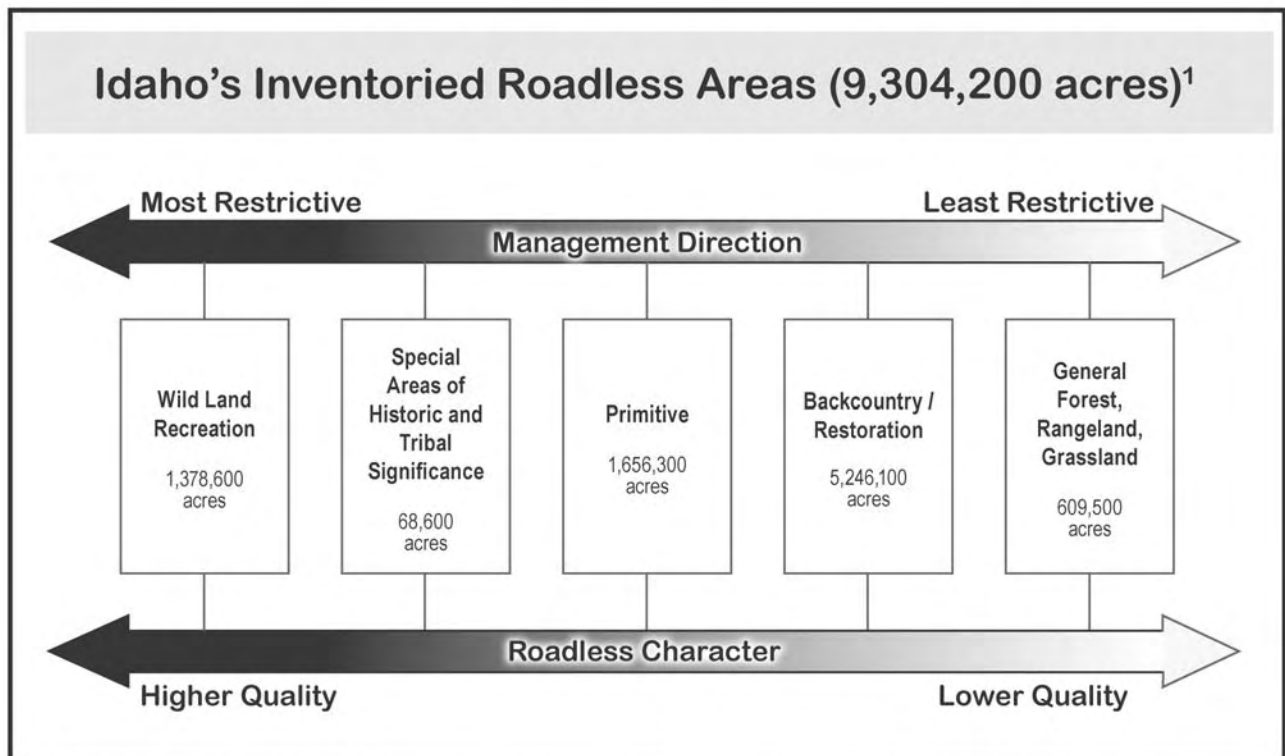


SUMMARY

Proposed Action (Idaho Roadless Rule)

The Forest Service is proposing to promulgate a State-specific rule in response to the Idaho State Petition presented by Governor James Risch on November 29 and 30, 2006, to the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC). The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would designate a system of lands called Idaho Roadless Areas and establish five management area themes for individual roadless areas: Wild Land Recreation; Primitive; Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance; Backcountry/Restoration; and General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland. The proposed themes span a continuum (fig. S-1) that includes at one end a restrictive approach emphasizing passive management and natural restoration approaches, and on the other end, active management designed to sustain forest, rangeland, and grassland management. This continuum accounts for stewardship of the uniqueness of each individual roadless area’s landscape and the quality of roadless characteristics in that area.



¹ 345,100 acres of forest plan special areas will be managed in accordance with applicable current and future forest plans

Figure S-1. Idaho Roadless Rule continuum

Allocation to a specific theme is not intended to mandate or direct the Forest Service to propose or implement any action; rather, the themes provide an array of permitted and prohibited activities regarding:

- Timber cutting, sale, or removal;
- Road construction and reconstruction;
- Mineral activities.

The Proposed Action also provides for the ability to accommodate necessary corrections and modifications in the future. A full description of the Proposed Action may be found in the alternatives section.

Purpose of and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule is to respond to the State's petition to provide State-specific direction for the conservation and management of inventoried roadless areas within the State of Idaho. The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule integrates local management concerns with the national objectives for protecting roadless area values and characteristics.

The management direction is based on individual roadless characteristics for lands (1) containing outstanding or unique features, where there is minimal or no evidence of human use; (2) containing culturally significant areas; (3) containing general roadless characteristics, where human uses may or may not be more apparent; and (4) displaying high levels of human use, while:

- Protecting communities, homes, and property from the risk of severe wildfire or other risks existing on adjacent Federal lands;
- Protecting forests from the negative effects of severe wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks; or
- Protecting access to property, by ensuring that States, Tribes, and citizens owning property within roadless areas have access to that property as required by existing laws.

The Secretary, aware of the long, unresolved debates over the management of inventoried roadless areas in the absence of wilderness legislation for the State of Idaho, considered the State's Petition, the advice and recommendations of the RACNAC, and associated public comments; the Secretary determined that there is a need to consider regulatory direction for roadless area management specific to the State of Idaho.

Public Involvement

A notice of intent to prepare an EIS on “Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands in Idaho” was published in the *Federal Register*, April 10, 2007 (68, FR 17816). About 38,000 comments were received, of which 32,000 were form letters¹, while the remaining letters consisted of original responses or form letters with additional original text. These comments were evaluated and summarized in a report called Summary of Public Comments, which is provided in the Scoping section of the project record. The summary analyzes the public’s responses specific to the Proposed Action, identifying significant concerns and issues.

¹ Form letters are five or more letters that contain identical text but are submitted by different people.

Issues

The Forest Service identified as significant issues those resources that could directly or indirectly be affected as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action. The Forest Service identified the following significant issues during scoping. These issues represent possible effects of implementing the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule:

- Changes to roadless characteristics;
- Ability to address forest health and fire ecology;
- Ability to utilize minerals and energy resources;
- Social factors; and
- Economic factors.

Alternatives

This draft environmental impact statement (draft EIS) examines three alternatives establishing regulatory direction:

1. Direction based on the 2001 Roadless Rule (2001 Roadless Rule);
2. Direction based on existing forest plans (Existing Plans);
3. Direction based on the Petition, as presented to the RACNAC (Idaho Roadless Rule).

The Idaho Roadless Rule recommends Idaho Roadless Areas be managed within a spectrum of five management themes: Wild Land Recreation; Primitive; Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance; Backcountry/Restoration; and General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland. To aid in analyzing effects and to better compare alternatives, the management prescriptions in the 2001 Roadless Rule and Existing Plans were placed in a management theme that would be the closest equivalent. Table S-1 describes each theme’s management emphasis and the number of acres represented by that theme, by alternative. To account for all acreage identified as a roadless area, the table lists other forest plan special areas, which are not affected by this proposed rule.

Table S-1. Number of acres represented by Idaho Roadless Rule themes and equivalent themes for the 2001 Roadless Rule and Existing Plans

Theme	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
<i>Wild Land Recreation.</i> These lands would show little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes would be predominant	0	1,320,800	1,378,600
<i>Primitive.</i> These lands would remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities while allowing for limited forest health activities including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species and protecting ecological integrity.	0	2,131,400	1,656,300
<i>Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance.</i> These areas would remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities in order to maintain their unique Tribal or historic characteristics	0	0	68,600
<i>Backcountry/Restoration.</i> These areas would retain their undeveloped character, while providing a variety of recreation opportunities, and allowing for limited forest health activities, including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species, and maintaining or restoring the characteristics of ecosystem and structure.	9,304,200	4,244,500	5,246,100
<i>General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland.</i> These areas would provide a variety of goods and services as well as a broad range of recreational opportunities, and conservation of natural resources.	0	1,262,400	609,500
Other lands*			
<i>Forest plan special areas</i> (appendix H, table H-9)	0	345,100	345,100
Totals	9,304,200	9,304,200	9,304,200

* The Idaho Roadless Rule would not apply to these other special areas.

Each alternative addresses only management actions associated with timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction, or future discretionary mineral-related actions for saleable or leasable minerals, because these particular activities have been identified as having the greatest likelihood of altering roadless area values and characteristics. Road construction/reconstruction or timber cutting under any alternative would be designed based on applicable forest plan standards and guidelines (for example, protection of riparian areas or habitat needs for species).

The following subsections generally describe each alternative. In-depth discussion on management direction can be found in chapter 2 of the draft EIS.

ALTERNATIVE 1. THE 2001 ROADLESS RULE (NO ACTION)²

This alternative presents a roadless area management regime based on the approach set out in the 2001 Roadless Rule (see 36 CFR, 294, subpart B [2004]; 66 *Fed. Reg.* 3244 [Jan. 12, 2001]). The purpose of the 2001 Roadless Rule was to ensure that inventoried roadless areas sustain their values for this generation and for future generations. By sustaining these values, a continuous flow of benefits associated with healthy watersheds and ecosystems was expected.

Timber cutting activities and road construction/reconstruction were identified as having the greatest likelihood of altering and fragmenting landscapes, and the greatest likelihood of resulting in an immediate, long-term loss of roadless area values and characteristics; therefore, these activities were prohibited, with certain exceptions in each roadless area.

The rule allows for road construction or reconstruction in the case of reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty. This would include roads associated with locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872.

The 2001 Roadless Rule was the product of a national process and established management direction at the national level with limited focus on State or local issues.

ALTERNATIVE 2. EXISTING PLANS

Management direction in this alternative represents a roadless area management regime based on each forest's land and resource management plan (forest plan). Each forest's plan is unique to its planning area; collectively the forest plans provide a broad range of management from wilderness to intensive management. Overall, as national forests have revised their forest plans, the trend has been to move more roadless areas into management prescriptions that conserve roadless characteristics. When developing or revising their forest plans, each forest or group of forests collaborates with the public

² As of the printing of this draft EIS, the 2001 Roadless Rule is in operation by court order and represents the legal status quo and operating management direction for these lands. In the absence of the 2001 Roadless Rule, management would be governed by each forest's land management plan.

and interested parties to develop management direction for their roadless areas. Generally, forest plans allow or limit an array of activities in roadless areas.

ALTERNATIVE 3. IDAHO ROADLESS RULE³ (PROPOSED ACTION)

The Proposed Action represents a strategy for the conservation and management of Idaho Roadless Areas that takes into account State and local situations and unique resource management challenges, while it recognizes and integrates the national interest in maintaining roadless characteristics.

Building from each forest's existing or proposed forest plan⁴, the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule assigned individual roadless areas within five broad management themes: Wild Land Recreation; Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance; Primitive; Backcountry/Restoration; and General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland. These themes span a continuum (fig. S-1) that includes at one end, a restrictive approach emphasizing passive management and natural restoration approaches, and on the other end, active management designed to accomplish sustainable protection of roadless characteristics. The continuum accounts for stewardship of the uniqueness of each individual roadless area's landscape and the quality of roadless characteristics in that area.

The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would not apply to other special areas (referred to as "forest plan special areas" such as research natural areas; wild and scenic rivers (designated, eligible, and suitable); special interest areas; visual corridors; and the like (table S-1). These areas would be managed according to applicable current and future forest plan direction. These lands are included in the discussion for sake of completeness; however, the Proposed Action does not recommend management direction for these 345,100 acres.

Allocation to a specific theme is not intended to mandate or direct the Forest Service to propose or implement any action; rather, the themes provide an array of permitted and prohibited activities related to timber cutting, sale, and removal; road construction/reconstruction; and discretionary mineral activities.

As in the 2001 Roadless Rule, timber cutting and road construction/reconstruction are identified as the management activities having the greatest potential for altering landscapes and causing immediate changes to roadless values and characteristics; therefore, a continuum of prohibitions and permissions was proposed for each roadless area.

³ The Idaho Roadless Rule includes clarifications made by Governor Risch at the November 29 and 30, 2007, RACNAC meeting.

⁴ Existing plans referred to here include the Boise, Caribou, Challis, Payette, Salmon, Sawtooth, Caribou, Wallow-Whitman. Proposed plans referred to here are the Clearwater, Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, Nez Perce.

The Proposed Action also establishes prohibitions and permissions for discretionary mineral activities because of potential effects on roadless characteristics. Further, the Proposed Action, like the 2001 Roadless Rule, allows for road construction/reconstruction in the case of reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty. This would include roads associated with locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872. Finally, the Proposed Action provides additional direction regarding common variety minerals, which are the sole discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) to manage.

Again, like the 2001 Roadless Rule, the Proposed Action does not seek to restrict retroactively any existing mineral authorizations⁵. However, the Proposed Action would establish limitations on the future exercise of discretion available to Forest Service line officers. It does not seek to impose restrictions on decision-making that Congress has assigned to the Department of the Interior. The Proposed Action also does not effect or seek a withdrawal of the mineral estate; such matters are subject to a separate statutory process established in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA). Instead, the Proposed Action would be applied only where Forest Service line officers have discretionary authority to influence whether and how the activity may occur.

The Proposed Action does not address grazing, travel management, or wildland fire use. Management direction related to those activities would be regulated by other existing regulatory and analytical processes (for example, travel planning).

⁵ Mineral authorizations include those for saleable, leasable, and locatable minerals.

Comparison of Alternatives

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Idaho Roadless Rule and equivalent themes for the 2001 Roadless Rule and Existing Plans (Acres)			
Wild Land Recreation	0	1,320,800	1,378,600
Primitive	0	2,131,400	1,656,300
SAHTS	0	0	68,600
Backcountry	9,304,200	4,244,500	5,246,100
GFRG	0	1,262,400	609,500
Other lands (Acres)			
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	354,100	354,100
Total Idaho Roadless Area Acres	9,304,200	9,304,200	9,304,200
Projected timber cutting			
Timber harvest yearly average (MMBF)	0.5	14	4
Timber harvest yearly average (CCF)	1,137	26,900	7,237
Timber harvest yearly average (acres)	100	2,800	800
% of average yearly volume harvested on all NFS lands in Idaho	.5%	11.5%	3%
% of average yearly acreage harvested on all NFS lands in Idaho	1%	28%	8%
Projected miles of road construction/reconstruction activities; yearly average			
Permanent – other	0.8	0.8	0.8
Temporary – other	0.2	0.2	0.2
Reconstruction – other	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	1.0	1.0	1.0
Permanent – timber	0.0	4.0	0.0
Temporary – timber	0.0	2.0	1.5
Reconstruction – timber	0.0	5.0	1.5
Total	0.0	11.0	3.0
Grand Total	1.0	12.0	4.0
Decommissioning	1.0	4.0	3.0
Net Change	0.0	8.0	1.0
Percent of Idaho Roadless Areas that permit or prohibit construction/ reconstruction			
Prohibited	0	39	34
Permitted, under limited exceptions	100	0	59
Permitted, under variable	0	47	0
Permitted without exceptions	0	14	7

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Forest health			
Insect and disease	Most of the 1.4 million acres currently at risk of 25% mortality or significant growth loss would remain untreated.	190,000 of high risk forests in GFRG. 730,000 in Backcountry Opportunities for treatment. Projected treatments on 42,000 acres likely to be effective over 15 years.	26,000 acres of high risk forests in GFRG. 940,000 acres in Backcountry. Opportunities to treat GFRG. Opportunity for treatment in Backcountry if done for forest health or to reduce hazardous fuels Projected treatments on 12,000 acres likely to be effective over 15 years.
Noxious weeds – Potential for Noxious weed spread	Spreading is unlikely given limited potential for soil disturbance. 28,000 acres of weeds currently found in Idaho Roadless Areas.	Some potential for spreading based on acreage assigned to GFRG (1.262 million); the limited degree of projected road construction, timber cutting, and mineral activity would minimize the potential for spreading. 8,300 acres of weeds currently found in GFRG.	Some potential for spreading based on acreage assigned to GFRG (609,500 acres); the limited degree of projected construction, harvest and mineral activity would minimize the potential for spreading. 2,600 acres of noxious weeds currently found in GFRG.
Climate change	The magnitude and rapidity of climate change is uncertain, particularly at the finer scales such as Idaho Roadless Areas. Variable impacts across alternatives are therefore not quantified.		

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Fuel management			
	<p>Road construction not permitted in conjunction with treatments on 100% of the WUI.</p> <p>Treatments more expensive; insignificant acreage treated relative to acres at risk. Limited capacity to treat high priority condition class 2 and 3 areas.</p> <p>Does not directly permit timber cutting to reduce risk of unwanted wildland fire.</p>	<p>Road construction permitted in conjunction with treatments on 69% of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).</p> <p>Mechanical treatments, without road construction may be permitted on 22% of the WUI.</p> <p>Mechanical treatments not permitted on 9%⁶ of the WUI.</p> <p>Projected harvests could treat 10% of high priority areas (Fire Regimes I, II and III, Condition Class 2 and 3) within WUIs or 1% of high priority areas overall.</p> <p>May permit timber cutting to reduce risk of unwanted wildland fires</p>	<p>Road construction permitted in conjunction with treatments on 71% of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).</p> <p>Mechanical treatments, without road construction may be permitted on 19% of the WUI.</p> <p>Mechanical treatments not permitted on 9% of the WUI.</p> <p>Projected harvests could treat 3% of high priority areas (Fire Regimes I, II and III, Condition Class 2 and 3) within WUIs or less than half a percent of high priority areas overall.</p> <p>Directly permits timber cutting to reduce risk of unwanted wildland fires in the Primitive, Backcountry, and GFRG themes.</p>
Potential for increase in human-caused fire starts	No increase	Potential for increase	No measurable increase
Locatable minerals			
Gold, silver, lead, Etc.	None of the alternatives affect rights of reasonable access to prospect and explore lands open to mineral entry and develop valid claims under the General Mining Act of 1872.		
Rights to reasonable access for locatable minerals	Yes	Yes	Yes

⁶ Includes lands in Forest Plan Special Areas

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Leasable minerals			
Oil, gas, and coal	Differences in activity and revenue associated with oil, gas, and coal development is expected to be minimal based on existing trends and inventories.		
Geothermal – acres of high geothermal potential within the GFRG theme	0	387,300	351,600
Geothermal – acres of medium geothermal potential within the GFRG theme	0	796,600	236,500
Geothermal – acres of high geothermal potential within the GFRG theme, less than 40% slope	0	249,500	233,600
Geothermal – acres of medium geothermal potential within the GFRG theme, less than 40% slope	0	457,700	140,800
Geothermal development	Negligible opportunities for development.	No opportunities on 40% of acreage; Limited opportunities on 46% of acreage; Open or unrestricted opportunities on 14% of acreage.	No opportunities on 93% of acreage; Open or unrestricted opportunities on 7% of acreage.
Leasable resources: phosphate (short term within 15 yrs)	Projected output is equal across all alternatives because (i) none of the alternatives prohibit road construction and reconstruction associated with existing leases and (ii) existing leases are expected to meet demand in reasonably foreseeable future.		
Phosphate – acres reasonable foreseeable road construction and mining disturbance proposed in Sage Creek and Meade Peak Roadless areas	1,100	1,100	1,100
Phosphate – Projected phosphate acres currently under lease	8,000	8,000	8,000
Phosphate (Long term – leasing of unleased phosphate deposits)	Opportunities to recover phosphate from Idaho Roadless Areas are negligible.	Estimated 603 million tons of phosphate deposits from 13,400 unleased acres available for development.	Estimated 545 million tons of phosphate deposits from 12,100 unleased acres available for development (road construction prohibited on primitive theme acres).

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Saleable minerals			
Acres associated with potential developing new mineral material sites within Idaho Roadless Areas (GFRG)	0	1,262,400	609,500
Potential for development of new mineral material sites within Idaho Roadless Areas	Rare Circumstance	Minimal	Minimal
Saleable minerals (sand, stone, gravel, pumice, etc.)	Differences in production of saleable minerals are projected to be minimal across alternatives due to the relative inefficiencies of providing saleable minerals from Idaho Roadless Areas.		
Abandoned and inactive mines			
Road Construction allowed for CERCLA Violations	Yes	Yes	Yes
Energy corridors			
Energy corridors	None of the proposed corridors designated for oil, gas, and/or electricity under Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act are within Idaho Roadless Areas. Opportunities for non-Section 368 corridors within Idaho Roadless Areas are a function of the themes assigned to the areas proposed for corridor development; differences in opportunities across alternatives cannot be discerned.		
Physical resources			
Acres of high sensitive soils by theme			
Wild Land Recreation	0	221,900	270,200
Primitive	0	817,200	610,800
SAHTS	0	0	24,100
Backcountry	3,094,200	1,503,400	1,842,500
GFRG	0	440,300	235,200
Forest Plan Special Areas		111,400	111,400
Acres of high sensitivity soils where road construction/reconstruction is permitted without restrictions – GFRG	0	440,300	235,200
Acres of highly sensitive soils where road construction/reconstruction is prohibited	3,094,200	1,1150,500	1,016,500
Effect of road building on high hazard soils for timber cutting	No effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect
Effect of road building on high hazard soils for mining	Limited risk	Likely effect	Likely effect
Miles of 303(d) listed streams			
Wild Land Recreation	0	15	29
Primitive	0	62	47
SAHTS	0	0	4
Backcountry	445	159	210
GFRG	0	84	31
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	125	125

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Acres of watersheds with surface drinking water			
Wild Land Recreation	0	26,800	29,500
Primitive	0	165,000	119,900
SAHTS	0	0	0
Backcountry	409,100	151,600	230,900
GFRG	0	61,500	24,600
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	4,200	4,200
Effect of road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest on listed streams and drinking water	Negligible effect	Minimal effect	Negligible effect
Effect of mining on listed streams and drinking water	Possible effect to 303(d) streams from selenium – mitigation required at time of analysis	Possible effect to 303(d) streams from selenium – mitigation required at time of analysis	Possible effect to 303(d) streams from selenium – mitigation required at time of analysis
Acres within 50 miles of a Class I air quality protection area			
Wild Land Recreation	0	832,400	879,600
Primitive	0	1,712,300	1,406,300
SAHTS	0	0	46,500
Backcountry	5,542,800	2,370,600	2,871,100
GFRG		395,200	107,000
Forest Plan Special Areas		232,300	232,300
Effect to air quality from fuel reduction projects	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Botanical resources			
Number of occurrences of known sensitive plant populations			
Wild Land Recreation	0	127	141
Primitive	0	166	147
SAHTS	0	0	1
Backcountry	1,165	523	601
GFRG	0	84	10
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	265	265
Effects on biodiversity	Beneficial		Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS
Aquatic			
Effects to aquatic species or habitat	Beneficial	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Some potential risk of adverse effects in management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and GFRG	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Limited potential risk of adverse effects in Backcountry; some potential risk in GFRG

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Wildlife			
Effects to terrestrial animal species or habitat	Beneficial	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Some potential risk of adverse effects in management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and GFRG	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Limited potential risk of adverse effects in Backcountry; some potential risk in GFRG
Recreation			
Dispersed Recreation –	No measurable change to dispersed recreation opportunities. Feeling of remoteness or solitude may change if timber cutting or road construction/ reconstruction occurs (projected 1,500 acres timber cutting and 15 miles of road construction/ reconstruction over 15 years. No change to hunting and fishing opportunities.	No measurable change to dispersed recreation opportunities, except if unleased phosphate deposits (13,400 acres) are developed. Feeling of remoteness or solitude may change if timber cutting or road construction/ reconstruction occurs (projected 42,000 acres timber cutting and 180 miles of road construction/ reconstruction over 15 years. No change to hunting and fishing opportunities.	No measurable change to dispersed recreation opportunities, except if unleased phosphate deposits (12,100 acres) are developed. Feeling of remoteness or solitude may change if timber cutting or road construction/ reconstruction occurs (projected 12,000 acres timber cutting and 60 miles of road construction/ reconstruction over 15 years. No change to hunting and fishing opportunities.
Developed recreation – ability to construct or reconstruct roads to access new or expanded developed recreation areas	No road construction/ reconstruction permitted to access new developed recreations sites (9.3 million acres). There are no foreseeable developments.	Road construction/ reconstruction generally permitted to access new developed recreations sites management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and GFRG (5.5 million acres). There are no foreseeable developments.	Road construction/ reconstruction permitted to access new developed recreations sites management in GFRG (.6 million acres). There are no foreseeable developments.
Recreation	In general, the magnitude of shifts in recreational opportunity spectrum classes is slight across the alternatives because: (i) differences in road construction are minimal, and (ii) many constructed roads are likely to be temporary and not accessible for recreation purposes. As a consequence, changes in dispersed versus developed recreation opportunities are small across alternatives. Relative differences include the following:		

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
	Relatively high potential for maintaining existing dispersed recreation opportunities; little potential for increasing developed recreation.	Greatest opportunity for developed and road-based recreation to occur and expand, but magnitude of shift is tempered by limited amount of construction projected to occur.	Potentially the greatest level of protection for dispersed recreation, foreseeable threats from construction and development are remote.
Recreation special uses – existing permits (including ski areas)	Existing permits unaffected	Existing permits unaffected	Existing permits unaffected
Hunting and fishing	No effect to opportunities.	Opportunities could be affected in locations of phosphate leasing and geothermal development. No effect from timber cutting and limited road construction.	Opportunities could be affected in locations of phosphate leasing and geothermal development. No effect from timber cutting and limited road construction.
Wilderness			
Existing Wilderness areas	1,726,000 acres of roadless areas adjacent to Wilderness. Limited to no indirect effect to Wilderness from activities in roadless areas	158,000 acres of GFRG adjacent to Wilderness; 842,000 acres of Backcountry Limited potential for impacts to Wilderness experience	9,000 acres of GFRG adjacent to Wilderness; 954,000 acres of Backcountry Limited potential for impacts to Wilderness experience
Recommended wilderness	No change or effect to recommended wilderness in existing plans	Existing plans recommend 1,320,900 as Wilderness	There would be no change to the recommendations in the forest plans; however there are 1,378,600 acres in Wild Land Recreation. 57,700 acres of additional protection over existing plans. Some recommended wilderness areas in Boulder-White Clouds and Winegar Roadless Areas would be managed as Primitive. 6,900 acres in Mallard Larkins Roadless Area would be managed as Backcountry.

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Wilderness characteristic	Majority of roadless areas retain their existing character	Areas developed could have reduced wilderness character. Activities in GFRG may not change wilderness character if prior activities are still evident	Areas developed could have reduced wilderness character. Activities in GFRG may not change wilderness character if prior activities are still evident
Scenic integrity			
Acres maintained in High to Very High Scenic Integrity			
Wild Land Recreation	0	1,320,900	1,378,600
Primitive	0	2,130,100	1,656,300
SAHTS	0	0	68,600
Backcountry	9,295,100	0	0
GFRG			
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	345,100	345,100
Acres available for reduction to Moderate Scenic Integrity			
Wild Land Recreation	0	0	0
Primitive	0	0	0
SAHTS	0	0	0
Backcountry	9,304,200	4,243,700	5,245,300
GFRG	0	1,251,100	598,200
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	0	0
Acres Likely Changed to Moderate or Low Scenic Integrity			
Wild Land Recreation	0	0	0
Primitive	0	1,300	0
SAHTS	0	0	0
Backcountry	9,100	800	800
GFRG	0	11,300	11,300
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	0	0

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Scenic integrity	High or Very High scenic integrity retained on most Idaho Roadless Areas.	Potential for lower scenic quality on 5.5 million acres due to permissions in management prescriptions for timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction and discretionary mineral activities, but reasonably foreseeable losses are small given projections of activities in Idaho Roadless Areas.	Potential for lower scenic quality on 5.9 million acres due to management theme assignments and associated permissions for timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction and discretionary mineral activities, but reasonably foreseeable losses are small given projections of activities in Idaho Roadless Areas.
Cultural resources			
Potential for disturbance, vandalism, and looting	Low	Low to Moderate	Low
Cultural resources	Prior to management actions taking place on the ground under any alternative or theme, cultural resource inventories and appropriate mitigation are required by law. Differences in risk to cultural resources are not expected to be significant across alternatives due to projected levels of road construction and long-term use and fate of new roads.		
Idaho and affected Indian tribes			
	Impacts on Tribal governments and Tribal practices from resource management activities would be minimal because of consultation requirements. Roads, timber cutting, and mining may alter the character of places that have historic or cultural value, thereby diminishing their value.		
Social			
Values and Beliefs	Most environmental functions retained, roadless characteristics remain intact	Most environmental functions retained, some roadless characteristics changed	Most environmental functions retained, few roadless characteristics changed
Collaborative Environment	Local communities feel left out	Local communities engaged	Local community interests integrated with national values
Lifestyles	Significant risks to natural resource conditions near communities remain	Significant risks to natural resource conditions near communities reduced	Significant risks to natural resource conditions near communities reduced
	Undeveloped recreation and cultural opportunities continue	Many undeveloped recreation and cultural opportunities continue	Most undeveloped recreation and cultural opportunities continue
Economic			
Commodity values – forest level outputs			
Harvest (MBF)	567	13,458	3620
Phosphate (tons)	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Road decommissioning (miles)	1.00	4.00	3.00
Roads (miles)	1.00	12.02	4.35
Jobs (Yr)			
Harvest	1	304	91
Phosphate	582	582	582
Road construction/reconstruction	2	12	4
Labor Income (\$/Yr)			
Harvest	343,000	7,651,000	1,935,000
Phosphate	23,000,000	23,000,000	23,000,000
Road construction/reconstruction	100,000	467,000	150,000
Non-Commodity Values - Acres retaining natural processes and roadless characteristics (million)	9.3	4.3	3.2

CHAPTER 1. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 Document Structure

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service, with the State of Idaho as a cooperating agency, has prepared this draft environmental impact statement (draft EIS) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This draft EIS discloses the environmental consequences that could result from the Proposed Action (proposed Idaho Roadless Rule) and alternatives. The document is organized into four chapters:

- **Chapter 1. Purpose of and Need for Action.** The chapter includes information on the history of the proposal, the purpose of and need for the proposed rule, and the Agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- **Chapter 2. Alternatives, Including the Proposed Action.** This chapter provides a more detailed description of the Agency's Proposed Action as well as alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose.
- **Chapter 3. Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences.** This chapter describes the environmental consequences of implementing the proposal and other alternatives. This analysis is organized by overview, methodology, assumptions, and resource area.
- **Chapter 4. Consultation and Coordination.** This chapter provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the EIS.
- **Index.** The index provides page numbers by document topics.
- **Appendices.** The appendices provide additional detailed information in support of the analyses presented in the EIS.
- **Map packet.** The map packet is a separate packet that includes alternative maps, and maps for appendix A and appendix C.

Related documentation, including additional detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at Northern Rockies Regional Office, 200 East Broadway, Missoula, Montana.

1.2 Background

The State of Idaho submitted to the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) a petition for rule-making: the State of Idaho Petition (Petition) (Risch 2006). The Petition, pursuant to section 553(e) of the Administrative Procedures Act and Department of Agriculture (Department) regulations at 7 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) §1.28, requested specific regulatory protections and certain management flexibility for the 9.3 million acres of National Forest System (NFS) inventoried roadless areas (roadless areas) in Idaho.

The Petition was based on information about each roadless area in existing and proposed land and resource management plans (forest plans) that consider the different and unique values each roadless area contains, and county and public comments (see the Public Involvement section below). The State proposed a management continuum, including, at one end, a restrictive approach emphasizing passive management, and natural restoration approaches, and, on the other end, active management designed to accomplish sustainable forest, rangeland, and grassland management.

The Forest Service and the State believe that the Proposed Action represents a unique opportunity to collaboratively resolve and provide certainty to the roadless issue in the State of Idaho. First, the Proposed Action enables the Forest Service to account for comments of those most affected or concerned about the contents of State-specific rulemaking. Second, it allows the Agency to consider the unique characteristics of each individual inventoried roadless area in the State. Third, it balances the integrity and natural beauty of these roadless areas with responsible stewardship.

The Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC) reviewed the Petition on November 29 and 30, 2006. Governor James Risch, on behalf of the State of Idaho, discussed his views on the scope and intent of the Petition. The committee also heard comments from other State and Forest Service officials, and members of the public (RACNAC 2006). On December 19, 2006, the RACNAC issued a unanimous consensus-based recommendation that the Secretary direct the Forest Service, with the State of Idaho as a cooperating agency, to proceed with rulemaking (RACNAC 2006a).

On December 22, 2006, the Secretary accepted the Petition and directed the Forest Service to proceed with developing a rule specific to NFS inventoried roadless areas in Idaho (USDA 2006).

1.3 Purpose of and Need for Action

The purpose of the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule is to provide State-specific direction for the conservation and management of inventoried roadless areas within the State of Idaho. The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule integrates local management concerns with the national objectives for protecting roadless area values and characteristics⁷.

The Department and the Forest Service are committed to conserving and managing inventoried roadless areas and consider these areas an important component of the NFS. The Department believes that the most viable path for lasting conservation of these areas must properly integrate local, State, and national perspectives on roadless area management. The management direction in the Proposed Action achieves this integration because it takes into account State and local resource management challenges and the national interest in maintaining roadless characteristics, and it provides for management flexibility.

The management direction is based on individual roadless characteristics for lands (1) containing outstanding or unique features, where there is minimal or no evidence of human use; (2) containing culturally significant areas; (3) containing general roadless characteristics, where human uses may or may not be more apparent; and (4) displaying high levels of human use, while:

- Protecting communities, homes, and property from the risk of severe wildfire or other risks existing on adjacent Federal lands;
- Protecting forests from the negative effects of severe wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks; or
- Protecting access to property, by ensuring that States, Tribes, and citizens owning property within roadless areas have access to that property as required by existing laws.

The Secretary, aware of the long, unresolved debates over the management of inventoried roadless areas in the absence of wilderness legislation for the State of Idaho, considered the State's Petition, the advice, and recommendations of the RACNAC, and associated public comments. The Secretary determined that there is a need to consider roadless area management direction specific to the State of Idaho.

⁷ See section 1.7 for descriptions of roadless characteristics.

1.4 Proposed Action (Idaho Roadless Rule)

The Forest Service is proposing to promulgate a State-specific rule in response to the Idaho State Petition presented by Governor Risch on November 29 and 30, 2006, to the RACNAC.

The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would designate a system of lands called Idaho Roadless Areas (fig. 1-1) and establish five management area themes for individual roadless areas: Wild Land Recreation; Primitive, Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance; Backcountry/Restoration; and General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland (map packet – Idaho Roadless Rule management themes). The proposed themes span a continuum (fig. 1-2) that includes at one end a restrictive approach emphasizing passive management and natural restoration approaches, and on the other end, active management designed to sustainable forest, rangeland, and grassland management. This continuum accounts for stewardship of the uniqueness of each individual roadless area's landscape and the quality of roadless characteristics in that area.

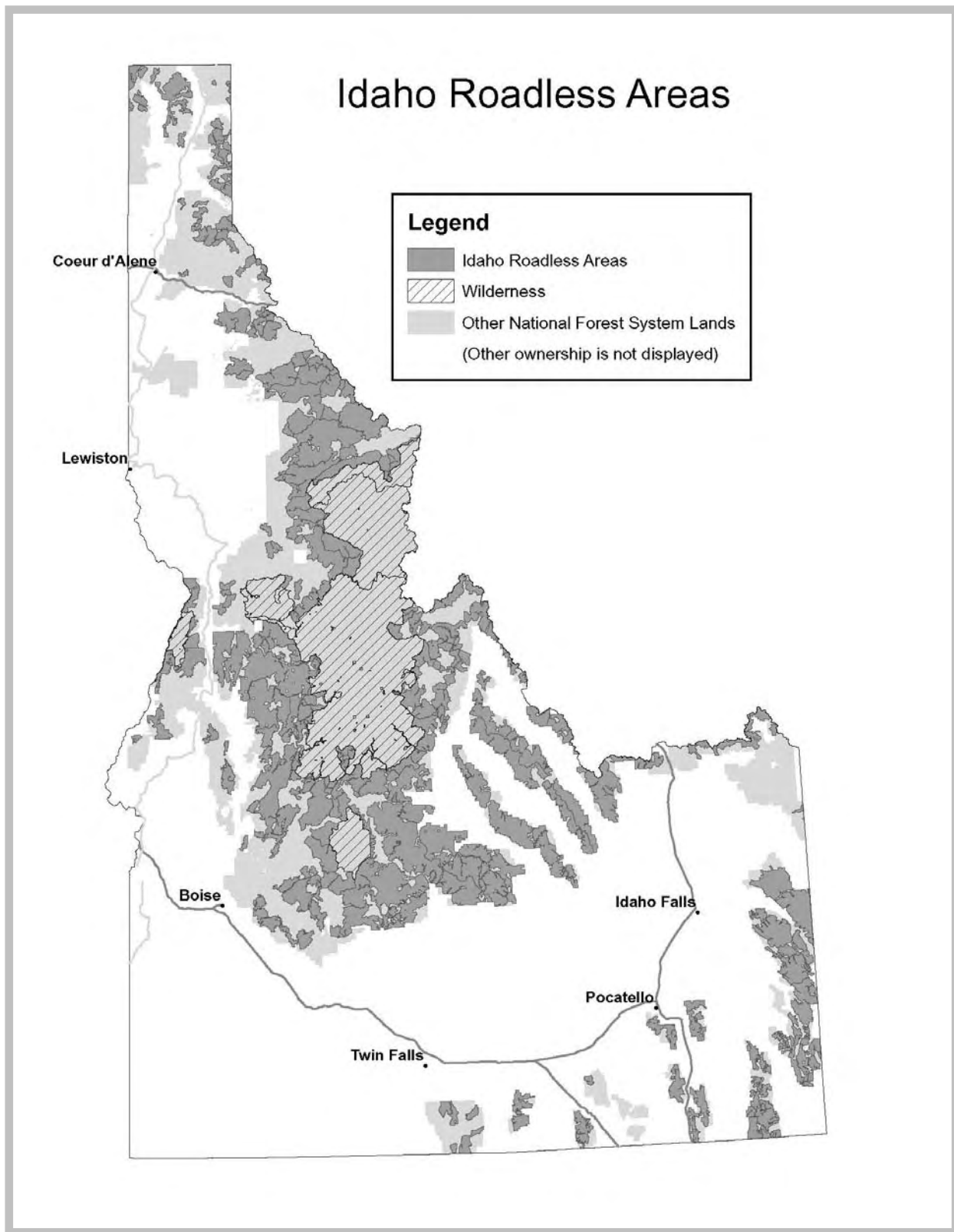
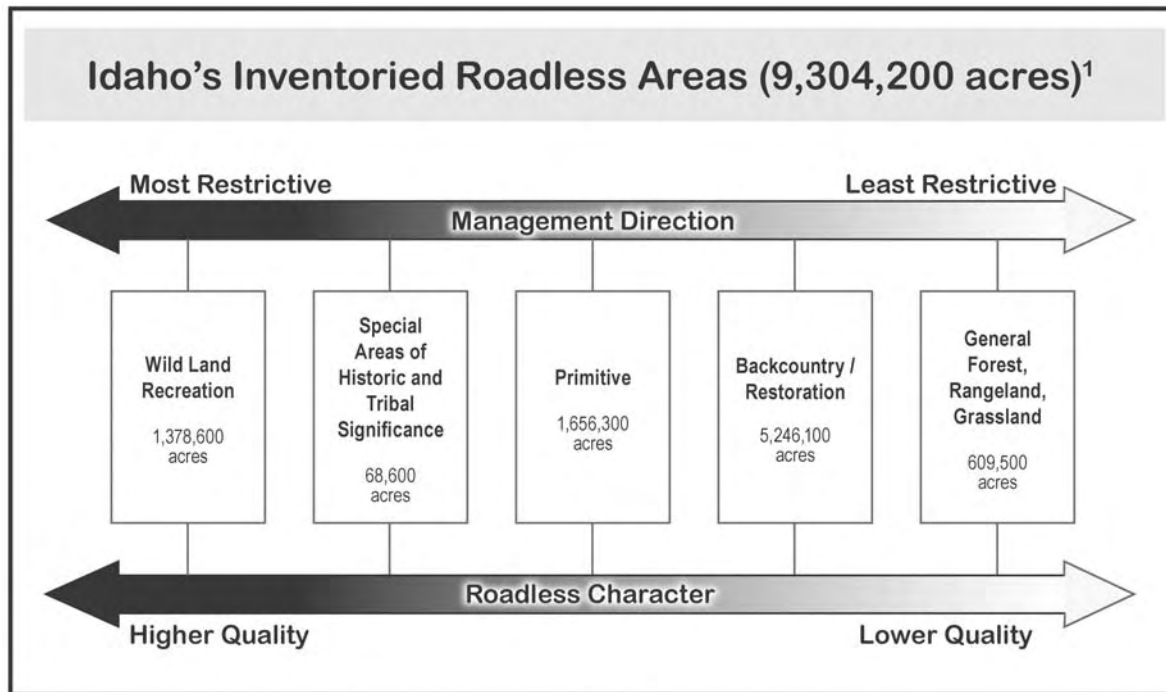


Figure 1-1. Idaho Roadless Areas – areas designated pursuant to the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule, based on the most current inventory of roadless areas in Idaho



¹ 345,100 acres of forest plan special areas will be managed in accordance with applicable current and future forest plans

Figure 1-2. Idaho Roadless Rule continuum

Allocation to a specific theme is not intended to mandate or direct the Forest Service to propose or implement any action; rather the themes provide an array of permitted and prohibited activities regarding:

- Timber cutting, sale, or removal;
- Road construction and reconstruction;
- Mineral activities.

The Proposed Action also provides for the ability to accommodate necessary corrections and modifications in the future.

The subsections below describe each management area theme and its intended purpose and describes when timber cutting, sale, or removal; road construction/reconstruction; and discretionary mineral activities would be permitted or prohibited.

WILD LAND RECREATION

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area assigned to lands that were generally identified during the forest planning process as recommended for wilderness designation. These lands would show little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes would be predominant.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. Prohibited except for personal or administrative use (36 CFR §223); or when incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited (e.g., trail clearing).

Road construction/reconstruction. Prohibited unless provided for by statute or treaty, or pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights, or other legal duty of the United States.

Mineral activities. No recommendation, authorization, or consent to surface occupancy, or road construction or reconstruction associated with new mineral leases. The sale of common variety minerals would be prohibited. Locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872, including road construction and reconstruction, would not be affected.

PRIMITIVE

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area that would be managed to remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities while allowing for limited forest health activities including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species and protecting the ecological integrity.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. Prohibited unless existing roads or aerial systems are used and the responsible official determines that:

1. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber would maintain or improve one or more of the roadless characteristics and is needed for one of the following purposes:
 - a. To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat; or
 - b. To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects; or
2. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is:
 - a. Personal or administrative use (36 CFR §223); or
 - b. Incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited (e.g., trail clearing).

Road construction and reconstruction. Prohibited, unless provided for by statute or treaty, or pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights, or other legal duty of the United States.

Mineral activities. No recommendation, authorization, or consent to surface occupancy or road construction or reconstruction associated with new mineral or energy leases. The sale of common variety minerals would be prohibited. Locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872, including road construction and reconstruction, would not be affected.

SPECIAL AREAS OF HISTORIC AND TRIBAL SIGNIFICANCE

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area managed to be relatively undisturbed by human management activities in order to maintain their unique Tribal or historic characteristics. This theme would provide for the same management direction as Primitive.

BACKCOUNTRY/ RESTORATION

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area that would be managed to retain the undeveloped character, while providing a variety of recreation opportunities, and allowing for limited forest health activities, including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species, and maintaining or restoring the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. Permitted if one of the following circumstances exists:

1. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber would maintain or improve one or more of the roadless characteristics and is needed for one of the following purposes:
 - a. To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat; or
 - b. To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects; or
2. The cutting, sale or removal of timber is:
 - a. Personal or administrative use (36 CFR §223); or
 - b. Incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited (e.g., trail clearing
 - c. It is within a substantially altered portion of an Idaho Roadless Area designated as Backcountry/Restoration, which has been altered because of the construction of a forest road and subsequent timber harvest.

Road construction/reconstruction. Permissible if one or more of the following criteria is met:

1. A road is needed to protect public health and safety in cases of significant risk or imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event that, without intervention, would cause the loss of life or property, or to facilitate forest health activities permitted under timber cutting, sale, or removal (1) above;
2. A road is needed to conduct a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) or to conduct a natural resource restoration action under CERCLA, section 311 of the Clean Water Act, or the Oil Pollution Act; or
3. A road is needed pursuant to statute, treaty, reserved or outstanding rights, or other legal duty of the United States; or

4. Road realignment is needed to prevent resource damage that arises from the design, location, use, or deterioration of a road and cannot be mitigated by road maintenance. Road realignment may occur only if the road is deemed essential for public or private access, natural resource management, or public health and safety; or
5. Road construction is needed to implement a road safety improvement project on a road that has been determined to be hazardous based on accident experience or accident potential on that road; or
6. The Secretary of Agriculture determined that a Federal aid highway project, authorized pursuant to Title 23 of the U.S. Code (23 USC), is in the public interest or is consistent with the purpose for which the land was reserved or acquired and no other reasonable and prudent alternative exists; or
7. A road is needed in conjunction with activities permissible under the limited mineral exceptions for Backcountry.

Road construction must be a temporary road, unless the responsible official determines that a permanent road meets one or more of the above criteria and that the addition of a permanent road would not substantially alter roadless characteristics. Maintenance of forest or temporary roads is permissible.

Mineral activities. No recommendation, authorization, or consent to road construction or reconstruction associated with new mineral leases, except such road construction or reconstruction may be authorized in association with phosphate leasing. Leasing instruments that allow surface use or occupancy are permissible if they do not require road construction or reconstruction. Locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872 would not be affected, including road construction and reconstruction.

The Forest Service would not authorize sale of common variety mineral materials, but may authorize the use or sale of common variety minerals, and associated road construction or reconstruction to access these minerals if the use of these minerals is incidental to activity allowed under this rule.

GENERAL FOREST, RANGELAND, OR GRASSLAND

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area that would be managed to provide a variety of goods and services as well as a broad range of recreational opportunities, and conservation of natural resources.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. Permitted, consistent with the applicable forest plan, after necessary environmental analysis, including public involvement is completed.

Road construction/reconstruction. Permitted for a forest or temporary road after necessary environmental analysis is completed. Maintenance of forest and temporary roads is permissible.

Mineral activities: Permitted, after necessary environmental analysis is completed.

Road construction or reconstruction associated with mining activities allowed must be conducted in a manner that minimizes effects on surface resources, prevents unnecessary or unreasonable surface disturbances, and complies with all applicable lease requirements, land and resource management plans, regulations, and laws. Road constructed or reconstructed must be decommissioned when no longer needed upon expiration of the lease, contract, or permit, whichever is sooner.

OTHER FOREST PLAN SPECIAL AREAS

The Idaho Roadless Rule identified approximately 345,100 acres of roadless areas that are already part of other land classification systems – such as research natural areas, wild and scenic rivers, special interest areas, and the like (appendix H, table H-9) – that are governed by specific Agency directives and forest plan direction. These forest plan special areas are included for the sake of completeness; however, the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule does not recommend management direction for these lands, which would continue to be governed by forest plans.

1.5 Decision Framework

The Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture, or his designee will consider establishing regulation direction for timber cutting, sale or removal; road construction/reconstruction; and discretionary mineral activities on NFS lands in Idaho Roadless Areas and will determine whether or not to:

- Promulgate a rule based on the Petition (Proposed Action),
- Promulgate a rule based on a modified Petition (alternatives), or
- Not promulgate a rule (no action).

1.6 Public Involvement

The management of undeveloped areas of the NFS has been a topic of ongoing discussion since the 1920s. In the past 10 years, several formal public processes have been initiated. These include the involvement of the public in developing the 2001 Roadless Rule, the 2005 State Petition Rule, individual forest plan revisions, and most recently, the Idaho State Roadless Petition. Overall the public response represents two main points of view on natural resource management and decision-making regarding the management of inventoried roadless areas:

1. An emphasis on environmental protection and preservation, and support for making decisions about roadless area management at the national level;
2. An emphasis on responsible active management, and support for making decisions about roadless area management at the local level.

2001 ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION RULE (2001 ROADLESS RULE)

The Forest Service received more than 360,000 individual responses, representing more than 500,000 comments, in response to its 1999 notice of intent to promulgate a rule. Close to 1.2 million responses were received by the Forest Service on the proposed 2001 Roadless Rule and draft EIS during their comment period (USDA Forest Service 2000p). More than one million responses were form letters initiated by national interest groups. Agency responses to comments on the draft EIS are contained in Volume 3, Agency Responses to Public Comments, Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation Final EIS (USDA, Forest Service, 2000). Responses in Volume 3 relevant to the final rule are summarized in the preamble to the final rule published in the *Federal Register* on January 12, 2001 (USDA Forest Service 2001).

2005 STATE PETITIONS RULE FOR INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREA MANAGEMENT (STATE PETITIONS RULE)

On May 4, 2001, the Secretary reaffirmed the Administration's commitment to providing protection for inventoried roadless areas in NFS lands. However, acknowledging concerns raised by local communities, Tribes, and States affected by the 2001 Roadless Rule, the Secretary also indicated that the Department would fairly address those concerns by re-examining the rule with a responsible and balanced approach.

On July 10, 2001, the Forest Service published an advanced notice of proposed rule in the *Federal Register* (USDA Forest Service 2001a) seeking public comment about how best to proceed with long-term protection and management of roadless areas. During the public comment period, which closed on September 11, 2001, the Forest Service received more than 726,000 responses.

A proposed rule was published in the *Federal Register* on July 16, 2004 (USDA Forest Service 2004). Approximately 1.8 million comments were received from a wide variety of respondents. Responses relevant to the final rule are summarized in the preamble to the final rule published in the *Federal Register* on May 13, 2005 (USDA Forest Service 2005).

FOREST PLANNING

Public involvement has been extensive, from the development of the first generation of land management planning (forest planning) in the 1980s through subsequent revisions of those plans. Moreover, one of the key issues in each public involvement process has been the management of inventoried roadless areas. Local, regional, and national comments have been received during these extensive public processes. Forests revising their plans use a collaborative process for working with the public on the management of roadless areas. Five Idaho forests have completed revisions of their plans, three are in progress, and two have not initiated revision.

IDAHO STATE PETITION

On June 23, 2005, the Governor of Idaho announced that the State would develop a petition pursuant to the State Petitions Rule. In that announcement, the Governor solicited the help of local units of government to invite local communities to develop (through a public process) specific recommendations for inventoried roadless areas in portions of the national forests within their counties.

Following that announcement, local communities under the leadership of their respective county commissioners outlined a process for providing written recommendations to the Governor for review. Affected county commissioners held a series of public meetings to solicit public comment and develop their recommendations. Statewide, approximately 50 public meetings were held. To provide guidance and assistance in the process, a representative from either the Governor's Office or the Governor's Office of Species Conservation attended nearly every meeting. In addition to those meetings, the Governor's staff explained the Governor's vision for his local process during at least 10 additional meetings across the State. Because of the high volume of comments received, the county commissioners hired two independent contractors to compile submitted comments and prepare the commissioners' final recommendations to the Governor.

The State received comments or recommendations from 66 organizations, 30 counties, and 1,596 individuals. Some responses focused on individual roadless areas. Based on the comments submitted by the commissioners, individuals, and organizations, the Governor's staff developed management recommendations for each individual roadless area for the Governor's consideration. After development of the initial recommendations, the State engaged the Native American Tribes in Idaho, as fellow sovereigns, in discussions about these recommendations. The State of Idaho also

contacted neighboring States to ensure inter-roadless area consistency. Based on the information gathered, the Governor assigned the management emphasis and the uses that would be permissible or prohibited for each management area.

The Governor's Petition demonstrates substantial engagement with local units of government, tribal governments, and the public at large, and well represents those who know, live, work, and recreate on these lands.

ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RACNAC)

The RACNAC was chartered by the Secretary to provide a national perspective on individual State petitions regarding roadless area management. On November 29 and 30, 2006, Governor James Risch presented the Idaho State Petition to the RACNAC. They also heard comments from other State and Forest Service officials, and nine members of the public, including one State-level organization and three national organizations (RACNAC 2006). These public comments were transmitted to the Forest Service and considered in the development of this EIS.

SCOPING

A notice of intent to prepare an EIS on "Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Lands in Idaho" was published in the *Federal Register*, April 10, 2007 (USDA Forest Service 2007). About 38,000 comments were received, of which 32,000 were form letters⁸, while the remaining letters consisted of original responses or form letters with additional original text. These comments were evaluated and summarized in a report called Summary of Public Comments, which is provided in the Scoping section of the project record. The summary analyzes the public's responses specific to the Proposed Action, identifying significant concerns and issues.

⁸ Form letters are five or more letters that contain identical text but are submitted by different people.

1.7 Issues

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 CFR §1501.7 direct agencies to “Determine the scope (§1508.25) and the significant issues to be analyzed in depth in the environmental impact statement” and to “identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review (§1506.3).” Scope consists of the range of actions, alternatives, and impacts to be considered in an EIS (40 CFR §1508.24). The scope of this EIS is defined by the Proposed Action, alternatives developed to address significant issues while meeting the purpose of and need for action, and the potential impacts identified in the significant issues.

The Forest Service identified as significant issues those resources that could directly or indirectly be affected as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action.⁹ The Forest Service identified the following significant issues during scoping. The issues represent possible effects of implementing the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule.

CHANGES TO ROADLESS CHARACTERISTICS

Idaho Roadless Areas provide large, relatively undisturbed landscapes. Key values or features characterize these areas and are briefly described below. Over time, whether it was in the development of the 2001 Roadless Rule, the 2005 State Petition Rule, or individual forest plans, the public has identified as an issue any significant changes to these roadless characteristics within individual Idaho Roadless Areas. The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would provide management direction regarding timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction, and discretionary mineral activities in Idaho Roadless Areas. Implementation of this management direction could result in opportunities to change roadless characteristics.

1. **High quality or undisturbed soil, water, and air.** These three key resources are the foundation on which other resources depend. Healthy watersheds catch, store, and safely release water over time and in this way they:
 - a. Protect downstream communities from flooding;
 - b. Provide clean water for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses;
 - c. Help maintain abundant and healthy fish and wildlife populations; and
 - d. Provide the basis for many forms of outdoor recreation.

The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the ability of a roadless area to provide high quality soil, water, and air.

⁹ Issues identified as not being significant were those: (1) outside the scope of the Proposed Action; (2) already decided by law or other regulation; (3) unrelated to the decision to be made; or (4) conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence. A list of non-significant issues and reasons regarding their categorization as non-significant is provided in the project record.

2. **Sources of public drinking water.** NFS lands include watersheds that are important sources of public drinking water. Several Idaho Roadless Areas contain all or portions of municipal watersheds, which contribute drinking water to the citizens of Idaho. Careful management of these municipal watersheds is crucial in maintaining the flow and affordability of clean water to a growing population. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the ability of a roadless area to provide quality sources of drinking water.
3. **Diversity of plant and animal communities.** Because of the absence of roads and the disturbance activities that accompany them, Idaho Roadless Areas are more likely than roaded areas to support enhanced ecosystem health, including the diversity of native and desired nonnative plant and animal communities. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the degree to which a roadless area provides for the diversity of plant and animal communities.
4. **Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species and for those species dependent on large, undisturbed areas of land.** Idaho Roadless Areas are biological strongholds and refugia for many species. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the condition of biological strongholds and refugia in Idaho Roadless Areas.
5. **Reference landscapes.** The body of knowledge is limited with respect to the effects of management activities over long periods of time and on large landscapes. Reference landscapes, which are landscapes with minimal human disturbance, are a barometer for measuring the effects of development on other parts of the landscape. Roadless areas, because of their size, lend themselves to serve as reference landscapes. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the condition and amount of reference landscapes.
6. **Primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, and semi-primitive motorized classes of recreation.** Idaho Roadless Areas often provide outstanding dispersed recreation opportunities, such as camping, canoeing, cross-country skiing, fishing, hiking, hunting, picnicking, and wildlife viewing. Although roadless areas may have many wilderness-like attributes, roadless areas often allow the use of mountain bikes and other mechanized means of travel, unlike wilderness areas. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the type of dispersed recreation opportunities in Idaho Roadless Areas.
7. **Natural-appearing landscapes with high scenic quality.** High-quality scenery, especially scenery with natural-appearing landscapes, is a primary reason people choose certain settings in which to recreate. High-quality scenery can contribute directly to real estate values in nearby communities and residential areas. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could change the scenic quality in a roadless area.

8. **Traditional cultural properties and sacred sites.** Traditional cultural properties are places, sites, structures, art, or objects that have played an important role in the cultural history of a group. Sacred sites are places that hold a special religious significance to a group. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could affect traditional cultural properties and sacred sites in Idaho Roadless Areas.
9. **Other locally identified unique characteristics.** Idaho Roadless Areas may offer other locally identified unique characteristics and values. Examples include uncommon geological formations, which are valued for their scientific and scenic qualities, or unique wetland complexes. The Proposed Action would not apply management direction to 354,100 acres of special areas that are already part of another land classification system. These include research natural areas, wild and scenic rivers, special interest areas, and others (see appendix H, table H-9); therefore, the Proposed Action would not affect locally identified unique characteristics.

ABILITY TO ADDRESS FOREST HEALTH AND FIRE ECOLOGY

The National Fire Plan (NFP) was developed in August 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season (USDA Forest Service, USDI 2000). The NFP established an intensive, long-term hazardous fuel reduction program in response to the risks posed by heavy fuel loads. In 2002, President Bush initiated the Healthy Forests Initiative, and in 2003 the Healthy Forests Restoration Act was passed. This initiative and act were designed to equip land managers with additional tools to achieve long-term objectives in reducing hazardous fuels and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could affect the ability to reduce hazardous fuels and restore fire-adapted ecosystems in Idaho Roadless Areas.

ABILITY TO UTILIZE MINERALS AND ENERGY RESOURCES

Portions of Idaho Roadless Areas contain important mineral and energy resources. The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could affect the ability to recover mineral and energy resources in Idaho Roadless Areas.

SOCIAL FACTORS

Public involvement has identified competing social views of how Idaho Roadless Areas should be managed. These competing views can be placed in two categories: utilitarian or naturalist (see chapter 3, Social and Economic, for further discussion). The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could affect one or both of these views.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

The prohibitions and permissions in the Proposed Action could affect economic factors including timber outputs, energy and non-energy minerals, forest-dependent communities, and recreation special uses.

CHAPTER 2. ALTERNATIVES, INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and compares the alternatives considered for Roadless Area Conservation; National Forest System Land in Idaho. It includes a description and a map of each alternative considered (map packet). This chapter also presents the alternatives in comparative form, sharply defining the differences between each alternative and providing the decision maker and the public with a clear basis for choice by the decision maker. Some of the information used to compare the alternatives is based on the environmental, social, and economic effects of implementing each alternative.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulation at 40 CFR 1501.2(c) states that Federal agencies shall:

Study, develop, and describe appropriate alternatives to recommended courses of action in any proposal which involves unresolved conflict concerning alternative uses of available resources....

The scoping process was used to: (1) identify significant issues deserving of detailed study (see chapter 1 for a discussion); and (2) identify unresolved conflicts associated with the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule (Proposed Action), which may help identify alternatives. All comments were reviewed to determine whether they identified significant issues or unresolved conflicts.

In addition, the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001 Roadless Rule) and individual forest plans (Existing Plans) were brought forward as alternatives because they address many of the public's significant issues and provide a range of reasonable options for managing inventoried roadless areas.

Throughout this document, all acreage values are approximate and have been rounded.

2.2 Alternatives Considered in Detail

This draft environmental impact statement (EIS) examines three alternatives establishing regulatory direction:

1. Direction based on the 2001 Roadless Rule (2001 Roadless Rule);
2. Direction based on existing forest plans (Existing Plans);
3. Direction based on the Petition, as presented to the Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee (RACNAC) (Idaho Roadless Rule).

The Idaho Roadless Rule recommends Idaho Roadless Areas be managed within a spectrum of five management themes: Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance, Backcountry/Restoration, and General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland. To aid in analyzing effects and to better compare alternatives, the management prescriptions in the 2001 Roadless Rule and Existing Plans were placed in a management theme that would be the closest equivalent (appendix B). Table 2-1 describes each theme's management emphasis and the number of acres represented by that theme, by alternative. To account for all acreage identified as a roadless area, the table lists other forest plan special areas (FPSA), which are not affected by this proposed rule (appendix H, table H-9).

Table 2-1. Number of acres represented by Idaho Roadless Rule themes and equivalent themes for the 2001 Roadless Rule and Existing Plans

Theme	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
<i>Wild Land Recreation.</i> These lands would show little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes would be predominant	0	1,320,800	1,378,600
<i>Primitive.</i> These lands would remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities while allowing for limited forest health activities including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species and protecting ecological integrity.	0	2,131,400	1,656,300
<i>Special Areas of Historic and Tribal Significance.</i> These areas would remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities in order to maintain their unique Tribal or historic characteristics	0	0	68,600
<i>Backcountry/Restoration.</i> These areas would retain their undeveloped character, while providing a variety of recreation opportunities, and allowing for limited forest health activities, including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species, and maintaining or restoring the characteristics of ecosystem and structure.	9,304,200	4,244,500	5,246,100
<i>General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland.</i> These areas would provide a variety of goods and services as well as a broad range of recreational opportunities, and conservation of natural resources.	0	1,262,400	609,500
Other lands*			
<i>Forest plan special areas</i> (appendix H, table H-9)	0	345,100	345,100
Totals	9,304,200	9,304,200	9,304,200

* The Idaho Roadless Rule would not apply to these other special areas.

The following subsections describe each alternative and how it relates to the five management themes identified in the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule. Each alternative addresses only management actions associated with timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction, or future discretionary mineral-related actions for saleable or leasable minerals, because the Petition, similar to other efforts, has identified these particular activities as having the greatest likelihood of altering roadless area values and characteristics. Road construction/reconstruction or timber cutting under any alternative would be designed based on applicable forest plan standards and guidelines (for example, protection of riparian areas or habitat needs for species).

ALTERNATIVE 1. THE 2001 ROADLESS RULE (NO ACTION)¹⁰

This alternative presents a roadless area management regime based on the approach set out in the 2001 Roadless Rule (See 36 CFR, 294, Subpart B [2004]; 66 Fed. Reg. 3244 [Jan. 12, 2001]). The purpose of the 2001 Roadless Rule was to ensure that inventoried roadless areas sustain their values for this generation and for future generations. By sustaining these values, a continuous flow of benefits associated with healthy watersheds and ecosystems was expected.

Timber cutting activities and road construction/reconstruction were identified as having the greatest likelihood of altering and fragmenting landscapes, and the greatest likelihood of resulting in an immediate, long-term loss of roadless area values and characteristics. The 2001 Roadless Rule was the product of a national process and established management direction at the national level with limited focus on State or local issues.

Theme assignment. Management direction in the 2001 Roadless Rule is generally equivalent to the Backcountry/Restoration theme in the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule and applies to all 9.3 million acres of Idaho Roadless Areas.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. The 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits timber cutting, sale, or removal in inventoried roadless areas except as provided in the following situations:

- 1a. To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat;
- 1b. To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure, such as to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects, which would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period;
2. When timber cutting is incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited;
3. For personal or administrative use;

¹⁰ As of the printing of this draft EIS, the 2001 Roadless Rule is in operation by court order and represents the legal status quo and operating management direction for these lands. In the absence of the 2001 Roadless Rule, management would be governed by each forest's land management plan and any applicable agency interim direction.

4. Where roadless characteristics have been substantially altered in a portion of the roadless area because of the construction of a classified road and subsequent timber harvest.

Road construction/reconstruction. The 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits road construction and reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas except as provided in the following situations:

1. A road is needed to protect health and safety in cases of imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event that without intervention would cause the loss of life or property; or
2. A road is needed to conduct a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), or to conduct a natural resource restoration action under CERLA, section 311 of the Clean Water Act, or the Oil Pollution Act; or
3. A road is needed pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights or as provided for by statute, treaty; or
4. Road realignment is needed to prevent irreparable resource damage that arises from the design, location, use or deterioration of a road and cannot be mitigated by road maintenance. Road realignment may occur under this paragraph only if the road is deemed essential for public or private access, natural resource management, or public health or safety.
5. Road construction is needed to implement a road safety improvement project on a classified road determined to be hazardous based on accident experience or accident potential on that road; or
6. The Secretary of Agriculture determines that a Federal aid highway project, authorized pursuant to Title 23 of the U.S. Code (23 USC), is in the public interest or is consistent with the purpose for which the land was reserved or acquired and no other reasonable and prudent alternatives exists; or
7. In conjunction with the continuation, extension, or renewal of an existing mineral lease on lands that are under lease by the Secretary of the Interior as of January 12, 2001, or for a new lease issued immediately upon expiration of an existing lease. Such road construction or reconstruction must be conducted in a manner that minimizes effects on surface resources, prevents unnecessary or unreasonable surface disturbance, and complies with all applicable lease requirements, land and resource management plan direction, regulations, and laws. Roads constructed or reconstructed pursuant to this paragraph must be obliterated when no longer needed for the purposes of the lease or upon termination or expiration of the lease, whichever is sooner.

Maintenance of classified roads is permissible in inventoried roadless areas.

Mineral activities. The 2001 Roadless Rule provides for the construction or reconstruction of roads when needed in conjunction with the continuation, extension, or renewal of a mineral lease in existence as of January 12, 2001. Further, the rule allows for road construction or reconstruction in the case of reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty. This would include roads associated with locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872. The 2001 Roadless Rule prohibits road construction and reconstruction associated with new mineral leases (after January 12, 2001) or to access mineral materials.

The 2001 Roadless Rule would allow surface occupancy for mineral leasing activities if roads were not required; it also would allow for the sale of mineral materials in all Idaho Roadless Areas.

Ability to change roadless area boundaries. Although the 2001 Roadless Rule mentions subsequent update or revision to inventoried roadless area maps, no specific change provision was provided in the rule.

ALTERNATIVE 2. EXISTING PLANS

Management direction in this alternative represents a roadless area management regime based on each forest's land and resource management plan (forest plan). Each forest's plan is unique to its planning area; collectively the forest plans provide a broad range of management from wilderness to intensive management. Overall, as national forests have revised their forest plans, the trend has been to move more roadless areas into management prescriptions that conserve roadless characteristics. When developing or revising their forest plans, each forest or group of forests collaborates with the public and interested parties to develop management direction for their roadless areas.

In Idaho, five forests have revised their plans since 1997.¹¹ Revisions of seven other forest plans within Idaho are ongoing¹² and are unlikely to be finalized prior to this rule.

Generally, forest plans allow or limit an array of activities in roadless areas. To help compare alternatives, the management prescriptions in the existing plans were placed in the management themes that would be the closest equivalent to those set forth in the Petition.

Theme assignment. The following subsections describe how management prescriptions in Existing Plans corresponds to the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule themes. Not all management prescriptions in Existing Plans correspond exactly with the themes; for example, some prescriptions may limit road construction for some activities in General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland, or in Backcountry/Restoration, whereas the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule does not. For a comparison of the Idaho Roadless Rule with the management prescriptions for each national forest, see appendix B.

¹¹ Boise, Caribou, Payette, Sawtooth, Targhee.

¹² Challis, Clearwater, Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, Nez Perce, Salmon, Wallowa Whitman.

Forest plan special areas (appendix H, table H-9) include management direction associated with research natural areas; wild and scenic rivers (designated, eligible, and suitable); special interest areas; and other unique areas. The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would not apply to the 345,100 of forest plan special areas embedded in Idaho Roadless Areas.

Wild Land Recreation

Areas recommended for wilderness designation in Existing Plans are equivalent to the Wild Land Recreation theme; therefore, limited activities are allowed. Road construction/reconstruction is prohibited except when provided by statute or treaty, or pursuant to valid existing rights or other legal duty of the United States. Timber cutting is permitted only where it would be incidental to other activities (such as trail construction). Approximately 1,320,800 acres recommended as wilderness would be managed in a manner comparable to the Wild Land Recreation theme set out in the Idaho Roadless Rule.

Primitive

The Primitive theme lands most closely resemble areas managed for non-motorized backcountry recreation. Timber cutting may be done on a very limited basis and in response to a threat¹³ (for example, insect and disease, windstorms, hazardous fuels). Typically, no road construction/reconstruction is allowed except in some cases to access valid existing rights or minerals (locatable, leasable, and saleable). Approximately 2,131,400 acres would be managed in a manner comparable to the Primitive theme.

Backcountry/Restoration (Backcountry)

Backcountry/Restoration (Backcountry) areas would typically be managed for other resource benefits, such as wildlife or recreation, not typically including timber production. However, some prescriptions have dual objectives – timber production and consideration of wildlife resources. Timber cutting is allowed, usually to a lesser extent than would be allowed in General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland, when conducted for other resource benefits. Road construction/reconstruction may be allowed under certain circumstances, but typically includes substantial restrictions, such as road closures or use of temporary roads. Existing Plans call for approximately 4,244,500 acres to be managed in a manner similar to the Backcountry theme.

General Forest, Rangeland, or Grassland (GFRG)

Existing Plans direct that certain areas – represented by the General Forest, Rangeland, or Grassland (GFRG) theme – be managed to provide a variety of goods and services and a broad range of recreational opportunities, and also to ensure adequate flexibility to maintain forest, rangeland, and grassland health. These areas may be managed for

¹³ Reference the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-148).

timber production, where intensive forest management would be expected, including associated road construction/reconstruction. Existing Plans call for approximately 1,262,400 acres to be managed in a manner similar to the GFRG theme.

Mineral activities. Mineral resources are addressed in each of the equivalent themes in a variety of ways under Existing Plans, from limited to full development (see appendix B).

Ability to change roadless area boundaries. In the absence of the 2001 Roadless Rule or other regulatory direction, forest plans could create, delete, or amend inventoried roadless areas through plan amendment or revision.

ALTERNATIVE 3. IDAHO ROADLESS RULE¹⁴ (PROPOSED ACTION)

The Proposed Action represents a strategy for the conservation and management of Idaho Roadless Areas that takes into account State and local situations and unique resource management challenges, while it recognizes and integrates the national interest in maintaining roadless characteristics.

Building from each forest's existing or proposed forest plan¹⁵, the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule assigned individual roadless areas within five broad management themes: Wild Land Recreation, Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance, Primitive, Backcountry/Restoration, and General Forest, Rangeland and Grassland. These themes span a continuum (fig. 1-1) that includes at one end, a restrictive approach emphasizing passive management and natural restoration approaches, and on the other end, active management designed to accomplish sustainable protection of roadless characteristics. The continuum accounts for stewardship of the uniqueness of each individual roadless area's landscape and the quality of roadless characteristics in that area.

The Idaho Roadless Rule does not apply to other special areas (referred to as "forest plan special areas" such as research natural areas; wild and scenic rivers (designated, eligible, and suitable); special interest areas; visual corridors, and the like (table 2-1 and appendix H)). These areas would be managed according to applicable current and future forest plan direction. These lands are included in the discussion for sake of completeness; however, the Proposed Action does not recommend management direction for the 345,100 acres found in these lands.

Allocation to a specific theme is not intended to mandate or direct the Forest Service to propose or implement any action; rather the themes provide an array of permitted and prohibited activities related to timber cutting, sale, and removal; road construction/reconstruction; and discretionary mineral activities.

¹⁴ The Idaho Roadless Rule includes clarifications made by Governor Risch at the November 29 and 30, 2007, RACNAC meeting. Updates are reflected in appendix H.

¹⁵ Existing plans referred to here include the Boise, Caribou, Challis, Payette, Salmon, Sawtooth, Caribou, Wallow-Whitman. Proposed plans referred to here are the Clearwater, Idaho Panhandle, Kootenai, Nez Perce.

As in the 2001 Roadless Rule, timber cutting and road construction/reconstruction are identified as the management activities having the greatest potential for altering landscapes and causing immediate changes to roadless values and characteristics.

The Proposed Action also establishes prohibitions and permissions for discretionary mineral activities because of potential effects on roadless characteristics. Further, the Proposed Action allows for road construction/reconstruction in the case of reserved or outstanding rights, or as provided for by statute or treaty. This would include roads associated with locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872. Finally, the Proposed Action provides additional direction regarding common variety minerals, which are the sole discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretary) to manage.

Again, like the 2001 Roadless Rule, the Proposed Action does not seek to restrict retroactively any existing mineral authorizations¹⁶. However, the Proposed Action would establish limitations on the future exercise of discretion available to Forest Service line officers. It does not seek to impose restrictions on decision-making that Congress has assigned to the Department of the Interior. The Proposed Action also does not affect or seek a withdrawal of the mineral estate; such matters are subject to a separate statutory process established in the Federal Land Policy Management Act (FLPMA). Instead, the Proposed Action seeks direction to be applied where Forest Service line officers have discretionary authority to influence whether and how the activity may occur.

The Proposed Action does not address grazing, travel management, or wildland fire use. Management direction related to those activities would be regulated by other existing regulatory and analytical processes (for example, travel planning).

The following subsections describe each theme's desired condition, management intent, acres, and specific permissions and prohibitions.

Wild Land Recreation (WLR)

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area assigned to lands that were generally identified during the forest planning process as recommended for wilderness designation. These lands would show little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes would be predominant.

Approximately 1,378,600 acres have been identified for inclusion as Wild Land Recreation areas.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. Prohibited except for personal or administrative use; or where incidental to other management actions (such as trail clearing).

¹⁶ Mineral authorizations include those for saleable, leasable, and locatable minerals.

Road construction/reconstruction. Prohibited except when provided by statute or treaty, or pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights or other legal duty of the United States.

Mineral activities. No recommendation, authorization, or consent to surface occupancy, or road construction or reconstruction associated with new mineral leases. The sale of common variety minerals would be prohibited. Locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872, including road construction and reconstruction, would not be affected.

Primitive

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area that would be managed to remain relatively undisturbed by human management activities while allowing for limited forest health activities including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species and protecting the ecological integrity.

Approximately 1,656,300 acres are identified for inclusion as Primitive.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. Prohibited unless existing roads or aerial systems are used and the responsible official determines that:

1. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber would maintain or improve one or more of the roadless characteristics and is needed for one of the following purposes:
 - a. To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat; or
 - b. To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects; or
2. The cutting, sale or removal of timber is:
 - a. Personal or administrative use (36 CFR §223); or
 - b. Incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited (e.g., trail clearing).

The wording for exception (1)a. is modified from the 2001 Roadless Rule. The 2001 Roadless Rule uses the terms “reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects, within the range of variability that would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period;” the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule uses the terms “or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects.” The change in language is focused on allowing activities, when necessary and dictated by site-specific circumstance, to perform hazardous fuel treatment in Primitive areas at significant risk of wildland fire. It is anticipated that timber cutting would be very infrequent in the Primitive theme.

Treatments would be designed based on site-specific needs to reduce any significant risks or to trend toward historic range of conditions. Determination of significant risk would be guided by the interagency *Healthy Forests Initiative* and *Healthy Forests Restoration Act: Interim Field Guide* (USDA Forest Service, USDI BLM 2004).

Road construction/reconstruction. Prohibited except when provided by statute or treaty, or pursuant to reserved or outstanding rights or other legal duty of the United States.

Mineral activities. No recommendation, authorization, or consent to surface occupancy or road construction or reconstruction associated with new mineral or energy leases. The sale of common variety minerals would be prohibited. Locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872, including road construction and reconstruction, would not be affected.

Special Areas of Historic or Tribal Significance (SAHTS)

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area managed to be relatively undisturbed by human management activities in order to maintain their unique Tribal or historic characteristics.

This theme consists of three areas:

1. Pilot Knob located within the Pilot Knob (#849) Roadless Area on the Nez Perce National Forest;
2. Nimiipuu and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trails located within the Bighorn-Weitas (#306), Eldorado Creek (#312), Hoodoo (#301), North Lochsa Slope (#307), and Weir-Post Office Creek (#308) Roadless Areas on the Clearwater National Forest; and
3. The Pioneer Area located within the Mallard Larkins (#300) Roadless Area on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest.

Lands within the SAHTS theme would be managed the same as the Primitive theme. Approximately 68,600 acres have been identified for inclusion as SAHTS.

Backcountry/Restoration (Backcountry or BCR)

The Backcountry theme would be managed to retain the undeveloped character, while providing a variety of recreation opportunities, and allowing for limited forest health activities, including preserving biological strongholds for a variety of species, and maintaining or restoring the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure.

Approximately 5,246,100 acres have been identified for inclusion as Backcountry.

Timber cutting, sale, or removal. As in the 2001 Roadless Rule (with one modification), timber cutting, sale, or removal is permissible under the following circumstances:

1. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber would maintain or improve one or more of the roadless characteristics and is needed for one of the following purposes:
 - a. To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat; or
 - b. To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects; or
2. The cutting, sale or removal of timber is:

- a. Personal or administrative use (36 CFR §223); or
- b. Incidental to the implementation of a management activity not otherwise prohibited (e.g., trail clearing
- c. It is within a substantially altered portion of an Idaho Roadless Area designated as Backcountry/Restoration, which has been altered because of the construction of a forest road and subsequent timber harvest.

The wording for exception (1)a. is modified from the 2001 Roadless Rule. The 2001 Roadless Rule uses the terms “reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire effects, within the range of variability that would be expected to occur under natural disturbance regimes of the current climatic period”; the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule uses the terms “or to reduce the significant risk of wildland fire effects.” As with the Primitive theme, the change in language is focused on allowing activities, when necessary and dictated by site-specific circumstance to perform hazardous fuel treatment in Backcountry areas at significant risk of wildland fire. It is anticipated that timber cutting would be infrequent in the Backcountry theme, focusing on what is left behind versus what is removed.

Treatments would be designed based on site-specific needs to reduce any significant risks or to trend toward historic range of conditions. Determination of significant risk would be guided by the interagency *Healthy Forests Initiative* and *Healthy Forests Restoration Act: Interim Field Guide* (USDA Forest Service, USDI BLM 2004).

Road construction/reconstruction. Much like the 2001 Roadless Rule, road construction and reconstruction would be permissible if one or more of the following are met:

1. A road is needed to protect public health and safety in cases of significant risk or imminent threat of flood, fire, or other catastrophic event that, without intervention, would cause the loss of life or property, or to facilitate forest health activities permitted under timber cutting, sale, or removal (1) above;
2. A road is needed to conduct a response action under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) or to conduct a natural resource restoration action under CERCLA, section 311 of the Clean Water Act, or the Oil Pollution Act; or
3. A road is needed pursuant to statute, treaty, reserved or outstanding rights, or other legal duty of the United States; or
4. Road realignment is needed to prevent resource damage that arises from the design, location, use, or deterioration of a road and cannot be mitigated by road maintenance. Road realignment may occur only if the road is deemed essential for public or private access, natural resource management, or public health and safety; or
5. Road construction is needed to implement a road safety improvement project on a road that has been determined to be hazardous based on accident experience or accident potential on that road; or

6. The Secretary of Agriculture determined that a Federal aid highway project, authorized pursuant to Title 23 of the U.S. Code (23 USC), is in the public interest or is consistent with the purpose for which the land was reserved or acquired and no other reasonable and prudent alternative exists; or
7. A road is needed in conjunction with activities permissible under the limited mineral exceptions for Backcountry.

Under (1) above, the phrase “significant risk” is an addition to “imminent threat” which is the phrasing in the 2001 Roadless Rule. In addition the phrase “or to facilitate forest health activities permitted under timber cutting, sale, or removal” was added. The change in the text is focused on allowing forest health activities when necessary and dictated by site-specific circumstance to perform expedited hazardous fuel treatment in Backcountry areas at significant risk of wildfire and insect and disease epidemics. The Forest Service and State do not intend this change in language to be construed as giving permission to build roads in areas designated as Backcountry for the purpose of engaging in *routine* forest management activities as denoted by the use of the words “significant risk”. The addition is intended to provide additional flexibility where site-specific conditions pose a significant risk of wildland fire.

Although the principle objective for this adjustment is to protect at-risk communities and municipal water supply systems from adverse effects of wildland fire, this provision also contemplates access for: (1) areas where wind throw, blowdown, ice storm damage, or the existence or imminent threat of an insect or disease epidemic is significantly threatening ecosystem components or resource values that may contribute to significant risk of wildland fire; and (2) areas where wildland fire poses a threat to, and where the natural fire regimes are important for, threatened and endangered species or their habitat, consistent with the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA P.L. 108-148).

New roads that would be constructed would be temporary, unless the responsible official¹⁷ determines that a permanent road meets the exceptions above and the addition of a forest road would not substantially alter roadless characteristics.

Mineral activities. No recommendation, authorization, or consent to road construction or reconstruction associated with new mineral leases, except such road construction or reconstruction may be authorized in association with phosphate leasing. Leasing instruments that allow surface use or occupancy are permissible if they do not require road construction or reconstruction. Locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872 would not be affected, including road construction and reconstruction.

The Forest Service would not authorize sale of common variety mineral materials, but may authorize the use or sale of common variety minerals, and associated road

¹⁷ Responsible official in this context refers to the Forest Service line officer responsible for making the site-specific decision.

construction or reconstruction to access these minerals if the use of these minerals is incidental to activity allowed under this rule.

General Forest, Rangeland, and Grassland (GFRG)

A classification of an Idaho Roadless Area that would be managed to provide a variety of goods and services as well as a broad range of recreational opportunities, and conservation of natural resources. The GFRG theme includes lands that are forested, rangeland or grassland. About 240,000 acres of the GFRG theme are non-forest.

Road construction/reconstruction and timber cutting would be permissible and there would be no prohibitions on mineral activities except as addressed in existing or proposed forest plans.

When allowed under this theme or the Backcountry theme, road construction or reconstruction associated with mining activities would be conducted in a manner that minimizes effects on surface resources, prevents unnecessary or unreasonable surface disturbances, and complies with all applicable lease requirements, forest plan direction, regulations, and laws. Roads constructed or reconstructed would be decommissioned when they are no longer needed or when the lease, contract, or permit expires, whichever is sooner.

Ability to change Idaho Roadless Area management. The Proposed Action would provide for a process for administrative corrections, as well as other modifications to the management of Idaho Roadless Areas in response to changed conditions or other need.

Administrative corrections include, but are not limited to, adjustments that remedy clerical, typographical, mapping errors, or improvements in mapping technology. Administrative corrections would not require a particular process and would be effective upon public notice.

The Chief of the Forest Service may add, remove, or modify the designations and management classifications based on changed circumstances or public need. Modifications would be made only after public notice, and those deemed significant would require public involvement comparable to rulemaking – that is, notice and comment. Factors to be considered in assessing significance include location and size, degree of change, and the purpose of the modification. Non-significant modifications would require a minimum 30-day public notice prior to becoming effective.

Examples when rulemaking would not be expected include the following: (1) establishment by the Forest Service of a research natural area in a roadless area designated as Primitive; (2) redesignation of a small portion of Backcountry adjacent to a large block of GFRG into the GFRG theme; (3) redesignation of a small portion of the Backcountry theme adjacent to a large block of Primitive into the Primitive theme.

Examples when rulemaking would be expected include the following: (1) approving the use of lands designated as Primitive to construct and operate an all-season resort

complex; (2) geothermal exploration has discovered a significant energy field in an area designated as Primitive and the Forest Service proposes that a portion of the roadless area be designated as GFRG to allow development and transmission line corridors; (3) during forest plan revision, the Forest Service recommends two primitive areas for wilderness designation and consequently proposes their themes be changed to Wild Land Recreation.

2.3 Consideration of Comments

Federal agencies are required by NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14)¹⁸. People who commented during scoping suggested a number of different alternatives that reflect their values and preferred management options. The suggestions generally fall into four primary categories:

1. Distribution of management themes;
2. Additional conservation measures for GFRG;
3. Additional limitations;
4. Additional access.

The following subsections describe these suggestions and how they were considered.

DISTRIBUTION OF MANAGEMENT THEMES

Some people requested the acreage of GFRG be reduced. This suggestion is reflected in the 2001 Roadless Rule (alternative 1, No Action), which would have no lands in a management theme similar to GFRG. The Proposed Action would have 609,500 above the 2001 Roadless Rule in GFRG and the Existing Plans (alternative 2) would place 1,262,400 acres into GFRG. This spread of acreage represents a range of reasonable alternatives that provides a clear and sharply defined choice among the alternatives.

Some people requested areas that serve as key habitats for threatened and endangered listed salmon and trout be identified and be placed into a Wild Land Recreation or Primitive theme. The request reflects a desire for protections currently in place in all alternatives. Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), agencies seek to conserve threatened and endangered species through a variety of programs and mechanisms. Further, listed salmon and trout are protected in these areas through additional means, such as the Interim Strategy for Managing Anadromous Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California (PACFISH) and the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH), as well as other direction in existing plans (USDA Forest Service and USDI BLM, 1995; and USDA Forest Service, 1995).

¹⁸ General criteria for eliminating requests for additional management direction from detailed study included:

1. Management direction would not meet the purpose and need;
2. Management direction is not within the authority of the Forest Service;
3. Management direction is conjectural in nature or not supported by scientific evidence;
4. Management direction is already reflected in an alternative or does not contain a magnitude of change that provides a sharply different approach; or
5. Management direction does not pertain to Idaho Roadless Areas.

Of the 250 roadless areas, portions of 14 roadless areas, (appendix L, tables L-6 and L-7) are priority watersheds for listed Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Under the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule, none of these roadless areas would have GFRG. Most lands were placed in the Backcountry theme, which emphasizes preserving biological strongholds.

Some people requested the Wild Land Recreation theme be changed to Backcountry. This suggestion is reflected in the 2001 Roadless Rule, since all lands under the rule are managed similar to the Backcountry theme. Lands recommended for wilderness through forest plans would continue to be managed to maintain their wilderness characteristics.

ADDITIONAL CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR GFRG

Some people requested that additional protections be incorporated into the GFRG theme for stream segments with limited water quality, municipal watersheds, and habitats for threatened, endangered, and sensitive plant and animal species. This request would require the establishment of specific management direction for each of these resource areas. This type of direction is better addressed in forest plans because none of these elements are unique to roadless areas; therefore, this request is outside of the scope of the EIS. In the context of specific issues, these resource areas may be found outside as well as inside roadless areas. Management direction in existing and proposed plans generally provides direction for activities that occur in sensitive areas. In addition, laws and regulations such as the Clean Water Act and ESA provide further direction. All actions must adhere to these requirements. The purpose of this Proposed Action is not to determine the management direction for activities designed to meet other resource needs, but to determine what timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction, and discretionary mineral activities will be allowed in roadless areas.

ADDITIONAL LIMITATIONS

Some people asked for an alternative that imposes even stricter limitations on Idaho Roadless Areas than the 2001 Roadless Rule. The request does not provide further details; therefore, the Idaho Roadless Rule would meet this request, because it imposes stricter limitations than would the 2001 Roadless Rule on lands managed as Wild Land Recreation, encompassing about 1.378 million acres. These are areas where people can find outstanding opportunities for recreation, including exploration, solitude, risk, and challenge. In addition, the proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would impose stricter limitations for road construction on lands managed as Primitive or SAHTS, encompassing about 1.72 million acres. These are areas where people can find primitive recreation opportunities or areas of special historical or cultural significance.

To designate all the Idaho Roadless Areas to either of these themes would not meet the purpose and need to take into account State and local situations and unique resource

management challenges while recognizing and integrating the national interest in maintaining roadless characteristics while providing for management flexibility.

A similar request was also brought forward in the development of the 2001 Roadless Rule, where it was rejected because the scope of prohibited actions considered in detail was limited to timber harvest and road construction/reconstruction because these activities pose disproportionately greater risks of altering and fragmenting natural landscapes at regional and nation scales (USDA Forest Service, 2000 Vol. 1, 1-15 to 1-16).

Further, a similar request was made during the development of the Petition and was rejected, because it does not address uniqueness of each individual roadless area's landscapes and the quality of roadless characteristics in that area.

Some people asked to limit the exceptions that allow for logging and road construction. The request does not provide further details on the kinds or levels of limitations that should be implemented. As noted in the above response, when compared to the 2001 Roadless Rule, additional limitations for logging and road construction are provided in the Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, and SAHTS; therefore, the Idaho Roadless Rule addresses this request.

Some people asked to limit logging to fuels reduction in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would allow for timber cutting, sale, or removal of timber to maintain roadless characteristics by improving threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species or by maintaining or restoring ecosystem composition and structure; to reduce the significant risk of wildfire effects; for administrative and personal use; when the activity is incidental to other allowed management activities, such as trail construction; and when a roadless area had been substantially altered by previous timber harvest activities. Any of these circumstances could occur outside the WUI.

Limiting these activities to the WUI would not meet the purpose and need to maintain roadless characteristics – including providing habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species and protecting flows of public drinking water from critical watersheds – taking into account State and local situations and unique resource management challenges while providing for management flexibility.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe requested that all Idaho Roadless Areas within the Tribe's aboriginal territory (AT) be managed primarily to maintain water quality, native fish and wildlife, and plant diversity. Landscape diversity and watershed function should be maintained through natural ecological processes.

The 2001 Roadless Rule reflects this request and will be evaluated in the EIS.

The Tribe further requested that ecological and watershed functions should be protected by an expanding buffer of restored lands. The restoration buffers would be intended to protect ecological processes and functions within the roadless areas from degradation from surrounding landscapes, which have been extensively altered by past timber harvest and road building. Within the restoration buffers active

management may be use to control invasive weed species, reduce fuels, or control insects and disease. No permanent roads should be allowed. Existing roads should be maintained or reconstructed as needed to support restoration efforts. Resource extraction should be incidental to watershed restoration.

The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule, and the decision framework associated with the proposed rule, applies only to lands within Idaho Roadless Areas. This request would expand the scope of the proposed rule; therefore, because it is outside of the scope of this draft EIS, it will not be considered in detail. Management direction outside Idaho Roadless Areas is reflected in forest plans. The Idaho Panhandle, Clearwater, and Nez Perce National Forests are in the process of revising their plans. This request should be provided to these forests during the revision process.

Some people requested that locatable (hard rock) and leasable mining (oil, gas, phosphate, etc.) be prohibited in all roadless areas. Others requested that all roadless lands be withdrawn from these activities.

Like the 2001 Roadless Rule, the proposed rule does not seek to impose any limits regarding activities undertaken regarding locatable minerals, because these are considered non-discretionary actions and are subject to requirements under the General Mining Law of 1872. A decision to withdraw all Idaho Roadless Areas from mineral entry is outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and is at the discretion of the Department of the Interior, subject to environmental analysis and public involvement process. Further, such a restriction would not meet the purpose and need, which presents a strategy for the conservation and management of Idaho Roadless that takes into account State and local situations and unique resource management challenges.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has the exclusive authority to dispose of leasable mineral resources on NFS lands. However, BLM must have the consent of the Forest Service before it can lease oil, gas, or geothermal resources. As with locatable minerals, pursuing a complete withdrawal from leasing would not meet the purpose and need.

Some people requested road construction be limited to temporary roads.

The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule encourages the use of temporary roads but would not limit the use of permanent roads because constructing/reconstructing some roads as permanent roads may result in less resource damage, thereby maintaining a key roadless characteristic of healthy watersheds. For example, it may be better to construct roads associated with reserved or outstanding rights as permanent roads because long-term access is necessary and permanent roads generally have additional protections for limiting sediment. Once the use of a road is no longer necessary it can still be decommissioned.

MOTORIZED ACCESS

Some people requested an alternative that would convert roads closed to full-sized vehicles to all terrain vehicle (ATV) routes; designate all single-track trails on multiple-use lands as open to motorcycle use; mitigate the impacts from the loss of motorized access and recreation; provide motorized access to historic mines and cabins; provide for an adequate number of campsites and trailheads; develop a travel plan that would establish a 50/50 ratio for motorized/non-motorized trails; recognize and map primitive roads, trails, and single-track trails and allow use of these by appropriate vehicle; and allow greater motorized access in roadless areas.

When taken in total, the suggestions represent the mix of views and actions associated with a comprehensive travel management plan. The Proposed Action addresses only road construction and reconstruction. The Idaho Roadless Rule makes clear that travel-planning-related actions should be addressed through travel management planning and individual forest plans.

2.4 Responses to Other Questions Identified During Scoping

What are Idaho Roadless Areas? What are they based on? Are they different from the 2001 Roadless Rule?

The areas identified as Idaho Roadless Areas may be found the map packet, alternative maps and appendix C maps (maps of Idaho Roadless Areas by forest). These roadless areas are based on the most current inventory, found either in existing plans, proposed plans, or the 2001 Roadless Rule. In most cases, the boundaries from the three sources are the same. Where there are differences, several factors contributed (appendix A).

Most of the roadless area boundaries found in the 2001 Roadless Rule were based on forest plan inventories completed in the mid 1980s. Most of these inventories had not been updated for the 2001 Roadless Rule to reflect activities that had occurred in the 1990s. During forest plan revision, most forests updated their inventory according to Forest Service direction (Forest Service Handbook [FSH] 1909.12, Chapter 70). Some roadless areas decreased in size from Existing Plans or the 2001 Roadless Rule because development by timber sales and/or road construction had occurred during the past 15 years within those areas. Some were just mapping errors. Other areas increased in size, generally because of land exchanges or because development of some kind that was expected to occur at the time of forest plans did not happen.

Appendix A provides information regarding inventories for the 2001 Roadless Rule and Idaho Roadless Areas and summarizes the changes for each unit. Maps associated with appendix A may be found in the map packet.

What is the relationship between the Proposed Action and forest plans?

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (88 Stat. 476 *et seq.*), as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (90 Stat. 2949 *et seq.*; 16 USC 1601-1614), requires the Secretary to develop land and resource management plans (16 USC 1604) for each administrative unit of the Forest Service.

Forest plans are in place for all national forests in Idaho and provide a strategic vision for managing forests for the next 10 to 15 years. They establish the desired conditions to be achieved through the management of NFS lands to best meet the needs of the American people. The plans blend national and regional priorities with local forest capabilities and needs. Thus, each plan provides a vision of how its unit uniquely fits within a broader landscape and community context. Plans may contain standards or guidelines, which provide further direction for project planning and design. A basic requirement for any plan is that any direction established by a plan must be consistent with all laws and regulations.

Direction for the management of Idaho Roadless Areas, as outlined in the Petition, would be established in regulation. Regulations supercede forest plan direction and cannot be changed by forest plans. Therefore, future projects taken to implement the forest plan in roadless areas would be required to be consistent with the rule.

How would the Proposed Action influence future wilderness designations, specifically how and whether designation of a roadless area as Wild Land Recreation would affect current forest plan wilderness recommendations?

In general, the Wild Land Recreation theme lands were previously recommended as potential wilderness in existing and proposed plans. There are three instances where the Proposed Action would deviate from existing and/or proposed plans:

Boulder-White Clouds on the Sawtooth and Challis National Forests. About 191,100 acres are recommended wilderness under the Existing Plans. The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule would designate about 231,300 acres as Wild Land Recreation based on pending wilderness legislation. Some areas recommended for wilderness were changed to the Primitive theme because the pending legislation (Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CEIDRA, H.R.222, 2007)) did not include them; other areas were added because the pending legislation included them, for a net gain of 40,200 acres. Those lands not included in the bill were placed into the Primitive theme. These lands would still be considered as recommended wilderness under the forest plans, but the Primitive theme management direction would apply.

Mallard Larkins on the Idaho Panhandle and Clearwater National Forests. About 141,900 acres are recommended wilderness under the Existing Plans. The Proposed Action would designate about 108,900 acres to Wild Land Recreation based on the proposed revised forest plans. About 22,100 acres (Pioneer Area) were placed into SAHTS. The remaining 10,900 acres were placed into Backcountry based on recommendations by collaborative groups involved in forest plan revision.

Winegar Hole on the Targhee National Forest. About 2,600 acres are recommended wilderness under the Targhee forest plan. This area is adjacent to existing wilderness. The Proposed Action would place these acres into a Primitive theme because the Congress has already enacted wilderness legislation for the surrounding area and declined to incorporate these 2,600 acres into wilderness.

Recommended wilderness lands placed in the Wild Land Recreation theme would be managed in a more protective manner than under the 2001 Roadless Rule; for example, there would be more limited opportunities for timber cutting and/or road construction/reconstruction.

For those recommended wilderness lands placed in the Primitive theme, there would be more opportunities for timber cutting than under the Wild Land Recreation theme, but fewer than under the 2001 Roadless Rule. Further, the Proposed Action would have no effect on forest plan wilderness recommendations. Those designations would continue.

How does the proposed rule affect special areas, such as research natural areas or other legislated areas such as wild and scenic rivers? There are about 354,100 acres of existing special areas within Idaho Roadless Areas (table 2-1 and appendix H, table H-9). The proposed rule would not apply to these areas; management direction under existing plans would apply.

How does the proposed rule influence future considerations within these areas, such as travel management? The proposed rule directly affects only allowances for road construction and reconstruction; timber cutting, removal and sale; and discretionary mineral activities. It would not regulate travel management. However, as units engage in travel planning they would likely consider the management themes during the process.

How can changes be made to inventories? The 2001 Roadless Rule did not include a specific mechanism for changing roadless area boundaries or acres and the Forest Service has not established such direction. Past experience has shown that such direction is needed. The following provides some examples of why boundaries or acres may need to be adjusted:

Currently acres are calculated using geospatial information systems (GIS) technology. This technology is advancing in its precision. For example, GIS uses a process called Projections, in which a flat surface is projected around the earth's surface. The earth has a different curvature depending on where the area is located. In GIS these areas have been broken up into different units (which apply a certain curvature to that polygon). If the technician applies the polygon to the wrong unit, the acres will be wrong; therefore, there is a need to be able to correct this information.

Inventoried roadless area boundary lines may be misrepresented when newer information for roads or improvements are overlaid. For example, if roads have been identified using a global positioning system (GPS), this information is more accurate than a line drawn on a map. The boundary line should obviously follow the road and not go across it; therefore there would be a need to adjust the boundary.

Inventoried roadless area boundary lines may be misrepresented because they were developed at a different scale than the roads layer. This may cause the boundary line to weave on one side of a road to another, whereas in reality the boundary should be just on one side; therefore, there would be a need to reconcile the boundary.

In some cases, there are just errors. Roads or improvements such as facilities may have been included in the boundary when they should not have been.

The Proposed Action recommends a process for updating boundary corrections to include, but are not limited to, adjustments that remedy clerical, typographical, or mapping errors, or improvements in mapping technology as described above.

How can changes be made to themes? Because the Proposed Action would be in effect until it is repealed or modified, it includes a mechanism for changes to themes (land classifications) due to new circumstances. The Secretary of Agriculture may modify the land classifications, in any manner whatsoever, based on changed circumstances or public need. If a modification would result in a significant change, public involvement comparable to that required for the promulgation of the rule would be required. At least 30 days public notice is required for any non-significant modification.

What is the role of the State Implementation Task Force? The Governor of Idaho created the Governor's Roadless Rule Advisory Commission (Executive Order No.

2006-43) in 2006. The advisory commission would assist the Agency and tribal governments in ensuring the implementation of the final rule. The commission has no decision-making authority.

Why wasn't the scoping comment period extended? Why weren't public meetings held during the scoping period? The notice of intent initiates the scoping process in compliance with the NEPA and its implementing regulations (40 CFR §1501.7) to determine the nature and scope of environmental, social, and economic issues related to the rulemaking that should be analyzed in depth in the EIS.

There have been numerous opportunities in the past for public comment on roadless area conservation and management. During the development of the Petition, more than 50 public meetings were held in Idaho, producing local, regional, and national public input for the petition process. The proposed Idaho Roadless Rule also builds from of the experience with the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and the 2005 State Petitions Rule. More than two million public comments were received during these rulemaking processes; the knowledge gained from the previous public comment periods will help inform the identification and analysis of issues for this EIS.

The Agency believes that additional public meetings outside the State of Idaho or an extension of the comment period were not necessary. The Forest Service received more than 45,000 comments including many thoughtful and detailed submissions.

On release of the draft EIS and proposed rule language, additional public comment will be solicited and public meetings will be held to take a careful look at the site-specific elements of the proposed rule, alternatives, and effects.

2.5 Comparison of Alternatives

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Idaho Roadless Rule and equivalent themes for the 2001 Roadless Rule and Existing Plans (Acres)			
Wild Land Recreation	0	1,320,800	1,378,600
Primitive	0	2,131,400	1,656,300
SAHTS	0	0	68,600
Backcountry	9,304,200	4,244,500	5,246,100
GFRG	0	1,262,400	609,500
Other lands (Acres)			
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	354,100	354,100
Total Idaho Roadless Area Acres	9,304,200	9,304,200	9,304,200
Projected timber cutting			
Timber harvest yearly average (MMBF)	0.5	14	4
Timber harvest yearly average (CCF)	1,137	26,900	7,237
Timber harvest yearly average (acres)	100	2,800	800
% of average yearly volume harvested on all NFS lands in Idaho	.5%	11.5%	3%
% of average yearly acreage harvested on all NFS lands in Idaho	1%	28%	8%
Projected miles of road construction/reconstruction activities; yearly average			
Permanent – other	0.8	0.8	0.8
Temporary – other	0.2	0.2	0.2
Reconstruction – other	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	1.0	1.0	1.0
Permanent – timber	0.0	4.0	0.0
Temporary – timber	0.0	2.0	1.5
Reconstruction – timber	0.0	5.0	1.5
Total	0.0	11.0	3.0
Grand Total	1.0	12.0	4.0
Decommissioning	1.0	4.0	3.0
Net Change	0.0	8.0	1.0
Percent of Idaho Roadless Areas that permit or prohibit construction/ reconstruction			
Prohibited	0	39	34
Permitted, under limited exceptions	100	0	59
Permitted, under variable	0	47	0
Permitted without exceptions	0	14	7

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Forest health			
Insect and disease	Most of the 1.4 million acres currently at risk of 25% mortality or significant growth loss would remain untreated.	190,000 of high risk forests in GFRG. 730,000 in Backcountry Opportunities for treatment. Projected treatments on 42,000 acres likely to be effective over 15 years.	26,000 acres of high risk forests in GFRG. 940,000 acres in Backcountry. Opportunities to treat GFRG. Opportunity for treatment in Backcountry if done for forest health or to reduce hazardous fuels Projected treatments on 12,000 acres likely to be effective over 15 years.
Noxious weeds – Potential for Noxious weed spread	Spreading is unlikely given limited potential for soil disturbance. 28,000 acres of weeds currently found in Idaho Roadless Areas.	Some potential for spreading based on acreage assigned to GFRG (1.262 million); the limited degree of projected road construction, timber cutting, and mineral activity would minimize the potential for spreading. 8,300 acres of weeds currently found in GFRG.	Some potential for spreading based on acreage assigned to GFRG (609,500 acres); the limited degree of projected construction, harvest and mineral activity would minimize the potential for spreading. 2,600 acres of noxious weeds currently found in GFRG.
Climate change	The magnitude and rapidity of climate change is uncertain, particularly at the finer scales such as Idaho Roadless Areas. Variable impacts across alternatives are therefore not quantified.		

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Fuel management			
	<p>Road construction not permitted in conjunction with treatments on 100% of the WUI.</p> <p>Treatments more expensive; insignificant acreage treated relative to acres at risk. Limited capacity to treat high priority condition class 2 and 3 areas.</p> <p>Does not directly permit timber cutting to reduce risk of unwanted wildland fire.</p>	<p>Road construction permitted in conjunction with treatments on 69% of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).</p> <p>Mechanical treatments, without road construction may be permitted on 22% of the WUI.</p> <p>Mechanical treatments not permitted on 9%¹⁹ of the WUI.</p> <p>Projected harvests could treat 10% of high priority areas (Fire Regimes I, II and III, Condition Class 2 and 3) within WUIs or 1% of high priority areas overall.</p> <p>May permit timber cutting to reduce risk of unwanted wildland fires</p>	<p>Road construction permitted in conjunction with treatments on 71% of the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).</p> <p>Mechanical treatments, without road construction may be permitted on 19% of the WUI.</p> <p>Mechanical treatments not permitted on 9% of the WUI.</p> <p>Projected harvests could treat 3% of high priority areas (Fire Regimes I, II and III, Condition Class 2 and 3) within WUIs or less than half a percent of high priority areas overall.</p> <p>Directly permits timber cutting to reduce risk of unwanted wildland fires in the Primitive, Backcountry, and GFRG themes.</p>
Potential for increase in human-caused fire starts	No increase	Potential for increase	No measurable increase
Locatable minerals			
Gold, silver, lead, Etc.	None of the alternatives affect rights of reasonable access to prospect and explore lands open to mineral entry and develop valid claims under the General Mining Act of 1872.		
Rights to reasonable access for locatable minerals	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹⁹ Includes lands in Forest Plan Special Areas

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Leasable minerals			
Oil, gas, and coal	Differences in activity and revenue associated with oil, gas, and coal development is expected to be minimal based on existing trends and inventories.		
Geothermal – acres of high geothermal potential within the GFRG theme	0	387,300	351,600
Geothermal – acres of medium geothermal potential within the GFRG theme	0	796,600	236,500
Geothermal – acres of high geothermal potential within the GFRG theme, less than 40% slope	0	249,500	233,600
Geothermal – acres of medium geothermal potential within the GFRG theme, less than 40% slope	0	457,700	140,800
Geothermal development	Negligible opportunities for development.	No opportunities on 40% of acreage; Limited opportunities on 46% of acreage; Open or unrestricted opportunities on 14% of acreage.	No opportunities on 93% of acreage; Open or unrestricted opportunities on 7% of acreage.
Leasable resources: phosphate (short term within 15 yrs)	Projected output is equal across all alternatives because (i) none of the alternatives prohibit road construction and reconstruction associated with existing leases and (ii) existing leases are expected to meet demand in reasonably foreseeable future.		
Phosphate – acres reasonable foreseeable road construction and mining disturbance proposed in Sage Creek and Meade Peak Roadless areas	1,100	1,100	1,100
Phosphate – Projected phosphate acres currently under lease	8,000	8,000	8,000
Phosphate (Long term – leasing of unleased phosphate deposits)	Opportunities to recover phosphate from Idaho Roadless Areas are negligible.	Estimated 603 million tons of phosphate deposits from 13,400 unleased acres available for development.	Estimated 545 million tons of phosphate deposits from 12,100 unleased acres available for development (road construction prohibited on primitive theme acres).

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Saleable minerals			
Acres associated with potential developing new mineral material sites within Idaho Roadless Areas (GFRG)	0	1,262,400	609,500
Potential for development of new mineral material sites within Idaho Roadless Areas	Rare Circumstance	Minimal	Minimal
Saleable minerals (sand, stone, gravel, pumice, etc.)	Differences in production of saleable minerals are projected to be minimal across alternatives due to the relative inefficiencies of providing saleable minerals from Idaho Roadless Areas.		
Abandoned and inactive mines			
Road Construction allowed for CERCLA Violations	Yes	Yes	Yes
Energy corridors			
Energy corridors	None of the proposed corridors designated for oil, gas, and/or electricity under Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act are within Idaho Roadless Areas. Opportunities for non-Section 368 corridors within Idaho Roadless Areas are a function of the themes assigned to the areas proposed for corridor development; differences in opportunities across alternatives cannot be discerned.		
Physical resources			
Acres of high sensitive soils by theme			
Wild Land Recreation	0	221,900	270,200
Primitive	0	817,200	610,800
SAHTS	0	0	24,100
Backcountry	3,094,200	1,503,400	1,842,500
GFRG	0	440,300	235,200
Forest Plan Special Areas		111,400	111,400
Acres of high sensitivity soils where road construction/reconstruction is permitted without restrictions – GFRG	0	440,300	235,200
Acres of highly sensitive soils where road construction/reconstruction is prohibited	3,094,200	1,1150,500	1,016,500
Effect of road building on high hazard soils for timber cutting	No effect	Negligible effect	Negligible effect
Effect of road building on high hazard soils for mining	Limited risk	Likely effect	Likely effect
Miles of 303(d) listed streams			
Wild Land Recreation	0	15	29
Primitive	0	62	47
SAHTS	0	0	4
Backcountry	445	159	210
GFRG	0	84	31
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	125	125

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Acres of watersheds with surface drinking water			
Wild Land Recreation	0	26,800	29,500
Primitive	0	165,000	119,900
SAHTS	0	0	0
Backcountry	409,100	151,600	230,900
GFRG	0	61,500	24,600
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	4,200	4,200
Effect of road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest on listed streams and drinking water	Negligible effect	Minimal effect	Negligible effect
Effect of mining on listed streams and drinking water	Possible effect to 303(d) streams from selenium – mitigation required at time of analysis	Possible effect to 303(d) streams from selenium – mitigation required at time of analysis	Possible effect to 303(d) streams from selenium – mitigation required at time of analysis
Acres within 50 miles of a Class I air quality protection area			
Wild Land Recreation	0	832,400	879,600
Primitive	0	1,712,300	1,406,300
SAHTS	0	0	46,500
Backcountry	5,542,800	2,370,600	2,871,100
GFRG		395,200	107,000
Forest Plan Special Areas		232,300	232,300
Effect to air quality from fuel reduction projects	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Botanical resources			
Number of occurrences of known sensitive plant populations			
Wild Land Recreation	0	127	141
Primitive	0	166	147
SAHTS	0	0	1
Backcountry	1,165	523	601
GFRG	0	84	10
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	265	265
Effects on biodiversity	Beneficial		Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS
Aquatic			
Effects to aquatic species or habitat	Beneficial	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Some potential risk of adverse effects in management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and GFRG	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Limited potential risk of adverse effects in Backcountry; some potential risk in GFRG

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Wildlife			
Effects to terrestrial animal species or habitat	Beneficial	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Some potential risk of adverse effects in management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and GFRG	Beneficial in Wild Land Recreation, Primitive, or SAHTS; Limited potential risk of adverse effects in Backcountry; some potential risk in GFRG
Recreation			
Dispersed Recreation –	No measurable change to dispersed recreation opportunities. Feeling of remoteness or solitude may change if timber cutting or road construction/ reconstruction occurs (projected 1,500 acres timber cutting and 15 miles of road construction/ reconstruction over 15 years. No change to hunting and fishing opportunities.	No measurable change to dispersed recreation opportunities, except if unleased phosphate deposits (13,400 acres) are developed. Feeling of remoteness or solitude may change if timber cutting or road construction/ reconstruction occurs (projected 42,000 acres timber cutting and 180 miles of road construction/ reconstruction over 15 years. No change to hunting and fishing opportunities.	No measurable change to dispersed recreation opportunities, except if unleased phosphate deposits (12,100 acres) are developed. Feeling of remoteness or solitude may change if timber cutting or road construction/ reconstruction occurs (projected 12,000 acres timber cutting and 60 miles of road construction/ reconstruction over 15 years. No change to hunting and fishing opportunities.
Developed recreation – ability to construct or reconstruct roads to access new or expanded developed recreation areas	No road construction/ reconstruction permitted to access new developed recreations sites (9.3 million acres). There are no foreseeable developments.	Road construction/ reconstruction generally permitted to access new developed recreations sites management prescriptions similar to Backcountry and GFRG (5.5 million acres). There are no foreseeable developments.	Road construction/ reconstruction permitted to access new developed recreations sites management in GFRG (.6 million acres). There are no foreseeable developments.
Recreation	In general, the magnitude of shifts in recreational opportunity spectrum classes is slight across the alternatives because: (i) differences in road construction are minimal, and (ii) many constructed roads are likely to be temporary and not accessible for recreation purposes. As a consequence, changes in dispersed versus developed recreation opportunities are small across alternatives. Relative differences include the following:		

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
	Relatively high potential for maintaining existing dispersed recreation opportunities; little potential for increasing developed recreation.	Greatest opportunity for developed and road-based recreation to occur and expand, but magnitude of shift is tempered by limited amount of construction projected to occur.	Potentially the greatest level of protection for dispersed recreation, foreseeable threats from construction and development are remote.
Recreation special uses – existing permits (including ski areas)	Existing permits unaffected	Existing permits unaffected	Existing permits unaffected
Hunting and fishing	No effect to opportunities.	Opportunities could be affected in locations of phosphate leasing and geothermal development. No effect from timber cutting and limited road construction.	Opportunities could be affected in locations of phosphate leasing and geothermal development. No effect from timber cutting and limited road construction.
Wilderness			
Existing Wilderness areas	1,726,000 acres of roadless areas adjacent to Wilderness. Limited to no indirect effect to Wilderness from activities in roadless areas	158,000 acres of GFRG adjacent to Wilderness; 842,000 acres of Backcountry Limited potential for impacts to Wilderness experience	9,000 acres of GFRG adjacent to Wilderness; 954,000 acres of Backcountry Limited potential for impacts to Wilderness experience
Recommended wilderness	No change or effect to recommended wilderness in existing plans	Existing plans recommend 1,320,900 as Wilderness	There would be no change to the recommendations in the forest plans; however there are 1,378,600 acres in Wild Land Recreation. 57,700 acres of additional protection over existing plans. Some recommended wilderness areas in Boulder-White Clouds and Winegar Roadless Areas would be managed as Primitive. 6,900 acres in Mallard Larkins Roadless Area would be managed as Backcountry.

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Wilderness characteristic	Majority of roadless areas retain their existing character	Areas developed could have reduced wilderness character. Activities in GFRG may not change wilderness character if prior activities are still evident	Areas developed could have reduced wilderness character. Activities in GFRG may not change wilderness character if prior activities are still evident
Scenic integrity			
Acres maintained in High to Very High Scenic Integrity			
Wild Land Recreation	0	1,320,900	1,378,600
Primitive	0	2,130,100	1,656,300
SAHTS	0	0	68,600
Backcountry	9,295,100	0	0
GFRG			
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	345,100	345,100
Acres available for reduction to Moderate Scenic Integrity			
Wild Land Recreation	0	0	0
Primitive	0	0	0
SAHTS	0	0	0
Backcountry	9,304,200	4,243,700	5,245,300
GFRG	0	1,251,100	598,200
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	0	0
Acres Likely Changed to Moderate or Low Scenic Integrity			
Wild Land Recreation	0	0	0
Primitive	0	1,300	0
SAHTS	0	0	0
Backcountry	9,100	800	800
GFRG	0	11,300	11,300
Forest Plan Special Areas	0	0	0

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Scenic integrity	High or Very High scenic integrity retained on most Idaho Roadless Areas.	Potential for lower scenic quality on 5.5 million acres due to permissions in management prescriptions for timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction and discretionary mineral activities, but reasonably foreseeable losses are small given projections of activities in Idaho Roadless Areas.	Potential for lower scenic quality on 5.9 million acres due to management theme assignments and associated permissions for timber cutting, road construction/reconstruction and discretionary mineral activities, but reasonably foreseeable losses are small given projections of activities in Idaho Roadless Areas.
Cultural resources			
Potential for disturbance, vandalism, and looting	Low	Low to Moderate	Low
Cultural resources	Prior to management actions taking place on the ground under any alternative or theme, cultural resource inventories and appropriate mitigation are required by law. Differences in risk to cultural resources are not expected to be significant across alternatives due to projected levels of road construction and long-term use and fate of new roads.		
Idaho and affected Indian tribes			
	Impacts on Tribal governments and Tribal practices from resource management activities would be minimal because of consultation requirements. Roads, timber cutting, and mining may alter the character of places that have historic or cultural value, thereby diminishing their value.		
Social			
Values and Beliefs	Most environmental functions retained, roadless characteristics remain intact	Most environmental functions retained, some roadless characteristics changed	Most environmental functions retained, few roadless characteristics changed
Collaborative Environment	Local communities feel left out	Local communities engaged	Local community interests integrated with national values
Lifestyles	Significant risks to natural resource conditions near communities remain	Significant risks to natural resource conditions near communities reduced	Significant risks to natural resource conditions near communities reduced
	Undeveloped recreation and cultural opportunities continue	Many undeveloped recreation and cultural opportunities continue	Most undeveloped recreation and cultural opportunities continue
Economic			
Commodity values – forest level outputs			
Harvest (MBF)	567	13,458	3620
Phosphate (tons)	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000

	2001 Roadless Rule	Existing Plans	Idaho Roadless Rule
Road decommissioning (miles)	1.00	4.00	3.00
Roads (miles)	1.00	12.02	4.35
Jobs (Yr)			
Harvest	1	304	91
Phosphate	582	582	582
Road construction/reconstruction	2	12	4
Labor Income (\$/Yr)			
Harvest	343,000	7,651,000	1,935,000
Phosphate	23,000,000	23,000,000	23,000,000
Road construction/reconstruction	100,000	467,000	150,000
Non-Commodity Values - Acres retaining natural processes and roadless characteristics (million)	9.3	4.3	3.2