments, and mineral soil seedbeds created by fire for successful, widespread regeneration (Schmidt et al. 1976). Western larch has unique characteristics that allow it to survive intense fire, including the thickest bark (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988), high crowns with high moisture contents, deep roots, and epicormic branch production (Fiedler and Lloyd 1995; Harrington 2012;

Schmidt and Shearer 1995; Schmidt et al. 1976). Western larch is one of the few Northern Rockies tree species that has adapted to survive mixed-severity to stand-replacement fires (Hopkins et al. 2013; Marcoux et al. 2015). Tall surviving western larch can produce copious seeds that are wind dispersed across large burns to land on mineral soil seedbeds and ensure continued western larch domination (Stoehr 2000). However, if serotinous mature lodgepole pine trees occur with western larch, regeneration may be dominated by both species (e.g., Hopkins et al. 2013). Because western larch grows quicker and taller, it often outcompetes lodgepole pine to attain dominance (Pfister et al. 1977).

Western dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium campylopodum*) is perhaps the most damaging disease-causing parasite of western larch (Schmidt and Shearer 1990). It can infect seedlings as young as 3 to 7 years old and continue throughout the life of the tree. In addition to killing treetops, reducing seed viability, creating conditions suitable for entry of other diseases and insects, and causing burls, brashness, and some mortality, it decreases height and diameter growth. Three other important diseases are found in western larch: needlecast caused by *Hypodermella laricis*, brown trunk rot, and red ring rot. The exotic larch casebearer (*Coleophora laricella*) and native western spruce budworm are currently the two most serious insect pests of western larch (Schmidt and Fellin 1973). However, neither of these agents causes substantial mortality. Western larch is susceptible to defoliation as a result of the recent western spruce budworm outbreak (DeNitto 2013). Larch needle cast results in substantial needle damage in cooler, moister springs. Episodic outbreaks of larch casebearer and western spruce budworm can also cause defoliation severe enough to reduce the current year's tree growth (Schmidt et al. 1976) and disrupt cone production.

Historical and Current Conditions

The more mesic montane western portions of the region were often dominated by extensive western larch forests that had regenerated after major fires. The species dominated northwestern Montana and was the major timber species for most of the 1950s to 1970s. However, extensive logging as early as 1908 on USFS lands (Arno 2010) removed many of the large tall western larch that could have survived fire and cast seed across the landscape, and effective fire exclusion has removed the burned, mineral soil seedbeds where western larch can regenerate. Continued fire exclusion has served to increase forest density and surface fuel loads so that future fires may be more severe.

Climate Change Responses

Western larch is a species that is highly susceptible to climate warming. Most climate change studies predict major losses of western larch throughout the Northern Rockies. Morales et al. (2015) used an SDM approach to project a 41-percent loss of western larch in its range in the western United States, and Aston (2010) reports major

expected declines in western larch habitat in the northern Rocky Mountains. Rehfeldt and Jaquish (2010) projected major shifts in western larch in the western portions of the Northern Rockies, with major losses in Montana and gains in Idaho. Nitschke and Innes (2008) used gap modeling approaches to simulate major losses in western larch in most of British Columbia. Coops and Waring (2011) suggest that western larch may invade many areas vacated by lodgepole pine in the future in some portions of the Pacific Northwest. In addition, considering western larch associates, competitive interactions among species may play a critical role in the current and projected distribution of tree species such as western larch (Thuiller et al. 2008). Although temperature-precipitation interactions tend to set the limits where species can successfully compete, temperature alone seems primarily responsible for adaptation of populations within those limits (Rehfeldt et al. 2014).

Western larch will probably migrate to more northerly and higher areas in the Northern Rockies, but not without surviving major fires. Gray and Hamann (2013) estimated western larch could migrate more than 500 miles northward and more than 1,100 feet higher in elevation in the region by 2050. Western larch has the ability to quickly take advantage of changes in productivity of colder sites, providing these areas burn and the western larch survives the fires to provide sufficient seed for colonization. Increasing fires may serve to return western larch to the Northern Rockies landscape, but managers may need to provide substantial assistance by planting western larch in burned areas before other species become established. Continued fire exclusion will probably result in major declines of western larch in the western portions of the region because increased competition will reduce vigor, making the trees more susceptible to damaging agents; surface and canopy fuel buildups will be so great that many relic western larch trees will die in uncharacteristically severe fires (Arno et al. 1997; Davis 1980; Norum 1974). Keane et al. (1996) simulated major declines in the future for western larch under fire exclusion and moderate climate change, but found it increased as more fire was allowed to burn in the Glacier National Park landscape.

Western larch exhibits an intermediate adaptive strategy, and geographic clines for most adaptive traits are relatively flat (Rehfeldt 1994, 1995b). Populations from northerly latitudes and higher elevations exhibit the lowest growth potential, least tolerance to larch needle cast, and the lowest survival. Using a common garden study of 143 populations, Rehfeldt (1995b) demonstrated that an increase of 9 °F would produce a mean annual temperature exceeding the current ecological distribution of the species. A molecular study using allozymes indicated low levels of genetic differentiation among populations from the inland Northwest (Fins and Steeb 1986). Evolutionary bottlenecks are commonly cited as a mechanism of reduced genetic differentiation among populations, and increased differentiation within populations.

Western larch may be highly susceptible to future changes in climate primarily because of its narrow geographic and elevational distribution in the region and its uncertain association with wildland fire. If wildland fires increase, western larch may have a distinct colonization advantage, providing fire mortality is low in those communities that have extensive fuel buildups from fire exclusion. However, if fires decrease and exclusion is continued, western larch may be outcompeted by its shade-tolerant competitors, and those seed-producing western larch that remain might be killed by severe fires created by abnormal fuel accumulations. If western larch is planted in those severely burned areas, the species will surely remain on the landscape in the future.

Western White Pine

Autecology

In the Interior West, western white pine (*Pinus monticola*) grows from near Quesnal Lake, British Columbia, south through the Selkirk Mountains of eastern Washington and northern Idaho and into the Bitterroot Mountains of western Montana (Graham 1990). Isolated populations are found as far east as Glacier National Park (Loehman et al. 2011a). The climate of the interior portion of western white pine range is influenced by the Pacific Ocean; summers are dry and most of the precipitation occurs in the fall and winter. Western white pine is limited by moisture at lower elevations and temperatures at upper elevations. The southern boundary is limited by a balance of precipitation and evaporation.

Western white pine grows on diverse of soil types in the Northern Rockies (Harvey et al. 2008), but it primarily grows in areas where the upper soil layers are composed of loess or loess-like material. In this region, it generally grows at elevations of between 1,600 and 5,900 feet and where the topography is steep with V-shaped and round-bottomed valleys. It grows on a variety of slopes, but is common along moist creek bottoms, lower benches, and northerly slopes. Western white pine grows in association with a variety of species, and in the western hemlock/bride's bonnet (*Clintonia uniflora*), western redcedar/bride's bonnet, and grand fir/bride's bonnet habitat types (Cooper et al. 1991).

Western white pine seeds require 20 to 120 days of cold, moist conditions before germination occurs. Seeds germinate in the spring when soil moisture is at field capacity from melting snow. Western white pine seedling establishment is favored by partial shade on severe to moderately severe sites (Graham 1990) but little to no shade on north slopes. Under full sun, germination begins earlier and ends earlier than in shaded conditions. Mineral soil surfaces are preferred over duff. Once established, western white pine grows best in full sunlight on all sites. Seedlings have low drought tolerance, and seedling mortality late in the first growing season is attributed to high surface temperatures on exposed sites, and drought in heavily shaded areas where

root penetration is slow. Early root and shoot development is not rapid.

Western white pine is almost always a seral species and is classified as intermediate in shade tolerance (Minore 1979). It attains dominance in a stand only following wildfire or with silvicultural systems that favor it. It is tolerant of cold when it is dormant, and similar to lodgepole pine in cold tolerance.

Genetic variation of western white pine is high, with the greatest difference being among trees within a stand, although differences occur among stands and elevational zones. The adaptation of western white pine to different conditions (topographic, climatic, geographic, and edaphic) is governed more by phenotypic plasticity than by selective differences. The species has a high outcrossing rate and average genetic diversity with moderate genetic differentiation. It is a generalist species with broad climate and environmental tolerances (Devine et al. 2012).

Disturbance Interactions

Historically, western white pine forests mostly originated from wildfires, especially stand-replacement burns, but were also maintained by frequent low-severity fires (Barrett et al. 1991). The species, especially when mature, is more tolerant of heat and can better survive fire than nearly all of its shade-tolerant competitors. Its relatively thick bark and moderately flammable foliage make it intermediate in fire resistance among its conifer associates (Graham 1990). Native American burning was probably the primary source of fire that created the pure stands of western white pine in northern Idaho, but lightning was also important (Graham 1990).

The most prominent agent causing the severe declines in western white pine is white pine blister rust (Fins et al. 2002; Harvey et al. 2008). A combination of climate, extensive white pine blister rust, abundant alternate hosts, and susceptible western white pine caused significant losses in the recent past. Selection of naturally resistant trees as seed sources and planting of rust-resistant nursery stock can reduce losses. In the absence of blister rust, western white pine is long-lived, commonly surviving to 300 to 400 years old.

The foremost root disease of western white pine is Armillaria root rot, which causes fading foliage, growth reduction, root-collar exudation of resin, dead and rotten roots, and black rhizomorphs. Annosus root disease and laminated root rot (*Phellinus sulphurascens*) also cause some mortality of individuals and groups. In periods of drought, pole blight, a physiological disorder, can occur in stands of the 40- to 100-year age class, causing yellow foliage and dead resinous areas on the trunk. Later, the top dies and, after a few years, the tree dies. The disease apparently is not caused by a primary pathogen but results from rootlet deterioration in certain soils, which restricts the uptake of water. Bark beetles are the most important insects that attack western white pine, and the most important species is the mountain pine beetle, which kills groups of trees, primarily in mature forests. The mountain pine beetle often attacks trees weakened by blister rust. Likewise, the red turpentine beetle (*Dendroctonus valens*) sometimes attacks weakened trees.

Historical and Current Conditions

Western white pine stands were once extensive across northern Idaho and parts of Montana, with large, tall pine trees dominating the montane landscapes (Harvey et al. 2008). As a result of logging, fire suppression, and extensive white pine blister rust infection, western white pine forests are nearly gone, and the species occurs only as scattered individuals in mixed-conifer stands (Fins et al. 2002). This is truly an ecosystem in decline, and it may be doomed to extinction without active restoration.

Climate Change Responses

Western white pine presents a special challenge in forest management in the future. Recent studies have shown that western white pine might be the species best adapted to changes in climate in the northwestern portions of the Northern Rockies (Loehman et al. 2011a). Using SDMs, Gray and Hamann (2013) estimated western white pine could move almost 250 miles northward and 500 feet higher in elevation in the region by 2050. Its superior growth rates, ability to survive fire, and high timber value make it a species to promote in the creation of future forests with high resilience (Baumgartner et al. 1994; Graham 1990). It has the unique ability to disperse seeds into burned areas, which are likely to increase in the future, and the predicted increases in productivity where it occurs could mean that it might benefit more than any other tree species from changing climate, especially in the context of timber production. However, western white pine is currently ravaged by white pine blister rust, and it has not yet developed the genetic capacity to overcome the damaging effects of this exotic disease to populate future landscapes in the northwestern Northern Rockies (Fins et al. 2002). The species simply has not achieved a sufficient level of rust resistance to allow it to dominate future stands (Harvey et al. 2008). With white pine blister rust and its alternate hosts (e.g., currant) predicted to also increase in the future, creating a rust-resistant population of western white pine is critical to maintaining it in the mesic grand fir/western redcedar/western hemlock habitat types (Baumgartner et al. 1994). Without a comprehensive western white pine restoration program, there is little chance that this species will play an important role in the future.

Other issues may govern future western white pine dynamics. While wildland fire may increase growing space, thereby providing for high regeneration potential, there may be few western white pine trees to provide the seed source needed to regenerate these large burns. Further, in some portions of the Northern Rockies, the species may be highly dependent on ash cap soils (Graham 1990), which may prevent its migration to warmer sites. The species is also dependent on a unique assemblage of ectomycorrhizae whose availability in some areas might be reduced in the

future; suitable substrate may not exist upslope so migration may not occur.

In summary, we deem western white pine to be highly predisposed to declines in the future due to the interacting effects of continued fire exclusion, low levels of white pine blister rust resistance in native populations, and rapid succession to more shade-tolerant conifer communities. While it may be a species of special interest for northwestern portions of the Northern Rockies, its populations and future under changing climates is especially precarious because of blister rust. Abundance of western white pine is currently low in isolated landscapes, and thus the magnitude of any decline may be large relative to current and past populations.

Quaking Aspen

Autecology

Quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) is the most widely distributed native tree species in North America and is abundant in the mountains of western and southwestern Montana and northern Idaho (DeByle 1985; Perala 1990). Its habitat is limited primarily to areas of water surpluses (where annual precipitation exceeds evapotranspiration), and it is also limited by minimum or maximum growing season temperatures. Deterioration of aspen stands is often related to warmer summer temperatures (Perala 1983). Aspen grows on a variety of soils, but growth and development are strongly influenced by both physical and chemical properties of the soil. The best soils for aspen growth are usually well drained, loamy, and high in organic matter, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and nitrogen. Aspen has an important role in nutrient cycling because of its rapid growth and high nutrient demand. Aspen is limited by both shallow and deep water tables (>8.2 feet) because the roots need sufficient water and good aeration, especially during the growing season.

Compared to most conifer species, aspen is a short-lived, disturbance-maintained seral species (Mueggler 1985; Rogers 2002). It is shade-intolerant and aggressively sprouts following any disturbance (usually fire) that kills most of the live stems, thus stimulating vegetative reproduction (i.e., suckering) (Bartos 1978). Aspen reproduces primarily by asexual root sprouting. Parent trees (genets) produce stems/trees (ramets), resulting in a clone or stand of genetically identical aspen stems (trees). Damage to parent trees alters the growth hormones (auxins and cytokinins) and stimulates a sprouting response (Perala 1990). Soil temperature is the most critical abiotic factor affecting suckering. Light is not needed for suckering but is needed for secondary growth. Eventually, most of the original root connections are severed as the ramets develop their own root systems to support nutrient uptake (Rogers et al. 2007; Shepperd and Smith 1993). This reproductive strategy allows aspen to establish quickly on disturbed sites and outcompete conifers for soil moisture, nutrients, and light. In addition, the shared root system maintains overall stand vigor by allowing sharing

of resources during the early stages of stand development (Mitton and Grant 1996; Romme et al. 1997).

Although there are a number of different aspen classifications (Mueggler 1988; Shepperd et al. 2001), it is widely recognized that aspen occurs as both stable climax communities and seral, disturbance-maintained communities (Mueggler 1985, 1988). Stable aspen communities occupy sites with both high soil moisture and solar radiation, which apparently preclude establishment of conifers for very long periods (or they never establish). Stable climax aspen communities do not require disturbance to maintain dominance. Seral aspen apparently occurs in two forms in the Northern Rockies. First, there are mesic stands in northwestern Montana and northern Idaho where aspen is a common seral component, but it rarely dominates stands unless there are several consecutive burns (Campbell and Bartos 2001; Cooper et al. 1991; DeByle 1985). The second seral type occurs in the drier forested areas in the region, such as east of the Continental Divide, especially in southwestern Montana. In these seral types, which are created by fire and sprouting, aspen occurs as the major stand component; these stands will eventually succeed to more shade-tolerant conifers (e.g., Douglas-fir, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce) in the absence of disturbance (DeByle 1985; Mueggler 1988).

Aspen has a high genetic diversity because it is essentially a transboreal broadleaf tree. It has weak genetic differentiation geographically, but strong differentiation at the population level. There is substantial phenotypic variation in the species, found both in the field and in genetic studies, as documented by varied leaf sizes, shapes, and phenologies.

Disturbance Interactions

Numerous factors other than competition will be important for quaking aspen under a changing climate. Perhaps the most important factor affecting aspen regeneration and distribution is browsing by ungulates, which frequently damage reproduction by browsing and by rubbing their antlers against the stems (Eisenberg et al. 2013; White et al. 1998). Elk (*Cervus elaphus*) and moose (*Alces alces*) can also damage pole- and saw log-size trees by "barking" them with their incisors. Such injuries often expose individuals to secondary attack by insects or pathogens. Heavy use by overwintering ungulates can greatly reduce the number of aspen trees in localized areas. Cattle and sheep browsing is a serious problem in many areas of the Northern Rockies as livestock are allowed to range through recent aspen clearcuts. Mature aspen stands adjacent to livestock concentrations (water holes, salt blocks, and isolated stands in large open areas) often have root damage, are declining, and have few if any suckers present.

Fire can kill aspen stands (Bartos 1998), but it also creates conditions conducive to aspen regeneration and suckering by eliminating shade-tolerant conifers, which compete for light and eventually overtop and shade out aspen, leading to aspen decline (Campbell and Bartos 2001; Shepperd et al. 2001). Mature aspen trees may not survive

fire as well as the fire-adapted conifers of the region, but aspen is easily the most competitive after fire because it can aggressively regenerate from suckers (Shinneman et al. 2013). Aspen could do well in a warmer climate with increased fire frequency, but moisture will limit its success, with varying results (Anderegg et al. 2012; Hogg and Hurdle 1995; Kulakowski et al. 2013; Worrall et al. 2013).

Following disturbance, aspen normally dominates a site for 40 to 80 years. Natural thinning from disease, aging, and succession (shading) by competing conifers eventually reduces aspen abundance (Mueggler 1985; Rogers 2002). In central Utah, Shepperd et al. (2001) found that both regenerating and nonregenerating clones had stems of various age classes, which suggests that periodic sucker events occurred in these clones. In addition, they found that all of the nonregenerating clones had fewer roots than their regenerating neighbors, which indicates that root systems decline when clones are not periodically regenerating. Many aspen clones are known to be associated with ectomycorrhizae (Cripps and Miller 1993).

Aspen has low susceptibility to insect damage, except in urban plantings, but stem canker diseases have a significant impact on aspen ecosystems. Depending on the fungus, cankers may kill trees within a few years or persist for decades. Hypoxylon canker caused by *Hypoxylon mammatum* is probably the most serious aspen disease east of the Rocky Mountains, killing 1 to 2 percent of the aspen annually (Perala 1990). Young trees are killed by small rodents and other mammals, particularly large ungulates (Eisenberg et al. 2013).

Historical and Current Conditions

Since around 1970, aspen has been in a period of general decline that is thought to be the result of wildfire exclusion, which has allowed plant succession to proceed toward conditions that ordinarily exclude aspen (Campbell and Bartos 2001; Frey et al. 2004). Recent episodes of aspen dieback have been superimposed on this general decline. Dieback can be recognized by the suddenness of the impact, giving rise to the term "sudden aspen decline," and by an epidemiology that begins with the death of branch tips, death of mature trees, and eventually death of entire clones (Frey et al. 2004). The dieback is suspected to be caused by drought.

Climate Change Responses

Aspen is a species that may experience both gains and losses under future climate, depending on local site conditions, particularly soil moisture. Seral aspen communities will respond differently from stable, climax aspen communities. Aspen communities on warmer, drier sites could have high mortality because of increasing water deficit. Ireland et al. (2014) found that drought was the major factor causing recent high mortality in southwestern aspen stands. In the boreal forests of western Canada, Hogg and Hurdle (1995) estimate that even with an 11-percent increase in precipitation, boreal forests in which aspen is a major component will decline due to drought stress. Sudden

aspen decline has been associated with severe, prolonged drought, particularly in aspen stands that are on the fringe of aspen distribution (warmer and drier sites than those typically considered optimal for aspen persistence) (Frey et al. 2004). Recent research efforts have found that extreme weather events (e.g., drought, thaw-freeze events), insect defoliation, or pathogens, or a combination of these factors, have led to aspen mortality (Brandt et al. 2003; Candau et al. 2002; Hogg et al. 2002). Marchetti et al. (2011) found that aspen mortality from various insects and disease (e.g., Cytospora canker [*Cytospora*], bronze poplar borer [*Agrilus liragus*], and aspen bark beetles *Trypophloeus populi* and *Procryphalus mucronatus*) was greater in those stands that were drought-stressed and declining due to sudden aspen death. Further exacerbating the situation is that declining stands may have little or no regeneration because of intense ungulate herbivory, and those smaller stands that persist may be smaller and fewer with increased plant stress due to increased severity of summer droughts (Rogers et al. 2013). Growth may increase because photosynthetic rates appear to increase more in aspen than other tree species as atmospheric carbon increases, but this may be offset by increased atmospheric ozone, which reduces photosynthesis and may increase susceptibility to insects and disease.

Increased fire frequency, particularly on moist sites, is likely to favor aspen regeneration in the future by removing shading conifers, and younger stands (<40 years old) created by fire may be more resilient to drought. However, if future fires are severe, they may kill the shallow root systems and eliminate aspen. Increased herbivory on regenerating stands may occur as adjacent upland vegetation senesces and desiccates earlier in the growing season. Areas with mountain pine beetle-caused conifer mortality (especially in lodgepole pine) may release aspen, and it will regenerate once the conifer canopy is thinned or removed, again given sufficient soil moisture.

Grand Fir

Autecology

Grand fir (*Abies grandis*) is found on a wide variety of sites, including stream bottoms, and valley and mountain slopes of the northwestern United States and southern British Columbia (Foiles et al. 1990). Average precipitation in its range varies from 20 to 100 inches, but in northern Idaho the average is from 20 to 50 inches. The average growing season temperature is 57.2 to 66.2 °F. In the inland portion of its range, grand fir grows best on rich mineral soils of valley bottoms but also grows well on shallow exposed soils of mountain ridges if moisture is adequate (Antos 1972).

Grand fir is either a seral or climax species, depending on site moisture (Ferguson and Johnson 1996). On productive mesic sites, it grows rapidly to compete with other seral species in the overstory, but it is outcompeted by western redcedar and western hemlock. On drier sites where western redcedar and western hemlock are excluded because of

drought, it is the most shade-tolerant species and can easily dominate the understory; it eventually assumes the dominant position in the climax condition. Grand fir is a major climax species in a variety of habitat types in Montana and northern Idaho, but it rarely grows in pure stands; one exception is on the Clearwater River drainage in north-central Idaho (Cooper et al. 1991; Pfister et al. 1977). In Montana and parts of Idaho, grand fir can also share dominance, even in the climax state, with subalpine fir, especially in narrow valley bottoms where subalpine fir can exert dominance in lower elevational zones (Antos 1972). In most of its range, grand fir is often associated with Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, and subalpine fir.

Grand fir has a high tolerance to shade but a low tolerance to drought, even though it can tolerate drought better than any of the conifers that may succeed it in the absence of disturbance (e.g., western redcedar and western hemlock). Grand fir forms associations with ectomycorrhizae and arbuscular mycorrhizae, which may allow it to outcompete some shade-tolerant conifers. It has a very low frost tolerance but can tolerate seasonally fluctuating water tables. It is monoecious and produces large, winged seed dispersed by wind. It has average levels of genetic diversity but weak geographic differentiation.

Disturbance Interactions

Grand fir is susceptible to fire damage in moist creek bottoms but is more resistant on dry hillsides where roots are deeper and bark is thicker (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988). Grand fir is less resistant to fire than western larch, ponderosa pine, and Douglas-fir but more resistant than subalpine fir, western hemlock, and Engelmann spruce. Most fires that burn grand fir sites are stand-replacement or mixed-severity, and these fires burn in fuels that generate sufficient heat to kill most grand fir trees (Arno 1980; Arno et al. 2000).

Grand fir is susceptible to heart rot and decay. Armillaria root rot and annosus root disease are common root diseases causing high tree mortality (Hagle et al. 2003). Numerous insects attack grand fir. The western spruce budworm and Douglas-fir tussock moth have caused widespread defoliation, topkill, and mortality in grand fir. The western balsam bark beetle (*Dryocoetes confusus*) and the fir engraver (*Scolytus ventralis*) are the principal bark beetles attacking grand fir (Foiles et al. 1990).

Historical and Current Conditions

Fire exclusion has increased grand fir on both dry and mesic sites, but increased tree densities have also stressed grand fir trees, contributing to increased fuel loadings, higher root rot, and greater insect damage and mortality. Historically, grand fir sites were probably dominated by western larch, western white pine, Douglas-fir, and ponderosa pine because of frequent fires, but these sites have since succeeded to the more shade-tolerant grand fir, and on the productive mesic sites, to western redcedar and western hemlock. Therefore, the condition of most grand fir stands depends on the last severe fire; if fire exclusion has caused

grand fir to dominate in both the overstory and understory, then these stands are usually highly stressed because of increased root rot and insect agents. However, in earlier seral stands that have not yet experienced high grand fir regeneration, a rise in grand fir cover types is likely with continued fire exclusion.

Climate Change Responses

On xeric sites, increased drought and longer growing seasons will exacerbate grand fir stress from competition, resulting in high mortality mainly from insects and disease. Nitschke and Innes (2008), using a gap modeling approach, projected major declines in grand fir, and Coops and Waring (2011) used a mechanistic model to simulate a nearly 50-percent decrease in the range of grand fir compared to historical distributions. Franklin et al. (1991) projected that grand fir will nearly disappear from the east slope of the Cascades.

Yet projections of increased productivity suggest increased grand fir populations on moderate sites (Aston 2010). Urban et al. (1993) projected an expansion of grand fir forests into upland xeric sites of the Pacific Northwest. On mesic sites where grand fir is seral to western redcedar and western hemlock, the longer growing seasons coupled with higher temperatures may increase growth rates and regeneration success, thereby increasing tree density and competition and effectively reducing grand fir components. The opposite is true on those sites where grand fir is the indicated climax; grand fir will increase in both the overstory and understory in the absence of disturbance.

Disturbance, specifically fire, could be the major factor in the rearrangement of grand fir communities across the Northern Rockies landscape. Longer fire seasons and high fuel loadings from both fire exclusion and increased productivity will serve to foster large, severe fires that may reduce grand fir, especially on those sites where it is the indicated climax species (i.e., grand fir habitat types). Fire will reduce grand fir dominance at both landscape and stand scales.

In summary, although many grand fir forests are highly stressed from high tree densities, the species will probably tolerate changes in climate and remain on the landscape at levels that are closer to historical conditions rather than the high abundance observed now.

Western Redcedar

Autecology

The inland range of western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) extends from the western slope of the Continental Divide in British Columbia south through the Selkirk Mountains into western Montana and northern Idaho (Minore 1990). The southern limit is Ravalli County and the eastern limit is near Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park. A few trees may exist east of the Continental Divide near St. Mary's Lake (Pfister et al. 1977). Western redcedar is abundant in many forested swamps as well as sites that are too dry for western hemlock; it has better root penetration than western hemlock

(Habeck 1978). Western redcedar dominates wet ravines and poorly drained depressions. Where there is sufficient precipitation, low temperatures limit the range of the species. It is not resistant to frost and can be damaged by freezing temperatures in late spring and early fall.

Western redcedar occurs only in pure stands where fire has been excluded for a long time, or where fire has been used to maintain western redcedar dominance (Barrett 1988; Barrett and Arno 1991). It is commonly associated with a wide array of tree species: grand fir, western white pine, western hemlock, western larch, and ponderosa pine. Only western hemlock in the Northern Rockies is more shade-tolerant than western redcedar, but western redcedar can be overtopped by Douglas-fir, grand fir, western hemlock, and western white pine (table 6.3). Its relative shade tolerance may be higher in warm than in cool areas, but western redcedar is very tolerant wherever it grows. Often present in all stages of forest succession, western redcedar can occupy pioneer, seral, and climax positions. In the Northern Rockies, however, most western redcedar stands are in the late seral-stages; it is usually considered a climax or near climax species. It has little tolerance to drought but can exist in seasonally wet areas, especially near riparian systems (Devine et al. 2012).

Western redcedar regenerates best on disturbed mineral soil, although scorched soil is not beneficial to its regeneration. Rotten wood that is in contact with the soil is a preferred seedbed in western redcedar groves. Western redcedar also propagates by clones, and clones tend to be more abundant than young trees established by seed. Establishing seedlings survive best in partial shade, as they are not tolerant of high soil temperatures or frost. Young branches are susceptible to sunscald. Roots of young seedlings grow more slowly than Douglas-fir roots but faster than western hemlock roots, and shoots have the longest growing period of any of the associated conifers.

Western redcedar has very low levels of genetic diversity, and this diversity is weakly distributed geographically and within populations. Clines are very gentle and seed zones narrow. This species cannot tolerate wide ranges of environmental conditions.

Disturbance Interactions

Relative to its associates, western redcedar is not as affected by damaging agents, but because it is long-lived, damaged trees are common (Minore 1990). Although western redcedar trees are somewhat wind-firm, especially on dry sites, the trees are often wind thrown in wetter environments. Western redcedar is less susceptible to fire damage than Engelmann spruce, western hemlock, grand fir, and subalpine fir in the Northern Rockies. Western redcedar is also less susceptible than other associated species to root pathogens. However, root disease still impacts western redcedars, and fungi eventually invade heartwood typically resistant to decay. In North America, the most important fungi attacking western redcedar are root, butt, and trunk rots, most importantly laminated root rot, honey fungus

(*Armillaria mellea*), and stringy butt rot (*Perenniporia subacida*).

Historical and Current Conditions

Compared to historical distributions, there has not been a significant increase or decrease in western redcedar distribution in the Northern Rockies. However, western redcedar dominance has probably increased in those stands occupying mesic western redcedar sites due to fire exclusion.

Climate Change Responses

With warmer temperatures, mesic northern Rocky Mountain ecosystems may increase in productivity (Aston 2010), and western redcedar may expand into more upland communities. Hamann and Wang (2006) projected that the western hemlock/cedar forests of British Columbia would double in range by 2050, and Urban et al. (1993), using gap modeling, simulated an expansion of western redcedar into upland western Oregon sites. Devine et al. (2012) rated western redcedar as having moderate vulnerability in the Pacific Northwest Region. With increased western redcedar productivity could come increased cone production and seed dispersal into new areas that might be more conducive to long-term seedling establishment.

Although warmer conditions in the future may benefit western redcedar, drier conditions in the future are likely to result in retraction of western redcedar to the warmer, wettest Northern Rockies sites; upland western redcedar stands might have high mortality from declining productivity. Woods et al. (2010) noted recent declines in western redcedar in British Columbia and attributed the decline to increased drought that decreased vigor and increased insect attacks and disease in western redcedar. Warming may also result in a loss of chilling required for western redcedar (Nitschke and Innes 2008), and the narrow genetic potential of western redcedar (Devine et al. 2012) may limit its expansion into new habitats. Using SDMs, Gray and Hamann (2013) estimated western redcedar might move 400 miles northward and 1,000 feet higher in elevation in the Pacific Northwest by 2050. However, in some portions of the region, redcedar is mostly associated with ash cap soils, so despite the possible creation of new habitats by new climates, the potential of non-ash soils to sustain productive western redcedar may be limited.

It is uncertain how disturbance will affect western redcedar in the future. Fire can serve to maintain western redcedar communities if it burns at low severities and kills only seedlings and saplings. However, high-severity wildfires could eliminate seed sources. Continued fire exclusion may maintain current western redcedar distributions, but without proactive fuels treatments, wildfire that occurs after long periods of exclusion may burn with sufficient severity to cause extensive western redcedar mortality. Further, new warm-cold cycles may facilitate the injury called red belt and adversely affect young western redcedar, as evidenced by increased flagging during past dry seasons.

In summary, western redcedar may not be severely affected by future climate warming. The species may remain in its current range, and productivity may increase in some settings.

Western Hemlock

Autecology

The inland range of western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) includes the west side of the Continental Divide in Montana and Idaho, north to Prince George, British Columbia (Packee 1990). Western hemlock thrives in mild humid climates and in environments with abundant soil moisture throughout the growing season (Hann et al. 1994). Where the growing season is relatively dry, western hemlock is confined primarily to northerly aspects, moist stream bottoms, or seepage sites. Western hemlock grows on a variety of soil types, although it is a shallow-rooted species and does not develop a taproot. Abundant roots, especially fine roots, grow near the soil surface and are easily damaged by fire.

Western hemlock is considered very shade-tolerant and is perhaps the most shade-tolerant tree species in the Northern Rockies (table 6.3). It is a major climax or near-climax species in the region and is found with nearly all of the other conifer species, including western redcedar, grand fir, Douglas-fir, western larch, western white pine, lodgepole pine, and ponderosa pine. Seed germination and germinant survival occur when there is adequate moisture. Western hemlock can germinate on a variety of materials and in both organic and mineral seedbeds. Decaying logs and rotten wood are often favorable seedbeds; decayed logs have the added benefit of providing nutrients. Western hemlock is highly susceptible to drought and demands abundant water throughout the growing season (Baumgartner et al. 1994). It is associated with some ectomycorrhizae. Its seedlings are highly susceptible to frost.

Western hemlock has relatively low genetic diversity and low geographic differentiation. It has a high outcrossing rate and average heterozygosity (Devine et al. 2012). Growth rate is more related to soil conditions than to genetics.

Disturbance Interactions

A variety of root and bole pathogens cause significant damage and mortality in western hemlock. It is also very susceptible to fire damage because of its shallow roots and thin bark, and it is also susceptible to windthrow owing to shallow roots. On droughty sites, top dieback is common, and entire stands of western hemlock saplings have been killed in exceptionally dry years. Western hemlock is highly susceptible to annosus root disease and Indian paint fungus (*Echinodontium tinctorium*), but seems to have a high tolerance to Armillaria root rots (Packee 1990).

Historical and Current Conditions

The current distribution of western hemlock is similar to its historical distribution. However, most stands with western hemlock have become denser and the western hemlock component has increased in both the overstory and understory. Overly dense western hemlock stands may be declining in vigor, thereby becoming more susceptible to disease, insects, and abiotic perturbations (e.g., windthrow).

Climate Change Responses

In the past, western hemlock/western redcedar forests were associated with wetter conditions in the low elevation forests of the Northern Rockies, but this type declined as fires and drought increased (Gavin et al. 2007). Thus, increased drought and area burned may decrease western hemlock abundance and distribution. Several studies have projected contractions in western hemlock distribution. For example, Hansen et al. (2001) simulated major contractions in western hemlock range, and Franklin et al. (1991) project that western hemlock will occupy about half its current range on the western slopes of the Cascades. Shafer et al. (2001) noted that western hemlock may decrease in range because chilling requirements for the seeds will not be met. Using a mechanistic landscape model, Keane et al. (1996) simulated losses of western hemlock and western redcedar under moderate climate warming in Glacier National Park, mostly as a result of severe fires. Cumming and Burton (1996) projected minor changes in the western redcedar-western hemlock zone in British Columbia under moderate warming. On the other hand, Hamann and Wang (2006) predicted that western hemlock would increase its range by more than 200 percent in British Columbia, and using gap modeling, Urban et al. (1993) simulated an expansion of western hemlock into upland western Oregon sites.

It is possible that western hemlock will maintain its current range under a changing climate. It may not have the diversity in growth habit that will allow it to expand its range into the more upland sites as temperatures warm. Because the species is dependent on ash cap soils, any migration may be relegated to those wetter and warmer sites without ash cap soils.

Lodgepole Pine

Autecology

Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*) has wide ecological amplitude, but only the inland form (*P. contorta* var. *latifolia*) is found in the Northern Rockies (Lotan and Critchfield 1990). Lodgepole pine has the widest range of environmental tolerance of any conifer in North America (Lotan and Critchfield 1990). It is relatively resistant to frost injury and can often survive in frost pockets where other species cannot (Pfister et al. 1977). In Montana, lodgepole pine does not grow on highly calcareous soils derived from dolomitic limestone (Lotan and Perry 1983). Lodgepole pine is primarily found on moist soils developed on colluviums from other types of limestone and calcareous glacial till. It grows well on gentle slopes and in basins, but it is also found on rough and rocky terrain, steep slopes and ridges, and bare gravel (Lotan and Critchfield 1990). Compared to other associated species,

lodgepole pine is intermediate in its needs for water, requiring more than Douglas-fir or ponderosa pine but less than spruce and subalpine fir in the region.

Lodgepole pine is intolerant of shade but highly tolerant of frost and drought (table 6.3). Occasionally seedlings become established under a forest canopy, but these individuals rarely do well and remain in a stunted form for long periods of time (decades to centuries). In the absence of fire, lodgepole pine is usually succeeded by its more tolerant associates, such as Douglas-fir in xeric environments and Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir in subalpine environments. Succession proceeds at variable rates, however, and is particularly slow in some high elevation forests (Arno et al. 1993). Lodgepole pine grows both in pure stands and in association with many conifers, primarily subalpine fir, spruce, Douglas-fir, and western larch (Steele et al. 1983). Its successional role is dependent on environmental conditions and on competition. It is seral in most mesic Northern Rockies forest communities (Arno et al. 1986). However, on cool dry habitats, such as those found in the Greater Yellowstone Area and southeastern Idaho, it is dominant and tends to be persistent and form near-climax communities (Despain 1983). Its ability to remain on xeric landscapes is enhanced by its association with many types of mycorrhizae.

Lodgepole pine has a great ability to regenerate due to a combination of cone serotiny, high seed viability, early rapid growth, and ability to survive a wide variety of microsite and soil conditions (Hardy et al. 2000). The serotinous cone habit, where cones open only after being heated by wildland fire, is common in the Rocky Mountains, but in general, the highest serotiny is found in the northern parts of the region. Large quantities of stored seeds are available for regeneration after fire, and annual seedfall from non-serotinous cones helps in restocking in areas of relatively minor disturbance and maintaining lodgepole pine presence in mixed stands.

The best lodgepole germination occurs in full sunlight and on bare mineral soil or disturbed duff, with little competition. Adequate soil moisture is required for germination and survival, with the first few weeks being most critical. In southwestern Montana most of the season's total germination occurs during the 2 weeks following snowmelt in late June when soil is saturated and temperatures most favorable. Drought is a common cause of mortality in first-year seedlings. Freezing temperatures may kill seedlings, but seedlings vary in frost resistance based on seed source. Frost heaving also causes mortality. Height growth begins earlier than in other associated species, except for other pines and western larch.

There is moderate genetic variation in strains of lodgepole pine, resulting in some strains growing well in cold climate and on poor sites. Lodgepole pine has an average genetic diversity but a weak differentiation across its Northern Rockies range and strong differentiation among populations. The species is a prolific seed producer and has

a good cone crop at about 1- to 3-year intervals. It is wind pollinated and its seeds are wind dispersed.

Disturbance Interactions

Fire plays a critical role in lodgepole pine forest succession (Lotan et al. 1984). Typically, many Northern Rockies lodgepole pine forests originated from stand-replacement fires, but extensive fire scars in Northern Rockies lodgepole pine forests indicate the existence of a low-severity, non-lethal fire regime component in these forests, especially in many areas east of the Continental Divide (Arno et al. 1993; Stewart and Arno 1997). Lodgepole pine is apparently able to survive low-intensity fires quite well even though it has thin bark (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988). However, most lodgepole pine forests in the region have a mixed-severity fire regime in space and time, where all fire severity types are possible depending on available fuels, antecedent drought, and wind conditions (Arno et al. 2000). Consequently, lodgepole as a species will be well adapted to the fires of the future. Repeated fires, however, can eliminate lodgepole pine seed sources if the fires occur before existing lodgepole has become reproductively mature (approximately 10 years). In most cases, lodgepole pine natural regeneration often overwhelms a burned site with abundant seed from serotinous cones and thereby excludes other species (Lotan and Perry 1983; Nyland 1998).

The mountain pine beetle is the most important insect pest and has played a significant role in the dynamics of lodgepole ecosystems (Roe and Amman 1970). Past research has tried to link fire, beetles, and lodgepole pine in a complex web of interactions (Geiszler et al. 1980). However, recent findings have shown that fire and beetles often act independently to influence lodgepole pine dynamics (Axelson et al. 2009; Moran and Corcoran 2012; Schoennagel et al. 2012).

Historical and Current Conditions

Advancing succession due to fire exclusion is contributing to replacement of lodgepole pine with subalpine fir in many areas of the Northern Rockies. Keane et al. (1994) found successional advancement of subalpine communities in the upper subalpine landscape of the Bob Marshall Wilderness increased from less than 8 percent of the landscape to more than 22 percent. Concurrent increases in burn areas are creating many new lodgepole stands and some may become dense thickets, but coupled with increased drought, these dense lodgepole stands may exacerbate stress from other factors, including competition, endemic insects and diseases, and wind. Warming temperatures have heightened bark beetle activity, resulting in more frequent and severe outbreaks that have devastated many mature lodgepole pine communities in the central Northern Rockies (Carroll et al. 2003).

Climate Change Responses

Longer drought periods and warmer temperatures in the lower, south-facing, drier lodgepole pine subalpine

environments may cause decreased tree growth and regeneration potential, perhaps resulting in a transition to more-xeric trees species, such as Douglas-fir. Chhin et al. (2008) found that recent warming has decreased lodgepole pine growth rates in the foothill lodgepole pine communities of the low elevation forests in Alberta. Coops and Waring (2011) used process modeling to simulate minor declines with moderate warming in lodgepole pine in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia), but major type conversions to other species with greater warming. Using an SDM approach, Hamann and Wang (2006) projected a net 50 percent loss of lodgepole pine in British Columbia under severe warming. Nigh (2014) projected that lodgepole pine heights may decrease by roughly 3 feet in moderate future warming, but the species has the genetic capacity to mitigate this height loss. In contrast, Rehfeldt et al. (1999) found substantial decline in lodgepole pine growth and height with minor changes in climate. Chhin et al. (2008) also found that decreases in lodgepole pine growth were correlated with high summertime temperatures, presumably related to summer drought. However, they also found that lodgepole pine growth increases with high fall temperatures. Gray and Hamann (2013) used SDM techniques and estimated lodgepole pine would move more than 250 miles northward and more than 650 feet higher in elevation in the Northern Rockies by 2050. Bell et al. (2014), using SDMs, projected losses of more than 70 percent of its Northern Rockies range by 2090. Given that lodgepole pine is a generalist that is capable of regenerating and growing in a wide range of environments, it is likely that the decline of lodgepole pine from drier sites will occur only under extreme warming scenarios (e.g., RCP 8.5 and A2) over longer time periods.

Another possibility is that, in the higher elevational areas of the Northern Rockies subalpine, where seasonal drought is not a problem, warming climates may actually increase lodgepole pine productivity because of high precipitation (Aston 2010). Johnstone and Chapin (2003) show that lodgepole pine is not in equilibrium with current climate; thus the response of the species to climate shifts will be difficult to predict using SDM approaches. However, they found that there are places where lodgepole pine will be positively affected by climate change. Wang et al. (2006) projected major increases in lodgepole pine productivity under future climates with moderate warming, but major decreases and perhaps local extinctions under extreme warming. Romme and Turner (1991) projected increases in the lodgepole pine zone in the GYA under moderate warming.

A third possibility is that lodgepole pine will migrate into areas where it is currently excluded by harsh, cold, windy conditions, such as the upper subalpine and treeline. This relocation process will likely be catalyzed by fire, especially in those areas with high serotiny. Clark et al. (2017) found that under moderate warming, lodgepole pine would remain on the GYA landscape, but it would also expand into higher elevation environments historically occupied by whitebark

pine. Most studies have projected the migration of lodgepole pine into the whitebark pine zone (Hamann and Wang 2006; Romme and Turner 1991).

Lodgepole pine is well adapted to increases in fire occurrence, depending on level of serotiny (Turner et al. 1999). Smithwick et al. (2009) simulated some positive increases in GYA lodgepole pine after fire and under climate change. If fire is too frequent, however, lodgepole may be eliminated from sites where fires reburn stands before established seedlings and saplings become reproductively mature. Clark et al. (2017) simulated major and rapid decreases in GYA lodgepole pine under high climate warming due to both inhospitable environments and too frequent fire.

In mesic subalpine sites, continued fire exclusion coupled with higher productivities will certainly heighten competitive interactions and put more lodgepole pine trees into stress, thereby increasing mortality, vulnerability to insects and disease, and canopy and surface fuels, and accelerating succession toward subalpine fir (Smithwick et al. 2009). Severe fires that then occur in these advanced successional communities could convert communities back to lodgepole pine, providing there is not a loss of seed source. Fire exclusion, especially in areas of high serotiny, might delay the expansion of lodgepole pine.

Projected increases in climatic conditions that facilitate mountain pine beetle outbreaks could reduce lodgepole pine populations and forest extents (Creeden et al. 2014; Gillette et al. 2014). Lodgepole pine is highly susceptible to bark beetle mortality, especially on those landscapes where fire exclusion has resulted in an abundance of mature hosts (Temperli et al. 2013). Bark beetle outbreaks will favor the more shade-tolerant, nonhost tree species, thereby creating dense stands that may be subject to severe crown fires after 10 to 20 years. If beetle-killed stands burn, lodgepole pine can occupy the burned area only if viable seed sources remain. The varying levels of serotiny and beetle mortality will dictate future stand conditions in beetle-killed stands. Landscape heterogeneity is the only hedge against massive declines of lodgepole pine in the future (Logan and Powell 2001).

In summary, lodgepole pine is expected to both expand and contract in range, but as long as fire remains on the landscape, the species is likely to maintain its presence in the Northern Rockies at roughly the same proportions as during the last 100 years, albeit in different areas. The species is highly exposed to any climate changes because of its wide range and diverse growing environments. But Soulé and Knapp (2013) suggest that the steep clines associated with lodgepole pine may be driven more by density-dependent selection than by environmental selection, so this species may be well adapted to future changes in climate. In addition, although the magnitude of climate effects is likely to be great for tree growth, it may be only moderate for species survival compared to other species. The likelihood of these effects is highly uncertain, primarily because of the uncertainty about fire frequency and severity, which determine the extent to which fire will continue to play its

role in the maintenance of lodgepole as a major component on future landscapes.

Whitebark Pine

Autecology

Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) is an important component of high-elevation upper subalpine forests in the western United States and Canada (Arno and Hoff 1990). It is a keystone species because it supports unique community diversity, and it is a foundation species because of its roles in promoting community development and stability (Tomback and Achuff 2010; Tomback et al. 2001). More than 90 percent of whitebark pine forests occur on public lands in the United States and Canada, so maintaining whitebark pine communities requires a coordinated effort across Federal, State, and Provincial land management agencies (Keane et al. 2012).

Whitebark pine is a long-lived tree of moderate shade tolerance (Minore 1979) (table 6.3). It is common to find mature whitebark pine trees well over 400 years of age, especially on harsh growing sites; the oldest is more than 1,275 years (Luckman et al. 1984). Well-formed, thrifty individuals often have smooth gray bark, especially in the tree crowns, which may appear whitish in bright sunlight (Arno and Hoff 1990). Whitebark pine is slow growing in both height and diameter, and it rarely grows faster than most of its competitors, except on the most severe sites (Arno and Hoff 1990). In general, whitebark pine grows where summers are short and cool and where most precipitation comes in the form of snow and sleet, with rain only in June through September. Whitebark pine survives strong winds, thunderstorms, and severe blizzards, and is one of the few upper subalpine species that can tolerate long periods of drought (Callaway et al. 1998).

Whitebark pine is a major component of high elevation forests throughout the upper subalpine and treeline zones in the Northern Rockies (Arno and Hoff 1990). Whitebark pine forests occur in two high mountain biophysical settings. On productive upper subalpine sites, whitebark pine is the major seral species that is replaced by the more shade-tolerant subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and mountain hemlock, depending on geographic region (Arno 2001). These sites, referred to as "seral whitebark pine sites," support upright, closed-canopy forests in the upper subalpine lower transition to treeline, just above or overlapping with the elevational limit of the shade-intolerant lodgepole pine (Pfister et al. 1977); the two pine species can often share dominance. Other minor species found with whitebark pine on these sites are Douglas-fir, limber pine, and alpine larch (Keane et al. 2012). Sites where whitebark pine is the only tree species able to successfully dominate high elevation settings (called climax whitebark pine sites) occur in the upper subalpine forests and at treeline on relatively dry, cold slopes. Other species, such as subalpine fir, spruce, and lodgepole pine, can occur on these sites, but as scattered individuals with truncated growth forms. Whitebark pine can also occur as krummholz, elfin forests, clusters, groves,

tree islands, and timber atolls in the alpine treeline ecotone (Tomback 1989) and as a minor seral in lower subalpine sites (Cooper et al. 1991; Pfister et al. 1977).

Whitebark pine is eventually replaced, in the absence of fire, by the shade-tolerant subalpine fir, spruce, and mountain hemlock on the productive, seral whitebark pine sites (Arno and Hoff 1990). It can take 50 to 250 years for subalpine fir to replace whitebark pine in the overstory, depending on the local environment and fire history (Keane 2001). Whitebark pine competes with lodgepole pine during early successional stages in the lower portions of its elevational range. Lodgepole pine usually has the competitive advantage over whitebark pine when it establishes from seed after a stand-replacing disturbance event because of its fast growth, serotiny, and copious seed production.

A bird (Clark's nutcracker) and whitebark pine have coevolved into a mutualistic relationship that ensures their continued presence on the landscape (Tomback 1982, 1983). Whitebark pine has evolved a nearly exclusive dependence on nutcrackers to disperse its large wingless seeds, and in turn, nutcrackers utilize the large whitebark pine seeds as an important food source. The key behavior that benefits the whitebark pine is the tendency of nutcrackers to bury thousands of whitebark pine seeds each year as food stores in small clusters or "seed caches" across diverse forest terrain (Keane et al. 2012). Nutcrackers retrieve these seed caches primarily in spring and summer as an important food source for themselves and their young. However, not all seed caches may be recovered, particularly following a large cone crop. Snowmelt, spring rains, and summer showers stimulate seed germination, leading to whitebark pine regeneration. Although whitebark pine depends nearly exclusively on nutcrackers, nutcrackers often harvest and cache seeds of other large-seeded pines.

Whitebark pine is a genetically diverse species because of its dependence on bird-mediated seed dispersal (Keane et al. 2012). As a result, the species is highly adapted to exist across many environments, and is limited only by competition, even at the lowest elevations. It has only six seed zones across its entire range, so it is easily able to migrate across local landscapes to rapidly take advantage of newly burned areas. Whitebark pine has weak geographic differentiation in the Northern Rockies, but a moderate level of inbreeding. One concern in the future is that the breeding of rust resistance in future whitebark pine seedlings may compromise other important traits; Mahalovich et al. (2006) found lower cold tolerance in highly rust-resistant seedlings grown in the nursery.

Disturbance Interactions

Whitebark pine fire regimes are complex and variable in space and time, but in general, all three types of fire severities describe whitebark pine fire dynamics: nonlethal, stand-replacing, and mixed-severity (Morgan et al. 1994b). Some whitebark pine stands may undergo fire events that burn in low-intensity nonlethal surface fires (sometimes called underburns or low-severity fires) because of sparse

surface and canopy fuel loadings and unique topographical settings. However, most fires in the upper subalpine burn in mixed-severity patterns that best facilitate continued existence of whitebark pine (Keane et al. 1994).

Mountain pine beetle is by far the most damaging insect in mature stands of whitebark pine. Much of the mature whitebark pine in the Northern Rockies was killed by this insect between 1909 and 1940. Epidemics evidently spread upward into the whitebark pine forest after the beetle became established in the lodgepole pine forests below. The GYA whitebark pine ecosystems have recently suffered one of the most severe mountain pine beetle mortality events in recorded history.

The principal disease of whitebark pine is the introduced white pine blister rust (Schwandt 2006). Blister rust is particularly destructive where the ranges of whitebark pine and blister rust coincide with currant, the alternate host of the rust. Where there is a source of inoculum from lowland forests, the spores that infect pine can be carried by wind to the trees, but cool, moist conditions are needed for infection in whitebark pine. Blister rust damage is severe and prevents tree development in many upper subalpine settings of northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. Whitebark pine has some resistance to the disease, and efforts at developing rust-resistant seed for regenerating burned and treated areas have been very successful.

Historical and Current Conditions

Whitebark pine has been declining since the early 20th century from the combined effects of native mountain pine beetle outbreaks, contemporary fire exclusion policies, and the spread of the exotic white pine blister rust (Schwandt 2006; Tomback and Achuff 2010). Losses of whitebark pine in some areas of the Northern Rockies exceed 80 percent (Keane et al. 2012). Whitebark pine is listed as endangered in Alberta, it is a candidate species for listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act (USFWS 2011), and it is listed as endangered in Canada under the Federal Species at Risk Act. Within the last decade, major outbreaks of pine beetle and increasing damage and mortality from blister rust have resulted in cumulative whitebark pine losses that have altered high-elevation community composition and ecosystem processes in many regions of the United States and Canada.

Climate Change Responses

There is much disagreement in the research and management communities about the fate of whitebark pine as climates slowly warm. Some maintain that projected warmer conditions will severely reduce whitebark pine habitat and push whitebark pine "off the tops of mountains" (Lenoir et al. 2008) or restrict the species to north of the Canadian border (Koteen 1999; Schrag et al. 2007; Warwell et al. 2007). This assumes that less hardy, shade-tolerant conifer species would establish in those higher elevation stands where whitebark pine currently dominates, and whitebark pine would "migrate" upslope to the limited areas above its current elevational range (Romme and Turner 1991).

Bell et al. (2014), using SDMs, project minor losses (10–20 percent) in whitebark pine range in the Northern Rockies by 2090. Others hold that climate-mediated changes in the disturbance regimes will serve to keep whitebark pine within its current range, albeit at lower levels (Loehman et al. 2011b). The fate of whitebark pine is uncertain because of high uncertainty in regional climate change predictions, the high genetic diversity and resilience of the species, and the localized changes in disturbance regimes and their interactions (Keane et al. 2015a).

Climate change has the potential to significantly impact whitebark pine ecosystems (Bartlein et al. 1997). Devine et al. (2012) rated whitebark pine the most vulnerable of all the Pacific Northwest tree species, primarily because of restricted range and white pine blister rust infections. Taking a historical perspective, however, we can see that whitebark pine was able to persist through many major climatic cycles in the past. Historical analogs of warmer climates in the paleoecological record indicate whitebark pine was maintained and even increased in some places under past warmer and drier climates in parts of its range (Whitlock and Bartlein 1993; Whitlock et al. 2003). Whitebark pine can grow within a broad upper-elevation zone in the West; it just happens to grow best at high elevations where there is little competition from other tree species. For example, Arno et al. (1995) found that the elevational range of whitebark pine in the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana extended more than 500 feet below its current lower elevation limits. Nitschke and Innes (2008) suggested that temperature alone would exclude whitebark pine from British Columbia landscapes. However, whitebark pine occupies the largest range of any five-needle pine in the United States and Canada—about 18° of latitude and 21° of longitude—indicating a great deal of tolerance to different climates (Tomback and Achuff 2010). Because it is bird dispersed, it is planted and grows in many environments and dies only from competition (Arno and Hoff 1990). Moreover, its longevity provides potential buffering against changing climates (Morris et al. 2008).

The same three responses of tree species to climatic change will occur for whitebark pine: Ranges will decline, stay the same, or expand. SDM studies have projected dramatic decreases in whitebark pine habitat over the next 50 years (McDermid and Smith 2008; Warwell et al. 2007). Hamann and Wang (2006) projected a 100 percent decline in whitebark pine in British Columbia with high levels of warming. These models also predict that whitebark pine will probably make a transition to treeline environments that are above the current elevational range, but these transitional areas are much smaller than the traditional range of whitebark pine, thereby resulting in a net loss of the species. Climate can adversely affect growth and mortality of whitebark pine in many ways (Bugmann and Cramer 1998; Keane et al. 2001). Projected decreases in water availability may result in less water being available for some droughty sites. Longer drought might cause whitebark pine to shut their stomata longer to conserve the little water available, resulting in slow growth.

However, many whitebark pine stands may have positive responses to warming climates. Anecdotal evidence shows that some whitebark pine forests are exhibiting abnormally high growth and more frequent cone crops with warmer summers and longer growing seasons. These observations are consistent with some region-based scenarios using computer modeling (Loehman et al. 2011b). Recent modeling efforts have shown that whitebark pine might be maintained on the landscape in the future, provided that projected increases in large, stand-replacement fires do occur and create large, competition-free burned areas (Clark et al. 2017; Loehman et al. 2011b). If tree dispersal enables range shifts to occur, this will lead to a new northern distributional range of whitebark pine (Hamann and Wang 2006; McKenney et al. 2007). Moreover, whitebark pine shows promise for being maintained in the Northern Rockies because of high levels of genetic diversity (Mahalovich and Hipkins 2011; Richardson et al. 2002), moderate to high heritabilities in key adaptive traits, demonstrated blister rust resistance (Hoff et al. 2001; Mahalovich et al. 2006), minimal inbreeding (Bower and Aitken 2007; Mahalovich and Hipkins 2011), and generalist adaptive strategies.

Future climates may enhance growth of whitebark pine diameter and height and decrease mortality, especially in mesic seral whitebark pine forests. Earlier growing seasons with ample moisture, such as those projected for the upper subalpine forests, will result in increased productivity and greater growth. Longer, warmer growing seasons may also result in higher productivities and greater biomass, especially considering the high amounts of precipitation that currently fall in upper subalpine forests. The abundant moisture may enable longer growing seasons at high elevations. Increased biomass could result in higher growth rates for timber production and forage, especially in the widespread higher mountain areas where cold, not moisture, limits tree growth, creating potential for the inclusion of whitebark pine in the timber base. Increased biomass could also foster more intense, severe fires, and maybe insect and disease outbreaks, but more importantly, the increased biomass will probably increase cone crop abundance and frequency. However, this increased production may also heighten competitive interactions between whitebark pine and its associated species, thereby favoring the more shade-tolerant individuals in the absence of disturbance. If disturbances increase, however, the more fire-tolerant whitebark pine might inherit the landscape.

Whitebark pine cone and seed crops could be both adversely and beneficially affected by climate change. In high-elevation, historically cold environments, increased temperatures may increase growing seasons and thereby increase potential for more frequent and more abundant cone crops with greater numbers of seed. This is important because decreases in species abundance and associated cone production may be offset by climate-driven increases in cone crops. Warming and variability in climate will also affect the phenology of cone crops, but these impacts may be minimal as plants adapt to the new conditions. Some predict

higher frost mortality of emerging cones due to earlier onset of the growing season, coupled with high daily temperature variability (Chmura et al. 2011). Others suggest that cone crops will be reduced in the future because of high tree stress from drought, resulting in less frequent and abundant cone crops. Many expect that changes in climate variability and timing will have low impact on species reproduction because whitebark pine is both drought-tolerant and cold-tolerant.

Perhaps the life stage most critical for whitebark pine is regeneration, where most species, but especially trees, are most susceptible to shifts in climate (Solomon and West 1993). The microsite conditions needed for successful regeneration are so demanding that seed germination, especially from seeds that are wind dispersed, is rarely successful (McCaughey and Tomback 2001). Bunn et al. (2003) emphasized the importance of accounting for microsite variability in assessing climate change response; high-elevation microsite changes, coupled with increased fire activity, could increase whitebark pine regeneration and growth as climates change. The depth and duration of snow cover often governs high-elevation tree regeneration. Most years are moist enough for regeneration, but snow remains on sites for a long time, thereby limiting the number of days that a seedling can actually photosynthesize and grow. If temperatures increase, then snow might melt earlier, giving more time for seedlings to survive and grow. Warm years often result in waves of regeneration and can be dated in upper subalpine ecosystems by using seedling and sapling tree ages (Little et al. 1994; Rochefort et al. 1994). Recent observations of invasions of subalpine meadows and balds by subalpine fir, alpine larch, and spruce are a testament to a high number of sequential warm years over the last decade, which have facilitated regeneration in the high mountain landscape. Moreover, there is often abundant precipitation in upper subalpine settings, and projections for the future indicate roughly the same amount, so seedling mortality from drought might continue to be minimal.

Many climate change studies consistently project drier conditions in the range of whitebark pine, which would result in large increases in the annual number and severity of wildfires and area burned (Flannigan et al. 2009; Krawchuk et al. 2009; Marlon et al. 2009). With increased fire, whitebark pine will have a unique opportunity to maintain its range or even increase in distribution in the future because it has bird-mediated seed dispersal mechanisms that can disseminate seed great distances into large, severe burns, well before wind can disperse the seeds of its competitors (Tomback 1977, 1982, 1989; Lorenz et al. 2008). Whitebark pine also has morphology that enables it to survive low- to moderate-severity fires (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988). Therefore, whitebark pine is uniquely positioned as a species that can increase under the more frequent fire regimes that result from warming climates. Further, nutcrackers may be harvesting seeds from trees that have survived blister rust, so there is some chance that seeds from unclaimed nutcracker caches may become blister rust-resistant trees. It

is entirely possible that as long as wildland fire creates areas where birds will cache seeds and resultant seedlings can grow without competition, whitebark pine will continue to thrive throughout its range.

Current mountain pine beetle outbreaks are killing more whitebark pine than historical records indicate, and these outbreaks are probably a result of warmer winter temperatures that facilitate expansion of and establishment of beetle populations in the higher elevation whitebark pine zone (Logan and Powell 2001; Logan et al. 2003). A warmer climate may also accelerate the spread of blister rust (Koteen 1999).

In summary, whitebark pine is not expected to do well under future climates, not because it is poorly adapted to shifts in climate regimes, but rather because it is currently undergoing major declines from the exotic disease white pine blister rust that preclude its immediate regeneration in future burned areas. Moreover, the declines from white pine blister rust and mountain pine beetle have served to reduce whitebark pine populations to severely low levels, and now the nutcracker is acting more as a seed predator than a seed disperser (Keane and Parsons 2010). Climate shifts will only exacerbate this decline and complicate restoration efforts. Whitebark pine will be highly exposed to any climate changes because of its (1) confined distribution to the upper subalpine environments, (2) severely depressed populations, and (3) lack of ability to regenerate when populations are low because of nutcracker predation. The species has the genetic capacity to overcome both white pine blister rust and new climates to thrive over the next century, but only with extensive restoration efforts.

Subalpine Fir

Autecology

Subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) grows in the coolest and wettest forest areas of the western continental United States (Alexander et al. 1990). Although widely distributed, it grows within a narrow range of mean temperatures (25 to 40 °F); however, January temperatures average 5 to 25 °F. In contrast with other subalpine species, cool summers, cold winters, and deep winter snowpack are more important than precipitation in determining where subalpine fir grows.

Subalpine fir occupies the lower valleys to upper subalpine zone in the Northern Rockies. In the lower valley bottoms and footslopes, it is often associated with grand fir, western larch, Douglas-fir, western redcedar, and western white pine (Pfister et al. 1977). At the mid-subalpine, it is often associated with lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and Engelmann spruce; at the upper subalpine, it is associated with whitebark pine, alpine larch, mountain hemlock, and Engelmann spruce (Arno 2001). In the Rocky Mountains, subalpine fir is commonly found with Engelmann spruce, and the two together are often called spruce-fir forests (Moran-Palma and McTague 1997). The subalpine fir habitat types are probably the most common forest habitat types in the Northern Rockies (Pfister et al. 1977).

Subalpine fir is shade-tolerant, and is often the most shade-tolerant of all its associates, except for grand fir and mountain hemlock in isolated cases (Alexander et al. 1990; Minore 1979) (table 6.3). Although subalpine fir can grow under nearly all light conditions, seedling establishment and early survival are usually favored by partial shade (Knapp and Smith 1982). In the absence of grand fir and mountain hemlock, subalpine fir will survive under closed-forest conditions with less light than Engelmann spruce. It may not compete well with the spruces, lodgepole pine, or interior Douglas-fir in the lower subalpine when light intensity exceeds 50 percent of full shade. Subalpine fir is quite intolerant of drought, and many seedlings can be killed if droughts are overly long or deep. The species is highly tolerant of frosts and can remain alive in seasonally wet conditions. Subalpine fir is usually the climax tree species in most subalpine areas of the Northern Rockies, although it sometimes shares climax status with spruce.

Subalpine fir is a prolific seed producer, often having large cone crops every 2 or 3 years (Alexander et al. 1990). Seeds usually drop in late fall, over snow in most places. The species is restricted to cold, humid habitats because of the low tolerance of seedlings to high temperatures and dry conditions (Knapp and Smith 1982); newly germinated subalpine fir seedlings rarely tolerate high solar radiation, and they are susceptible to heat girdling and drought (Little 1992). Seedlings are also killed or damaged by spring frosts, competing vegetation, frost heaving, damping off, snowmold, birds, rodents, and trampling and browsing by large animals, but losses are not different than for any of the common associates of the species (Alexander et al. 1990). However, the abundant seedfall of fir, coupled with cool conditions in the subalpine, often create dense mats of seedlings in stands that contain partial shade and overwhelm seedling establishment of all other species. Subalpine fir has average genetic diversity for a Northern Rockies tree species and weak geographic differentiation. There are strong clinal variations in phenological and morphological characteristics.

Disturbance Interactions

Subalpine fir is highly susceptible to fire damage because of thin bark, low-hanging dense foliage, and shallow roots (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988). Even the lowest severity fire can cause high mortality in subalpine fir. Frequent fires often eliminate subalpine fir from both the overstory and understory, thereby maintaining the more fire-adapted species of lodgepole pine, whitebark pine, western larch, and western white pine (Little et al. 1994; Murray et al. 1997; Wadleigh and Jenkins 1996). Invariably, some fir trees survive even the most severe fires in refugia, thereby providing a seed source for future stands (Murray et al. 1998; Veblen et al. 1994).

In spruce-fir forests, the most important insect pests are the western spruce budworm and western balsam bark beetle. The silver fir beetle (*Pseudohylesinus sericeus*) and the fir engraver may at times be destructive, but only

in local situations in the Northern Rockies. Fir broom rust (*Melampsorella caryophyllacearum*) and wood-rotting fungi are responsible for most disease losses, but root and butt rots may be important locally. Broom rust and wood rots weaken affected trees and predispose them to windthrow and windbreak. Decades of intense competition, coupled with a period of moderate to severe drought, often cause extensive mortality in subalpine fir stands. These high mortality events are often attributed to a complex of disease, insects, and other agents, but the underlying cause is low vigor in existing trees from overcompetition.

Historical and Current Conditions

Effects of 100 years of fire exclusion have not yet become manifest in most subalpine fir ecosystems because of historically infrequent fire and slow successional advancement. However, abundance of subalpine fir cover types has increased in many subalpine and upper subalpine landscapes (Keane et al. 1994), and many stands that had low subalpine fir components now have fir dominating the understory and encroaching in the overstory. Increased stand density has resulted in many stands becoming stressed from competitive interactions, heightening susceptibility to disturbances. Recent dry, droughty conditions have led to high-elevation subalpine fir mortality of undetermined origin called subalpine fir die-off, usually attributed to a complex of causal mechanisms such as drought, greater competition, higher temperatures, and increasing diseases. Therefore, as fire is progressively kept off the subalpine landscape, the subalpine fir stands that replaced the pine communities will progressively decline in vigor and be more susceptible to fire, insects, and diseases. A concern is that if these overly dense, unhealthy stands continue to escape fire, the seed sources of the fire-adapted pines will be eliminated, and high elevation sites may be converted to grass and shrublands (Keane 2001). Another concern is that as fire is excluded from these dense forests, canopy and surface fuels will accumulate to such levels that, when they are burned, fires will be of extremely high severities (Keane 2001; Morgan et al. 1994b).

Climate Change Responses

It is challenging to predict responses of subalpine fir to future climate change. It is a species that is highly adapted to moist growing conditions, so it is likely to respond poorly to increasing temperatures and drought (Alexander et al. 1990). On the other hand, it is a fierce competitor that can outcompete all subalpine tree species for shade, and it is a species that has a diverse range throughout the Northern Rockies. Subalpine fir could expand its range into the treeline, become more or less productive in its current range, and decline in productivity and occurrence in those areas that become inhospitable for the species, presumably the warmer, drier portions of its current range. Most paleo-reconstructions over the Holocene show subalpine fir dominated during periods of cold, moist conditions but declined in extent as climates warmed (Brunelle et al. 2005; Whitlock 1993, 2004). Hamann and Wang (2006) projected

that future losses of subalpine fir from drought will exceed gains from range expansion, resulting in a 97-percent decrease in the range of the species in British Columbia. Romme and Turner (1991) estimated major to minor losses in subalpine fir in the future in the GYA, depending on degree of warming, and Bell et al. (2014) modeled little loss of subalpine fir in the Northern Rockies. Using SDM techniques, Crimmins et al. (2011) estimated that the subalpine fir/spruce zone would move upward in elevation by 300 feet by 2050. Woodward et al. (1994) suggested that subalpine fir will produce less frequent and lower cone crops in the future. However, seedling establishment may be the bottleneck for subalpine fir in the future; the species needs long periods of high moisture for seeds to germinate and seedlings to thrive (Urban et al. 1993), and years that meet these conditions may be less frequent in the future in the lower subalpine.

In those areas with abundant precipitation, longer growing seasons and reduced snowpacks may increase regenerative success of subalpine fir, especially in subalpine areas where snow pack historically controlled regenerative success (Means 1990; Urban et al. 1993). These areas constitute most of the range of fir in the subalpine to treeline. Little and Peterson (1991) found that most fir regeneration occurred in low snow years because there were more suitable microsites. Villalba et al. (1994) found subalpine fir growth was positively correlated with increasing summertime temperature. Higher productivity in these subalpine forests may also increase cone crops, tree growth, and species densities. Denser stands may eventually result in high competitive stress, making these fir stands even more vulnerable to high mortality from insects, disease, and abiotic factors, and therefore less resilient. However, declines in whitebark pine and lodgepole pine from beetle- and rust-caused mortality may facilitate fir regeneration and growth, resulting in more fir trees and more stands dominated by subalpine fir.

Those Northern Rockies areas in high-elevation (treeline) settings may have an increase in subalpine fir as the heavy snow and cold conditions that precluded fir regeneration at treeline become less frequent (Cayan et al. 2001; Rochefort et al. 1994). However, the decline of whitebark pine trees that act as nurse crops to facilitate subalpine fir establishment may contribute to the inability of the fir to establish in the high elevation settings. Establishment of populations at the upper subalpine and treeline may be possible only when fire is absent long enough to allow enough subalpine fir to gain reproductive maturity; then sufficient seed can be dispersed over enough years to ensure suitable environmental conditions for seedling establishment (Little and Peterson 1991; Little et al. 1994).

Increases in wildland fire would decrease subalpine fir throughout the Northern Rockies, and those decreases would be much more extensive and steeper than any resulting from direct climate change effects. Frequent fires would favor nearly all of the associates of subalpine fir because it is the least adapted to survive fire (Arno and Hoff 1990; Keane

2001). Little et al. (1994) found limited subalpine fir regeneration over 30 years after a fire at Mount Rainier, but those regeneration events that did occur happened after low snow years. Heusser (1998) found that subalpine fir increased in growth with warmer temperatures during the spring of the growth year, but growth was negatively correlated with high summer temperatures the previous years.

In summary, the future of subalpine fir will depend on both the future level of fire and the degree of climatic warming. Subalpine fir is likely to be a species that shifts across the high mountain landscape, with gains in expansion balancing losses of contraction (caused directly by changes in climate). However, future increases in fire, disease, and insects may limit its abundance. Fir is an aggressive competitor, so gains in the species through advanced succession in the upper subalpine will probably be balanced by or exceed losses from the drier, lower subalpine caused by fire, drought, and pathogens.

Engelmann Spruce

Autecology

Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*) is widely distributed in the western United States and is a major component of the high-elevation Northern Rockies forests (Alexander and Shepperd 1990). It grows in humid climates with long, cold winters and short, cool summers, and occupies one of the highest and coldest environments of the western United States. The range of mean annual temperature in which this species occurs is narrow considering its wide distribution. Engelmann spruce grows best on moderately deep, well-drained, loamy sands and silts and clay loam soils from a variety of volcanic and sedimentary materials. It also grows well on glacial and alluvial soils where the water table is accessible.

Engelmann spruce is rated as shade tolerant, but it is less shade tolerant than its major associate, subalpine fir (Minore 1979) (table 6.3). It is more shade enduring than interior Douglas-fir, western white pine, lodgepole pine, quaking aspen, western larch, or ponderosa pine (Alexander and Shepperd 1990). The species does not tolerate drought well and it is perhaps the least adapted to drought conditions of the subalpine tree species (Alexander and Shepperd 1990). It is highly frost tolerant and one of the few upper subalpine species that can tolerate seasonal standing water. It is associated with mycorrhizae but does not seem to be dependent on the fungi for survival. It is wind pollinated and its seeds are wind dispersed.

In the Northern Rockies, Engelmann spruce is mostly associated with subalpine fir but grows with many other tree species, including mountain hemlock, whitebark pine, western larch, Douglas-fir, quaking aspen, lodgepole pine, limber pine, and western hemlock. In most upland subalpine Northern Rockies sites, Engelmann spruce is a minor species associated with subalpine fir in later seral communities. It is often found in the upper subalpine as scattered individuals with the greatest height and diameter (Arno 2001).

Pure Engelmann spruce communities are found in wet areas and riparian settings, and in severe frost pockets where all frost-sensitive tree species are excluded.

Spruce seeds germinate in a variety of substrates, including duff, litter, and decomposed humus, and seedlings have best initial survival on duff seedbeds, rather than on mineral soil. Engelmann spruce has low tolerance to high temperatures and drought, especially in the first 5 years of establishment. Due to its slow initial root penetration and sensitivity to heat in the succulent stage, drought and heat girdling kill many first-year spruce seedlings. Drought losses can continue to be significant during the first 5 years of seedling development, especially during prolonged summer dry periods (Alexander and Shepperd 1990). After establishment, adequate soil moisture, cool temperatures, and shade favor survival.

Engelmann spruce is similar to subalpine fir in that it has an average genetic diversity with weak geographic differentiation. It is considered intermediate in its adaptive strategy, being neither a generalist nor a specialist. Populations show habitat specificity. Engelmann spruce has a high outcrossing rate and possesses the ability to cross with white spruce (*Picea glauca*).

Disturbance Interactions

Engelmann spruce is highly susceptible to fire injury and death, but some spruce survive severe burns because of their large size (Bigler et al. 2005; Wadleigh and Jenkins 1996). The species can survive fire better than its primary associate, subalpine fir (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988). Surviving large spruce trees can provide abundant seed in burned areas, but rarely do these seeds germinate to create forests dominated by Engelmann spruce; these spruce-dominated forests occur only in seasonally wet habitats (Pfister et al. 1977).

Engelmann spruce is susceptible to windthrow, especially after any cutting in old-growth forests. The spruce beetle (*Dendroctonus rufipennis*) is the most serious insect pest of Engelmann spruce. It is restricted largely to mature and overmature spruce, and epidemics have occurred throughout recorded history. The western spruce budworm also attacks Engelmann spruce.

Historical and Current Conditions

It is difficult to determine recent trends in Engelmann spruce forests across the Northern Rockies because the species is rarely the dominant component in a stand. One would expect that advancing succession under a century of fire exclusion has increased spruce in the subalpine and upper subalpine. However, logging and fire have reduced spruce in lower elevation areas, where it occurs in seasonally wet areas and frost pockets.

Climate Change Responses

Similar to subalpine fir, some losses of Engelmann spruce are likely in the drier portions of its range, especially in those seasonal moist sites that will be mostly dry in the future. Liang et al. (2015) found that major mortality events

have occurred in Engelmann spruce over the last 20 years because of increased drought, presumably related to changing climate. Alberto et al. (2013) found that this species had lower growth the year following warm, dry years in the U.S. Cascades. Using SDMs, Morales et al. (2015) projected a 47 percent contraction in Engelmann spruce in the northern Rocky Mountains by 2060, and Hamann and Wang (2006) projected a 27-percent decrease in the range of Engelmann spruce in British Columbia by 2050. Gray and Hamann (2013) estimated Engelmann spruce would move 230 miles northward and 550 feet higher in elevation in the Northern Rockies by 2050. Using SDMs for the southwestern United States, Notaro et al. (2012) projected that Engelmann spruce would disappear by 2050. Using gap modeling, Burton and Cumming (1995) projected a precipitous collapse of Engelmann spruce in the mesic forests of British Columbia. Coops and Waring (2011) used mechanistic modeling to simulate a retraction in spruce range of more than 50 percent.

Engelmann spruce may be the first species to become established in high elevation areas where snow precluded conifer regeneration historically, but where there now may be a seasonal wetland or subalpine wet meadow (Schauer et al. 1998). Jump and Peñuelas (2005) note that Engelmann spruce has the genetic capacity to adapt to large swings in climate in situ by taking advantage of shifts in microsites. Due to the great seed dispersal ability and tall stature of the species, it is able to disseminate into previously unforested areas, such as glades, meadows, and balds, to expand its range. Whitlock (2000) found increased spruce regeneration during the warmest periods of the past several centuries, and Luckman et al. (1984) found Engelmann spruce growth positively correlated with increasing summertime temperature. Various SDM approaches project minor changes in the spruce-fir subalpine zone (Bell et al. 2014; Crimmins et al. 2011).

Engelmann spruce is poorly adapted to fire, and thus major declines are expected with the projected increases in area burned. But these declines may be offset by increased regeneration on burned areas with mineral soil substrates. Continued fire suppression activities may maintain spruce on the landscape, but this species may persist at lower abundance because of increased drought. Fire suppression may also ensure the demise of Engelmann spruce in that, when fires eventually burn, the severities may be so great that they kill all spruce seed sources. In addition, Bentz et al. (2010) noted that future climates are likely to be more conducive to the spruce beetle, and Stout and Sala (2003) suggested that future climates may foster more spruce budworm events, leading perhaps to further declines in spruce.

In summary, Engelmann spruce is a species that is highly sensitive to climate but likely to persist in future Northern Rockies landscapes because of the superior ability of the species to seed into new areas, especially burned areas, and ability to remain in the high mountain landscape. Projected increases in subalpine productivity will also serve to keep spruce on the Northern Rockies landscape.

Mountain Hemlock

Autecology

Mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) is usually found on cold, wet, snowy upper subalpine sites, where it grows slowly and sometimes lives to be more than 800 years old. The species is apparently limited by late snowmelt, short growing seasons, and cool summer temperatures throughout much of its range in the Pacific Northwest. Earlier snowmelt, higher summer temperatures, and lower summer precipitation in the lower portions of its range produce conditions under which growth is limited (West et al. 2009). Areas occupied by mountain hemlock generally have a cool to cold maritime climate that includes mild to cold winters, a short, warm to cool growing season, and moderate to high precipitation. The presence of mountain hemlock in the Rocky Mountains is closely correlated with the eastward penetration of moist maritime air masses (Woodward et al. 1994). Mountain hemlock occurs in mixed upper subalpine stands in the western portions of the Northern Rockies, often relegated to the moist north slopes.

Mountain hemlock is considered highly tolerant of shade and other forms of competition, and it is probably more tolerant than any of its Northern Rockies associates, even subalpine fir in some places (Minore 1979). Mountain hemlock is considered a minor climax species in most of its limited habitats; mountain hemlock often succeeds lodgepole pine or subalpine fir (Means 1990). The species has a low tolerance to drought but a high tolerance to frost and standing water. It is wind pollinated, and the seeds are wind dispersed.

Mountain hemlock has large cone crops about every 3 years. It reaches reproductive maturity quickly by around 20 years of age, and most of the seedfall occurs during the fall months. It has average genetic diversity and weak geographic differentiation, but moderate population differentiation.

Disturbance Interactions

Mountain hemlock is considered susceptible to fire because it often retains branches almost to the ground, grows in clusters, and often has shallow roots spread throughout well-developed forest floors that dry out in the summer (Dickman and Cook 1989). It has thick bark and can withstand some low-intensity fire, but overall, it will often succumb to fire damage over time. Fire is a rare visitor to these mesic, cold stands, so any increase in fire frequency will reduce mountain hemlock populations.

The most striking damage to mountain hemlock is probably that caused by laminated root rot. This fungus spreads from centers of infection along tree roots so that all trees are killed in circular areas that expand radially. Mountain hemlock is the species most susceptible to root rot in subalpine forests (Means 1990).

Historical and Current Conditions

There have been few evaluations of mountain hemlock distributions in the Northern Rockies, and thus it is difficult to gauge trends in this species over the last century. The fire exclusion era has advanced succession in those subalpine sites where mountain hemlock can be found, thereby increasing the numbers and density of the species. These dense forests are probably not currently stressed because of high productivity in these areas. Mountain hemlock has a limited range in the region, so any significant warming and drying could drive the species to local extinction.

Climate Change Responses

With warming climate in western North America, existing mountain hemlock forests will probably increase in productivity, especially in the upper and lower elevational boundaries of the mountain hemlock zone (Means 1990). Near Mount Baker, Washington, ring width of mountain hemlock increased with increasing monthly temperatures in the preceding 12 months, decreasing winter precipitation, and decreasing snow depth, implying that productivity should increase with predicted temperature increases (Woodward et al. 1994). Graumlich et al. (1989) estimated that productivity increased 60 percent in the last century in four high-elevation stands in Washington, three of which contained 48 to 96 percent mountain hemlock. They related this increase most strongly to the increase in growing season temperature during this period (about 2.7 °F). West et al. (2009) projected increases in growth and productivity of mountain hemlock throughout much of its range in Washington and northern Oregon, but increased summer drought stress will reduce productivity in mountain hemlock forests of southern Oregon and near the lower elevation limit of the species. Peters and Lovejoy (1992) estimated that if mean annual temperatures increase 4.5 °F, the mountain hemlock zone may be shifted 1,800 feet higher in elevation and decrease as a proportion of forestland from 9 percent to 2 percent in Oregon. An increase of 9.0 °F may induce an upward shift of 3,700 feet, which is above all but the tallest peaks, effectively eliminating the species from the Northern Rockies (Means 1990). Woodward et al. (1994) speculated the mountain hemlock will produce less frequent and lower cone crops in the warm future.

In summary, the high productivity of mountain hemlock sites in the western Northern Rockies may mitigate the potential decline of mountain hemlock over the next 50 years. Local shifts of the species are likely to occur where it is established in droughty low-elevation areas of Idaho and western Montana, but overall, the species might be somewhat stable under climate warming. It might even increase in productivity and make range expansions into the lower treeline. The species is not highly exposed to climate changes because of its limited range in the region and its somewhat confined niche. The magnitude of climate effects on mountain hemlock responses will be great, but mostly positive, and the likelihood of these effects has a high uncertainty, primarily because of the uncertain role that fire will play in the dynamics of mountain hemlock populations in future landscapes.

Alpine Larch

Autecology

Alpine larch (*Larix lyallii*) is a deciduous conifer that occupies the highest and most remote environments in the Northern Rockies, growing in and near treeline on high mountains across the inland Pacific Northwest (Arno 1990). In the Rocky Mountains, alpine larch extends from the Salmon River Mountains of central Idaho northward to Lake Louise in Banff National Park, Alberta (Arno 1990). Within this distribution, alpine larch is common in the highest areas of the Bitterroot, Anaconda-Pintler, Whitefish, and Cabinet Ranges of western Montana. It is also found in lower abundance in isolated stands atop many other ranges and peaks in western Montana and northern Idaho (Arno and Habeck 1972). Alpine larch grows in cold, snowy, and generally moist climates where for more than half of the year, mean temperatures are below freezing. Mean annual precipitation for most alpine larch sites is between 32 and 75 inches, the larger amount being more prevalent near the crest of the Cascades; most stands in the Montana Bitterroot Range receive 39 to 59 inches. About 75 percent of this precipitation is snow and sleet. Ridgetop alpine larch stands are exposed to violent winds; most alpine larch stands annually experience winds reaching hurricane velocity or more, especially during thunderstorms or during the passage of frontal systems.

Alpine larch is perhaps the most drought-susceptible conifer in the Northern Rockies because of its reliance on subsurface water during the dry summer months (Arno 1990). It achieves its best growth in high cirque basins and near the base of talus slopes where the soils are kept moist throughout the summer by aerated seep water. It can also tolerate boggy wet meadow sites having very acidic organic soils. The species is most abundant on cool, north-facing slopes and high basins, where it forms the uppermost band of forest. It also covers broad ridgetops and grows locally under relatively moist soil conditions on south-facing slopes. The Northern Rockies may have a droughty period for a few weeks in late summer, but the effect is minor in most alpine larch sites; however, dry surface soils may prevent seedling establishment in certain years.

Alpine larch is the most shade-intolerant conifer growing at high-elevation Northern Rockies sites and is classified as very intolerant (Minore 1979) (table 6.3). Its evergreen associates attain their best development in forests below the lower limits of larch. An exception is whitebark pine, another treeline inhabitant, which is most abundant on warm exposures and microsites and thus tends to complement rather than compete with larch. Alpine larch grows mostly in pure stands, but it can be found with whitebark pine, subalpine fir, and Engelmann spruce near their upper

limits. Alpine larch roots extend deep into fissures in the rocky substrate. Trees are well anchored by a large taproot and large lateral roots and are very windfirm. Alpine larch is easily replaced by subalpine fir in most upper subalpine sites, but the species can act as a climax species in the lower treeline (Arno and Habeck 1972).

Alpine larch is one of the few deciduous conifers in the Northern Rockies, and as a result, it has a high capacity to survive wind, ice, and desiccation damage during the winter because the needles are off the trees. The species also has an evergreen sapling stage that allows it to quickly take advantage of the short growing season in the early summer after snowmelt (Arno and Habeck 1972). Alpine larch seedlings are frost-tolerant. Mature trees produce good cone crops every fifth year, and these seeds drop in early fall. It is assumed that alpine larch has an average genetic diversity and weak geographic differentiation, but little genetic work has been done on this species.

Disturbance Interactions

Fire is an occasional but localized visitor in alpine larch stands, causing injury or death in most cases. Large fires are infrequent in the cool, moist, and rocky sites where alpine larch occurs, and fire spreads poorly on these sites because of light and discontinuous fuels. Unlike its thick-barked, fire-resistant relative western larch, alpine larch has thin bark, has low resistance to surface fire, and often dies after low-intensity fires (Ryan 1998).

Powerful winds in alpine larch stands often damage crowns, in conjunction with loads of clinging ice or wet snow (Arno and Habeck 1972). Nevertheless, the deciduous habit and supple limbs of this tree make it more resistant to wind damage than its associates. Death usually occurs when advanced heart rot has so weakened the bole that high winds break off the trunk. Brown trunk rot produces the only conks commonly found on living trunks (Arno 1990); this fungus is evidently the source of most heart rot. Snow avalanches and snowslides are an important source of damage in many stands, but again, this species is better adapted to survive these disturbances than its evergreen associates.

Historical and Current Conditions

This species is rarely studied, and as a result, very little is known about its population trends in the Northern Rockies. Our best guess is that alpine larch populations have stayed roughly the same across most of its range in the region over the last 100 years. There have been some losses from fire in some areas, especially the Bitterroot Mountains of Montana, but there have also been gains. Recent anecdotal observations indicate that alpine larch has been increasing in ribbon forests, glades, and high-elevation open areas where snow accumulated historically; over the last two decades, these areas have been clear of snow enough of the year to foster alpine larch regeneration.

Climate Change Responses

We think alpine larch has a high potential to decrease in both productivity and abundance with climate change. On the one hand, alpine larch is a shade- and drought-intolerant species, so it does not do well in areas of increasing dryness and competition (Arno and Habeck 1972). Its high demand for subsurface water during the growing season is apparently the main factor limiting its range in the Northern Rockies (Arno 1990), making it highly susceptible to increasing drought in the future. Alpine larch growth is highly correlated with high snowpack, especially in April, which is usually indicative of high subalpine moisture throughout the year (Colenutt and Luckman 1991; Peterson and Peterson 1994). The lack of summertime groundwater would be more likely in the southern part of the species range in the Northern Rockies, specifically western Montana and central Idaho.

On the other hand, alpine larch can produce copious amounts of seed that may land on upper subalpine and timberline areas that were historically covered with snow for most of the year but in the future may be sufficiently snow-free to allow wind-dispersed seed to germinate and grow into viable seedlings. There is ample anecdotal evidence documenting alpine larch encroachment into ribbon forests, glades, and snowfields. These seedlings could become mature trees, provided there is sufficient moisture. With higher rates of productivity in a warming climate, seedlings and trees may have greater growth and cone production. However, short-term increases in alpine larch regeneration may be offset by the high variability in drought in the upper subalpine, which may eventually cause declines in the larch. Another possibility is that the more shade-tolerant subalpine conifers, such as spruce and subalpine fir, might become established in these new open areas and outcompete alpine larch for dominance. Along those same lines, the more drought-tolerant whitebark pine may also become established in the snow-free areas and survive the anticipated long droughts.

Although alpine larch apparently lacks the morphological, ecophysiological, and genetic capacity to adapt to new environments, it does have the ability to genetically intergrade with western larch to produce hybrids that may be more tolerant of drought and competition (Carlson et al. 1990). Moreover, its superior seed dispersal capability may allow it to become established in treeline areas made environmentally favorable by climate change, mainly from decreasing snowpacks and higher temperatures. These areas, however, may be significantly smaller and more isolated than areas in its current range, where it will decline because of lack of water.

Alpine larch is not well adapted to survive wildland fire (Arno 1990), and as its existing range becomes drier and fires become more probable, it is expected that more alpine larch will burn, providing there are sufficient fuels. Those upper subalpine forests that are co-dominated by whitebark pine and alpine larch are probably the most susceptible of

subalpine larch habitats to increases in fire. Rocks, scree, and fuel-free areas protect many alpine larch communities, so it may be years before fire, or the more shade-tolerant competitors, invade pure alpine larch woodlands (Arno and Habeck 1972). Although alpine larch does not seem to be impacted by major insects and pathogens (Arno 1990), future climates may increase the possibility that insects and diseases that were relatively minor in the past could become more significant in the future, especially in timberline environments where damaging agents were depressed by cold (Woods et al. 2010).

In summary, alpine larch is one of the most susceptible tree species in the Northern Rockies region to climatic shifts that result in increasing drought and fire. Its exposure to climate change is likely to be high because upper subalpine areas may experience the greatest climatic change (Luce et al. 2013). Due to its specialized habitat, alpine larch has the highest risk for major range shifts, and impacts to the species may be great if there are insufficient environments created upslope.

Green Ash

Autecology

Green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) is the most widely distributed of all the American ashes (Kennedy 1990), but primarily occurs in the eastern and central United States. In the Northern Rockies, green ash is restricted to the northern Great Plains, which is the northwestern edge of its range (Girard et al. 1987; Lesica 2009). Naturally a moist bottomland or streambank tree, it is well adapted to climatic extremes and has been widely planted in the Plains States and Canada. It is probably the most adaptable of all the ashes, growing naturally on a range of sites, from clay soils subject to frequent flooding and overflow, to sandy or silty soils where the amount of available moisture may be limited. In the northern Great Plains, green ash grows best on fertile, moist, well-drained alluvial soils, primarily along river bottomlands and woody draws. It also occurs in broad upland depressions and ridges, which have subsurface water early in the growing season (Girard et al. 1987; Lesica 2003; Lesica and Marlow 2013). Natural stands of green ash are almost completely confined to bottomlands, but the species grows well when planted on moist upland soils. It lines the watercourses in the western parts of its range where rainfall is insufficient to support upland growth.

Green ash varies from intolerant to moderately shade-tolerant in woody draws. It is an early-seral species, colonizing alluvial soils. It regenerates from seed when exotic grass (which inhibits germination through competition for soil moisture) is absent or has low cover (Lesica 2003; Lesica and Marlow 2013). It also regenerates vegetatively through stump sprouting. Uresk and Boldt (1986) reported 90-percent sprouting success following trunk removal in an experimental study in North Dakota. Lesica (2009) found that stump sprouts can achieve full tree height in 20 years. Although green ash is generally drought-tolerant, prolonged drought may affect regeneration success because it is at the most arid edge of its range (Severson and Boldt 1978). Kennedy (1990) found that a population from the arid, northwestern part of the green ash range was more drought-resistant than one from the moister central Great Plains and northeast.

Disturbance Interactions

Green ash is easily killed by fire, but stumps of most size classes of green ash sprout readily after both fire and mechanical trunk or stem removal (Lesica 2009). The species has several insect and disease agents; it is particularly susceptible to white stringy heartroot (*Perenniporia fraxinophila*), which weakens the plant and makes it more susceptible to wind or ice breakage (Lesica and Marlow 2013).

Historical and Current Conditions

Very little is known about the range expansion or contraction of green ash. However, green ash in the Northern Rockies is at the northwestern (most arid) edge of its range (Lesica 2009), and evidence suggests that many of the green ash communities on the western fringe of the northern Great Plains are declining (Boldt et al. 1978; Lesica 1989, 2001).

Climate Change Responses

Green ash has a broad ecological amplitude and can survive droughty conditions, but it grows optimally on moist sites. As soil moisture declines with a warmer, drier climate, marginal sites may become less favorable for regeneration and survival of young green ash trees. With increases in fire frequency, there will probably be increased vegetative regeneration and decreased production of seedlings following fire; fire often kills green ash seed on or near the soil surface, restricting seedling recruitment to surviving seed-producing trees. Green ash may benefit from increased temperatures because seedling and mature tree growth may increase with increasing soil temperatures. However, those green ash populations associated with moist upland microsites (e.g., northeast-facing residual snow-loaded depressions) may suffer severe drought stress as snowpack declines and melts sooner, and regeneration may decrease, eventually resulting in loss of those communities.

Most mature green ash communities are somewhat resistant to wildland fire, given that the species can sprout afterward, so the projected increases in fire in the future may not impact most green ash stands, especially the moist communities. Low-severity fires might promote regeneration by thinning stands and stimulating sprouting; green ash has both root crown and epicormic sprouts, and both are typical following fire events, especially in the woody draws and riparian areas of the Great Plains. High-severity fires, however, may result in mortality. Browsing pressure on green ash communities is also likely to increase with increased drought, as upland grasses and forbs desiccate and senesce earlier, or are replaced by invasive, less palatable species.

Cottonwood

Autecology

Black cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*) is the largest of the American poplars and the largest hardwood tree in western North America (Debell 1990). Narrowleaf cottonwood (*P. angustifolia*) and black cottonwood grow primarily on seasonally wet to moist open canopy sites (typically along streams and rivers) in the western portions of the Northern Rockies. Plains cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*) occurs in eastern Montana and the Dakotas portion of the region. All three species typically occupy fluvial surfaces along flood-plains of streams and rivers.

Cottonwoods typically dominate riparian communities on alluvial sites at low to mid-elevations. Various riparian shrubs (e.g., willows [*Salix* spp.], alder [*Alnus* spp.)], birch [*Betula* spp.], dogwood [*Cornus* spp.)]) and a variety of graminoids and forbs occur in the understory of cotton-wood stands (Merigliano 2005). Cottonwood is very shade intolerant, and conifers (e.g., Douglas-fir, Rocky Mountain juniper [*Juniperus scopulorum*], ponderosa pine, Engelmann spruce, subalpine fir) may encroach and become dominant in upland cottonwood forests (typically on river and stream terraces). The species is also drought intolerant, and requires an accessible water table (i.e., free, unbound water) during most of the growing season (Rood et al. 2003). Older cottonwood individuals can reach very deep water tables. Plains cottonwood is probably more able to extract water in the unsaturated zone once the water table has dropped below the extent of the roots (Merritt et al. 2010). The finer tex-tured soils in the northern Great Plains hold more water, but it is harder to extract due to the finer soil texture. However, plains cottonwood has apparently adapted to extract water and is likely to be more resilient to drought than the other species.

For all three species of cottonwood, high streamflows are required for successful seedling establishment; the associated scouring action and deposition of fresh alluvium creates optimal surfaces for germination. All species of cottonwood are prolific seed producers, and the windborne seeds disperse widely once the catkins have matured and seeds are released. Seeds are viable for only about 2 weeks, and thus timing of seed release and recession of flood flows is essential to successful germination (Malanson and Butler 1991). Black and narrowleaf cottonwood seedlings are usually established on a yearly basis, depending on flood frequency, timing, and duration. Plains cottonwood establishment is less frequent and more episodic because flows are more variable in both magnitude and frequency. Scott et al. (1997) found that about 72 percent of the plains cottonwoods along the Missouri River of eastern Montana established after a very large flood event (flow >1,800 cubic yards per second with a recurrence interval of 9.3 years). High numbers of seedlings become established in the first year after a flood, but they naturally thin out up to several years later, if they have not been scoured away by high flow events. The young seedlings and saplings that survive are frequently injured

and sometimes killed by unseasonably early or late frosts (Debell 1990).

Disturbance Interactions

Cottonwood is mildly fire tolerant owing to its thick bark, high branches, and foliage that is too moist to burn in most years. It is considered a weak stump sprouter, but unlike aspen, cottonwood rarely regenerates from suckers (Brown 1996). Gom and Rood (1999) found that black and narrowleaf cottonwood were more successful at coppice (stump) sprouting and suckering than plains cottonwood. Cottonwood is able to survive low-intensity fires in the short term, but fire injuries can lead to the introduction of diseases that weaken and perhaps kill the tree (Borman and Larson 2002).

Although several insects attack cottonwood, none has yet been reported as a pest of economic significance. Tent caterpillars (*Malacosoma* spp.) are the most important foliar feeders that affect the Northern Rockies. At least 70 fungal species cause decay in cottonwood, but only 6 fungi cause significant losses; 2 of these—brown stringy heart rot (*Spongipellis delectans*) and yellow laminated butt rot (*Pholiota populnea*)—cause 92 percent of the loss. Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) and saltcedar (*Tamarix ramo-sissima*) are aggressive invasive trees that often outcompete plains cottonwood, particularly during or following drought (Shafroth et al. 2002). These species, along with invasive herbaceous species, are a threat to cottonwoods in general.

Historical and Current Conditions

Black cottonwood was common throughout the Columbia River watershed in Lewis and Clark's day, and can still be found today, but it is greatly reduced in extent.

Climate Change Responses

As snowpack declines and melts earlier with warming temperatures, there will be reduced, attenuated river flows (loss of extreme high and low flows), along with a possible shift in timing of peakflows to earlier in the season, before cottonwood seed is viable for germination. These shifts in timing, magnitude, and variability may result in both decreased germination and establishment of young cot-tonwoods (Whited et al. 2007). Human demand for water is likely to increase in the future, which will probably result in creation of additional diversions and reservoir expansions. Any alteration of hydrologic flow regime (i.e., timing, mag-nitude, and duration) will affect both floodplain interaction and water available to cottonwoods, which in turn may re-duce recruitment and establishment of seedlings (Auble and Scott 1998; Beschta and Ripple 2005). Decreased stream-flows and floodplain interactions may result in a conversion of streamside vegetation from cottonwood to upland species, along with reduced growth and regeneration (recruitment) and increased mortality of cottonwood (Beschta and Ripple 2005). Upland conifers (e.g., Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir) typically establish once the stream and local water table have dropped, and they can shade out

the remaining cottonwoods. In addition to competition from upland conifers, there may be increased browsing pressure on cottonwoods, which will further contribute to declines in cottonwood regeneration and recruitment.

Plains cottonwood may be more persistent under a changing climate because of greater plant-available soil water in the unsaturated zone (as a result of finer textured soils) in its habitat. Black and narrowleaf cottonwood typically occur in coarser substrate, which will become much drier as flows are lower and recede earlier than in the past, or are attenuated due to diversions. Seedling and sapling mortality may increase in these species. Plains cottonwood regeneration occurs with episodic flooding, whereas black and narrowleaf cottonwood regenerate with 1- to 3-year bankfull flow return intervals (typically an annual recruitment cycle); therefore, plains cottonwood will probably be better adapted to irregular flows that may occur with climate change. Black and narrowleaf cottonwood are likely to be at greater risk to changing climate because of soil water characteristics in their habitats and their narrow amplitude in terms of germination and flood events on specific fluvial surfaces.

Vegetation Types

Vegetation types are broad species assemblages that are used to identify the geographic distribution of vegetation in the Northern Rockies. Vegetation types are different from species in that species can be a major to minor component in a vegetation type, but vegetation types can be composed of a number of species. Here we describe generally the likely response of forest vegetation types in the Northern Rockies to climate change. This section is less detailed than the section on species because readers can refer to the individual species for each vegetation type as presented in the previous section.

Dry Ponderosa Pine-Douglas-fir Forests

Ecology

Dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests are the driest forests in the Northern Rockies. These forests are relatively rare in northern Idaho, more common in western Montana, and prominent in central and eastern Montana where moisture is most limited. They are often found at the foothills of mountain ranges in the region, but also in extensive flatlands bordering perennial grasslands and shrublands. Historically, frequent fires often maintained pure to mixed ponderosa pine woodlands and savannas in areas currently occupied by this type. However, fire exclusion has led to increased tree density and abundance of Douglas-fir, making these forests susceptible to uncharacteristically severe fire.

Disturbance Interactions

These forests recover from disturbance by slowly shifting from fire-tolerant pioneer species to less fire-tolerant and shade-tolerant "climax" species over time. This successional process can occur over 200 to 1,000 years. Ponderosa pine

is often able to colonize the hot dry surface conditions of a disturbed site. Over time, as it matures, it provides a shaded environment where less heat-tolerant Douglas-fir can establish. In a frequent low-severity fire regime, the thick-barked ponderosa pine survives fire, whereas the thinner barked Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine seedlings do not. If frequent fires are sustained, the ponderosa pine forest can develop into large patches of open-grown old growth, intermixed with relatively small openings that can persist for centuries. During a cool wet climatic period, or through fire suppression, Douglas-fir or denser ponderosa pine can become established. The increased biomass and structural heterogeneity of these denser forests allow fires to develop into active crown fires that return the site to the initial stand establishment phase. If fires burn these areas again, forest establishment may be limited because of loss of seed source, limited soil moisture, and high surface temperature.

Historical and Current Conditions

A century of fire exclusion, coupled with extensive logging and grazing, has changed these open dry woodlands to closed, dense forests that are often dominated by Douglas-fir.

Climate Change Responses

This vegetation type may be reduced in some areas of its current range under a changing climate because of dry, hot conditions. However, this type may expand into the mixed mesic forest type (next subsection), especially on south slopes, as drought increases. This forest type will probably be the most dynamic in the future, with many of the current areas of this type seeing losses in Douglas-fir, balanced by gains in ponderosa pine. Dry Douglas-fir communities that are currently too cool to support ponderosa pine may support more ponderosa pine with warming climate. Fire exclusion in this type has increased forest density and accumulation of surface fuels; both conditions are likely to support high-severity fires in the next century (Keane et al. 2002).

Western Larch Mixed Mesic Forests

Ecology

Western larch mixed-conifer forests, found in northern Idaho and northwestern Montana, evolved under a combination of moist air masses from the west and cold air masses from Canada, resulting in a patchy forest condition with a mixture of western larch, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and spruce subalpine forests. Western larch is most prominent on cooler, moist topographic positions (Touzel 2013); thus, the influence of a warming climate may change the potential distribution of western larch to the more northerly aspects with soils most capable of retaining needed moisture during the growing season (Rehfeldt and Jaquish 2010).

Disturbance Interactions

These forests evolved under a mixed-severity fire regime, which produced a diverse pattern of shade-intolerant western larch, ponderosa pine, lodgepole pine, and Douglas-fir. High-severity fire was more common on moist and cool sites, and produced very large burn patches, often with legacy western larch (Marcoux et al. 2015). Under fire exclusion, many of these forests have become denser, putting them at risk to high-severity fire (Arno 2010; Harrington 2012; Hopkins et al. 2013).

Historical and Current Conditions

In the past, wildland fire maintained extensive stands of western larch across Montana and Idaho. Due to its great value as a timber species, many older stands of western larch were harvested across much of the Northern Rockies, and these forests were often planted back to western larch after extensive site treatments. With fire exclusion, succession advanced and western larch was replaced with mixed stands of lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir, and grand fir.

Climate Change Responses

The western larch mixed-conifer forests of northern Idaho and northwestern Montana are a forest type that has been changing and is likely to continue to change. Fire exclusion, coupled with climate change, will probably continue to reduce western larch and increase the more shade-tolerant Douglas-fir, grand fir, and subalpine fir in some areas. Continued fire exclusion will result in further accumulation of surface and canopy fuels, and coupled with hotter and drier conditions with climate change, will put these forests at risk of high-severity fire. High mortality of the seed-bearing western larch and ponderosa pine may result.

Some attributes of this cover type may serve to make it more resilient in the future. Western larch is not susceptible to the wide range of insects and diseases common to its associated tree species, and it has the best ability to survive fire of all its tree associates. As such, it makes an excellent candidate to feature in management to increase resilience. However, western larch mixed mesic forests are one of our most vulnerable forests to climate change impacts, mainly because past land management has made natural western larch forests susceptible to the damaging effects of uncharacteristically high-severity wildfires. Management of these forest types to create stand and landscape conditions within the historical range of variability are likely to increase resilience to climate change.

Mixed Mesic Western White Pine-Western Redcedar-Western Hemlock-Grand Fir Forests

Ecology

Moist forests within the Northern Rockies range from 500 to 1,750 feet and occasionally occur at 1,900 feet (Jain and Graham 2005). These forests are influenced by a maritime climate with wet winters and dry summers. Precipitation ranges from 20 to 91 inches and predominantly occurs from November to May. A defining characteristic of these forests is a layer of fine-textured ash (up to 24 inches thick) that caps the residual soils. In addition, these forests are characterized by complex topography, including dissected slopes and varying degrees of slope angle, all of which influence soil development and ash cap depth. Disturbance is another important component of these forests that contributes to creating vegetative mosaics. Thus, the combination of disturbance, topography, moisture and temperature regimes, parent material, soil weathering, and ash cap depth results in productive vegetation that is complex in composition and structure. For example, up to 10 different tree species can occupy a given square yard of this forest type (Jain and Graham 2005).

The nine primary tree species that grow together in this wet forest type, outside of riparian areas, are ponderosa pine, western larch, Douglas-fir, grand fir, western white pine, western redcedar, western hemlock, lodgepole pine, and Engelmann spruce. The niche that these species occupies varies by habitats. For example, western redcedar is a mid-seral species in western hemlock types but is late seral on western redcedar riparian and upland habitat types. The genetic adaptive capacity and autecological characteristics of individual trees species and their tolerances to light, moisture, temperature, and disturbance is also highly variable among the different tree species in this forest type (Minore 1979). Some species are better adapted to regenerating in shade (western hemlock and western redcedar), whereas other species can regenerate in a wide range of conditions (western white pine). Some have a stronger competitive capacity than other species when growing together; for example, western larch cannot compete with western hemlock. Some are drought-tolerant (ponderosa pine, western larch, and western white pine), and others are drought-intolerant (western hemlock).

Disturbance Interactions

Natural disturbances (snow, ice, insects, disease, and fire), when combined, create heterogeneity in patch sizes, forest structures, and composition in this forest type. Ice and snow create small gaps and openings, reducing forest densities and altering species composition. Native insects (e.g., bark beetles) and diseases (e.g., Armillaria root rot and dwarf mistletoes) infect and kill the very old or stressed individuals, and tend to diversify vegetation communities (Hessburg et al. 1994). A mixed-severity fire regime also plays a role in creating a mosaic of forest compositions and structures. Historically, nonlethal surface fires occurred at relatively frequent intervals (every 15 to 25 years) in a quarter of the area of this forest type. Lethal crown fires burned about a quarter of the area at intervals of 20 to 150 years, occasionally extending to 300 years. A mixed-severity fire regime characterized the rest of the moist forests, with return intervals of 20 to 150 years. Fires typically started

burning in July and were usually out by early September (Hann et al. 1997).

Historical and Current Conditions

In addition to white pine blister rust and salvage that removed most of the western white pine, harvesting removed the early-seral, shade-intolerant species (e.g., ponderosa pine and western larch) that were resistant to fire and other disturbances. Partial canopy removal and minimal soil surface disturbance in these harvests were ideal for Douglas-fir and grand fir, which regenerated aggressively, in contrast with the shade-intolerant pines and larch species. Fire exclusion also prevented the creation of canopy openings and receptive seedbeds for the regeneration of pine and larch. Similar to the dry forests, high canopies (>165 feet) of western white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine and other early and mid-seral species are currently absent. In their place, the present forest structure and composition (grand fir and Douglas-fir) favor the compression of nutrients, microbial processes, and root activity toward the soil surface (Harvey et al. 2008). When wildfires occur, surface organic layers can be consumed, decreasing the nutrition and microbial processes important for sustaining these forests. In general, the lack of the early seral species and historical structures most likely have altered the disturbance regimes that sustained these forests.

Climate Change Responses

Habitat types are not static but reflect the operational environment that supports a particular set of plant species. As the moist forests experience climate change, the competition among species and how these forests evolve will be particularly dynamic. Thus, any discussion concerning climate change and an individual tree species that grows in moist mixed-conifer (and dry mixed-conifer) forest must be placed within the context of species cohorts, the adaptive capacity of an individual tree species, the interaction of disturbance, and how environmental niches change over time and space. For example, if future moisture regimes no longer support the current distribution of western hemlock, the remaining species that thrive on the upland western redcedar habitat types are likely to become dominant (Graham 1990). How disturbance changes (intensity, extent, and return interval) with a warming climate can also influence the subsequent effects on particular tree species. In a drier climate, western redcedar may become the late-seral species in what we consider to be western hemlock habitat types.

Lodgepole Pine Mixed Subalpine Forests

Ecology

Lodgepole pine forests straddling and occurring east of the Continental Divide are associated with the cold continental air mass that influenced their development. The higher elevations combined with the relatively dry cold climate associated with this type exclude many of the warm and moisture-dependent tree species found on the west side

of the Continental Divide. Aspen, which is often associated with moisture seeps, swales, and other moist sites within this type, is released from conifer suppression by fire. Disturbance is needed to maintain aspen in this type and to keep seral lodgepole pine communities from becoming dense with subalpine fir.

Disturbance interactions. Lodgepole pine mixed subalpine forests in the Northern Rockies evolved with both high-severity and mixed-severity fire regimes. Mixed-severity fire regimes were common in central Montana on flatter slope positions and produced a diverse pattern of various-sized patches of different ages and tree sizes. Stand-replacing fire return intervals were 100 to 500 years (Fischer and Clayton 1983). However, stands reaching 60 to 80 years of age often suffered severe mortality from mountain pine beetle, creating snags and down fuel (Jenkins et al. 2008).

Historical and Current Conditions

This forest type was probably the most extensive in the Northern Rockies, with vast subalpine areas dominated by even-aged and multiaged stands of lodgepole pine, mixed with aspen, created by mixed-severity fire. Subalpine fir has probably increased as a result of fire exclusion, but more importantly, most of this type is currently dominated by large, mature lodgepole pine. Landscapes of these mature forests have fostered the large mountain pine beetle outbreak observed in many parts of the region (Central Rockies and GYA).

Climate Change Responses

This type will probably expand and contract, but provided that fire is not excluded from these areas, it is not likely to change substantially in a warmer climate.

Whitebark Pine Mixed Upper Subalpine Forests

Ecology

Perhaps the most threatened forest type, whitebark pine mixed upper subalpine forests are associated with high elevations, and the distribution of this type is primarily influenced by the cold continental air masses in Montana and higher elevations in northern Idaho. In this type, whitebark pine is found with subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and mountain hemlock, and subalpine larch in the area west of the Continental Divide. This type occurs on about 5 million acres in the Northern Rockies, primarily on the higher ridges and mountaintops. At the lower elevations within the range of this type, whitebark pine typically serves as a minor early-seral species in mixed-conifer stands. At the uppermost elevations, whitebark pine can serve as a major climax species.

Disturbance Interactions

Whitebark pine and its associates developed under both a stand-replacing fire regime on steep north slopes, and under a mixed-severity fire regime on other aspects and flatter

slope positions. Various sized patches are common within the range, with density depending on moisture availability. The future could bring more-intense fire that could further threaten whitebark pine distribution.

There have been three outbreaks of mountain pine beetle in the Northern Rockies over the last 100 years. The first one in the 1920s–1930s killed significant areas of whitebark pine (Tomback et al. 2001). Snags from this outbreak can still be seen today. Another major outbreak occurred in the early 1980s, but the largest outbreak started in the mid-2000s and has continued, especially in the GYA.

Historical and Current Conditions

More than 14 percent of the Northern Rockies could have consisted of whitebark pine forests, with late-seral mixed fir-spruce patches mixed throughout, prior to 1910. However, with extensive white pine blister rust epidemics and mountain pine beetle outbreaks over the last several decades, the upper subalpine landscape has slowly shifted from whitebark pine to more spruce and fir and nonforest vegetation in some places (Tomback et al. 2001).

Climate Change Responses

There may be substantial change in the upper subalpine forests over the next century. However, that change will probably be driven by whitebark pine mortality from white pine blister rust rather than climate change, and the changes will primarily be in forest composition and structure rather than distribution. Over the last 40 years, whitebark pine has become a minor component of this forest type in many parts of the western Northern Rockies because of white pine blister rust, allowing subalpine fir to become dominant in both the overstory and understory. Although the GYA has yet to have massive die-offs from white pine blister rust, it has not escaped recent mountain pine beetle outbreaks, and the whitebark pine mortality rates in cone-bearing trees from these outbreaks exceed 50 percent in most areas. Recent fires in the upper subalpine have served to reset the successional clock to the earliest seral stages of shrub and herbaceous communities, but whitebark pine regeneration levels are low in these burns because of low population levels (Leirfallom et al. 2015). Clark's nutcracker apparently is eating most of the seeds from the few remaining whitebark pine trees and not enough of their seed caches go unclaimed to germinate and grow into trees (Keane and Parsons 2010). This has served to keep recently burned areas in the shrub/herb stage for long periods, which may allow time for other wind-dispersed tree species to populate the burn. Thus, whitebark pine may continue to decline in this type, and species dominance is likely to shift to subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and lodgepole pine.

Most of the range shifts of this forest type will probably be in wilderness areas, as about 50 percent of this type is found in wilderness (Keane 2000). Many Northern Rockies wilderness areas have lands that are above the elevations at which this type occurs, so there are potential areas for this type to expand. Wildland fire will be the catalyst for any range shifts in this forest type. Continued fire exclusion may seem appropriate for whitebark pine types, but it is contraindicated in many situations. Most whitebark pine will eventually succumb to white pine blister rust; thus, suppressing fire does not necessarily protect it. Fire is needed to create conditions in which whitebark pine can become established and grow to maturity. If fires are suppressed and no rust-resistant trees are planted, then whitebark pine is likely to remain a minor component of this forest type. However, if wildland fires occur and burned areas are planted with rust-resistant trees, then whitebark pine may become more abundant in the high elevation settings of the Northern Rockies. Therefore, land management is likely to be more critical than climate in dictating the future composition and extent of this forest type.

Resources of Concern

Landscape Heterogeneity

Background

Historically, most Northern Rockies landscapes were shaped by disturbance regimes interacting with vegetation and climate creating shifting mosaics of diverse vegetation assemblages. Wildfire was the primary sculptor of historical landscape composition and structure, especially at lower elevations (including ignitions by Native Americans and lightning), with other disturbances (mountain pine beetle outbreaks, root rot pockets, windthrow) woven into the patchwork of forestlands. Forest patterns were constantly shifting over time and space at rates governed by interactions among vegetation, disturbance, and climate, resulting in different patch sizes, shapes, and distributions. Therefore, understanding the variability and scale of disturbance and succession is critical to quantifying historical landscape heterogeneity, which in turn affects biological diversity and ecosystem resilience.

High landscape heterogeneity creates diverse biological structure and composition, which are considered more resilient and resistant to disturbances (Bannerman 1997; Cohn et al. 2015; Haire and McGarigal 2010; Turner 1987). For example, the effects of mountain pine beetle outbreaks are less severe in landscapes with diverse age structures of host tree species (Schoettle and Sniezko 2007). Heterogeneous landscapes also promote population stability (Oliver et al. 2010) because fluctuations in plant and animal population are less when landscape structure is diverse (Turner et al. 1993). Heterogeneous landscapes may also have more corridors, buffers, and refugia for wildlife and plant migration.

During the past 100 years, land management practices have altered the temporal and spatial characteristics of Northern Rockies landscapes. Timber management has modified patch shape and structure at lower elevation, and fire exclusion has changed patch size and diversity. Fire exclusion has in many cases created landscapes with large contiguous patches of old, dense stands with high surface and canopy fuel accumulations (Keane et al. 2002),

although some areas with frequent disturbance (e.g., frequently burned ponderosa pine forest) are also homogeneous compared to presettlement montane forests (Romme 2005). Because we have directly or indirectly managed for late seral conditions, some Northern Rockies landscapes are highly susceptible to insects and disease, owing to low tree vigor from intense competition, and have an abundance of live and dead fuels that will contribute to the severity of future wildfires.

Climate Change Responses

Many current Northern Rockies landscapes have less ability to buffer potential climate change effects because of widespread increases in the density of shade-tolerant species in forests, although some landscapes, especially in subalpine forests, still have structures and compositions similar to those observed in the historical record. Recent wildfires, restoration activities, and timber harvest have helped return some heterogeneity, especially in wilderness areas and national parks. However, most Northern Rockies landscapes are outside their historical range and variability (HRV) in landscape structure, making it challenging to implement effective climate change adaptation.

Landscape heterogeneity may increase if climate-mediated changes in disturbance regimes increase (Funk and Saunders 2014). During the past 20 years, wildfire area burned and mountain pine beetle outbreaks have both increased, replacing late seral forests with younger age and size classes and thereby increasing heterogeneity. Continued increases in wildfires and other disturbances are projected in a warmer climate (Bentz et al. 2010; Marlon et al. 2009), so projected declines in biodiversity (e.g., Botkin et al. 2007) could be balanced by gains in landscape heterogeneity (Kappelle et al. 1999).

Continued fire exclusion in a warmer climate may promote late seral forests that would be stressed from competition and drought (van Mantgem and Stephenson 2007). Wildfires that will eventually burn these landscapes may become large and burn more severely, thereby creating large patches of homogeneous postburn conditions (Flannigan et al. 2005, 2009). These fires may also create semipermanent shrublands and grasslands in areas that have become too dry for conifer establishment or where seed sources are eliminated (Fulé et al. 2004). However, some have found a high degree of heterogeneity in severity and vegetation conditions following large fires (Collins and Stephens 2010; Keane et al. 2008). Although the size, shape, and distribution of forest management treatments are a concern for landscape heterogeneity, the effects of management on landscape properties may be overwhelmed by other disturbances.

Is there an appropriate level of heterogeneity for Northern Rockies landscapes? How can management facilitate landscape heterogeneity and minimize adverse climate change effects? Mechanistic ecosystem models can be used to simulate landscape structure and composition in the future and to understand effects of management actions (Keane 2013), but cannot generate heterogeneity metrics as

design criteria for ecosystems. Using the HRV of landscape characteristics is a more straightforward and useful approach (Keane 2013; Morgan et al. 1994a; Nonaka and Spies 2005) (box 6.1). The HRV of landscape metrics may not represent future conditions (Millar 1997; Millar and Woolfenden 1999), but does provide an estimate of landscape conditions under which ecosystems have developed over the last 1,000 years, conditions that produced functional, heterogeneous ecosystems (Landres et al. 1999). It is preferable to first use HRV as a reference for landscape heterogeneity (Keane et al. 2015b), then ecological models can be parameterized for historical conditions and used to generate a set of useful landscape metrics (Keane 2012).

Timber Production

Background

The area managed for timber production as one of the objectives for management is about 8,700 out of 34,000 square miles of forested lands throughout the USFS Northern Region. This area includes approximately 2,600 square miles in northern Idaho, 4,250 square miles in western Montana, 1,400 square miles in central and eastern Montana, and 450 square miles in the Greater Yellowstone portion of the Northern Region.

During the 1970s and 1980s, an average of 98 square miles were harvested each year, which amounted to about 1,900 square miles that had some type of harvest treatment implemented to meet various management objectives including timber production. From 1990 through 2014, an average of 39 square miles were harvested each year, which amounted to about 970 square miles. Recent harvest during 2014 of 32 square miles may be more typical of current and near-term future harvest levels.

The species composition of timber harvests has fluctuated during the past 45 years, as harvest has often followed some disturbance agent such as mountain pine beetle in western white pine and lodgepole pine, spruce beetle in Engelmann spruce, white pine blister rust in western white pine, root disease in Douglas-fir and grand fir, Douglas-fir beetle and spruce budworm in Douglas-fir, and wildfire in a variety of species types. The current percentage of acreage in each of the major species composition groups within the lands suitable for timber production across the Northern Region is 6 percent ponderosa pine, 13 percent dry Douglas-fir, 27 percent lodgepole pine, 6 percent western larch, 12 percent mixed subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce, and 35 percent mixed western white pine, grand fir, western hemlock, moist site Douglas-fir, and western redcedar forests.

Many of the current timber harvests in mixed mesic types of northern Idaho and western Montana are removing grand fir, Douglas-fir, and western hemlock, and replanting western white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine. Other harvests involve removal of lodgepole pine and replanting of western larch. Thinning in ponderosa pine and dry Douglas-fir forests is also common. Within eastern Montana and the GYA, harvesting is concentrated on mountain pine

Box 6.1—Using Historical Range and Variability to Assess and Adapt to Climate Change

To effectively implement ecosystem-based management, land managers often find it necessary to obtain a reference or benchmark to represent the conditions that describe fully functional ecosystems (Cissel et al. 1994; Laughlin et al. 2004). Contemporary conditions can be evaluated against this reference to determine status, trend, and magnitude of change, and to design treatments that provide society with valuable ecosystem services while returning declining ecosystems to a more sustainable condition (Hessburg et al. 1999; Swetnam et al. 1999). Reference conditions are assumed to represent the dynamic character of ecosystems and landscapes, varying across time and space (Swanson et al. 1994; Watt 1947).

The concept of *historical range and variability* (HRV) was introduced in the 1990s to describe past spatial and temporal variability of ecosystems (Landres et al. 1999), providing a spatial and temporal foundation for planning and management. HRV has sometimes been equated with "target" conditions (Harrod et al. 1999), although targets can be subjective and somewhat arbitrary; they may represent only one possible situation from a range of potential conditions (Keane et al. 2009). HRV encompasses a full range of conditions that have occurred across multiple spatiotemporal scales.

HRV represents a broad historical envelope of possible ecosystem conditions—burned area, vegetation cover type area, patch size distribution—that can provide a time series of reference conditions. This assumes that (1) ecosystems are dynamic, not static, and their responses to changing processes are represented by past variability; (2) ecosystems are complex and have a range of conditions within which they are self-sustaining, and beyond this range they make a transition to disequilibrium (Egan and Howell 2001); (3) historical conditions can serve as a proxy for ecosystem health; (4) the time and space domains that define HRV are sufficient to quantify observed variation; and (5) the ecological characteristics being assessed for the ecosystem or landscapes match the management objective (Keane et al. 2009).

The use of HRV has been challenged because a warmer climate may permanently alter the environment of ecosystems beyond what was observed under historical conditions (Millar et al. 2007a). In particular, disturbance processes, plant species distribution, and hydrologic dynamics may be permanently changed (Notaro et al. 2007). However, a critical evaluation of possible alternatives suggests that HRV might still be the most viable approach in the near term because it has relatively low uncertainty.

An alternative to HRV is forecasting future variations of landscapes under changing climates by using complex empirical and mechanistic models. However, the range of projections for future climate from the commonly used global climate models may be greater than the variability of climate over the past three centuries (Stainforth et al. 2005). This uncertainty increases when we factor in projected responses to climate change through technological advances, behavioral adaptations, and population growth (Schneider et al. 2007). Moreover, the variability of climate extremes, not the gradual change of average climate, will drive most ecosystem response to climate-mediated disturbance and plant dynamics (Smith 2011) that are difficult to project. Uncertainty will also increase as climate projections are extrapolated to the finer scales and longer time periods needed to quantify *future range and variability* (FRV) for landscapes (Araujo et al. 2005; Keane et al. 2009).

Given these cumulative uncertainties, time series of HRV may have lower uncertainty than simulated projections of future conditions, especially because large variations in past climates are already captured in the time series. It may be prudent to wait until simulation technology has improved enough to create credible FRV landscape pattern and composition, a process that may require decades. In the meantime, attaining HRV would be a significant improvement in the functionality of most ecosystems in the Northern Rockies, and would be unlikely to result in negative outcomes from a management perspective. As with any approach to reference conditions, HRV is useful as a guide, not a target, for restoration and other management activities.

beetle-susceptible or dead lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine, and thinning in ponderosa pine and dry forest Douglas-fir forests is also common.

Climate Change Responses

With increasing temperatures and the potential for increases in forest productivity (Aston 2010; Joyce 1995) and biomass accumulation (Lin et al. 2010) will probably come potential increases in timber production for most Northern Rockies forests (Garcia-Gonzalo et al. 2007). Productivity increases are projected to be substantial because most

forested lands in the region are in the mesic montane, subalpine, and upper subalpine. The increase in biomass might result in higher basal areas, greater timber value, and increased regeneration (Sohngen et al. 2001). However, these mesic temperate forests might also become denser, which may result in decreased vigor that may offset gains in productivity from climate alone. Depressed vigor might also increase susceptibility to insects and disease; because insect and disease outbreaks are projected to increase in severity and frequency, there may be some major timber losses from forest pathogen and insect mortality (Joyce et al. 2008).

There will also be an increase in potential mortality from wildland fire with increased fuel, drier conditions, and longer fire seasons, and this might facilitate even more timber losses. Future timber harvests from mature timberland might be a race against losses from increased insects, disease, and fire. The greatest climate change impacts on commercial forestry may come from changes in the disturbance regimes rather than changes in productivity (Kirilenko and Sedjo 2007).

There are other considerations in addressing how timber resources in the Northern Rockies region will change with warming climates. First, most of the roads on Northern Rockies lands are in drier, lower elevation forests where productivity may decline and more trees are projected to die from drought. Fewer roads are in the subalpine and upper subalpine where productivities and associated timber values are likely to increase, resulting in limited ability to transport timber to markets. Creation of new roads is expensive, risky, and environmentally damaging. These higher lands are distant from timber markets and sawmills, and are also more topographically complex and steep, thereby limiting the potential for mechanized timber removal while increasing harvesting costs. These higher elevation lands are also where most of the threatened and endangered plant and animal species are found, especially grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and wolverine (*Gulo gulo*), making it more difficult to implement timber harvest projects in these sensitive areas. If increases in insects, diseases, and fire are realized, the quality of timber will probably be reduced, and the value of the timber for building material will drop dramatically (Gillette et al. 2014; Kirilenko and Sedjo 2007; Spittlehouse and Stewart 2004). Longer fire seasons will probably mean there will be less time to perform forestry tasks, such as inventory, sale layout, and cruising. This may also mean that less agency money will be spent on forestry projects, such as ecosystem restoration, fuels treatments, and timber harvest sales, and more money will be spent on fire suppression activities. As the risk of uncharacteristic fire severity due to uncharacteristically high forest density increases, there will most likely be reductions in timber production opportunities, especially in dry forest areas that may be lost and converted to grass and shrub lands (Allen et al. 2010).

Timber species will also shift in the future. Increases in temperature and soil moisture deficits may result in shifts of desirable timber species, such as western larch, to species compositions that are susceptible to root disease, such as Douglas-fir and grand fir. Any increases in production at mid- and higher elevations from warming temperatures could be offset by losses from root disease because of continued fire exclusion. Land management efforts that create late-seral, shade-tolerant communities, namely fire exclusion and some fuels treatments, will increase the risk that standing timber will be affected by damaging agents before it can be harvested.

Many new forest practices, harvesting techniques, and markets are being proposed to offset carbon emissions from fossil fuels with carbon emissions from harvested biomass (Kirilenko and Sedjo 2007). Most of these new technologies will result in better utilization of timber resources and a more diverse and vibrant timber market. Biomass burning for energy, for example, could provide a market for noncommercial material removed from proposed fuels treatments. Slash piles could have value as biomass for energy. A more diverse market for wood products would surely enhance potential timber harvests in the region, but it is essential that any proposed cutting activity be done in an ecological context, especially in this time of rapidly changing climates. Proposed harvesting activities must address a wide diversity of issues, such as landscape character, species mix, successional dynamics, and fuels, to ensure these activities are effective and to minimize the long-term environmental impact.

It is essential that ecological principles be used to design harvest treatments of the future to ensure the creation of resistant, resilient forests that can withstand major impacts of climate change. Designing fuels treatments without considering ecosystem restoration concerns, for example, might create forests that are highly susceptible to insects and disease or fire. Favoring shade-tolerant, fire-susceptible species over fire-tolerant, sun-loving, early-seral tree species is ecologically inconsistent and likely to create landscapes that are intolerant of future climate change.

One proposed management alternative, carbon sequestration (see next subsection), might be cause for concern. The main assumption of most carbon sequestration options is to maximize biomass to sequester carbon from the atmosphere and put it into timber products to offset fossil fuel burning. The problem is that this approach must recognize the role of disturbance to be effective in the long term. Many studies have shown that the most resilient forests are ones with suboptimal carbon sequestration.

Again, the major issue related to climate change and timber production in the near term is loss from disturbance. The anticipated increases in drought, severe large wildfires, root disease, other diseases such as white pine blister rust, and insect damage such as that from large-scale bark beetle outbreaks, need to be addressed throughout the Northern Rockies. Tactics to increase landscape heterogeneity overall and reduce forest density in the dry forest types will be key climate change responses in the near term. Adjusting species composition and distribution may help sustain long-term timber production.

Carbon Sequestration

Background

North American forests are considered important carbon sinks and currently offset about 13 percent of annual continental fossil fuel emissions (Pacala et al. 2007). Size and persistence of forest carbon sinks depend on land use, land management, and environmental factors such as vegetation composition, structure, and distribution, climate, and disturbance processes including wildfire.

Vegetated landscapes play an important role in storing carbon in the form of plant and animal materials (both live and dead), aboveground and in soils. Forests store carbon in soils (about 45 percent of total storage), aboveground and belowground live biomass (about 42 percent), dead wood (about 8 percent), and litter (about 5 percent) (Bonan 2008; Pan et al. 2011). Because forests contain large reservoirs of carbon (i.e., carbon sinks) and facilitate flows of carbon from the atmosphere to the biosphere (i.e., carbon sequestration), they are an important component of the global carbon cycle and are thought to have the potential to mitigate climate change (Ingerson 2007; Pan et al. 2011). The carbon sequestration potential of Earth's forests is about 33 percent of global anthropogenic emissions from fossil fuels and land use (Denman 2007). Carbon typically accumulates in woody biomass and soils for decades to centuries until a disturbance event releases this stored carbon into the atmosphere (Goward et al. 2008). Disturbance and decomposition are recognized as primary mechanisms that shift ecosystems from carbon sinks to carbon sources (Baldocchi 2008), and wildfire in forested ecosystems is one of the primary disturbances that regulates patterns of carbon storage and release (Kasischke et al. 2000a,b). Forest insect outbreaks can also release carbon through decomposition of needles and other fine fuels from attacked trees (Kurz et al. 2008). The amount and rate of carbon release from a disturbance event depends on the extent and severity of the disturbance, as well as predisturbance site conditions and productivity (Bigler et al. 2005; Falk et al. 2007). In the case of both wildfires and insect outbreaks, although long intervals between events can allow carbon to accumulate for years to centuries, probability of disturbance increases with time (Clark 1989). Changing climate, in combination with other ecosystem stressors such as disturbance, may be sufficient to cause structural or functional changes in ecosystems, and thus fundamentally alter carbon dynamics of landscapes.

Although long intervals between disturbance events, such as wildfires or insect outbreaks, can allow carbon to accumulate for years to centuries, probability of disturbance increases with time (Goward et al. 2008; Loehman et al. 2014). Thus, disturbance-prone forests will eventually move stored carbon to the atmosphere, regardless of management strategies designed to limit or prevent disturbance events. However, unless structural or functional ecosystem shifts occur, net carbon balance in disturbance-adapted systems at steady state is zero when assessed over long time periods and at landscape scales. This is significant to management for two reasons: (1) disturbance-prone ecosystems cannot be managed to increase stored carbon over historical amounts without limiting the occurrence and magnitude of disturbance events; and (2) major shifts in vegetation composition, distribution, and structure resulting from climate change will result in different patterns of carbon storage on the landscape as compared with the historical period. Thus, it is important to develop expectations for landscape carbon storage potential in the context of projected climate change

effects on both disturbance dynamics and vegetation patterns, and the relationships between them.

Climate Change Responses

As described in chapter 8, future warmer, drier conditions are likely to result in more frequent, larger wildfires, and greater annual area burned, which will serve to move carbon from biomass storage to the atmosphere. Warmer temperatures and increased drought stress are also projected to increase the area susceptible to or affected by beetle outbreaks. Regrowth of forests following disturbance may be delayed if the climatic conditions stress remaining or reestablishing species. Disturbance events in combination with additional climate-caused stressors may also result in functional transitions, such as a shift from forests to montane woodland or grassland-dominated vegetation types, which would probably result in less stored carbon. Frequent fires may also maintain open woodlands and savannas that might sequester less carbon than forests, but these carbon pools may be more stable and resilient to climate shifts.

Strategies that aim to manage carbon resources should consider the following:

1. Is the system disturbance-prone? If so, is it reasonable to expect the system to accumulate carbon over historical (steady-state) levels, especially given future climatic conditions that may increase the frequency, severity, and magnitude of disturbance events?

2. What are appropriate temporal and spatial scales over which to measure carbon storage? For example, in forests with multicentury disturbance cycles, it may take hundreds of years for forests to attain pre-disturbance levels of carbon, but this does not mean that they have become carbon sources at the appropriate, ecological scale of measurement.

3. Can potential future disturbance events be managed? For example, will it be possible to suppress or exclude wildfires from the system in the future, and at what economic or ecological costs?

4. Can additional stressors (e.g., drought stress, invasive weeds, and other management activities) be mitigated, to help maintain existing vegetation communities?

5. How might the system change with changing climate and disturbance? For example, are future climatic conditions conducive to persistence of forests, or will conditions become too warm or dry for the current dominant species?

6. Do planned carbon accounting methods assess ecological benefits of natural disturbance processes in carbon-equivalent units so that they can be weighed against carbon losses from disturbance? For example, wildfires confer many important ecological benefits not measurable in carbon units (e.g., nutrient release and redistribution and stimulation of plant growth, increased productivity in soil systems from decomposition of burned material, initiation of

vegetation succession and forest regeneration, and increased availability of resources for surviving trees) that may actually increase carbon sequestration rates.

Two complementary activities, monitoring and modeling, can improve our understanding of cross-scale ecological drivers and responses to disturbance (Loehman et al. 2014). Monitoring programs can be used to quantify long-term carbon dynamics before and after disturbance, evaluate responses of ecosystems to changes in climate, and identify shifts in ecosystem patterns and processes emergent under changing climates. Monitoring data can also be used to provide inputs to, calibrate, and validate models. Models, in turn, can be used to simulate emergent environmental patterns, compare effects of potential treatments, identify vulnerable landscapes or ecosystem components, and bridge gaps between landscape-scale ecological processes and variables measured in small areas and over short periods of time. There is room for improvement on both fronts, as described previously in this chapter. Although it may be tempting to meet policy-driven goals of increased carbon storage via management strategies designed to exclude or limit the extent and magnitude of disturbance events (e.g., wildfires), it is important to remember that native

disturbance processes confer many important ecological benefits not measurable in carbon units (see item 6). Thus, it will be important to develop accounting methods that can assess ecological benefits in carbon-equivalent units so that they can be weighed against carbon losses from disturbance.

Vulnerability Assessment

All items in each of the three levels of assessment were rated as to their vulnerability to climate change using the same rubric employed across all chapters in this report (table 6.4), and the results are summarized in detail in Appendix 6B. We populated a table with information for the eight categories in table 6.4 using a thorough consideration of five factors: climate, disturbance, life history, dependencies, and other stressors. For climate, we considered whether the species, vegetation type, or resource concern was sensitive to changes in direct effects of climate (temperature and precipitation) or indirect effects of climate (e.g., soil moisture, snowpack, seasonality of flows, climatic water deficit, altered flow regimes, and stream temperature). For example, we asked, "Does the system inhabit a relatively

Table 6.4—Categories used to assess the vulnerability of species, vegetation types, and resource concerns in this chapter.

Evaluation category	Description	Example
Habitat, ecosystem function, or species	Specific biophysical or social entity of interest	Whitebark pine
Broad-scale climate change effect	Overarching change in climate that is expected to affect a resource	Warming temperatures
Current condition, existing stressors	Current status of resource relative to desired conditions, including factors that are reducing the quality or quantity of the resource	Reduced abundance, wildland fire, mountain pine beetle, white-pine blister rust
Sensitivity to climatic variability and change	Specific sensitivity of a habitat, species, or ecosystem function that responds to climate	Low ability to compete with encroaching conifers
Expected effects of climate change	How specific habitat, species, or ecosystem function is expected to respond to climate change (develop inferences from model projections and known responses to climatic variability)	Regeneration may be reduced by combination of warming and low seed availability
Adaptive capacity	Ability to adjust to climate change, to moderate potential damages, or to cope with the consequences; usually more appropriate for species than for systems and processes	Variable: unable to compete with other tree species, but bird-mediated seed dispersal allows quick colonization of burned over areas
Exposure	The extent to which each species' physical environment will change expressed as low, moderate, or high	High
Risk assessment, magnitude of effects	Estimate of the magnitude of climate change effects expressed as low, moderate, or high by time period	Moderate
Risk assessment, likelihood of effects	Estimate of the likelihood that climate change effects will occur expressed as low, moderate, or high by time period	High

narrow climatic zone, or does it experience large changes in composition or structure with small climatic changes?" We also considered both direct sensitivity to climate change (e.g., ecophysiology and life history) and indirect sensitivity to climate change (e.g., ecological relationships such as competition, dispersal, and migration). Vulnerability to disturbance was assessed in reference to whether the species, type, or concern was sensitive to major disturbances, primarily wildland fire, insect outbreaks, drought, and pathogens. Disturbances are major catalysts for vegetation change and can combine with climate stressors and nonclimate stressors to create a broader stress complex with multiple interactions. Life history aspects of the species and vegetation type were considered to address the impact of the growth rate, susceptibility to mortality, longevity, and reproductive strategy of a species, all of which may influence sensitivity to climate change. Species with long lifespans may have lower vulnerability than short-lived species. We also addressed the dependence of species on other ecosystem processes or landscape elements. Riparian species, for example, are dependent on wet conditions. Last, nonclimate stressors, such as land use, grazing, timber harvest, and fire exclusion were integrated into our assessment.

The vulnerability assessment in Appendix 6B is further summarized in table 6.5 for only the tree species included in this report. We ranked each species by subregion (fig. 6.1) and removed those species that did not occur in a given subregion. We also included the rankings of two other efforts for comparison purposes. The Devine et al. (2012) report assessed vulnerability for tree species in the Pacific Northwest, and the Hansen and Phillips (2015) effort assessed vulnerability for some Northern Rockies tree species using SDMs. This information is presented as a means of helping land managers to integrate climate change impacts into their planning documents and analyses.

Adaptation Strategies and Tactics

This chapter documents what could happen to Northern Rockies forest resources under potential future climates. Land managers need options for adapting to climate change and mitigating any adverse impacts incurred as a result of changing climate. Adaptation can be defined as initiatives

Table 6.5—Final tree species vulnerability ratings (1 = lowest vulnerability) for the entire Northern Rockies (NR), and the five subregions of the NR. Also included are ratings from the Pacific Northwest in Devine et al. (2012) report and from the northern Rocky Mountains in Hansen and Phillips (2015).

Tree species	NR	West	Central	East	GYA	Grass	Devine et al. (2012)	Hansen and Phillips (2015)
Alpine larch	1	2	1	NA[a]	NA	NA	4	NRT[b]
Whitebark pine	2	1	2	1	1	NA	1	1
Western white pine	3	5	3	NA	NA	NA	13	NRT
Western larch	4	6	4	NA	NA	NA	12	8
Douglas-fir	5	8	8	2	2	1	11	9
Western redcedar	6	4	5	NA	NA	NA	15	7
Western hemlock	7	3	6	NA	NA	NA	10	6
Grand fir	8	7	7	NA	NA	NA	5	11
Engelmann spruce	9	9	11	3	4	5	3	5
Subalpine fir	10	10	12	4	5	6	2	4
Lodgepole pine	11	11	10	5	6	7	8	3
Mountain hemlock	12	3	9	NA	NA	NA	7	2
Cottonwood	13	12	13	6	3	2	17	NRT
Quaking Aspen	14	13	14	8	7	3	6	NRT
Limber pine	15	NA	15	7	8	4	18	NRT
Ponderosa pine-west	16	14	16	NA	NA	NA	14	10
Ponderosa pine-east	17	NA	NA	8	9	8	NRT	10
Green ash	18	NA	NA	9	10	9	19	NRT

[a] NA = Not applicable.
[b] NRT = Not rated.

and measures to reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual or expected climate change effects (IPCC 2007). Adaptation actions range from the simple, such as doing nothing or increasing the harvest rotation age, to the complex, such as implementing fuels treatments to reduce the risk of high-severity fire in ecosystems with rare plants (Spittlehouse and Stewart 2003). Most land managers have the tools, knowledge, and resources to begin to address climate change, but as Swanston and Janowiak (2012) note, managers need to expand their thinking to consider new issues, spatial scales, timing, and prioritization of efforts. For example, managers need to account for the high variability and trend of climate in the design of alternative land management actions.

There are some fundamental principles that can serve as starting points in the development of adaptation approaches (Joyce et al. 2008; Millar et al. 2007a; West et al. 2009). First, it will be increasingly important to prioritize management actions based on both the vulnerability of resources and on the likelihood that actions to reduce vulnerability will be effective (i.e., prioritization). Next, adaptive management principles provide a decisionmaking framework that maintains flexibility and incorporates new knowledge and experience over time (i.e., adaptive management). Management actions that result in a wide variety of benefits under multiple scenarios but have little or no risk may be the first places to look for near-term implementation (i.e., low-hanging fruit). Where vulnerability to a particular resource is high, precautionary actions to reduce risk in the near term, even with existing uncertainty, may be essential (i.e, triage). It is important to remember that climate change is much more than increasing temperatures; increasing climate variability across all components of climate, such as precipitation, humidity, and radiation, will lead to equal or greater impacts that will need to be addressed (i.e., increased uncertainty). Last, many adaptation actions are often complementary with other land management actions, and any actions to adapt forests to future conditions may also help restore these forests to healthy conditions (i.e., multiple objectives). When designing adaptation actions, it is important to address and integrate these principles to maximize efficiency.

The concepts of resistance, resilience, and response serve as the fundamental options for managers to consider when responding to climate change using adaptation (Millar et al. 2007a; Swanston and Janowiak 2012). *Resistance options* improve the defenses of an ecosystem against anticipated climate change responses or directly defend the ecosystem against disturbance to maintain current conditions. Resistance actions are often effective in the short term, but resistance options are likely to require greater effort over the long term as the climate shifts further from historical norms. Moreover, there is a real risk that the ecosystem will undergo irreversible change because of large climatic shifts, thereby rendering all resistance activities ineffective. *Resilience options* allow some change, but emphasize a quick return to prior conditions after a disturbance. Resilience actions are also short-term and should be used for high-value resources or areas that are buffered from climate

change impacts. *Response options* intentionally accommodate change and allow ecosystems to adaptively respond to changing and new conditions. A wide range of actions exists under this option, all working to influence ways in which ecosystems adapt to future conditions.

Resistance, resilience, and response options serve as the broadest and most widely applicable level of a continuum of management responses to climate change. Along this continuum, adaptation actions become increasingly specific from options to strategies to tactics. Adaptation *strategies* describe how adaptation options could be employed, but they are still broad and general in their application across ecosystems. *Tactics* are more-specific adaptation responses, and they can provide prescriptive directions on how actions can be applied on the ground.

There are many broad strategies and associated tactics that can be used to adapt to climate change impacts in the Northern Rockies region, and the major ones that were identified by managers and scientists in a series of workshops in fall 2015 are detailed in table 6.6 and described next. Adaptation tactics for all Northern Rockies species, vegetation types, and resource concerns discussed in this chapter are summarized in table 6.7. Adaptation tactics were designed at different scales and levels of organization. Some involve Northern Rockies managers at the highest levels of agency organization, and others apply to ecologists, silviculturists, and resource specialists at the lower levels of organization. Some tactics concern multiple species or resources, while others are specific to just one entity. These tactics were designed so that Northern Rockies managers can use these recommendations to directly address climate change impacts in their planning and implementation of any action, specifically National Environmental Policy Act analysis.

As in other adaptation efforts, many tactics developed by Northern Rockies managers were focused on protecting forests from severe disturbance, mainly fire (table 6.6). For example, managers identified promoting disturbance-resilient forest structure and species as key strategies. Both thinning and prescribed fire can be used to reduce forest density and promote disturbance-resilient species. Disturbance-resilient species can also be planted. Managers recognized the importance of promoting and planting site-adapted species, specifically western larch and western white pine on moist sites, ponderosa pine on dry sites, Douglas-fir on extremely dry sites, and lodgepole pine on harsh sites that are difficult to regenerate.

Preparing for disturbance will also be important under a changing climate. Tree regeneration after severe fire may be more limited in the future with increased drought. Promoting legacy trees of disturbance-resilient species may help to increase postfire regeneration. Managers may also want to increase seed collection and ensure that adequate nursery stock is available for post-disturbance planting.

Another theme in the adaptation strategies and tactics developed by Northern Rockies managers was promoting diversity, including species diversity, genetic diversity, and

Table 6.6—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forested vegetation in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: The frequency and scale of disturbance will likely increase with climate change.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote disturbance-resilient species, including western larch and western white pine on moist sites, ponderosa pine on dry sites, Douglas-fir on extremely dry sites, and lodgepole pine on harsh sites that are difficult to regenerate.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Thin to favor disturbance-resilient species.	Plant disturbance-resilient species.	Promote disturbance-resilient species with prescribed fire and/or natural fire use.
Where can tactics be applied?	On sites most likely to be affected by wildfire	On sites most likely to be affected by wildfire	On sites most likely to be affected by wildfire

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing temperatures with climate change will lead to increased moisture stress and fire.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce forest density and maintain low densities.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Conduct thinning treatments (pre-commercial and commercial).	Use prescribed fire to maintain structure and promote fire-tolerant conifer species.	Use regeneration and planting to influence forest structure.
Where can tactics be applied?	Dense stands with low risk of root disease problems	Dense stands	Where there are no opportunities for thinning because of species or stand condition

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Areas with limited species and genetic diversity will likely be more susceptible to climate change stressors.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote species and genetic diversity.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Plant potential microsites with mix of species (hedge your bets).	Maintain species diversity during thinning.	Interplant to supplement natural regeneration and genetic diversity.
Where can tactics be applied?	In sufficiently large openings on sites most at risk for drought stress	In dense or overstocked stands on sites more at risk for drought stress and where sufficient diversity exists for thinning	In sufficiently large openings on sites most at risk for drought stress

Table 6.6 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forested vegetation in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing temperatures with climate change will lead to longer growing seasons, increased drought stress, and increased fire.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote ecosystem resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Promote legacy trees of western larch, Douglas-fir, western white pine, Engelmann spruce, whitebark pine, and subalpine larch for regeneration and wildlife habitat.	Collect seed for post-wildfire reforestation and other planting needs, especially for subalpine larch, whitebark pine, and high-elevation western larch.	Promote landscape heterogeneity and create connectivity at multiple scales.
Where can tactics be applied?	On dense spruce, fir, and lodgepole pine sites	Where species of interest occur	At broad spatial scales

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Climate change will likely lead to increased disturbance, increased moisture deficits, and species distribution shifts.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge for agency land managers and stakeholders.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific Ttactic – C
Tactic	Determine what connectivity means for different species and guilds.	Track tree species regeneration and distribution.	Improve integration between wildlife managers and forest ecologists, and between research and management.
Where can tactics be applied?	All lands	All lands	All lands

	Specific tactic – D	Specific tactic – E	Specific tactic – F
Tactic	Monitor blister rust resistance within planted white pine stands, and try to understand the relationship between infection rates and climatic drivers (e.g., fog).	Identify other resource management goals (not directly related to stand structure and composition) that may modify management strategies for forest vegetation, such as water yield, snow retention, and wildlife habitat.	Support the adaptive management research framework; develop consistent monitoring framework that can capture long-term change.
Where can tactics be applied?	On sites planted with white pine	Federal lands	Federal lands

Table 6.6 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forested vegetation in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Climate change will likely lead to increased whitebark pine mortality through increased mountain pine beetle activity, fire, and white–pine blister rust. There will also likely be a loss of site conditions that support whitebark pine.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote resilient whitebark pine communities.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Identify sites that are less likely to be affected by climate change (refugia), and focus on those sites for restoration.	Implement a variety of management strategies and options to promote whitebark pine, including fire management, planting at lower elevations, and removing other dominant species (e.g., lodgepole pine, spruce and fir).	Plant genetically-selected seedlings to promote blister rust resistance.
Where can tactics be applied?	Federal lands	Federal lands	Federal lands

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Climate change will lead to increased risk of stand-replacing wildfire, mortality from drought, and loss of large ponderosa pine individuals in ponderosa pine forests.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Decrease density within stands, and increase structural diversity across the landscape.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Reduce density by thinning, prescribed fire, and wildfire use, with density and structural goals based on past and predicted future conditions.	Promote age class and structural diversity across the landscape, through regeneration harvest, thinning, prescribed fire and wildfire use.	Monitor establishment, survival and development of ponderosa by age class and in different topoedaphic conditions using Forest Inventory and Analysis data and project-level stocking exams.
Where can tactics be applied?	Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir forests	In locations where activities are allowed	Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir forests

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Climate change stressors cross boundaries, forcing agencies to coordinate and work across boundaries.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Work across jurisdictions at a larger scales.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Align budgets and priorities for program of work with neighboring lands.	Communicate about projects adjacent to other lands, and coordinate on the ground.	Work across boundaries to preserve roads, trails, and access with increasing fire and flood events.
Where can tactics be applied?	All lands	All lands	All lands

Table 6.6 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forested vegetation in the Northern Rockies.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: The vigor and extent of quaking aspen may be reduced with increased frequency of disturbance and drought under changing climate.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Restore and promote the health and vigor of aspen clones.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Manage ungulates during the regeneration phase (e.g., with slash barriers, increased hunting pressure, grazing management, and salt block placement).	Remove conifers around aspen, at multiple scales and using multiple tools (i.e., hand and commercial treatments).	Monitor the extent and condition of aspen clones to determine the effect of disturbance frequency on aspen survival, effects of sudden aspen decline, and incidence of new clones; this may lead to strategic protection measures for specific clones.
Where can tactics be applied?	Wherever aspen regeneration prescriptions are applied	Wherever aspen occurs outside of protected areas	Wherever aspen occurs

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: The distribution of subalpine forests is likely to shift as a result of increasing temperatures with climate change.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Monitor and detect change in seedling survival, species composition, and mortality of mature trees in subalpine forests.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Install and analyze additional plots to gather trend information over time, targeting areas where changes are expected.	Use Forest Inventory and Analysis plot information to determine trends in subalpine forests.	Expand reforestation monitoring and post-treatment monitoring.
Where can tactics be applied?	Federal lands	All lands	In reforestation or treatment locations

Table 6.7—Management recommendations for each of the evaluated species, vegetation types, and resource concerns.

Habitat, ecosystem function, or species	Primary adaptive tactics	Restoration potential	Further management recommendations
Species			
Limber pine	Promote rust resistance while preserving genetic diversity; monitor mortality rates and distributions; evaluate which stands need treatment to ensure conservation of species; determine impact of fire exclusion era.	Low to moderate – the main drawback is the exotic disease white-pine blister rust. Most management actions should be to increase rust resistance in native populations.	Initiate rust-resistant programs; identify plus trees; collect cones and determine rust resistance; map limber pine populations and identify those stands that have become established before and after the fire exclusion era.
Ponderosa pine	Restore fire to historically fire-dominated stands; reduce fuel loadings to mitigate uncharacteristic fire severities; use HRV as guide to design and conduct restoration treatments.	Moderate to high – reintroducing fire or fire surrogates into fire-excluded stands is the first step; addressing where to plant in the future is the next.	Reduce or eliminate Douglas-fir in fire-excluded stands; remove competition through thinnings and prescribed burns; monitor lower treeline in SW Montana and central Idaho to evaluate potential ponderosa pine increases.
Douglas-fir	Reduce competition and increase vigor; keep stand density low; replace Douglas-fir with ponderosa pine, western white pine, and western larch in areas where root disease is a concern; emphasize ponderosa pine on lower elevation dry forests.	Moderate to high – mitigating effects of the fire exclusion era is the first step; might be more difficult in cool, dry environs.	Keep stocking low; change species composition on sites where root disease and soil moisture deficits will be increasing; concentrate planting on the higher elevation, mesic sites and avoid planting in the lower treeline.
Western larch	Restore declining larch stands from adverse fire exclusion effects; prioritize northerly aspects and ash cap soils for treatment; reduce competition; manage larch more intensively on more xeric sites where larch may not be the species to plant on south slopes even though current climate may be suitable. Reduce forest density in all successional stages to provide larch with better chance to utilize soil moisture.	Moderate to high in west region; moderate in central region.	Cut to remove more shade-tolerant species using group selections and thinnings; consider planting options on north slopes where long term persistence will have highest potential; consider genetic stock with best adaptive traits for drought and moisture stress compatibility; maintain stocking and structure diversity to favor moisture regime for larch in all successional stages and to be more able to cope with fire; consider most intensive management for larch on sites with least moisture deficits.
Western white pine	Promote rust resistance.	Moderate in west region; low to moderate in central region, mainly due to the devastating effects of rust mortality.	Increased planting of blister rust resistant material; thinning dense stands to increase young pine vigor.
Aspen	Restore quasi-historical fire regimes; prioritize areas were aspen already exist albeit at lower than historical levels.	Moderate for all NR.	Plant aspen where it is now absent but once flourished; manage aspen at the landscape level by ensuring mix of age classes and successional stages.
Grand fir	Foster landscape heterogeneity; ensure age class structure is near HRV.	High in the west and central regions.	Low priority for restoration; no need to spend valuable restoration dollars restoring this forest unless it is locally declining.

Table 6.7(cont.)—Management recommendations for each of the evaluated species, vegetation types, and resource concerns.

Habitat, ecosystem function, or species	Primary adaptive tactics	Restoration potential	Further management recommendations
Species (cont.)			
Western redcedar	Ensure high landscape heterogeneity; multiple age classes	High in west and central NR regions	Low priority for restoration; no need to spend valuable restoration dollars restoring this forest unless it is locally declining.
Western hemlock	Maintain diversity of age classes and high landscape diversity	High in west and central NR regions	Low priority for restoration; no need to spend valuable restoration dollars restoring this forest unless it is locally declining.
Lodgepole pine	Perhaps the most important subalpine species to manage for mixed age classes and successional stages that approximate HRV	Moderate to high in most if its NR range	Allow managed fires to burn in moderate years.
Whitebark pine	Most climate change adaptation strategies are detailed in Keane et al. (2015a): promote rust resistance; conserve genetic diversity; implement treatments on the higher stands in project areas; plant rust-resistant seedlings in old or recent burns.	Low to moderate in most of its range primarily due to the devastating effects of blister rust	Follow Keane et al. (2010) rangewide strategy: protect rust-resistant plus trees; promote rust resistance; implement prescribed burn and mechanical cuttings to reduce competition; plant and direct-seed blister rust resistant seedlings on burn and treated areas; cold hardy and drought tolerant material.
Subalpine fir	Populations can best be modified by wildfire suppression efforts at local scales.	High in most of the NR	Low priority for climate impact mitigation; no need to spend valuable restoration dollars restoring this forest unless it is locally declining.
Engelmann spruce	Populations can best be modified by wildfire suppression efforts at local scales; planting may be warranted in areas with declining populations.	High in most of the NR; moderate in those low elevation wetland stands	Low priority for climate change adaptation actions; no need to spend valuable restoration dollars conserving this forest unless it is declining locally
Mountain hemlock	Increased fire suppression efforts will increase populations if needed.	Moderate to high in west and central regions of NR	Although this species may have low priority for mitigating adverse climate change effects, it is important to monitor so it does not go locally extinct.
Alpine larch	Preserve genetic diversity by collecting and storing seed.	Low to moderate across most of its range	Monitor changes in alpine larch populations; document
Green ash	Reduce grazing; increasing fire suppression and grazing can be used to modify ash populations along with planting in areas where populations are critically low.	High in the eastern NR	Plant in recently burned areas where it last existed.
Cottonwood	Foster high variability in river flows to increase seedling establishment potential; eliminate competition.	Moderate to high	Prioritize the most mesic sites first; allow fire to burn in areas that are not too dense; conduct cuttings to remove conifer competition.

Table 6.7(cont.)—Management recommendations for each of the evaluated species, vegetation types, and resource concerns.

Vegetation types			
Dry ponderosa pine-Douglas-fir forests	Create less dense forests with composition related to moisture deficit tolerance.	High everywhere in dry settings	Manage density and appropriate composition related to projected moisture limited sites
Western larch mixed mesic forests	Create a greater landscape heterogeneity forest pattern that may limit the extent of large uncharacteristically severe disturbances using mechanical and prescribed fire as tools; greater moisture deficits, less available moisture for trees will require consideration of appropriate species distribution and forest density in the future; create within stand structure diversity and more open conditions to allow larch to maintain dominance.	High in western portion of the region	Manage pattern of the forest to increase the diversity of successional stages and arrangement; tools in areas suitable for timber production will include timber harvest and prescribed burning, and areas in roadless areas will be restored with wildfire for resource benefit with some planting where seed source is absent due to large fires; maintain stocking levels to favor larch moisture relationship in all successional stages and to be able to better cope with fire; manage species composition less susceptible to root disease especially in northern Idaho; manage larch in lynx habitat knowing that larch needs more open conditions to maintain dominance over the long term in a stand.
Mixed mesic western white pine-western redcedar-western hemlock-grand fir forests	Attempt to emphasize the restoration of western white pine while also maintaining landscape heterogeneities similar to historical conditions; promote rust resistance and plan treated and burned areas with pine seedlings.	Moderate because of blister rust	Monitor local conditions to evaluate losses or gains in the four species so management options can be adjusted.
Lodgepole pine mixed subalpine forests		High in most ares	Again, manage pattern to increase the diversity of successional stages and arrangement; roadless areas need wildfire for resource benefit; planting to lodgepole may be needed where seed source is absent due to large fires; manage species composition in lynx habitat knowing that returning natural fire regimes will reduce subalpine fir populations.
Whitebark pine mixed upper subalpine forests	Most climate change adaptation strategies are detailed in Keane et al. 2015a: most important – create landscape heterogeneity in composition and size classes; also promote rust resistance; conserve genetic diversity; implement treatments on the higher stands in project areas; plant rust-resistant seedlings in old or recent burns.	Low to moderate in most of its range primarily due to blister rust	Follow Keane et al. (2010) rangewide strategy: protect rust-resistant plus trees; promote rust resistance; implement prescribed burn and mechanical cuttings to reduce competition; plant and direct-seed blister rust resistant seedlings on burn and treated areas; cold hardy and drought tolerant material.

Table 6.7(cont.)—Management recommendations for each of the evaluated species, vegetation types, and resource concerns.

Resource concerns			
Landscape heterogeneity	Design restoration and climate change treatments at multiple scales, especially the landscape scale; allow wildfires to burn.	Moderate	Landscape heterogeneity should be evaluated periodically to determine trends and magnitudes.
Timber production	Thinning and planting western larch, ponderosa pine and western white pine on appropriate habitats will be important to long-term timber production to enable the forest to better cope with disturbance such as fire and root disease, manage density within dry forest settings.	High in western portion of region for larch and western white pine. High for ponderosa pine everywhere.	Manage landscapes for species composition, structure and pattern best able to cope with moisture deficits and disturbance, especially root disease, bark beetles and fire. Manage dry forest settings to be more open grown ponderosa pine compared to current dense mixed Douglas-fir forests. Increase percent of ponderosa pine, western larch and western white pine on mixed mesic settings to cope with increase in fire and root disease. Manage for a diversity of lodgepole pine, spruce, subalpine fir, larch and whitebark pine in higher elevations considering increasing soil moisture deficits. Manage for a diversity of successional stages (landscape heterogeneity) in a pattern that will better cope with disturbance agents.
Carbon sequestration	Carbon can be best sequestered by embracing ecosystem management and restoring landscapes and ecosystems; carbon sequestration is a side effect of an ecosystem treatment, not the objective.	N/A	The best management approach for managing carbon sequestration is to foster a timber management program that emphasizes an ecosystem approach.

landscape diversity. Increasing diversity is a "hedge your bets" strategy that reduces risk of major forest loss. Areas with low species and genetic diversity are likely to be more susceptible to the stressors associated with climate change; thus, promoting species and genetic diversity, through plantings and in thinning treatments, is likely to increase forest resilience to changing climate. Promoting heterogeneity of species and structure across the landscape is also expected to increase resilience to wildfire, insects, and disease.

There is a lot of uncertainty associated with climate change, and managers identified several ways to increase knowledge and manage in the face of uncertainty. Implementation of an adaptive management framework can help managers deal with uncertainty and adjust management over time. In the context of climate change adaptation, adaptive management involves: definition of management goals, objectives and timeframes; analyzing vulnerabilities; determining priorities; developing adaptation strategies and tactics; implementing plans and projects; and monitoring, reviewing, and adjusting (Millar et al. 2014). Development of a consistent monitoring framework that can capture ecosystem changes with shifting climate is a key component of the adaptive management framework. For example, tracking tree species regeneration and distribution will help managers determine how species are responding to climatic changes and ways to adjust management accordingly (e.g., guidelines for planting). Integration between research and management and across resource areas (e.g., forest management and wildlife) will also be key in implementation of the adaptive management framework to ensure that the best available science is being considered in on-the-ground management and that management approaches do not conflict (e.g., effects of a particular thinning treatment on wildlife).

Managers also identified adaptation strategies and tactics to maintain particular species or community types of concern. For example, climate change is likely to lead to increased whitebark pine mortality through increased mountain pine beetle activity, fire, and white pine blister rust. There will probably also be a loss of site conditions that support whitebark pine. To promote resilient whitebark pine communities, managers may want to focus restoration efforts on sites less likely to be affected by climate change (i.e., refugia). A variety of management strategies can be implemented to promote whitebark pine, including fire management, planting at lower elevations, and removing other dominant species (e.g., lodgepole pine, spruce, and fir). Genetically selected seedlings can also be planted to promote blister rust resistance.

Finally, managers recognized that stressors associated with climate change cross boundaries, making it increasingly important that agencies coordinate and work across boundaries. Agencies can coordinate by aligning budgets and priorities for programs of work, communicating about projects adjacent to other lands, and working across boundaries to maintain roads, trails, and access that are likely to be more frequently impacted by fire and flood events under a changing climate.

Discussion

Given the high uncertainties in predicting climate, vegetation, and disturbance responses to increasing CO_2, we think that assessing vegetation change and vulnerabilities is currently more of an educated guess based on inconsistent and contradictory studies rather than a highly confident evaluation of comprehensive scientific investigation. Many of the techniques used to predict tree species response to climate change in the literature present only one possible future out of seemingly unlimited possibilities. These predictions would change if a new climate change scenario were used, if new data were augmented with existing data, if new variables were included in the analysis, if simulation parameters were modified, or if new algorithms were included in existing models. Moreover, there are still many unknowns in ecosystem science, and if we link those unknowns to the unknowns in climate systems, these uncertainties would certainly swamp any educated guesses that we might have. Consequently, these projections and assessments must be interpreted in the context of high uncertainty.

One important lesson that we learned while writing this chapter is that climate change is only one of the many challenges facing land managers, and some of these other challenges might be more important than mitigating climate change. We found that successfully mitigating ecosystem impacts from past management actions, such as fire exclusion and introductions of exotic species, will also mitigate climate change impacts. Restoring fire-prone ecosystems declining due to fire exclusion, for example, might successfully solve two issues: It would increase ecosystem health and create resilient forests that could thrive under future climate changes. These fire-dominated forests have already experienced great variation in past climate and clearly have broad amplitudes of resilience with respect to climate. In another example, fostering greater rust-resistance in our native five-needle pines may allow us to create forests that are less vulnerable to changes in climate. There will be places in the Northern Rockies where the primary challenge will be climate change impacts, such as drought at the lower treeline, but overall, we think that the best approach is to integrate climate change considerations into current management actions rather than conducting management actions for the sole purpose of climate change mitigation. Ecosystem restoration, as a prime example, could be the best approach for preparing for climate change.

The main question then is: How do we restore ecosystems in the Northern Rockies? Managers need reference conditions at the stand and landscape scales to prioritize, plan, design, and implement effective restoration activities. This becomes somewhat problematic when we need that reference to include the trend and variability of future climate. Considering the high uncertainty of future climate and vegetation projections, and knowing the resilience of fire-adapted species, we suggest that any conclusions about the infeasibility of ecosystem restoration under changing

climates are imprudent. It may be more prudent to wait until simulation technology has improved to include credible pattern and process interactions with realistic regional climate dynamics for the future so that we base decisions about the restoration of ecosystems on better information. But improving ecosystem models may take decades before simulations can be used to predict species and landscape response to climate change with reasonable accuracy. While we wait, we lose valuable populations and rust-resistant trees, and our options for restoration diminish greatly. Even with climate change, restoration activities will probably be appropriate considering the high genetic variation across the range of forest species, which provides the foundation for adaptation (Bower and Aitken 2006, 2008; Mahalovich and Hipkins 2011; Rehfeldt et al. 1999). Therefore, we think that the current emphasis on ecosystem restoration in the Northern Rockies will lead to more-resilient ecosystems for the future. Until we have realistic models and less uncertain climate change projections, we desperately need a construct to use as a reference for restoration. Using historical data to guide future management actions may entail less uncertainty than building new references based on uncertain climate change projections. Therefore, we think that historical ranges and variability may provide sufficient reference conditions in the future.

We think that the concept of HRV still has a valid place in land management, at least for the near future. Landscape models can be used to simulate fire regimes and their interaction with climate and vegetation to create HRV time series that can be used as reference conditions to assess, plan, evaluate, design, and implement ecosystem restoration treatments. HRV should be used only to guide land management—not as a target on which to evaluate success or failure. There are few measures of ecosystem health that match the scale, scope, flexibility, and robustness of HRV analysis. HRV might provide a useful, though not ideal, reference for land management over the next several decades until simulation modeling advances to a level where models can forecast both accurate climate and climate responses by the ecosystems.

Conclusions

Climate change is one of many challenges facing land managers, and some of these other challenges might be more important than climate change. In addition, mitigating past ecosystem damage (e.g., fire exclusion and nonnative introductions) is a climate-smart practice. For example, restoring fire-prone ecosystems can both improve ecosystem function and create forests that will be resilient in a warmer climate. Fire-prone forests have already withstood variation in past climate and have broad amplitudes of resilience with respect to climate. There will be places in the Northern Rockies region where climate change will be the primary challenge (e.g., drought at lower treeline), but integrating climate change considerations into current management

operations is preferable to a climate-centric management strategy.

Multiresource monitoring will be critical for managing ecosystems in the future, building on existing monitoring systems but with additional elements to accommodate the effects of climate change (Janowiak et al. 2014). Although costly in terms of money and personnel, an extensive monitoring system will save money in the long run by evaluating the effectiveness of adaptation tactics and providing a means to adjust them. Without monitoring, it will be impossible to know the magnitude and trend of climate effects on vegetation, or if actions proposed in this document (see section on adaptation strategies and tactics) are useful for planning and management. Monitoring data can also be used to provide inputs to calibrate and validate models. Models, in turn, can be used to simulate emergent environmental patterns, compare effects of potential treatments, identify vulnerable landscapes or ecosystem components, and bridge gaps between large-scale ecological processes and variables measured in small areas and over short periods of time. Therefore, any future land management planning will be complete only if a plan for monitoring proposed actions is included.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 6—Vegetation Model Output, Vulnerability Assessment Descriptions, and Adaptation Options for Forest Vegetation in the Northern Rockies.

Appendix 6A—Dynamic Global Vegetation Model (MC2) Output for the Northern Rockies.

The following figures show output from the MC2 dynamic global vegetation model for the Northern Rockies region, including vegetation type distribution (figs. 6A.1–6A.4), carbon (6A.5, 6A.6), potential evapotranspiration (6A.7), and fire rotation (6A.8). See Chapter 6 for further information on the MC2 model and model simulation details.

Figure 6A.1—Maps of MC2 vegetation type distributions for three time spans (historical, 2030–2050, and 2080–2100) and with and without fire suppression. Vegetation types are abbreviated as follows: B = boreal; M = maritime; S = subtropical; SA = subalpine; T = temperate; and ENF = evergreen needleleaf forest; ENW = evergreen needleleaf woodland; F = forest; MF = mixed forest; MW = mixed woodland; DBF = deciduous broadleaf forest; and DBW = deciduous broadleaf woodland.
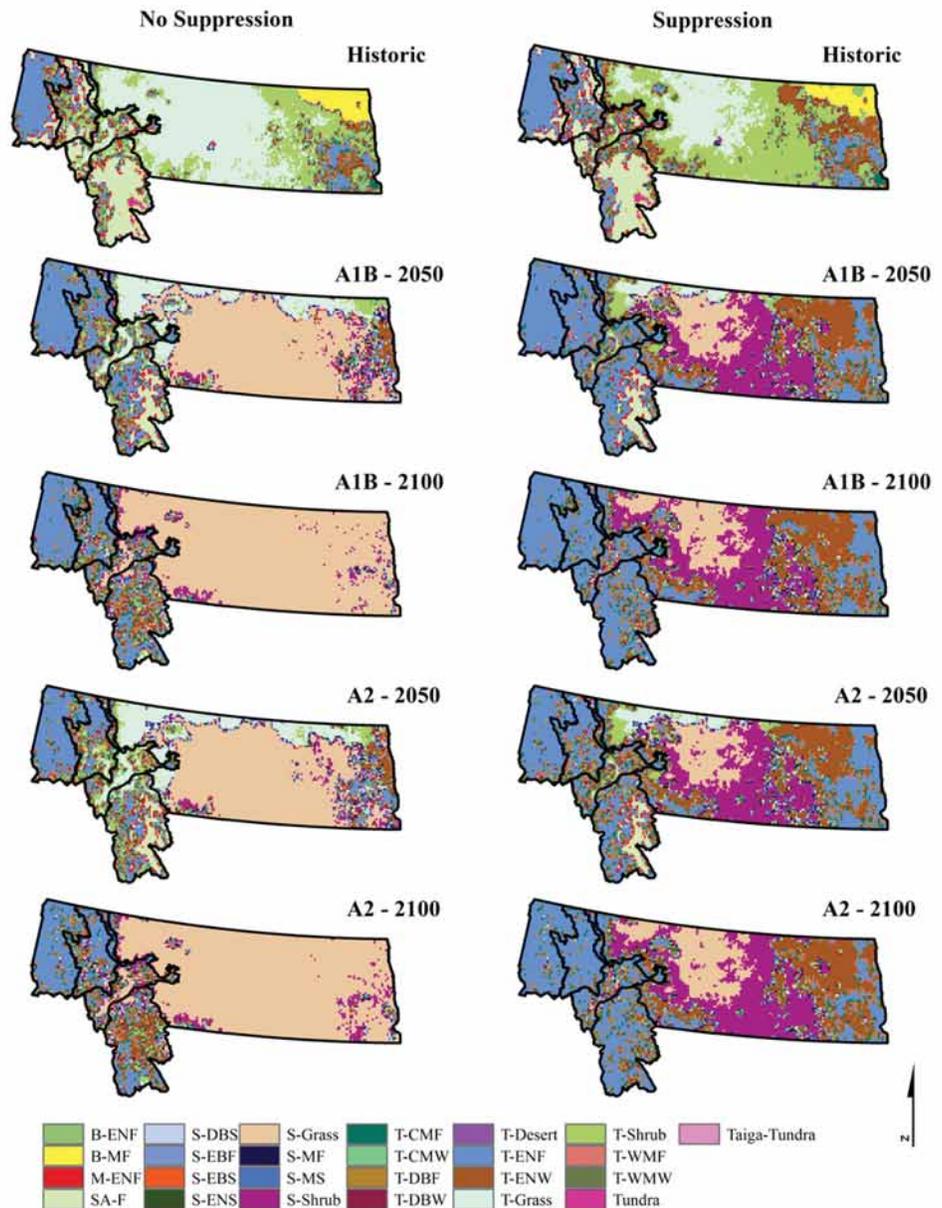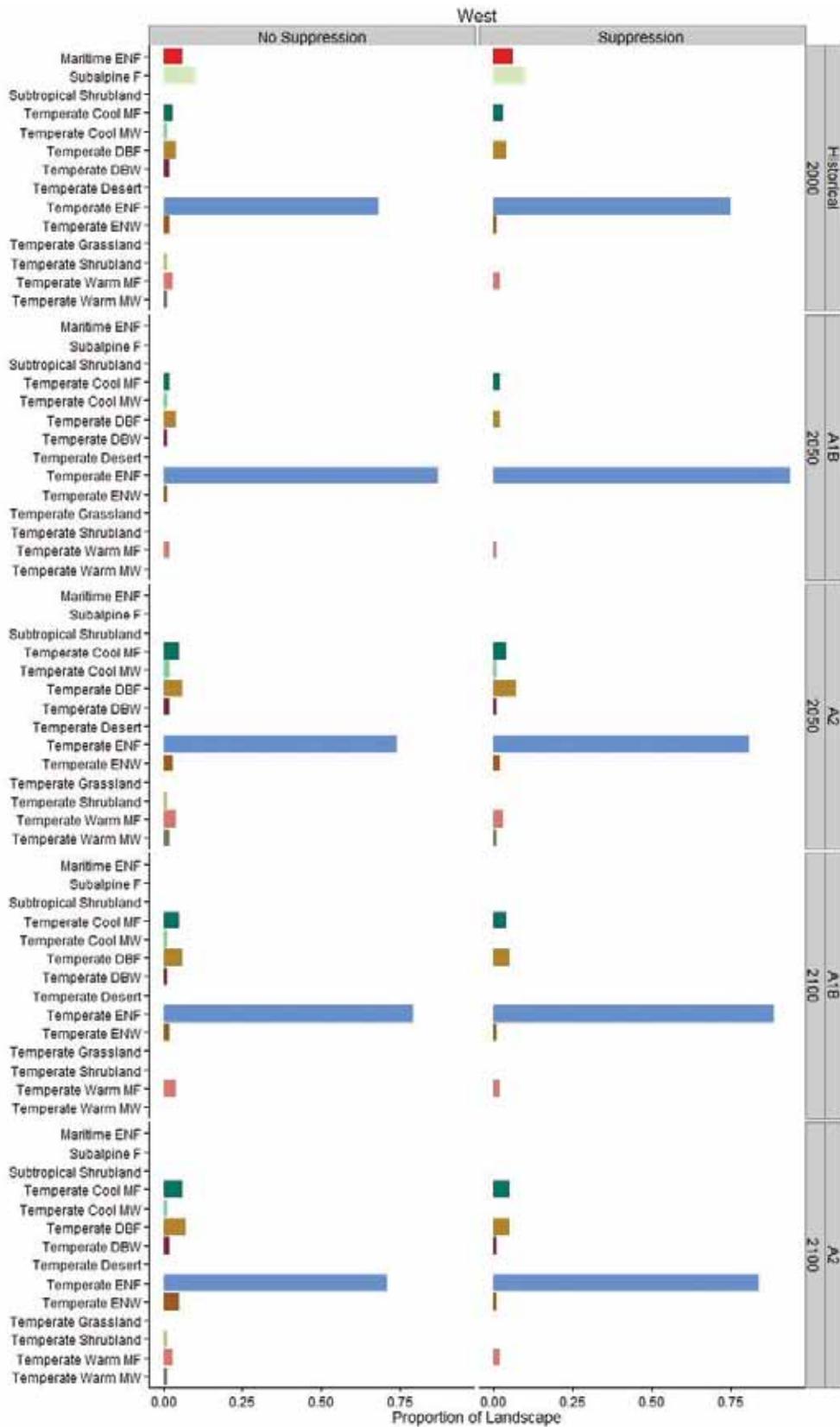
Figure 6A.2—MC2 Vegetation type distributions as proportion of the landscape for each subregion, where 2A = Western Rockies; 2B = Central Rockies; 2C = Eastern Rockies; 2D = Grassland; 2E = Greater Yellowstone Area; and vegetation type acronyms are: ENF = evergreen needleleaf forest; ENW = evergreen needleleaf woodland; F = forest; MF = mixed forest; MW = mixed woodland; DBF = deciduous broadleaf forest; and DBW = deciduous broadleaf woodland.

2B

Figure 6A.2—*Continued.*
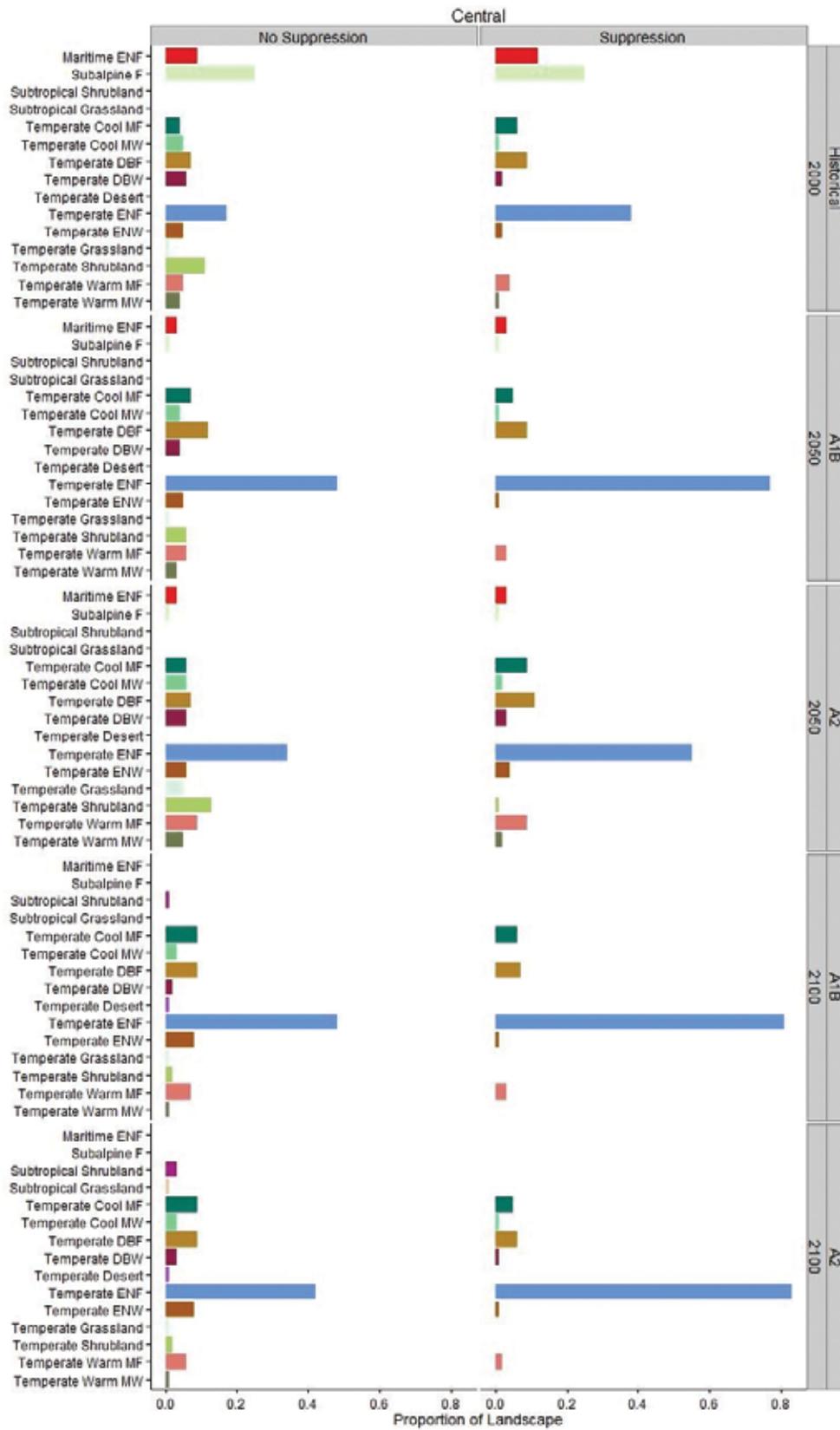
Figure 6A.2—Continued.
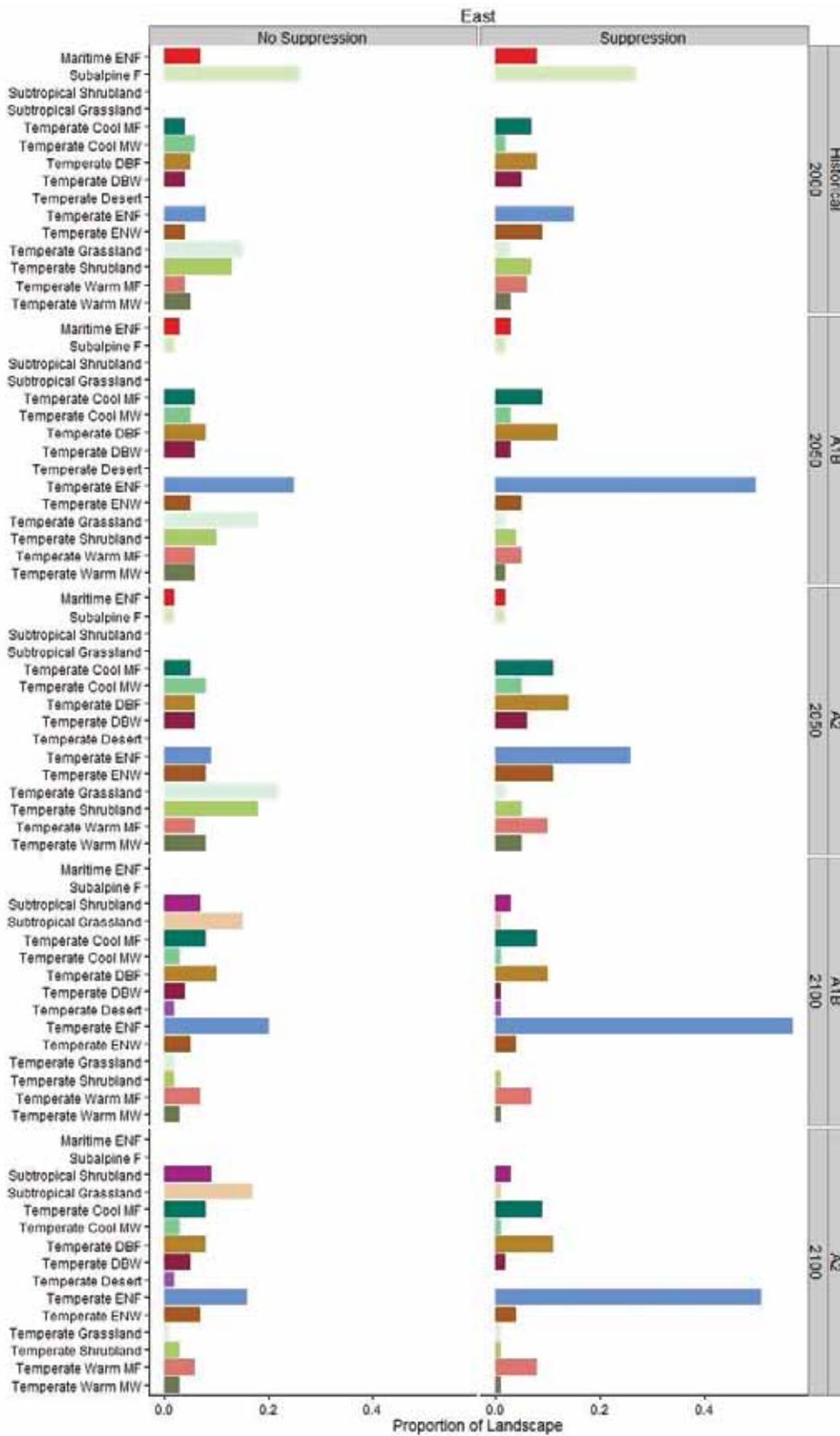
2D

Figure 6A.2—*Continued.*
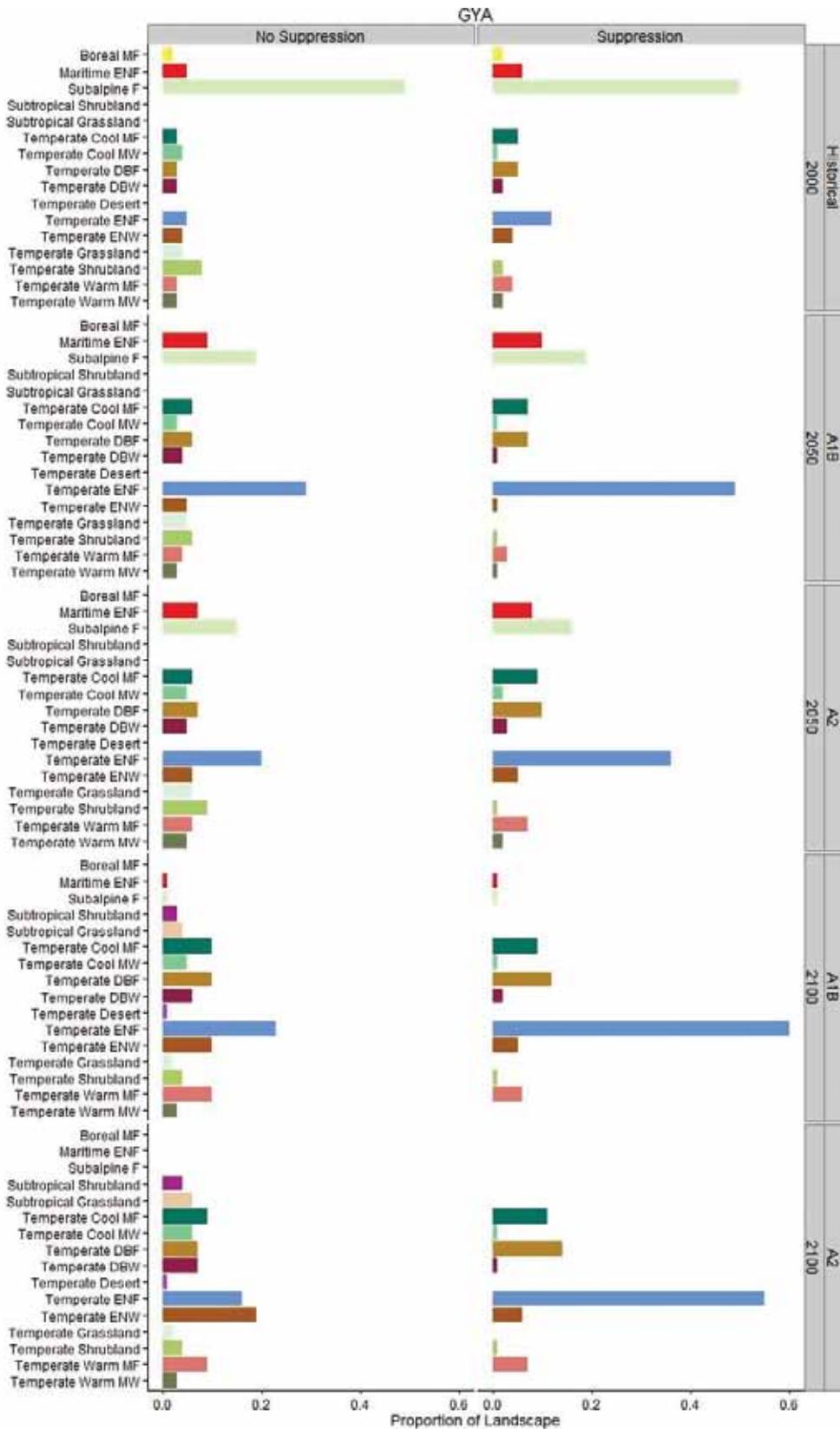
Figure 6A.2—*Continued.*
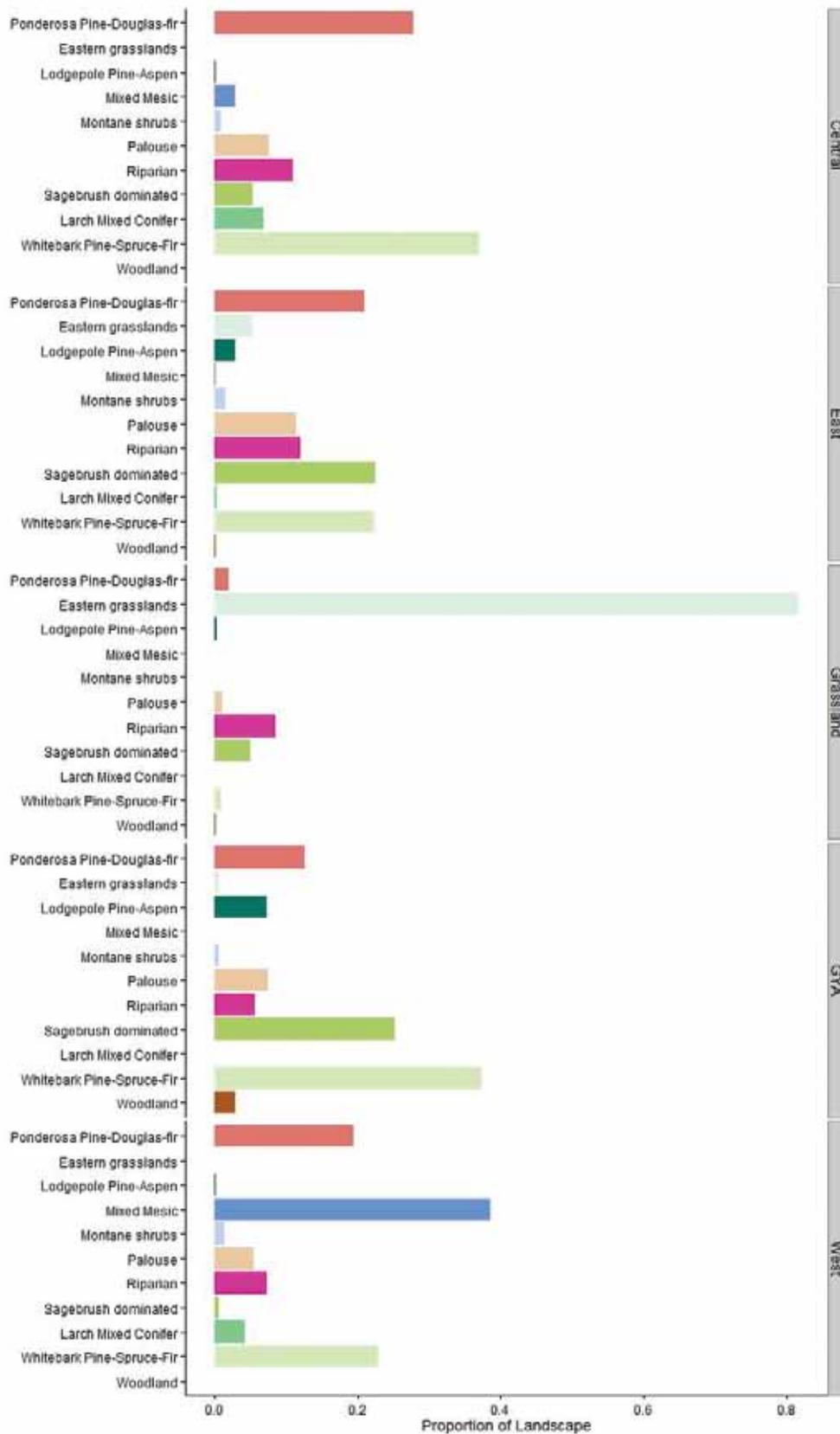
Figure 6A.3—Potential vegetation type distributions as proportion of the landscape for each subregion where vegetation types are abbreviated as follows: Ponderosa pine-Douglas-fir = dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests; eastern grasslands = eastern grasslands; lodgepole pine-aspen = lodgepole pine and aspen mixed conifer forests; mixed mesic = mixed mesic white pine, cedar, hemlock, grand fir forests; montane shrubs = montane shrubs; Palouse = Palouse (western grassland); riparian = riparian; sagebrush dominated = sagebrush-dominated systems; larch mixed conifer = western larch mixed conifer forests; whitebark pine-spruce-fir = whitebark pine-spruce-fir forests; woodland = woodland; and exotics = exotics.

Figure 6A.4—Existing vegetation type distributions as proportions of the landscape for each subregion, where vegetation types are abbreviated as follows: Ponderosa pine-Douglas-fir = dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests; eastern grasslands = eastern grasslands; lodgepole pine-aspen = lodgepole pine and aspen mixed conifer forests; mixed mesic = mixed mesic white pine, cedar, hemlock, grand fir forests; montane shrubs = montane shrubs; Palouse = Palouse (western grassland); riparian = riparian; sagebrush dominated = sagebrush-dominated systems; larch mixed conifer = western larch mixed conifer forests; whitebark pine-spruce-fir = whitebark pine-spruce-fir forests; woodland = woodland; and exotics = exotics.
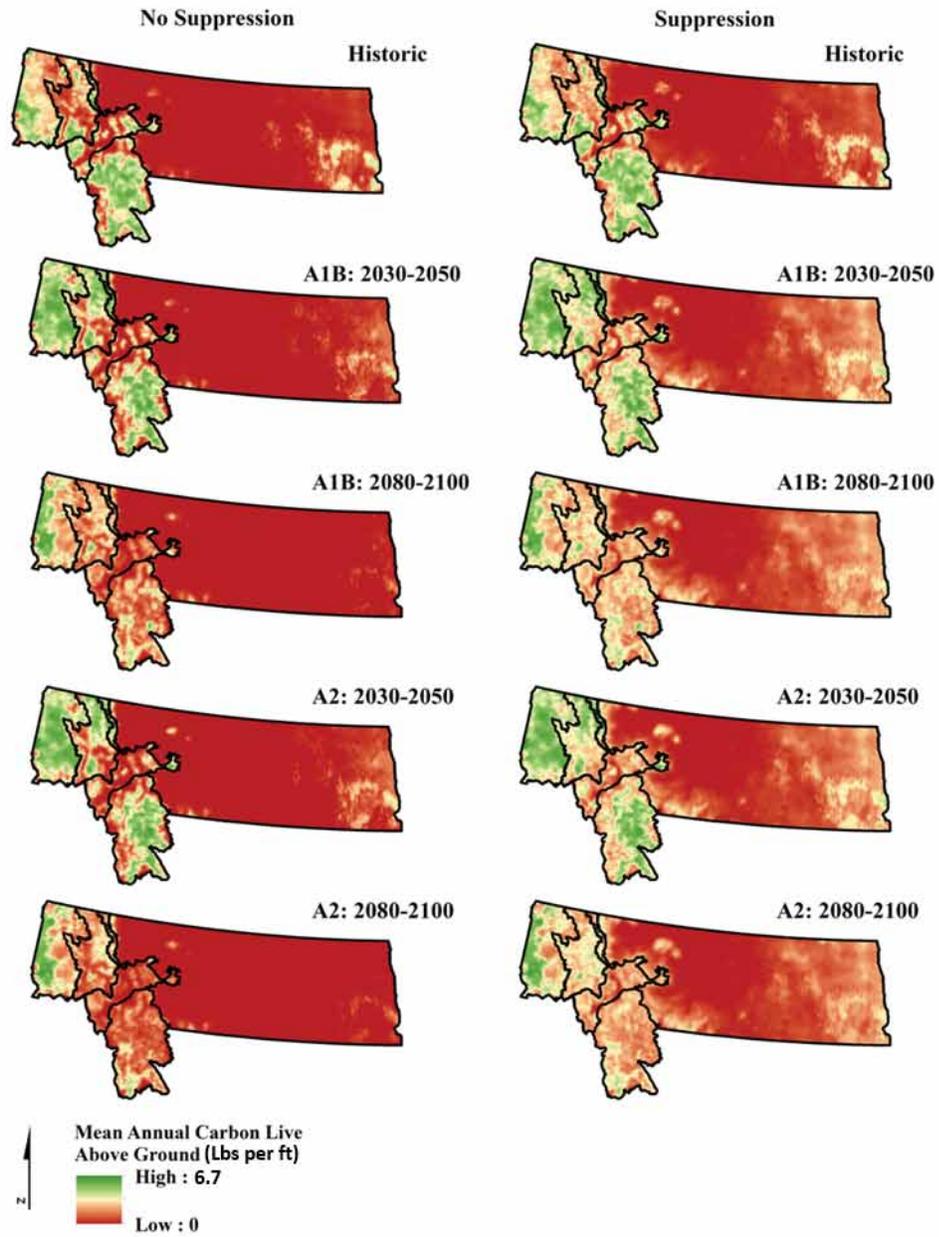
Figure 6A.5—Maps of aboveground live carbon averaged across each of three time spans (historical, 2030–2050, and 2080–2100) and with and without fire suppression, for the A1B and A2 emission scenarios.
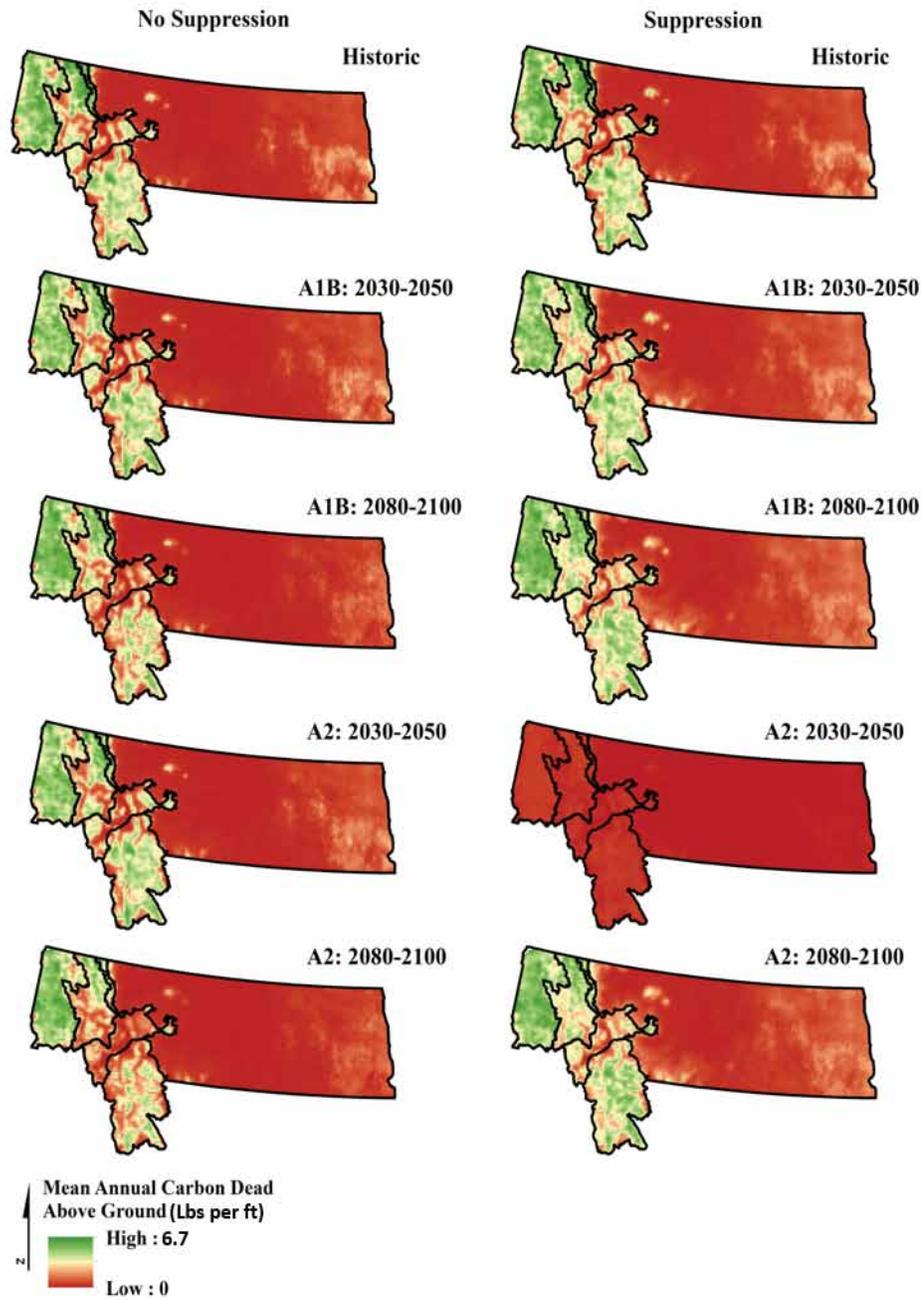
Figure 6A.6—Maps of aboveground dead carbon averaged across each of three time spans (historical, 2030–2050, and 2080–2100) and with and without fire suppression, for the A1B and A2 emission scenarios.
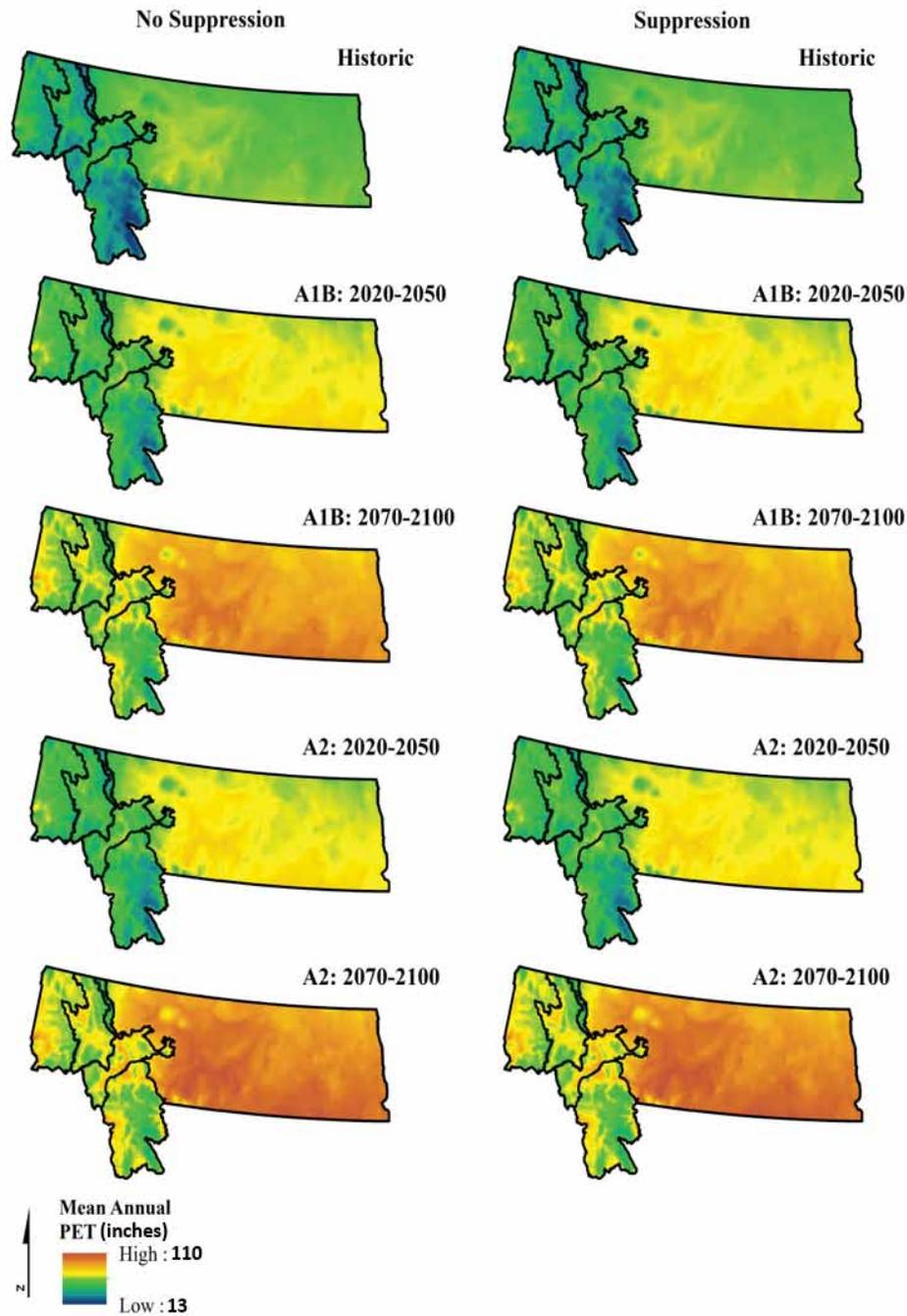
Figure 6A.7—Maps of potential evapotranspiration (PET) averaged across each of three time spans (historical, 2020–2050, and 2070–2100) and with and without fire suppression, for the A1B and A2 emission scenarios.
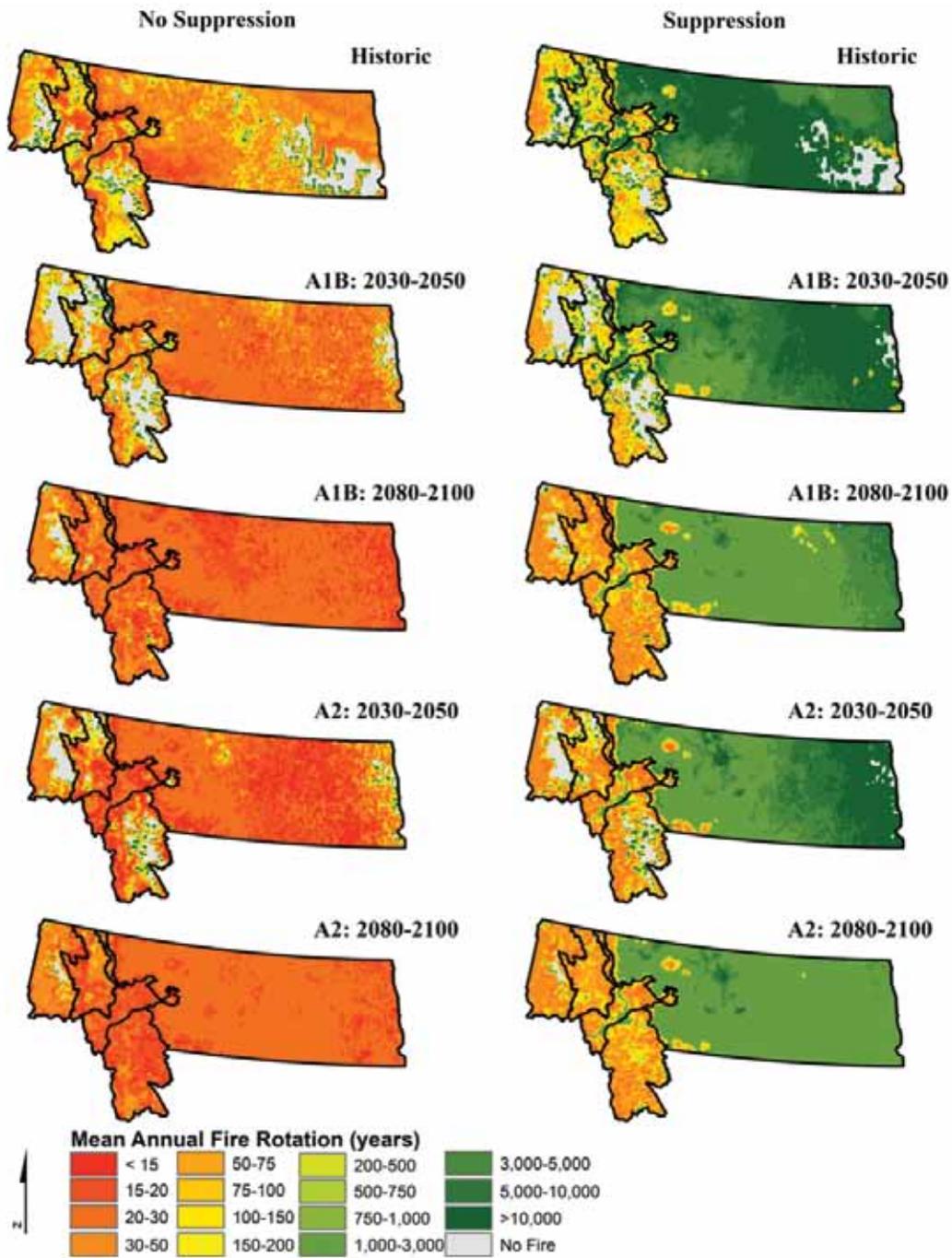
Figure 6A.8—Maps of annual fire rotation averaged across each of three time spans (historical, 2020–2050, 2080–2100) and with and without fire suppression, for the A1B and A2 emission scenarios.

Appendix 6B—Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments and Ratings for Tree Species, Forest Vegetation Types and Forest Resources of Concern.

The following tables describe climate change vulnerability assessments for tree species, forest vegetation types, and forest resource concerns (table 6B.1), and risk assessment and vulnerability ratings for the same species, vegetation types, and resources of concern (table 6B.2). See Chapter 6 for further discussion of climate change vulnerabilities for forest vegetation.

Table 6B.1—Vulnerability assessment for the three scales of analysis (species, vegetation type, resource concern) for vegetation of the Northern Rockies (NR).

Habitat, ecosystem function, or species	Broad-scale climate change effect	Current condition, existing stressors	Sensitivity to climatic variability and change	Expected effects of climate change
Species				
Limber pine	Warming temperatures, eastern portion of Northern Rockies anticipated increase in precipitation, less snow pack, variable precipitation during growing season.	Reduced abundance due to white pine blister rust infections, mountain pine beetle outbreaks, continued fire exclusion, and on wetter sites, limber pine dwarf mistletoe can cause mortality.	Shade intolerant, early-seral to pioneer species following fire or tree removal; difficulty in competing with other encroaching species on more productive sites; little to no reproduction at low tree densities (lack of effective pollination cloud) and those seeds that are produced have increased likelihood of inbreeding; minimum of 10 cone-bearing trees per acre is needed for dispersal by birds (i.e., corvids).	Increased growth; larger seed crops; increased seed dispersal into burned areas due to bird dispersal; lower seed germination due to warmer, drier conditions; loss of ectomycorrhizal associations, increased competition from wind-dispersed conifers; less blister rust infection due to higher temperatures and lower relative humidity disrupting the blister rust cycle; except in wave years; higher blister rust and dwarf mistletoe infections on eastside where precipitation is projected to increase; large and intense wildfires could threaten seed sources.
Ponderosa pine— var. *scopulorum*	Increasing temperatures; deeper and longer droughts; increasing fire severity and occurrence; shorter growing seasons and longer dormant seasons.	Higher than historical tree densities.	Generalist adaptive strategy; high phenotypic plasticity; early- to mid-seral species; moderate shade tolerance; well-adapted to drought.	Decreases in dwarf mistletoe and western gull rust damage; competitive capacity will increase; fire effects uncertain; more highly vulnerable to loss of disjunct and isolated populations, as compared to var. *ponderosa*; declining precipitation and variable spatial and temporal pattern may cause declines in regeneration, except in eastern portion of northern region where precipitation is expected to increase; increases in mountain pine beetle outbreaks; advancing competition, increasing western pine shoot borer occurrence; large and intense wildfires could threaten seed sources.
Ponderosa pine— var. *ponderosa*	Minor cold hardiness issues at lower elevations.	Precipitation pattern may favor regeneration; increases in pine beetle (western and mountain) *Lophodermium* sp. *Elytroderma*, *Armillaria* root rot, *Mycosphaerella pini*; extreme fire behavior; competition from grand fir and Douglas-fir.	Intermediate adaptive strategy at low to mid elevations; specialist adaptive strategy at higher elevations; moderate phenotypic plasticity; early- to mid-seral species; little shade tolerance; less adapted to drought.	Competitive capacity will increase; increasing fires may have both beneficial and detrimental effects (high uncertainty); dwarf mistletoe and western gull rust may decrease; loss of disjunct and isolated populations on edges of range; limited ectomycorrhizae availability at higher elevations; suitable substrates may not exist upslope, impedes both natural and artificial regeneration; large and intense wildfires could threaten seed sources.
Douglas-fir	Increase in temperature causing increase in soil moisture deficits and less available water especially at lower elevation dry sites.	Increase in tree density has increased risk of mortality from a large fire standpoint and will also limit regeneration and species distribution locally; root disease a major cause of mortality in northern Idaho and western Montana.	Sensitive to increasing temperatures and increasing soil moisture deficits, this will predispose Douglas-fir to other related mortality agents such as insect and disease.	At lower elevation southerly aspects expect ponderosa pine to be better able to cope with moisture deficits and disturbance such as fire, spruce bud worm; less seed source due fire size and due to cone production problems with spruce bud worm; mesic sites expect increase in mortality due to root disease; higher elevation southerly slopes may provide increased climate suitability for Douglas-fir; large and intense wildfires could threaten seed sources.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Western larch	Increase in temperature causing increase in evaporative demand and soil moisture deficits.	Increase in forest density has increased mortality risk from a fire standpoint, especially existing large larch trees; past selective harvest and lack of fire have reduced species distribution and density, especially very large individuals.	Very sensitive to changes in temperature; spring frosts often reduce pollen, cone and seed production that leads to sporadic seed years; very sensitive to warm temperatures to establish regeneration on high energy, southerly slopes; rising temperatures and increasing soil moisture deficits will affect potential distribution; increasing amount of fire will likely benefit larch as long as it is not in overly dense forest conditions with poor vigor leading to loss of seed source after fire.	Range expansion and/or shift to more northerly aspects; reduction of size/age diversity of trees; larger fires may facilitate larch regeneration because the larger larch trees may provide seed on burned areas; increased drought on drier sites may exacerbate competition stress caused by invading shade tolerant species.
Western white pine	Warming temperatures; longer growing seasons; increased fire; increases in drought.	Local rates of blister rust infection may hold steady but remains highly susceptible to wave years of infection; increases in *Armillaria* root rot, mountain pine beetle (endemic—depends on white pine population size and tree size), *Lophodermium nitens*, *Lecanosticta acicola* severe needle blight on-going issue with cool-wet protracted springs; potential seed sources vulnerable to fire damage; critical thresholds for regeneration establishment may be possible resulting in ineffective pollen cloud, no seed production and higher probability of inbreeding.	Early spring frost and cold hardiness may not be physiologically in tune as individuals migrate upslope; moisture: lower elevation ecotones (<25" per year precipitation threshold); moderate shade-tolerance; early- to mid-seral good competitive ability; up to 3 years seed viability in soil bank; generalist adaptive strategy; high phenotypic plasticity.	Increased growth; increased abundance with less grand fir provided there is a seed source or planting; less blister rust infection due to high temperatures and lower relative humidity except for wave years; if seed source exists, fire will increase growing space providing for regeneration potential; the species is dependent on ash cap on many sites, which may prevent migration to wetter/warmer sites; limited ectomycorrhizae availability at higher elevations; suitable substrate may not exist upslope so migration may not be expedited; both natural and artificial regeneration may occur with drought; pole blight may occur.

Quaking Aspen	Warming temperatures, decreasing snowpack, increase in severity and frequency of wildfires.	Although there are stable climax aspen communities, most aspen is a fire-maintained, early seral component of a forested community; stands are declining in number and size; stressors include competition with and shading by conifers, typically due to fire exclusion, domestic and native ungulate herbivory, and increasing temperature coupled with declining precipitation; reduction of soil moisture may cause severe water stress, which reduces aspen's ability to survive (e.g., sudden aspen decline) and to reproduce both vegetatively and by seed, thereby reducing genetic variability.	Sensitivity varies based on site characteristics, primarily soil moisture and solar radiation; it is mostly shade-intolerant; ubiquitous across most of North America; aspen is most persistent on sites with high solar radiation coupled with moist to wet soils; it does not tolerate extended drought; highly fire adapted and regenerates abundantly after stand-replacing fire, although it can regenerate in conifer dominated stands in some settings; it will persist or possibly increase with warmer temperatures as long as there is sufficient soil moisture; fringe communities may succumb to sudden aspen decline with long-term and severe water deficit, which will kill the roots.	Communities on warmer, drier sites could decrease due to water deficit; some stands may have significant mortality with little or no regeneration due to herbivory; sudden aspen decline has been associated with severe, prolonged drought, particularly in aspen stands that are on the fringe of the species' distribution (warmer and drier sites than those typically considered optimal for aspen persistence); fewer and smaller stands and of those that persist, there will be increased plant stress due to increased severity of summer droughts; increased fire frequency may likely favor aspen regeneration by removing shading conifers; younger stands (<40 years old) may be more resilient to drought and frequent fires could favor aspen on moister sites; severe fire may kill shallow root systems and eliminate aspen in some hotter and drier sites; growth may increase because photosynthetic rates appear to increase more in aspen than other tree species as atmospheric carbon increases, but this may be offset by increased drought stress and increased atmospheric ozone, which reduces photosynthesis and may increase susceptibility to insects and disease; higher herbivory (browsing) on regenerating stands is possible as adjacent upland vegetation senesces and desiccates earlier in the growing season; areas with mountain pine beetle-caused conifer mortality (especially in lodgepole pine) may release aspen and regenerate once the conifer canopy is removed; conifers use more water than aspen, so more aspen stands mean more streamflow; aspen forms natural fuel breaks that can be used effectively in fire management; pathological rotation is short-lived.
Grand fir	Increasing drought; longer growing seasons; increased fire and disease; highly variable weather.	Fire exclusion has increased grand fir in dry and mesic sites, but increased tree densities have also stressed fir trees, contributing to increased fuel loadings, higher root rot, and greater insect damage and mortality.	Late-seral, shade tolerant species highly susceptible to fire; usually exists in areas where competition and tree density is high so most trees are stressed; highly stressed trees are more susceptible to climatic fluctuations and trends.	On xeric sites, increased drought and longer growing seasons will exacerbate stress from competition, resulting in high mortality mainly from insects and disease; longer fire seasons and high fuel loadings from exclusion will also reduce this species; on mesic sites, longer growing seasons coupled with higher temperatures may increase growth rates and regeneration success, thereby increasing tree density and competition; fire will reduce grand fir dominance at across the landscape.
Western redcedar	Longer growing seasons; warmer temperatures; highly variable weather; enhanced warm and cold cycles; early frosts.	Root and butt diseases: low susceptibly to pathogens.	Generalist adaptive strategy; high phenotypic plasticity; high shade-tolerance; long-lived; seed production good; vegetative potential.	Increased growth rate; fire adds uncertainty; warm/cold cycle may facilitate red-belt and adversely affect western redcedar (early warming followed by early frost); cedar flagging from dry seasons (entire branch is shed, interferes with seed production); ash cap dependent, which may prevent it to migrate to wetter/warmer sites.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Species				
Western hemlock	Longer growing seasons; warmer temperatures; highly variable weather; early frosts during the growing stage.	Confined to the moister portions of northern Rockies; susceptible to annosus root rot, *Echinodontium tinctorium*; High tolerance to Armillaria root rot.	Provisionally tends to be a generalist adaptive strategy; high shade tolerance; needs ample moisture; susceptible to spring frost; very good competitor; high seed producer; seed viability only lasts one year in soil bank; susceptible to acid rain; ash cap dependent.	May stay the same and potentially not change its current distribution; vulnerable to water deficits so declines are possible on the drier sites; since the species is ash cap dependent, migration may be retarded to wetter/warmer sites without ash cap soils.
Lodgepole pine	Increasing temperatures; longer droughty periods; increasing fire occurrence, frequency, and severity; increased productivity.	Advancing succession due to fire exclusion is contributing to declines in lodgepole pine in many areas; current increases in burn areas are creating many new lodgepole stands and some may become dense thickets; increased drought may exacerbate stress from other factors including competition, endemic insects and diseases, and wind; warming temperatures may heighten bark beetle activity resulting in more frequent and severe epidemics.	Shade-intolerant conifer that has a wide climatic amplitude in subalpine areas; exists on a wide variety of soil types and may be the only species to inhabit infertile and well drained sites; moderately drought tolerant; reproductive success depends on level of serotiny; well adapted to colonize post-burn environments; highly susceptible to bark beetles, especially when in stress from endogenous and exogenous factors such as competition, fire damage, and drought.	Longer drought periods and warmer temperatures may decrease growth and regeneration on the driest sites (lower elevation lodgepole stands); well adapted to increases in fire occurrence and size depending on level of serotiny, but it may be eliminated from sites where fires reburn stands before established seedlings and saplings become reproductively mature. In mesic subalpine sites, continued fire exclusion coupled with higher productivities will heighten competitive interactions and put more lodgepole pine into stress thereby increasing mortality, insect and disease vulnerability, canopy and surface fuels, and accelerating succession toward subalpine fir; conversely, increasing fire could expand lodgepole pine occurrence, even when fires are large and severe; increasing insect (i.e., bark beetles) outbreaks may further acceleration toward non-host, shade-tolerant species.
Subalpine fir	Increased disturbance frequency and severity; highly variable weather and climate; decreasing snowpacks; lengthening growing seasons.	Fire exclusion has increased abundance of this species on many subalpine and upper subalpine landscapes; many current stands have high densities and trees may be stressed from competitive interactions resulting in increasing susceptibility to disturbances; increasing drought could further exacerbate competitive stress and increase mortality.	Highly vulnerable to subtle changes in climate; shade-tolerant species that is an aggressive competitor in subalpine areas; uniquely adapted to quickly occupy gaps in subalpine forest canopies; relatively intolerant of drought; unable to mature when seasonal drought is common; not adapted to disturbance, especially fire, with high mortality even after low severity fires; frequent cone crops.	Longer growing seasons and reduced snowpacks will increase regenerative success, especially in those high-elevation areas where snow historically controlled regenerative success; higher productivity in subalpine forests may increase regeneration and species densities, eventually resulting in high competitive stress making these fir stands vulnerable to high mortality and therefore less resilient; declines of the species on drier sites may result from new drought regimes reducing regeneration success; increases of the species on moister sites will result from increased regeneration and competitive advantages; fir may gain in upper subalpine and timberline environments that are controlled by snow dynamics; subalpine fir could also increase as it replaces rust- and beetle-killed whitebark pine, yet whitebark pine can also act as a nurse crop to facilitate subalpine fir establishment; increased fire would decrease fir; the future of subalpine fir depends on both fire suppression levels and climatic responses.

Table 6B.1—*Continued*.

Engelmann spruce	Increased disturbance frequency and severity; highly variable weather and climate; decreasing snowpacks; lengthening growing seasons.	Spruce is usually associated with fir in the NR; it occurs as a minor to major component of many subalpine stands and only dominates in wetland or special land types; fire exclusion has increased abundance of this species on many subalpine and upper subalpine landscapes; many current stands have high densities and trees may be stressed from competitive interactions resulting in increasing susceptibility to disturbances; increasing drought could further exacerbate competitive stress and increase mortality.	Spruce is highly susceptible to changes in climate; it is not as an aggressive competitor and often is only a minor portion of a stand; it is highly vulnerable to drought; it can quickly regenerate in severely burned microsites providing there are seed sources; highly susceptible to windthrow and wind damage.	Losses of spruce in the drier portions of its range, especially in those seasonal moist sites that will now be dry; not well adapted to fire so major declines are expected in burned areas, but these declines may be offset by increased regeneration on burned areas with mineral soil substrates; continued suppression activities may maintain spruce on the landscape but it may be at lower levels due to increased drought; it may increase in the upper subalpine when snowpacks become consistently lower and soil becomes drier thereby allowing spruce to encroach into glades, meadows, and balds.
Whitebark pine	Warming temperatures, lower snowpacks, highly variable weather, increasing fires in both intensity and severity; increasing insect and disease outbreak frequencies and severities; increase in populations of mountain pine beetles through possible univoltism shifts.	Reduced abundance due to white pine blister rust infections, mountain pine beetle outbreaks, and continued fire exclusion; survival due to cold hardiness in seedlings and saplings in frost pockets and swales.	Inability to compete with encroaching conifers due to low growth rates, moderate shade intolerance, and seed dispersal characteristics. Little to no reproduction may occur once tree densities are low; long-lived species that lasts through climate epochs.	On many upper subalpine sites there may be increased growth, larger seed crops, increased seed dispersal into increasing areas being burned due to bird-mediated dispersal providing there are adequate seed sources; lower seed germination due to warmer, drier conditions; possible loss of ectomycorrhizal associations; lack of suitable substrates (suitable soils) as species moves upslope; increased competition from wind-dispersed, shade tolerant conifers with fire exclusion; less infection due to higher temperatures and lower relative humidity, disrupting the highly variable blister rust cycle except in wave years; increased fire may provide caching habitat for nutcrackers that allow decades of development in the absence of competition from fir and spruce; losses in whitebark pine due to increased beetles, rust, and fire; may be offset by increases in growth, cone crops, and abundant regeneration in burned areas, but management actions are needed to augment natural regeneration by planting and direct seeding rust-resistant pine.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Species			
Alpine larch	Warming temperatures; longer growing seasons; smaller snowpacks; less summer water; possible summer droughts; increased fire.	Found in moist upper subalpine cove sites with abundant above and belowground moisture; exists in mixed stands of whitebark pine and sometimes subalpine fir; can form extensive stands in sub-irrigated upper subalpine areas.	Very shade intolerant; intergrades with western larch; while this species is quite sensitive to shifts in climate, it may initially increase because it may colonize upper subalpine non-forest sites quicker than other species, but the newly established individuals may be unable to survive to maturity as drought and temperatures increase, climates become more variable, and fires increase in the upper subalpine; susceptible to damage from fire.	Increased growth rates; greater ability to populate upper subalpine and treeline ecotones because of wind-aided seed dispersal and evergreen regenerative properties; increased fire may reduce many stands that historically were too wet to burn; on mesic sites, enhanced growing environment may increase competition from other more competitive, shade-tolerant conifers; lack of whitebark pine seed caching because of depressed cone crops may favor alpine larch dominance in areas that currently lack trees (e.g., treeline, subalpine balds, meadows, glades); on xeric sites, lack of summer groundwater may contribute to higher water stress and lower growth rates; years with deep droughts may kill established regeneration; alpine larch may decline in those areas with lower water availability and declining groundwater flow.
Green ash	Warming temperatures, decreasing snowpack, increase in severity and frequency of wildfires.	Domestic and native ungulate herbivory has affected both structure and composition of these communities.	Green ash has broad ecological amplitude and can survive droughty conditions, but persists optimally in moist sites; as soil moisture declines, marginal sites may become less favorable for regeneration and survival of young trees; there will probably be increased vegetative regeneration and decreased production of seedlings following fire—fire often kills green ash seed on or near the soil surface, restricting seedling recruitment to surviving seed producing trees.	Green ash may benefit from increased temperatures; seedling growth may increase with increasing soil temperatures; after increased fires, green ash has both root crown and epicormic sprouts, and both are typical following disturbances such as fire; fire may be very important in woody draws and riparian areas of the Great Plains; woody draws are long and narrow, so even though they are more moist than surrounding uplands, they can burn during frequent fires in surrounding grasslands. Low-severity fires might promote regeneration by thinning stands and stimulating sprouting (the primary response to fire); browsing pressure will likely increase with increased drought, as upland grasses and forbs desiccate and senesce earlier, or are replaced by invasive, less palatable species.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

| Cottonwood | Warming temperatures; decreasing snowpack; increase in severity and frequency of wildfires. | There has been a reduction in area due to conversion and development of floodplains; composition and structure of cottonwood forests have been altered due to changes in flow regimes; structural alteration (typically simplification) of the channel (e.g., levees, bank-armoring structures) has likely contributed to channel widening, or channel incision and loss of floodplain interaction; nonnative trees that are more drought tolerant are already present along rivers and streams in eastern Montana; increased drought stress will likely favor these species over cottonwood; additional stressors include roads, along with domestic and native ungulate browsing (particularly on young cottonwoods). | All species of cottonwood require saturated, but aerobic substrates and full sunlight to germinate and persist; any alteration of hydrologic flow regime (e.g., timing, magnitude and duration) will affect floodplain interaction and plant available water that may reduce recruitment and establishment of seedlings (cottonwoods regenerate primarily by seed); decreased streamflows and floodplain interaction may result in a shift in streamside vegetation to upland species, along with reduced growth and regeneration, and increased mortality of cottonwood; because cottonwoods are shade intolerant (require full sunlight), any conifers that establish on the drier fluvial surfaces will grow tall enough to eventually shade out the cottonwoods; as snowpacks decline and melt earlier, peakflows will be reduced and variation in discharge will decline, leading to a loss of various fluvial (depositional) surfaces along the stream, on which cottonwood germinate; the system becomes less complex; there may be fewer recruitment events; in addition, there may be a shift in timing of peakflows to earlier in the season, before cottonwood seed is viable for germination, resulting in both decreased germination and establishment of young cottonwoods; increased demand for water (additional diversions, reservoir expansions) and increased browsing pressure (adjacent upland vegetation senesces and desiccates earlier in the growing season) may also lead to a decline in cottonwood; sizes of cottonwood forests may decrease as these fluvial surfaces are less frequently inundated; there may be little to no recruitment of young cottonwoods. | Timing of flooding is critical to germination success, and establishment of young (sapling, pole) cottonwoods both diminished; this will vary based on winter snowpack, and amount and timing of snowmelt (and associated peakflows); seedlings establish on moist to wet bare mineral soil, typically on stream bars, in full sunlight; as the snowpack declines and melts earlier, there will be reduced, more stabilized flows (loss of extreme high and/or low flows) and/or a shift in timing of peakflows to earlier in the season, before cottonwood seed is viable for germination); with earlier peakflows and less discharge, germination success is diminished; increased demand for water (additional diversions, reservoir expansions) and increased browsing pressure (as adjacent upland vegetation senesces and desiccates earlier in the growing season) will also likely lead to a decline in cottonwood. |

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Vegetation types				
Dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests	Increase in temperature, causing increase in soil moisture deficits and less available water especially at lower elevation dry sites.	Increased density has put at risk increased mortality from a fire-severity standpoint, root disease a major cause of mortality in northern Idaho and western Montana.	Sensitive to increasing temperatures and increasing soil moisture deficits; this will predispose Douglas-fir to other related mortality agents such as insects and disease; this may give ponderosa pine an advantage on these settings	At lower elevation southerly aspects, expect ponderosa pine to be better able to cope with moisture deficits and disturbance such as fire, spruce budworm; less seed source due to fire size and cone production problems with spruce budworm; mesic sites expect increase in mortality due to root disease; higher elevation southerly slopes may provide increased climate suitability for Douglas-fir, whereas ponderosa pine will be favored at lower elevations; patches size will increase due to severe fire if density reductions are not implemented.
Western larch mixed-conifer forests	Increase in temperatures will likely rearrange current species associations on higher-energy slope positions	Larch forests have been reduced in extent due to successional effect from fire suppression, and preferential harvest; forest density increases have been substantial, and it now exists in uncharacteristic dense forest conditions in many areas. In northern Idaho, forest density (and productivity) was a bit denser due to warm mesic climate and deep ash capped soils. In areas once dominated in northern Idaho by western larch, western white pine, and ponderosa pine, they are now dominated by mixed grand fir and moist-site Douglas-fir forests. The spatial pattern of forest structure has been homogenized in many areas, leading to a continuous horizontal fuel profile atypical of historic landscape structure in many areas once typical of mixed-severity regime.	Larch is sensitive to changes in temperature; very sensitive to warm temperatures to establish regeneration on high energy, southerly slopes; rising temperatures and increasing soil moisture deficits will affect potential distribution and pattern of larch forests especially on high energy aspects. Increasing amount of fire will likely benefit larch as long as it is not in overly dense forest conditions with poor vigor with continuous horizontal fuel profile across landscapes.	Larch is highly vulnerable to increase in temperature and uncharacteristic fires in dense forest settings; the loss of large tree structure and larch regeneration success could be a major effect due to the current lack of heterogeneity and patch densities; this is especially true for high-energy topographic locations; increases in soil moisture deficits could retract the range of western large to more northerly slopes with deep soils; cone production could be positively affected with increasing temperatures, which could cause cone maturation to be earlier and could mean earlier fire seasons may still be timed with cone production and seed cast after fire. Adaptation ability for cone production and seeding distance and regeneration ability may be reduced if connectivity is reduced due to very large and more frequent severe fires occurring. High forest density and low landscape pattern diversity compared to HRV may put at risk medium, large, and old-growth larch stands due to increasing moisture deficits and stand replacing fire. Simplification of within- and between-patch structure due to increased fire severity and size could lead to loss of diversity and loss of important wildlife habitat such as cavity nesting habitat for birds and mammals. In northern Idaho, the change in species composition of the forest to more intolerant to shade species has resulted in a forest much more susceptible to wide spread root disease mortality. These areas involve millions of acres on which less carbon sequestration will take place given the relatively novel species composition of today's forests. Given the likely increase in soil moisture deficits in the future, root disease effects are not likely to reduce; lower tree densities of reproductively mature larch and loss of connectivity between populations will increase inbreeding depression as a result of disruption of an effective pollen cloud.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Lodgepole pine and aspen mixed conifer forests	Increasing temperatures; longer droughty periods; increasing fire occurrence, frequency, and severity; increased productivity.	Many stands of this type are succeeding to subalpine fir-spruce due to fire exclusion; aspen has been declining due to lack of fire and increasing drought; healthiest areas are in wilderness.	This type is more sensitive to management actions than climate in that continued fire exclusion will ensure their decline; this type thrives with fire and will even survive insect and disease outbreaks if fire is present on the landscape.	This cover type could expand in the future with increasing fires and warming of the subalpine; disturbances may eliminate competing conifers and facilitate serotiny-aided lodgepole pine regeneration; aspen may decline on the drier parts of its range, but could increase and make major advances into the subalpine as fires burn competing conifers and temperatures moderate creating favorable climates; if fires are too frequent, this cover type may be replaced by semi-permanent shrub-herb, but as long as fire return intervals are greater than the reproductive age, lodgepole and aspen should prevail; as fires increase, more areas in this type will be early seral, creating more heterogeneous landscapes with more patches of pine and fir mixed with aspen.
Mixed mesic white pine, cedar, hemlock grand fir forests	Increasing temperatures; more drought; more fires.	This type is limited to the northwestern portions of the Northern Rockies and much of this area has had management activities (harvest); western white pine occurrence has been severely reduced by blister rust but has shown increases in some portions of this type; unharvested stands are becoming more dense creating conditions that favor rot, insects, and disease damage.	This type includes a fire-tolerant, fast-growing, early-seral species (western white pine) with a collection of late-seral, shade-tolerant, highly competitive species so the type may actually not change in coverage as fires facilitate conversion to pine on these sites.	Western white pine may become a more dominant feature of this type; declines in cedar and hemlock are possible; moisture changes are probably not limiting on these sites as much as the dependence on ash cap soils; major gains in the type are probably not possible because of the limited distribution of ash cap soils in some areas and the decrease in moisture outside of the current type's range. Similar to other types, the distribution of seral types may be more heterogeneous due to fire, but the long period of fire exclusion might foster atypical high-severity fires that might burn entire landscapes in some areas, and this might result in homogeneous pine stands providing sufficient rust resistance and seed sources.
Whitebark pine-spruce-fir forests	Declining snowpacks; increasing fire; increasing temperatures.	This type is probably increasing from effective fire exclusion; losses in whitebark pine are successionally replaced by fir-spruce; the low-elevation spruce-fir types are becoming more dense and crowded.	This type might not be as sensitive as other more xeric sites to direct climate change impacts, because there is abundant water, and predicted increases in both regeneration and growth may actually increase its climate resilience; increasing fires may cause a shift to more early seral communities and if whitebark pine populations were not experiencing rust outbreaks, these early seral communities would probably be dominated by whitebark pine.	This type may contract in the future due to several interacting factors; whitebark pine will continue to decline due to rust and beetle outbreaks, spruce-fir forest may decline due to increased fire and reduced soil water; this site could be replaced by lodgepole-aspen in drier locations; if agencies plant and conduct restoration activities, whitebark pine could make major gains into the increasing burned areas, thereby replacing spruce-fir and limiting the contraction of this type; low-elevation spruce-fir stands are probably going to move towards the western larch/mixed conifer type because of prolonged droughts and increasing temperatures, especially after fires.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Resource concerns

Landscape heterogeneity	Increased productivity causing accelerated succession; increases in disturbance frequency and extent; highly variable drought intensity and extent; migration of species to new habitats; changes in magnitude, season, and variability of water availability.	Ninety years of fire exclusion coupled with past management activities (e.g., grazing) has reduced landscape heterogeneity.	Landscape heterogeneity is highly susceptible to subtle shifts in climate because it is the reflection of the interaction of vegetation dynamics with disturbance regimes, topography, and land use. Small changes in climate may facilitate large changes in disturbances or vegetation dynamics causing new landscape mosaics.	Increased fire across most of the NR may both increase and decrease landscape heterogeneity. Wildfires and wildland fire use fires may create patchworks of fire severity types across burned areas that will increase heterogeneity and therefore landscape resilience, but some fires may burn fire-excluded landscapes with high severities causing atypical large patches of high plant mortality that may decrease heterogeneity. While large, severely burned patches occurred in historical fires, the frequency and size of these patches may be different today. The highly variable species migration rates into areas with new climates may increase heterogeneity, but the rapidly changing climates may only facilitate generalist species thereby decreasing heterogeneity.
Timber production	Increase in temperature, causing increase in soil moisture deficits and less available water that larch need, will shift species composition to root disease prone species particularly Douglas-fir and grand fir. Higher temperatures likely to extend fire season and to reduce forest inventory on areas suitable for timber production. Some increase in productivity may occur at mid to higher elevations; however, increase in fire may reduce timber production opportunities.	Composition shift causing reduced productivity is likely in the western portion of the region on root disease-prone sites and in southerly exposures. Risk of uncharacteristic fire severity very high due to uncharacteristic high forest density which will reduce timber production opportunities, especially in dry forest areas.	Sensitivity is high in northern Idaho and southerly exposures due to increasing moisture deficits and increase in uncharacteristic disturbance such as severity and extent of fire and root disease.	Expect some increase in production at mid and higher elevations due to warming temperatures. This could be offset overall by losses due to root disease and increase in fire severity across the areas suitable for timber productions. Less production (sequestration) anticipated in northern Idaho if current species compositions are not changed.

Table 6B.1—*Continued.*

Carbon sequestration	Increased fire; increasing drought; productivity gains and losses.	Past policies of fire exclusion have created late-seral landscapes that sequester little carbon; past timber activities may have created younger stands that sequester more carbon; increasing disturbance (fire, insect, disease) has caused short-term losses in carbon sequestration.	Carbon sequestration is very sensitive to climate change impacts on vegetation and disturbance. Rates of carbon sequestration are going to largely be dependent on the rate of burning in the future and the gains and losses of productivity; productivity gains and losses need to be evaluated at large spatial and temporal scales to understand future carbon dynamics.	Fire exclusion will tend to push most ecosystems into later successional stages where sequestration rates are minimal; burning from controlled and uncontrolled wildfires and prescribed burning will cause short-term losses but the high productivity of the developing early-seral stands may increase sequestration for decades; sites that were historically dry will probably experience decreases in production and carbon sequestration in the future, and mesic sites with abundant water (e.g., subalpine, upper subalpine) may experience increases in productivity.

Table 6B.2—Risk assessment and vulnerability ratings for species, vegetation types, and resources of concern.

Habitat, ecosystem function, or species	Adaptive capacity	Exposure	Risk assessment magnitude of effects	Risk assessment likelihood of effects	Northern Rockies vulnerability ranking
Species					
Limber pine	Intermediate adaptive strategy largely driving by timing of pollen cloud dispersal (elevational effect); highly adapted to populating the burned areas predicted for the future due both to wind and corvid-mediated dispersal; poor competitor on more productive sites, if future fires are larger and more severe, there will be less competition from other subalpine conifers; possesses moderate genetic variation (capacity) in blister rust resistance; major gene resistance to blister rust has not been identified in several studies of interior populations, warmer temperatures favor expansion of alternate host species (currant, lousewort and Indian paintbrush); little to no opportunity to hybridize with western white pine due to non-overlapping species distributions, cannot hybridize with whitebark pine; very high risk of loss of disjunct and isolated populations due to genetic drift, ineffective pollen cloud, and substrate availability.	High	Moderate	Moderate	15
Ponderosa pine var. *scopulorum*	Generalist adaptive strategy; high phenotypic plasticity; better adapted to drought.	Moderate	Low	Low	17
Ponderosa pine var. *ponderosa*	Intermediate adaptive strategy at low to mid elevations Specialist adaptive strategy at higher elevations; moderate phenotypic plasticity; less adapted to drought.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	16
Douglas-fir	Specialist adaptive strategy at low to mid elevations, generalist adaptive strategy at higher elevations; no opportunity of hybridizing with coastal Douglas-fir subspecies because distributions do not overlap; highly adaptive to a large range of moisture and temperature gradients. In moist forest settings, Douglas-fir is limited to a relatively short-lived seral species due to the influence of two root diseases; With warming temperatures and a possible decrease in summer moisture drought conditions, Rocky Mountain Douglas-fir may increase along with an increase in associated stressors; vulnerable to uncharacteristic fire behavior and severity due to increased densities; increase in susceptibility to Douglas-fir bark beetle mortality uncertain but probably an increased activity; moderate change in species distribution expected away from driest margins. High potential for natural regeneration failure due to reduced seed source from large wildfires and difficult micro climate especially on southerly exposures at lower elevations with increasing moisture deficits expected. On moist sites (mixed mesic forest), increases in root disease mortality due to increasing moisture stress on sites where western white pine, ponderosa pine and larch occurred historically. Less carbon sequestration expected in Douglas-fir in those forest setting; there is a high likelihood of change in local distribution due to moisture deficits and fire severity and a high probability of carbon sequestration in northern Idaho if Douglas-fir remains a dominant species in mixed mesic forests.	High	High	High	5

Table 6B.2—*Continued.*

Species	Description				
Western larch	Intermediate adaptive strategy; low capacity to regenerate with increasing moisture deficits on higher energy slopes. Larch is adapted to warm-moist and cool-moist settings. It does best on northerly cool aspects. It is a prolific light seed-cone producer but in sporadic years. High adaptive capacity on lower-energy slopes; wind disperses seed further than many associates, so it can take advantage of newly opened areas due to harvest or fire as an early seral species; larch has few insect and disease stressors unlike associates and is adapted to fairly frequent mixed-severity fire; it can be a dominant, long-lived seral tree species on lower-energy slopes; potential serious reductions in extent of larch on higher energy-slope positions.	High	High	Very High	4
Western white pine	Generalist adaptive strategy, high phenotypic plasticity; cold hardiness may influence distribution; lack of abundance may influence its role in the moist forest ecosystem; especially adapted to future climates in the mesic regions of the NR; there could be major expansions into historical ranges and the subalpine as rust resistance increases in western white pine populations.	Moderate	High	High	3
Quaking aspen	Aspen has the widest distribution of all trees in this report; it is circumpolar across multiple continents; it is highly susceptible to many insect and diseases; with a warmer climate, gypsy moth may have greater impacts and cause possible mortality; aspen distribution may shift upslope or to northeast (cooler, moister) aspects if drought and repeated fire causes mortality on the warmer, drier sites. Riparian aspen communities will likely persist or increase in extent, particularly if the sites remain moist throughout the growing season and increased fire burns the riparian zone, killing conifers. Fire will favor aspen, but prolonged drought will cause mortality. Younger aged stands (<40 years) may be more resilient to drought; long-distance dispersal by light seed may enhance its ability to colonize recently burned areas; this will vary based on winter snowpack, and amount and time of melt (and associated peakflows) but only if there is sufficient moisture.	Moderate	Moderate	High	14
Grand fir	Generalist adaptive strategy, only differences are racial (blue and green race); increases in disease, insects, and fire may reduce populations.	Low	Moderate	Moderate	8
Western redcedar	Generalist adaptive strategy; high phenotypic plasticity; cold/warm cycles early in spring or winter may cause red belt.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	6
Western hemlock	Inferred or putative generalist adaptive strategy; information limited concerning western hemlock; susceptible to early frost.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	7
Lodgepole pine	Specialist adaptive strategy; especially adapted to occupy post-burn landscapes that may be more common in the future; highly susceptible to increasing bark beetle outbreaks, especially on landscapes dominated by mature individuals. Varying levels of serotiny allow the species to occupy new upper subalpine environments while also regenerating after fire; its intolerance of deep droughts may reduce its capacity along the xeric edges of its current range; Heterogeneity across broad landscapes may mitigate adverse impacts from fire and mountain pine beetles.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	11

Table 6B.2—*Continued.*

Species				
Subalpine fir	Generalist adaptive strategy; increasing fire will reduce subalpine fir populations to historical levels; fire exclusion may foster subalpine fir encroachment into larch, lodgepole pine, and whitebark pine late seral stands; increasing subalpine temperatures may increase fir growth and accelerate succession toward fir-dominated stands, however, as competition increases, warmer climate may facilitate increased mortality from insects and disease as trees become more stressed from high stem densities.	Low	Moderate	10
Engelmann spruce	Intermediate adaptive strategy with opportunities to hybridize with white spruce; hybrids may be more suited to future climates, and hybridization is another key driver in speciation.	Low	Moderate	9
Mountain hemlock	Increasing fire will reduce populations, especially where trees are smaller or in dense stands; potential to move to higher elevations; sensitive to low soil moisture in drier locations. Hybridizes with western hemlock to some extent. Should be able to persist across the landscape, perhaps in more scattered patches.	Low	Moderate	12
Whitebark pine	Highly adapted to populating the greater burned areas predicted for the future due to bird-mediated dispersal; if future fires are larger, more severe, there will be less competition from other subalpine conifers; ability to survive fire better than its competitors; moderately shade tolerant so it can exist in competition with limited cone crops; delayed germination adaptation may mitigate warmer, drier conditions; possesses moderate to high genetic variation (capacity) in adaptive traits (blister rust resistance, late winter cold hardiness and drought tolerance), as well as phenotypic plasticity to respond to climate change. Warmer temperatures favor expansion of alternate host species (currant, lousewort and Indian paintbrush). No opportunity to hybridize with another stone pine and cannot cross with western white or limber pine where species distributions overlap; high risk and loss of disjunct and isolated populations; more drought tolerant than its associates; long distance bird dispersal will increase regeneration potential as more of the landscape burns.	High	High	2
Alpine larch	Its specific habitat requirements may make it difficult for alpine larch to remain on the landscape over the long term; short-term gains in alpine larch encroachment in upper subalpine and treeline glades and meadows may be lost in those years with deep drought; effective, long-term establishment of alpine larch may depend on the ability of seed dispersal to find those areas with sufficient moisture to maintain the species.	High	High	1

Table 6B.2—*Continued.*

Green ash	Since green ash communities are already fire adapted (most associated species display some fire tolerance and/or postfire sprouting ability), increased fire will likely not affect most of the moister communities. However, those communities associated with either ephemeral drainages (e.g., woody draws) or moist upland microsites (e.g., northeast-facing depressions) may experience more drought stress as snowpack declines and melts sooner, and regeneration may decrease, eventually resulting in loss of those communities.	Moderate	Moderate	High	18
Cottonwood	Plains cottonwood may be more persistent due to greater plant available soil water in the unsaturated zone (as a result of finer textured soils). Black and narrowleaf cottonwood typically occur in coarser substrate, which will become more droughty as flows are lower and recede earlier than in the past, or are attenuated due to diversions. Seedling and sapling mortality may increase in these species. Plains cottonwood regeneration occurs with episodic flooding, whereas black and narrowleaf cottonwood typically regenerate with 1–3 year bankfull flow return intervals; therefore, plains cottonwood will likely be more adapted to irregular flows (in timing, magnitude and duration) that may occur with climate change.	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	13
Vegetation Types					
Dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests	Douglas-fir highly adaptive to a large range of moisture and temperature gradients. Ponderosa pine adapted to settings that are moisture limited and can grow well where moisture is less limited such in association currently with grand fir; exposure of Douglas-fir to increasing moisture deficits may change composition to more ponderosa pine; increasing moisture deficits will give ponderosa pine the advantage on dry forest settings due to fire, insect and disease.	High	High	High	3
Western larch mixed conifer forests	Larch forests thrive on northerly cool aspects locations in the Region; it is a prolific light seed cone producer but in sporadic years, may seed longer distances than many associates, so can take advance of newly opened areas due to harvest or fire as an early-seral species; larch has few insect and disease stressors unlike associates, and is adapted to fairly frequent fire; it can out-dominate long lived seral tree species, and due to the large diameters it can attain, is important to many cavity nesters as habitat when it reaches ages over 200 years in patches large enough and connected enough to provide functional habitat; exposure on southerly aspects; warming temperatures and possible decreased summer moisture and associated drought may decrease distribution of western larch, which could mean that it will retreat to low-energy northerly slope settings; distribution of larch in patches on high-energy slopes would be reduced significantly; serious reduction in extent of larch in patches on higher-energy slope positions in the long run.	High	High	Very High	2

Table 6B.2—*Continued.*

Lodgepole pine and aspen mixed conifer forests	This type has the capacity to absorb climate changes and either remain constant or expand into the upper subalpine; losses in aspen due to drought may be offset by gains in lodgepole pine, especially after fire; there may be long-term migrations of this type to higher elevation areas with increasing disturbance.	High	Moderate	High	4
Mixed mesic white pine, cedar, hemlock grand fir forests	This type may have the capacity to remain intact with changing climates; it may not be able to expand due to ash cap; increasing fire will favor western white pine, and fire exclusion will favor the shade-tolerant species; drier sites may see grand fir becoming more common than cedar or hemlock.	Low	Moderate	Low	5
Whitebark pine-spruce-fir forests	This type may have the capacity to respond favorably to changes in climate, but depressed populations of whitebark pine coupled with increasing fire may result in short-term losses of this type; however, if rust-resistant whitebark pine are planted and restoration activities are implemented, whitebark pine can easily dominate on these sites, especially if fires are large and severe, and whitebark pine may be able to make advances into the treeline; continued fire exclusion will probably aid in keeping this type somewhat static, and it may encroach on lower treeline sites if no fires are allowed	High	High	High	1
Resource Concerns					
Landscape heterogeneity	Because heterogeneity is an expression of disturbance, vegetation, and climate interactions, it depends on other factors to determine its adaptive capacity.	High	Moderate	High	NA
Timber production	Productivity could increase at higher elevation sites. Productivity in northern Idaho will likely decrease on southerly aspects due to root disease reducing productivity of alternate species unless western larch, ponderosa pine and western white pine are aggressively restored; high exposure due to species composition changes and risk to increased disturbance.	High	Moderate to high in north Idaho	High in north Idaho	NA
Carbon sequestration	All ecosystems have an inherent capability to store carbon, and the rate and capacity of carbon storage depends on plant productivity and disturbance; maximum levels of productivity depend on climate, whereas the instantaneous levels of productivity depend on successional stage or time since disturbance. Modeling studies have shown that many areas will increase productivity and increase sequestration rate and magnitude; the delicate balance between disturbance and climate coupled with land management will dictate where sequestration will increase and where it will decrease; it is important to know that over the long term (centuries), sequestration is near zero (disturbance and respiration losses are balanced by productivity gains).	High	High	Moderate	NA

Appendix 6C—Adaptation Options for Forest Vegetation in the Northern Rockies.

The following tables describe climate change sensitivities and adaptation strategies and tactics for forest vegetation, developed in a series of workshops as a part of the Northern Rockies Adaptation Partnership. Tables are organized by subregion within the Northern Rockies. See Chapter 6 for summary tables and discussion of adaptation options for forest vegetation.

Table 6C.1—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Aspen will be lost with increasing drought and lack of disturbance.			
Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase aspen populations.			
Strategy objective: Increase aspen populations.			
	Specific tactic – A	**Specific tactic – B**	**Specific tactic – C**	**Specific tactic – D**
Tactic	Actively decrease impact of ungulate browsing through an increase in predation of ungulates.	Increase fire disturbance.	Develop techniques to successfully artificially regenerate aspen; improve drought tolerance with genetic selection of drought-tolerant mother trees and identify and target areas most likely to successfully regenerate or provide favorable planting habitat.	Protect existing aspen populations and regeneration treatments from browsing.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High where ungulates concentrate			
Implementation urgency				
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)				
Opportunities for implementation				
Cost				
Barriers to implementation				

Table 6C.2—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Known unknowns and unknown unknowns.		
Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge and implement adaptive management.		
Strategy objective: Increase knowledge.		
Specific tactic – A	**Specific tactic – B**	**Specific tactic – C**
Tactic Monitor blister rust resistance within planted white pine stands, and try to understand the relationship between infection rates and climatic/weather drivers like fog.	Identify other resource management goals (not directly related to stand structure and composition) that may modify management strategies for forest vegetation, such as water yield, snow retention, and wildlife habitat.	Support the adaptive management research framework through a partnership between Region 1 and Rocky Mountain Research Station to evaluate management treatments and how they contribute to resiliency. Develop monitoring framework that will be consistently be implemented so that long-term change can be captured.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)		
Implementation urgency		
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)		
Opportunities for implementation		
Cost		
Barriers to implementation		

Table 6C.3—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Potential shifts in lodgepole pine ecosystems with changing climate.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote resilience by maintaining age-size class composition at the stand and landscape level.

Strategy objective: Maintain lodgepole pine on the landscape.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Identify areas appropriate for wildfire use and increase flexibility in how we manage fire; emphasize modified suppression and resource benefit fire; allow moderate season fires to burn.	Proactively treat stands with prescribed fire to reduce fire and insect mortality and increase individual tree vigor.	Implement silvicultural mechanical treatments.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Other unintended consequences could lower it from high to moderate.	Highly variable depending on scale, district expertise, and landscape position.	Highly variable depending on scale.
Implementation urgency	High/near term		
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Implement Wildland Fire Decision Support System forest wide		
Opportunities for implementation	Highly dependent on other resource concerns and political and social issues.		
Cost			
Barriers to implementation	Integration between forest and fire team	Prescribed fire air quality restrictions limit what we can do; other resource constraints (e.g., lynx)	Other resource constraints (e.g., thermal cover, lynx habitat, marten and wolverine)

Table 6C.4—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Homogenization of the ponderosa forest type across the landscape resulting in: increase in density causing associated increase in risk of severe stand replacing fires; increased risk of mortality from drought; loss of ponderosa pine on stressful sites; loss of large ponderosa pine and large ponderosa snag recruitment; and reduced water yield.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Decrease the density within ponderosa pine-Douglas-fir stands, and increase structural.

Strategy Objective: Develop resilience to fire, moisture and stress.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Reduce stand density with thinning, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use, with density and structural goals based on past and predicted future conditions.	Promote age class and structural diversity across the landscape, through re-generation harvest, thinning, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use.	Monitor establishment, survival and development of ponderosa by age class and in different conditions (e.g., aspect, heat load and soil moisture) using Forest Inventory and Analysis data and project-level stocking exams.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Thinning = high, prescribed fire = high, wildland fire use = moderate	High where implemented	High
Implementation urgency	Near-term in wildland urban interface areas. Mid term elsewhere	Near-term in wildland urban interface areas. Mid term elsewhere	Long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Ponderosa pine – Douglas-fir forests	Harvesting and thinning on non-reserved lands; prescribed fire and managed wildfire where approved.	Ponderosa pine – Douglas-fir forests
Opportunities for implementation	Work with collaborators on private and state land to include the wildland urban interface; work with other organizations to get funding and do work on private lands.	Work with collaborators on private and state land to include the wildland urban interface; work with other organizations to get funding and do work on private lands.	Forest Inventory and Analysis; restoration and resiliency report; forest regeneration reports; adapting Common Stand Exam protocols.
Cost	Varies by treatment	Varies by treatment	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation		Some: cost, litigation	None

Table 6C.5—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Changing moisture regimes with changing climate.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Replace plant association group-habitat typing with an index based on biophysical variables.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge; plant associations are not expected to remain the same under climate change.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Identify a set of biophysical predictors related to habitat types, site productivity, vegetation composition, and structure. Possible predictors include landform, soil depth, texture, type (specifically ash cap soil), actual evapotranspiration, potential evapotranspiration and water balance deficit.	Predict site productivity based on biophysical predictors; make concept operationally implementable so it can be used to aid in planting decisions, and aid understanding of long-term effects of management and long-term goals for a site.	Project into the future based on climate change models.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)			
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 6C.6—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Subalpine forest shifts as a result of climate change.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Monitor and detect change through measurement of seedling survival, species composition and mortality of mature trees.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge on climate-induced subalpine forest shifts.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B
Tactic	Install and analyze additional plots where trend information is needed over time; more intensified grid plots could also be installed.	Initiate the use of Forest Inventory and Analysis plot information.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Moderate to low, depending on how fast changes are occurring
Implementation urgency	High—need to know now	Already part of regional strategy
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Target areas of risk where we expect to see changes, focusing on disturbance areas; in especially sensitive forests such as whitebark pine	Large enough geographic area that information can be statistically meaningful
Opportunities for implementation	Very few because of lack of funding, but protocols and analysis tools already established	Already paid for, and existing expertise and knowledge are available
Cost	High based on information needs; many plots needed	Minimal
Barriers to implementation	Need training and oversight of data collection; need to have consistent, replicable protocol in order to be able to detect change; lack of immediate and long term funding	Difficult to get data updates in a timely manner; getting non-Forest Service data is difficult

Table 6C.6 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Subalpine forest shifts as a result of climate change.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Monitor and detect change through measurement of seedling survival, species composition and mortality of mature trees.

Strategy Objective: Increase knowledge on climate-induced subalpine forest shifts.

	Specific Tactic – C	Specific Tactic – D
Tactic	Expand reforestation monitoring to include additional monitoring and different electronic formats.	Implement pre- and post-treatment monitoring over time to be able to determine if treatments are meeting objectives.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High
Implementation urgency	High	Moderate
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Everywhere we are planting sensitive vegetation types	Treated areas
Opportunities for implementation	Often doing it anyway, and methodology is already in place; need to make sure we are collecting right data in the right electronic format	Existing systems
Cost	Low unless data collection becomes arduous	Moderate to high; depends on number of plots, length of time to monitor, what data is being collected; less expensive than intensifying grid across landscape.
Barriers to implementation	Need to establish protocols, conduct training, identify a location for data storage and determine who would do the analysis; lack of immediate and long-term funding	Lack of immediate and long-term funding; lack of training and oversight; lack of treatments to monitor

Table 6C.7—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Subalpine forest shifts as a result of climate change.		
Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote resilience of subalpine forests to climate-induced shifts.		
Strategy objective: Create conditions that will be resilient to perturbations.		
	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B
Tactic	Identify areas appropriate for managed wildfire; increase the flexibility of how we manage fire and de-emphasize suppression.	Artificially regenerate seedlings with higher levels of rust resistance than the natural population.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Other unintended consequences could lower it from high to moderate	High at site scale; low across large landscapes
Implementation urgency	High, near term	High, near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Highly dependent on other resource concerns and political and social issues; problematic in areas with mixed ownership	Have process established to develop rust-resistant seedlings; coordinate with tree improvement and nursery to continue to improve rust-resistant sources
Opportunities for implementation	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities
Cost	Inexpensive	Moderately expensive; cost of seedlings high
Barriers to implementation	Integration between forest and fire team; sociopolitical environment and backlash; lack of public support; decline in air quality	Access; cost; unable to plant in wilderness or research natural areas

Table 6C.7 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Subalpine forest shifts as a result of climate change.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Promote resilience of subalpine forests to climate-induced shifts.

Strategy Objective: Create conditions that will be resilient to perturbations.

	Specific Tactic – C	Specific Tactic – D	Specific Tactic – E
Tactic	Proactively treat with prescribed burn or mechanical thinning to reduce the risk of fire and insect mortality; increase individual tree vigor to establish the desired species composition and establish appropriate patch sizes.	Implement a broad review of most current literature, develop a regional library, and implement a climate change information system.	Educate the public on the need to increase resilience and develop a cohesive broader message.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Highly variable depending on scale, district expertise, and landscape position	High if used	Low
Implementation urgency	Moderate-mid term	High, near term	Low, long term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)		All	National
Opportunities for implementation	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities		National
Cost	Low to high depending on the combination of treatment, objectives, and local conditions		
Barriers to implementation	This type is not far from historic conditions, so there is not as much reason to restore; more complex and difficult to access; window for treatment is narrow		

Table 6C.8—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Homogenization of the larch forest type across the landscape, resulting in increased density and associated increase risk of severe stand-replacing fires, increased risk of mortality from drought, loss of western larch on stressful sites, loss of large larch, large larch snag recruitment across the landscape, and reduced water yield.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Decrease density within stands, and increase structural diversity across the landscape.

Strategy objective: Develop resilience to fire and moisture stress.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Reduce density with thinning, prescribed fire, and wildland fire use.	Promote age class and structural diversity across the landscape, through regeneration harvest, thinning, prescribed fire and managed wildfire.	Monitor establishment and survival of western larch by age class across different aspects/heat load/soil moisture. Use Forest Inventory and Analysis data to capture regeneration success by topographical position.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Thinning = high; prescribed fire = moderate; wildland fire use = low when first implemented, moderate over time	High where implemented	High
Implementation urgency			
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)			
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 6C.8 (cont.)—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Homogenization of the larch forest type across the landscape resulting in increased density and associated increase risk of severe stand-replacing fires, increased risk of mortality from drought, loss of western larch on stressful sites, loss of large larch, large larch snag recruitment across the landscape, and reduced water yield.

Adaptation Strategy / Approach: Decrease density within stands, and increase structural diversity across the landscape.

Strategy Objective: Develop resilience to fire and moisture stress.

	Specific Tactic – D	Specific Tactic – E
Tactic	Prioritize management for larch on landscape facets where monitoring indicates it is going to persist (e.g., on north aspects, but not southern aspects, or by habitat types).	Maintain and promote large diameter western larch across the landscape, so that large diameter snags, larch seed sources, and wildlife habitats are also maintained.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High if A and B are implemented
Implementation urgency		
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)		
Opportunities for implementation		
Cost		
Barriers to implementation		

Table 6C.9—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: High density of mixed-mesic white pine, cedar, hemlock, grand fir forests stands, leading to lower carbon sequestration because of lower density of some species (western larch, ponderosa pine and western white pine) and increased shade-tolerant species. High densities increase susceptibility to wildfire. Heart rot and root rot in cedar and hemlock decreases carbon sequestration and timber values.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote diversity in species composition and structure at multiple spatial scales (within stands and across the landscape).

Strategy objective: Promote resilience and increase carbon sequestration.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C	Specific tactic – D	Specific tactic – E
Tactic	Conduct regeneration harvest and planting to promote shade-intolerant tree species (western larch, ponderosa pine, white pine, birch) and rust-resistant white pine.	Promote western white pine.	Conduct density management thinning to retain shade-intolerant trees and develop large trees across the landscape; prune younger western white pine to promote resistance to blister rust.	Increase knowledge on how the different tree densities and species compositions within this group function as habitats and how the mosaic of stands influences connectivity for wildlife.	Develop a site-related prioritization approach for implementing management tactics.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High	Unknown	High
Implementation urgency	Mid-term				
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Within this vegetation type				
Opportunities for implementation					
Cost					
Barriers to implementation					

Table 6C.10—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Central Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Whitebark pine mortality from increased mountain pine beetle outbreaks, fire, and blister rust and shifts/loss of site conditions that support whitebark pine.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Restore whitebark pine.

Strategy objective: Increase rust-resistant regeneration and cone-bearing trees.

	Specific Tactic – A	Specific Tactic – B
Tactic	Assess condition; save seed sources; grow rust-resistant seedlings; collect seed; plant seedlings; monitor activities; prioritize treatment; and conduct research (mirror Keane range-wide restoration strategy).	Identify sites that are likely to not be as heavily affected (refugia), and focus on those sites for restoration.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)		
Implementation urgency		
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)		
Opportunities for implementation		
Cost	Cost of planting is high	
Barriers to implementation	The majority of whitebark pine is in wilderness or other protected areas, or in roadless areas with limited access. Thus, the ability to treat directly is limited. Need comprehensive long-term planning and commitment at multiple levels.	

Table 6C.11—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased frequency of disturbance, drought, browsing, and livestock trampling may reduce vigor and extent of aspen, even given the upward trend of aspen in pine forests that have extensive beetle-caused mortality.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Maintain and restore/promote the health and vigor of clones (specific key stressors include repeat disturbance, conifer competition, browse/trampling).

Strategy objective: Maintain the current population trend, promote resilience, reduce stressors/threats, and increase knowledge.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Actively manage ungulates during regeneration phase through slash barriers, increase in hunting pressure, grazing management, and salt block placement.	Implement conifer removal on multiple scales and through hand and commercial treatments.	Monitor extent and condition of aspen clones to determine the effect of disturbance frequency on aspen survival, effects of sudden aspen decline, and incidence of new clones; potentially implement strategic protection measures for specific clones.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Highest	Moderate to high
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Wherever aspen regeneration prescriptions are applied	Wherever aspen occurs outside of protected areas	Wherever aspen occurs
Opportunities for implementation	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, permittees	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation	Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Cost	Varies by tool Expensive – fencing Inexpensive – grazing management	Inexpensive	Moderate
Barriers to implementation	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority, permittees	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority	None

Table 6C.12—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Ability of Douglas-fir to develop stands with large, old-growth structure in face of fire, drought, beetles, spruce budworm and limited cone production.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Establish age-class and structural diversity to promote landscape heterogeneity, which could provide appropriate amounts and distribution of large tree structure.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, and reduce stressors and threats.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C	Specific tactic – D
Tactic	Manage stand-scale disturbance through thinning, prescribed fire, and managed wildfire to accelerate the development of large tree structure.	Manage landscape disturbance to achieve heterogeneity in structural diversity.	Identify critical stands with high value and large diameter for direct protection from fire and insects; protect using pesticides, stand manipulation, fire protection, and windthrow monitoring.	Improve cone production in key seed collection areas through fertilizer, pesticides and stand manipulation.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High – thinning Moderate – fire	Moderate–high	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near–mid term	Near–mid term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Throughout species range	Throughout species range	Throughout species range	Throughout species range
Opportunities for implementation	Forest plan; restoration committees	Forest plan; restoration committees	Coordinate with wildlife priorities	Inland Empire Cooperatives
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive–moderate
Barriers to implementation	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority	None	None

Table 6C.13—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Limited ability of limber pine to persist and regenerate in the face of frequent fires, blister rust, and mountain pine beetle; challenges include uncertainties in genetic variation and geographically disjunct populations.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Maintain viable populations of limber pine in suitable environments.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce impacts of stressors/threat, increase knowledge, engage coordination.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Address information gaps on current location, potential habitat and stand condition through coordination with other groups.	Address genetic data gaps by establishing a breeding program that includes rust-resistance screening, seed zones and drought tolerance through coordination with other groups.	Conduct stand treatments to promote resilience over a wide geographic area; protect remaining trees with pesticides and stand thinning, and establish a planting program to achieve scattered, mature individuals.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High at local stand scale; Moderate at population level
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term: improve resilience of existing stands; Mid term: planting (answer genetic questions first)
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Forest plans, Region 1 broad-scale monitoring strategy	Inland Empire Cooperatives	Forest plans, restoration committees
Opportunities for implementation	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	None	None	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority

Table 6C.14—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Eastern Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Small, fragmented populations of eastside ponderosa pine are vulnerable to loss of regeneration capability following repeated disturbance, especially in ecotone sites.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Maintain genetic diversity, population viability, increase resilience, and promote big-tree structure.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience, reduce stressors/threats, and facilitate transition.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Manage stand-scale disturbance through thinning, prescribed fire, and managed wildfire to accelerate the development of large tree structure and facilitate the transition to a savanna ecotone.	Develop seed collection and reforestation strategies to address potential loss of genetic variability due to disjunct populations and shortened mean return interval of severe disturbances.	Identify critical stands with high value and large diameter for direct protection from fire and insects; protect with pesticides, stand manipulation and fire protection.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Low-elevation ecotones; suitable ponderosa pine sites	Low-elevation ecotones; suitable ponderosa pine sites	Low-elevation ecotones; suitable ponderosa pine sites
Opportunities for implementation	Forest management; coordination with fire management	Forest management; Inland Empire Cooperatives	Forest management; wildlife habitat priorities
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive-moderate	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority	None	Some – litigation, scale and timing to be effective (staffing capacity), priority

Table 6C.15—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Climate change forces us to work across boundaries. Stressors cross boundaries. The public expects coordination.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Work across jurisdictions at larger scales.

Strategy objective: Encourage coordination.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Align budgets/priorities for program of work for neighboring lands (e.g., constrained budget forces cooperation for invasive species strategies).	Communicate about adjacent projects and coordinate on the ground; develop memorandum of understanding for adjacent projects.	Preserve roads, trails, and access despite increased fire and flood events.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High (if we succeed)	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Greater Yellowstone Area	Greater Yellowstone Area	Greater Yellowstone Area
Opportunities for implementation	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, universities
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Moderately expensive
Barriers to implementation	Major barriers: politics	Some barriers: politics, time, lack of priority, distance, travel budget	Major barriers: shrinking budget, staffing

Table 6C.16—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased fire and disease, and interactions with the wildland-urban interface.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase the resilience of forest stands to disturbance, and protect people from potential risks of increased fire.

Strategy objective: Manage fires in a way to protect the wildland-urban interface.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C	Specific tactic – D
Tactic	Create buffer zones between fire and residential development, and implement thinning.	Influence development zoning in high risk areas with local government and insurance companies.	Increase forest diversity through heterogeneity of species composition, age class and structure.	Promote education and communication about responsible land owner tactics.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate – intense fires cross boundaries, having unintended impacts on resources and cultural landscapes	High (if we can do it)	Moderate – large fires, climate change	Moderate
Implementation urgency				
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)				
Opportunities for implementation				
Cost				
Barriers to implementation	Land designation			

Table 6C.17—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Greater Yellowstone Area subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased impacts from fire, insects, disease, climate, and increased competition.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote resilient whitebark pine communities.

Strategy objective: Maintain whitebark pine on the landscape.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C	Specific tactic – D
Tactic	Actively remove other dominant tree species, such as lodgepole pine, spruce, and fir.	Prioritize management for populations with high survival potential.	Implement a variety of management strategies/options, such as control sites, fire management, and possibly planting at lower elevations.	Replant screened, grafted, genetically-selected seedlings to promote blister rust resistance.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Unknown – Not sure if it will work. See barriers.	Moderate – uncertainty, models not considering all factors	Moderate – see barriers	Moderate – see barriers
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term to long term – more information needed	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Where we have access; road, management designation	Greater Yellowstone Area	Greater Yellowstone Area	Where we have access and permission
Opportunities for implementation	Overall whitebark pine strategies, investment strategy niches, Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC)	Overall whitebark pine strategies, investment strategy niches, GYCC	Overall whitebark pine strategies, investment strategy niches, GYCC	We already have the trees and selected planting locations
Cost	Moderately expensive	Inexpensive	Expensive	Moderately expensive
Barriers to implementation	Major barriers: limited by wilderness designations, road access, litigation, compliance	Major barriers: limited by wilderness designations, road access, litigation, cost	Major barriers: limited by wilderness designations, road access, litigation, cost	Some barriers: ideal places, access, cost

Table 6C.18—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased impacts from moisture stress and fire.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Actively reduce density and maintain low densities.

Strategy objective: Promote forest resilience through density management.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific Tactic – C
Tactic	Implement pre-commercial and commercial thinning.	Conduct prescribed fires.	Influence stand density with planting.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Moderate – depends on stand conditions	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Be cautious with root disease-sensitive species and sites	Applied to maintain fire-tolerant conifer species and maintaining structure	Apply where opportunities for thinning are negligible due to species or stand condition
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	Some, barriers greater for Federal lands. There are thinning restrictions due to lynx.	Some, barriers greater for Federal lands	Some, barriers greater for Federal lands

Table 6C.19—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increased frequency and scale of disturbances such as fire and drought.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote disturbance-resilient species, such as ponderosa pine, western larch, western white pine, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine.

Strategy objective: Promote forest vegetation resilience to disturbance.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Promote thinning to favor disturbance-resilient species.	Promote planting of disturbance-resilient species.	Promote resilient species with prescribed fire and/or natural fire use.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Western larch and western white pine on moist sites, ponderosa pine on dry sites, Douglas-fir on extremely dry sites, and lodgepole pine on harsh, difficult-to-regenerate sites	Western larch and western white pine on moist sites, ponderosa pine on dry sites, Douglas-fir on extremely dry sites, and lodgepole pine on harsh, difficult-to-regenerate sites	Western larch and western white pine on moist sites, ponderosa pine on dry sites, Douglas-fir on extremely dry sites, and lodgepole pine on harsh, difficult-to-regenerate sites
Opportunities for implementation	Any place management is feasible and allowed	Any place management is feasible and allowed	Any place management is feasible and allowed
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	Scale will vary because of budgetary limitations	Scale will vary because of budgetary limitations	Scale will vary because of budgetary limitations. Natural fire may not occur where or when manageable.

Table 6C.20—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing disturbance, moisture deficits, stress due to densities, and longer growing seasons.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge on current issues, strategies, and future goals.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge for agency land managers and stakeholders.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Address definition of connectivity, including species guilds and scale, and identify existing and historical conditions in order to develop desired conditions.	Share knowledge on tree species migration at fine and broad scales, and track regeneration success, species distribution at the fine scale, species transfer zones, habitat type, and soil type.	Share knowledge on fire regimes in spruce-fir forests and increase collaboration with the Rocky Mountain Research Station.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Landscape	Landscape	Landscape
Opportunities for implementation	All lands: Federal, State, communities, and universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, and universities	All lands: Federal, State, communities, and universities
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Moderately expensive
Barriers to implementation	Funding, lack of understanding	Funding, lack of understanding	Funding, lack of understanding

Table 6C.21—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing disturbance, moisture deficits, stress due to densities, and longer growing seasons.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge on current issues, strategies, and future goals.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge for agency land managers and stakeholders.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Address how to manage conservation areas, such as research natural areas and roadless wilderness. Promote the important components within these areas and desired conditions.	Communicate the accurate mapping of important species such as whitebark pine.	Address the desired conditions at the landscape level and also for important wildlife habitat by tackling the "how much is enough?" question.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	High	High
Implementation urgency	Mid term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Program level	Program and national forest level	Program and national forest level
Opportunities for implementation	Rocky Mountain Research Station, The Nature Conservancy, Wilderness Society, universities, tribes, conservation partners	Universities, conservation partners, state heritage programs	Rocky Mountain Research Station, universities, tribes, conservation partners
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Barriers to implementation	Time	Time	Time

Table 6C.22—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing disturbance, moisture deficits, stress due to densities, and longer growing seasons.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase knowledge on current issues, strategies, and future goals.

Strategy objective: Increase knowledge for agency land managers and stakeholders.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B
Tactic	Increase awareness on the role of root disease in carbon sequestration by publishing root disease data.	Communicate the need for improved integration between wildlife managers and forest ecologists, and between research and management. Conduct an annual meeting with Rocky Mountain Research Station on management needs for research.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)		High
Implementation urgency		Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)		Program/Region 1 and Rocky Mountain Research Station
Opportunities for implementation		Program/Region 1 and Rocky Mountain Research Station
Cost		Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation		Lack of time and impetus to do it

Table 6C.23—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing disturbance, moisture deficits, stress due to densities, and longer growing seasons.

Adaptation strategy/spproach: Promote resilience in forest vegetation.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience by reducing stressors and facilitating transitions.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Reduce forest densities to increase fire resilience in lodgepole pine and whitebark pine sites with pre-commercial thinning.	Reduce forest densities to increase fire resilience in lodgepole pine and whitebark pine sites with commercial thinning.	Promote appropriate density conditions and landscape heterogeneity within mapped lynx habitat in spruce-fir forests.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Higher elevations	Higher elevations	Higher elevations
Opportunities for implementation	Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation, Forest Health Protection, programmatic National Environmental Policy Act work, stewardship contracting	Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation, Forest Health Protection, programmatic National Environmental Policy Act work	Rocky Mountain Research Station, State fish and game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, fire management
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Barriers to implementation	Endangered species (lynx), lack of available funding, access and short operating season, management limitations within roadless wilderness, and potential litigation	Endangered species (lynx), lack of available funding, access and short operating season, management limitations within roadless wilderness, and potential litigation	Knowledge gaps in desired conditions

Table 6C.24—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing disturbance, moisture deficits, stress due to densities, and longer growing seasons.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote resilience in forest vegetation.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience by reducing stressors and facilitating transitions.

	Specific tactic – D	Specific tactic – E	Specific tactic – F
Tactic	Promote legacy trees of western larch, Douglas-fir, western white pine, Engelmann spruce, whitebark pine, and alpine larch.	Establish seed collection and seed bank needs for alpine larch, whitebark pine, and high-elevation western larch. Coordinate with other land managers/owners on post-wildfire reforestation and planting of whitebark pine.	Promote landscape heterogeneity and create connectivity at multiple scales through strategic placement of treatment units. Increase patch size/treatments and cross-ownership boundary coordination.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Within dense spruce-fir-lodgepole pine sites	Where these species occur	Landscape
Opportunities for implementation	National forest plan desired conditions and project	Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation, volunteers (e.g., backcountry horseman and stakeholders), Forest Health Protection	National forest plan desired conditions and project
Cost	Inexpensive, can be done in conjunction with project	Expensive because of remote location/poor access, but volunteers can help reduce costs	Moderately expensive
Barriers to implementation	None other than lack of these trees in some areas and windthrow risk	Budget (to reduce this barrier, solicit partners); wilderness/roadless policy limitations	Some barriers, knowledge gaps in desired conditions.

Table 6C.25—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing disturbance, moisture deficits, stress due to densities, and longer growing seasons.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Promote resilience in forest vegetation.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience by reducing stressors and facilitating transitions.

	Specific tactic – G	Specific tactic – H	Specific tactic – I
Tactic	Promote rapid response and assessment for postfire reforestation.	Implement a triage approach to soil moisture conditions (e.g., loess soil mapping) for prioritizing areas for western white pine and whitebark pine.	Protect high value trees (plus other trees, cone producers, and rare species) via management actions, including pheromones and seed orchards.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	High
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Throughout zone	Throughout zone	Throughout zone
Opportunities for implementation	Burned area emergency response	Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrition Cooperative, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station	Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation, volunteers, Forest Health Protection
Cost	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Barriers to implementation	Burned Area Emergency Response does not fund planting; commitment from forests; lack of strategy	Funding; lack of understanding of utility by forests	Funding

Table 6C.26—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Accelerated root disease mortality due to climate stressors.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Reduce dominance of root disease sensitive species (e.g., Douglas-fir and grand fir) on root disease-prone sites.

Strategy Objective: Facilitate transition.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Regenerate and plant with species less susceptible to root disease.	Thin out root disease-susceptible species where less root disease-susceptible species are abundant.	Conduct a hot prescribed burn, followed by a re-burn.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	Moderate	Unknown
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Root disease-prone sites with current root disease losses and where management is allowed	Root disease-prone sites; in areas where management is allowed; where adequate, less susceptible species are present and current losses are low	Root disease prone sites and in areas where management is allowed
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	Where losses are severe and timber value may not cover cost of site preparation	May not be highest priority	5-year regeneration requirement

Table 6C.27—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Sites with limited species and genetic diversity are more likely to be impacted by climate change and climate-related stressors.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Work across jurisdictions at larger spatial scales.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Plant potential microsites with a mix of species to push the envelope and hedge bets.	Maintain species diversity during thinning.	Interplant to supplement natural regeneration and genetic diversity.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	In sufficiently large openings (from harvest, fire, or in understocked stands) on sites most at risk for drought stress	Dense or overstocked stands on sites more at risk for drought stress and where sufficient diversity exists for thinning.	In sufficiently large openings (from harvest, fire, or in understocked stands) on sites most at risk for drought stress.
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	Openings are lacking because of limited timber harvest and fire suppression.	Insufficient funding. Thinning restrictions due to lynx.	Openings are lacking because of limited timber harvest and fire suppression.

Table 6C.28—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Increasing moisture demands and drought stress in moisture-demanding species (western hemlock and western redcedar) on upland sites.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Minimize the effects to the stand from the affected species (western hemlock and western redcedar).

Strategy objective: Promote resilience and facilitate transition.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Implement pre-commercial thinning to limit dominance of these species on drought-prone sites.	Encourage regeneration harvest and planting with a more diverse species mix.	Preserve road and trail access despite increased fire and flood events.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	Moderate	High	Moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Mid term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)			
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost			
Barriers to implementation			

Table 6C.29—Adaptation options that address climate change effects on forest vegetation in the Western Rockies subregion.

Sensitivity to climatic variability and change: Western white pine is resilient but underrepresented.

Adaptation strategy/approach: Increase presence of western white pine.

Strategy objective: Promote resilience and facilitate transition.

	Specific tactic – A	Specific tactic – B	Specific tactic – C
Tactic	Implement planting of blister rust-resistant western white pine.	Implement blister rust pruning.	Retain existing natural white pine when thinning, harvesting, and burning.
Tactic effectiveness (risks)	High	High	Thinning/harvest – high Burning – moderate
Implementation urgency	Near term	Near term	Near term
Where can tactics be applied? (geographic)	Western redcedar, western hemlock and moist grand fir habitat types (and on moister microsites of drier habitat types)	Stands with moderate infection, but low infection above pruning height; may be critical if thinning	Where western white pine is present
Opportunities for implementation			
Cost	Inexpensive	Inexpensive	Inexpensive
Barriers to implementation	Openings are lacking because of limited timber harvest and fire suppression.	Insufficient funds and access	More difficult on steep slopes, where fire is needed for site preparation