

## RECORD of DECISION

### MYRTLE-CASCADE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

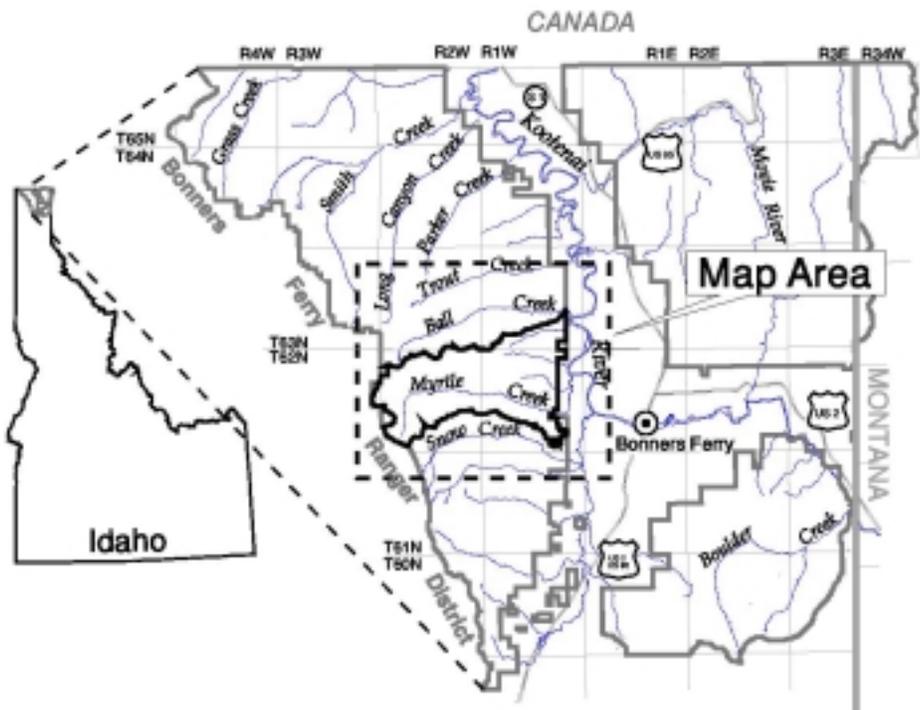
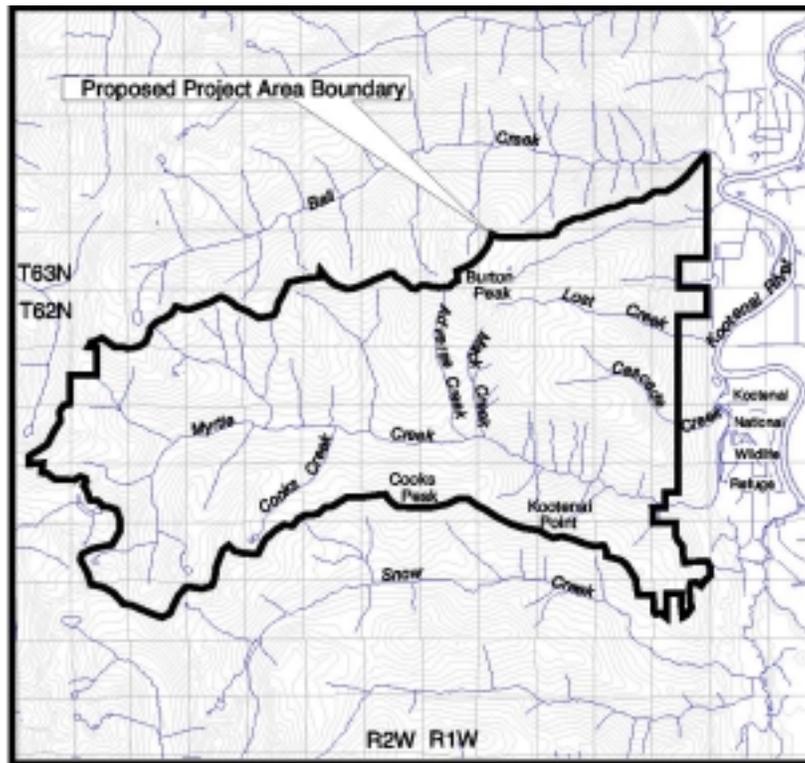
Bonnors Ferry Ranger District  
Kaniksu Working Circle  
Idaho Panhandle National Forests  
Boundary County, Idaho

Scoping for this project was initiated in April 1997 through a letter sent to all interested parties on the project mailing list, a news release in the newspaper, consultation with the Kootenai of Idaho Tribe, and the IPNF's Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions. A Notice of Intent (NOI) stating that the Bonners Ferry Ranger District would be preparing an EIS for proposed vegetation and road treatments in the Myrtle-Cascade area (Figure 1) was published in the Federal Register November 18, 1999. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Myrtle-Cascade project was completed on June 1, 2000. The 45-day comment period for the DEIS began June 30, 2000 when the notice was posted in the Federal Register. The issues identified through this process were used to help develop alternatives within the assessment area and to determine any needed mitigation.

#### **Purpose and Need**

There are many ecological factors that have combined to develop our forests as we see them today. Fire is the primary ecological factor that influences their development. It stands to reason then that fire suppression by Federal and State agencies since the turn of the century has certainly changed the way these forests look and function today versus how they would have looked if humans had not been around to suppress fires. In the last 100 years forests in the interior Columbia River basin have become more densely stocked, developed increasing dominance of shade tolerant species (e.g., Douglas-fir, grand fir, subalpine fir) and become more susceptible to severe fire, insect, and disease disturbances (USDA-USDI 1996). This creates more competition for water and nutrients and stresses the trees. Ironically, our very actions to save these forests may be contributing to the decline in the health of these ecosystems that evolved over the time with fire. Consequently, this may limit the ability of these forests to provide the products, habitats, services, and recreation desired by society. In addition, forest composition and structures have become more homogeneous (USDA-USDI 1996). In other words, forest diversity has declined. The IPNF North Zone Geographic Assessment (Zack et al, 1998) determined that similar changes in the forested landscape have occurred over this same time frame in the Kootenai River sub-basin (i.e, the Bonners Ferry Ranger District). In the Myrtle-Cascade assessment area western white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine (seral species) are being replaced by Douglas-fir, grand fir, subalpine fir, western hemlock, and western red cedar (shade tolerant species). Furthermore, 53% of the landscape is composed mature and old growth forests, while forest openings and smaller tree size classes are near the lower end of their historical range. To determine potential treatment opportunities the existing condition of the forested vegetation in the project area will be compared to conditions. In the long-term, restoration of historic structure and composition will improve tree vigor and reduce vulnerability to insects, disease, and severe fires, provide wildlife habitat that more closely resembles historic conditions, and maintain hydrologic function.

Figure 1 – Project Area Boundary



The Myrtle Creek portion of the project area has particular significance. The primary management objective for the Myrtle Creek watershed is to provide and maintain high quality drinking water for use by the City of Bonners Ferry. During our watershed and transportation analysis we learned that several road systems in the assessment area, including Myrtle Creek, which could be removed, or reconstructed, to improve overall watershed conditions throughout the assessment area. Forested watersheds typically transport runoff below ground until it reaches a stream channel. As long as the water moves below ground, the rate of movement is slow compared to water moving on the surface. Roads intercept water flowing below the surface and transport it more efficiently to streams. Roads can also create or contribute to potential landslide occurrence; roads can increase sediment delivery from ditches and surfaces, and stream crossings can become increased sediment sources. Hydrologic function has likely been altered by fire suppression as well. As stated earlier, forested stands are now more densely stocked than they were historically, especially on dry forest types. Consequently, fires that burn on these sites now will likely be more severe and could result in increased water yield and sediment delivery

The purpose and need, or objective, for entering the Myrtle-Cascade project area is to:

1) Improve forest composition, structure, and diversity of the landscape by providing for tree species and stocking levels similar to historic levels that better resist insects, diseases, and wildfire, and that wildlife are adapted to. More specifically:

- Reduce the number of trees per acre, and favor the development of large diameter ponderosa pine and western larch on dry forest types.
- Reestablish western white pine as a significant component of its historic range.
- Reduce the overmature lodgepole pine component in stands where this species is currently susceptible to mountain pine beetle infestations.
- Improve the diversity of forest structures in the area, including larger patch sizes with less fragmentation. This will provide for wildlife, fish, and plant habitat diversity and security. The project area contains stands that are relatively similar in size and age, and therefore, not providing a wide range of wildlife habitats.

2) Restore normal slope hydrology where it has been altered by roads. This includes:

- Reducing the sediment risk associated with stream crossing failures.
- Reducing the potential for roads to create or contribute to landslide occurrence.
- Reducing the production and delivery of sediment from road surfaces and ditches.

3) The 1897 Organic Act states, "No national forest shall be established, except to improve and protect the forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of the citizens of the United States." Therefore, one of the objectives for entering the Myrtle-Cascade assessment area will be to contribute to the short-term supply of timber to help meet the national demand for wood products and employment opportunities.

## Location

The Myrtle-Cascade project area is located on public lands administered by the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. The project area is located approximately ten air miles west of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. The area is bounded on the east by the Kootenai River, and on the west by the Selkirk Mountains crest. The southern boundary is the divide between the Myrtle and Snow Creek drainages. The northern boundary follows the divide between the Myrtle and Ball Creek drainages, until it hits Cascade Ridge; at this point the boundary follows Burton Creek to the northeast. The project area encompasses approximately 31,000 acres of which approximately 27,000 acres are National Forest Lands, while private landowners hold the remaining 4,000 acres. Drainages within the project area include Myrtle-Cascade, Upper Curley Creek, and one unnamed drainage with its headwaters in the project area and flowing south off of National Forest Lands.

A legal description for the analysis area is T63N, R2W, sections 34-36; T62N, R2W, sections 1-24 and 27-30; T63N, R1W, sections 15-23 and 32-35; T62N, R1W, sections 2-11, 14-23, and 27-29, Boise Meridian, Boundary County, Idaho.

On the landscape level, Myrtle Creek is a tributary to the Kootenai River. The Kootenai River has its headwaters in British Columbia, Canada and it flows southwesterly through northwest Montana and northern Idaho before heading north, and back into Canada, where it joins the Columbia River. The Kootenai River is a major subdrainage of the Columbia River.

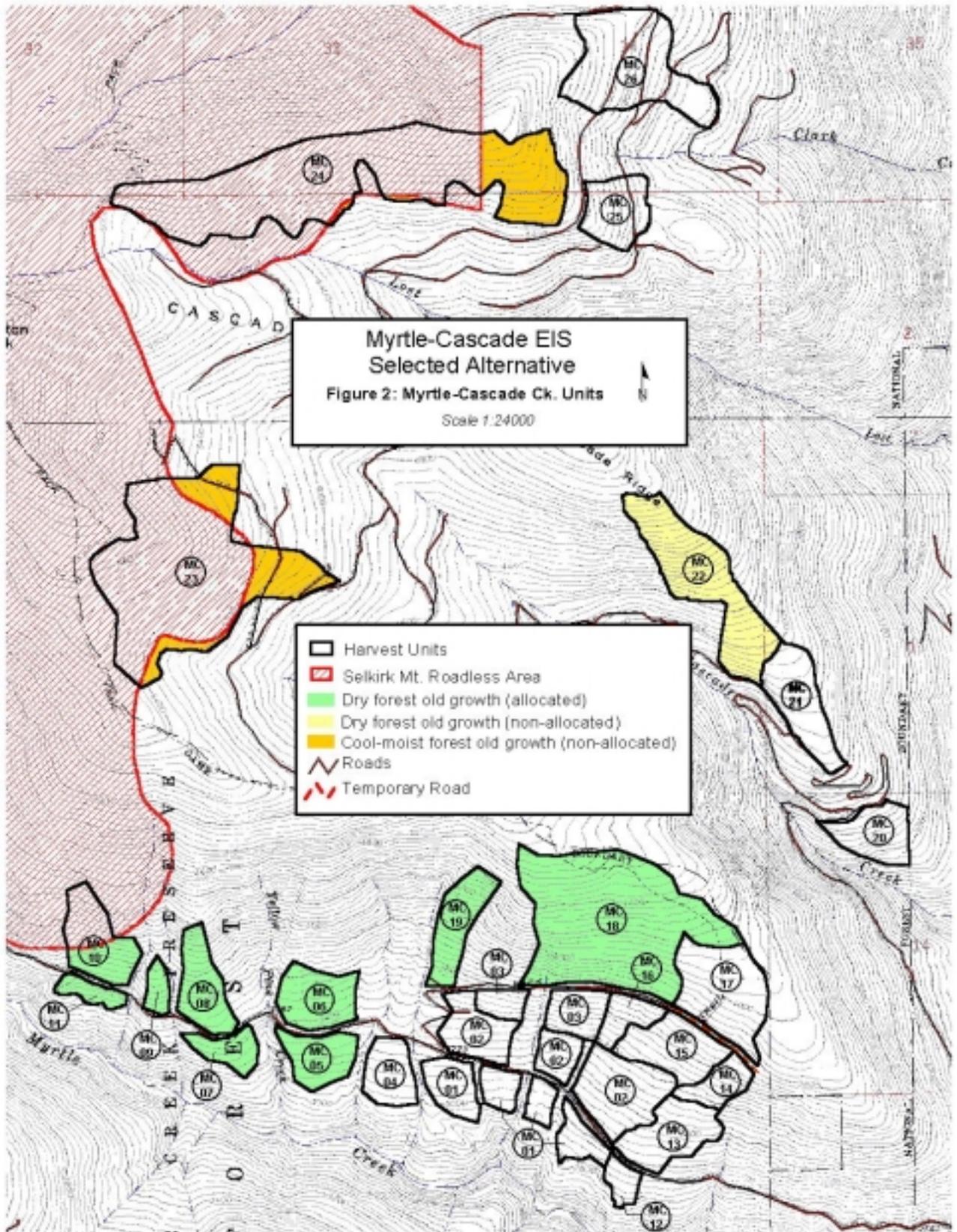
## Decision

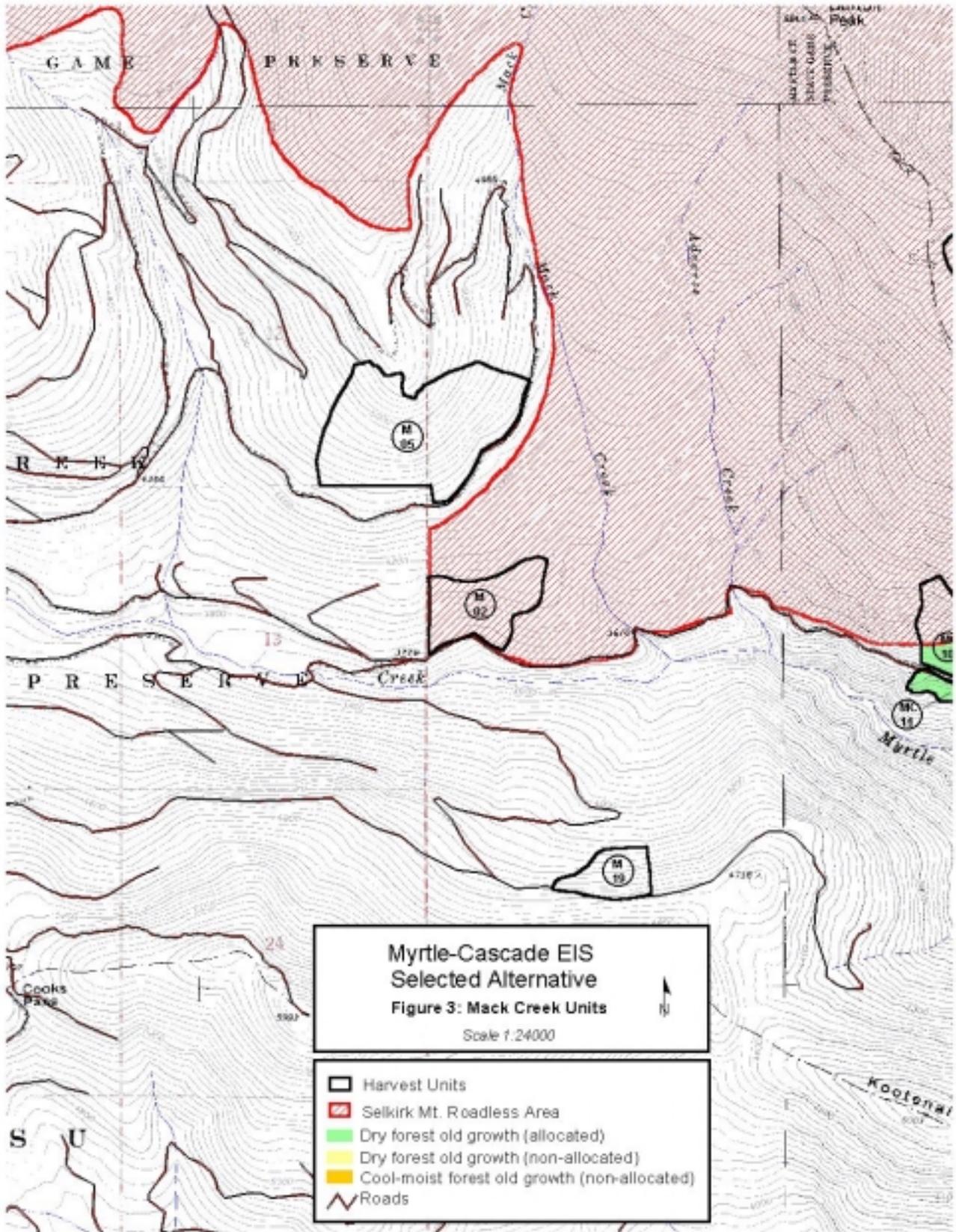
It is my decision to adopt Alternative 2 to implement management on these National Forest lands. The "Required Design Criteria For All Action Alternatives" and monitoring plan described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS are incorporated as part of my decision. The "Required Design Criteria" will also apply to connected actions. The treatments for Alternative 2 are outlined in Table 1. The selected treatment units are displayed in Figures 2, 3 and 4. The criteria used I used to make my decision are based on the purpose and need. This alternative will treat 1,818 acres through timber harvest and fuels treatments. Timber harvest will include 937 acres of uneven-aged regeneration harvests (group selection), 441 acres of even-aged regeneration harvests (irregular shelterwood), 225 acres of partial cutting (commercial thin and sanitation salvage, and 215 acres of overstory removal. Included in these treatments will be 230 acres of harvest in dry forest old growth (MC05-MC11, MC18 and MC19), allocated to the Forest Plan strategy, and 45 acres (MC22) of harvest in non-allocated dry forest old growth. The primary focus of these treatments will be to remove the small-diameter trees, mostly Douglas-fir and grand fir, while retaining the large-diameter old growth ponderosa pine and larch that are providing the old growth structure. Where openings are created ponderosa pine and larch will be regenerated. Timber harvesting will be accomplished using ground-based systems on 767 acres, helicopter logging on 741 acres, and skyline systems on 354 acres. Fuels treatments will include 895 acres of underburning, 483 acres of grapple piling, and 440 acres of lopping and scattering. Approximately 0.25 mile of temporary road will be reconstructed to access MC14, MC15, and MC17. The temporary road will be constructed as an outsloped road that follows the natural terrain. Following use, the purchaser will obliterate this road by restoring natural slope contours and placing slash and logs on top of the disturbed soil, and use of seeding if needed. The purpose of this requirement is to minimize potential for increasing sediment production and delivery.

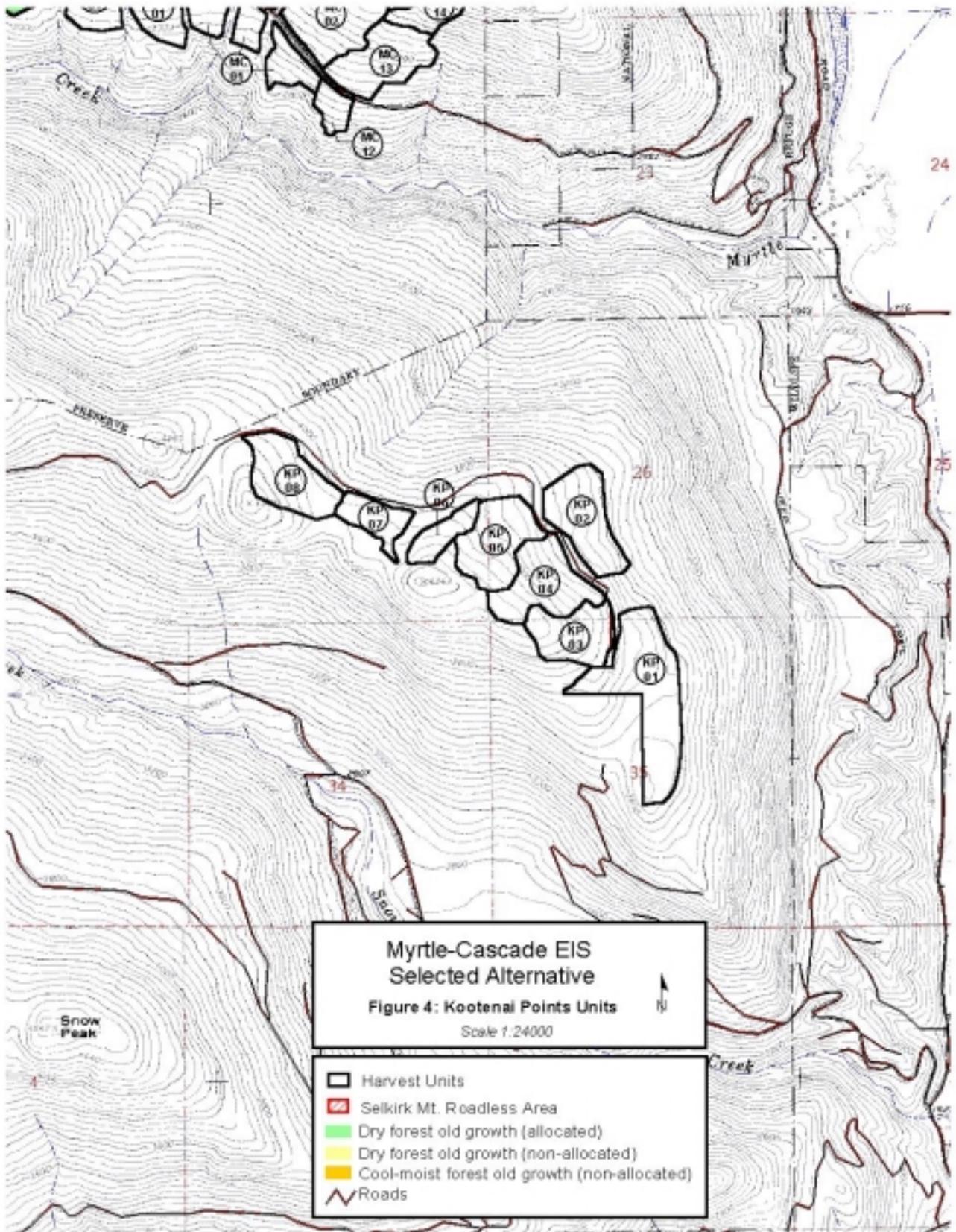
Table 1- Alternative 2 Treatments						
Unit	Acres	Rx	Logging System	Fuels Treatment	PCC Before Harvest	PCC After Harvest
KP01	66	CT/SS	S	LS	60	40-50
KP02	36	CT/SS	S	LS	65	40-50
KP03	29	OSR	G	LS	30	0-10
KP04	39	ISW	G	UB	70	20-30
KP05	37	OSR	G	LS	30	0-10
KP06	14	CT/SS	G	LS	75	40-50
KP07	17	OSR	G	LS	30	0-10
KP08	35	CT/SS	G	LS	70	40-50
M02	47	ISW	G (winter)	UB	65	20-30
M05	135	ISW	G (winter)	UB	70	20-30
M19	24	OSR	S	LS	20	0-10
MC01	50	GS	S	UB	65	20-50
MC02	83	GS	G (winter)	UB	70	20-50
MC03	29	GS	S	UB	60	20-50
MC04	22	ISW	S	UB	65	20-30
MC05	24	GS	S	UB	65	20-50
MC06	30	GS	G (winter)	UB	65	20-50
MC07	15	ISW	S	UB	65	30-40
MC08	28	ISW	H	UB	60	30-40
MC09	8	ISW	H	UB	65	30-40
MC10	34	ISW	H	UB	65	30-40
MC11	10	ISW	S	UB	65	30-40
MC12	9	CT	S	LS	65	50-60
MC13	34	CT	G (winter)	LS	65	50-60
MC14	16	CT	S	LS	65	50-60
MC15	35	GS	S	UB	60	30-40
MC16	15	CT	S	LS	65	50-60
MC17	54	GS	G (winter)	UB	65	30-40
MC18	159	GS	H	UB	65	30-40
MC19	29	GS	H	UB	75	30-40
MC20	27	ISW	S	UB	70	30-40
MC21	37	GS	G	UB	65	20-50
MC22	76	ISW	H	GP	70	20-30
MC23	192	GS	H	GP	85	40-50
MC24	215	GS	H	GP	85	40-50
MC25	29	OSR	S	LS	30	0-10
MC26	79	OSR	S	LS	30	0-10
<b>TOTAL</b>	1818					

Rx = Silvicultural prescription  
 PCC = Percent canopy closure  
 CT = Commercial thin  
 OSR = Partial overstory removal  
 GS = Group selection  
 SS = Sanitation salvage  
 ISW = Irregular Shelterwood

G = Ground-based skidding (Tractor)  
 S = Skyline yarding  
 H = Helicopter logging  
 GP = Grapple pile  
 UB = Underburn  
 LS = Lop and scatter







In addition to these timber harvest treatments 32.7 miles of existing system roads will be reconstructed and 36.1 miles of road will be obliterated. However, none of this work is mitigation for the proposed activities. None of the proposed road obliteration is currently open to motorized access. Reconstruction will be a critical part of Alternative 2 in order to comply with BMP's and the Forest Plan related to road maintenance and water quality protection. The reconstruction will include increasing pipe sizes or changing design on many of the stream crossings (to safely pass 100 year flood discharges and prevent streamflow diversion), installation of additional relief culverts (to more frequently cross drain the road), bypass dips to prevent streamflow from traveling down road prisms and ditchlines, gabion or bin walls (to stabilize road cutslopes), spot gravelling (to reduce surface erosion - especially near stream crossings), installing graded rolling dips, drivable dips, or drivable waterbars (to cross drain surface water), brushing, blading, shaping, ditch cleaning (to maintain drainage).

For the purposes of effects analyses, the road obliteration included as part of this decision is not considered to be certain to occur, but will conform to the following criteria if implemented:

During road obliteration, stream crossings will be restored using the following design criteria.

1. The width of the excavated channel must include the natural channel bankfull width and floodplain features as indicated above and below the crossing. This restores the natural stream hydraulics and reduces the potential for eroding and rejuvenating the channel side slopes.
2. The slope of the channel must match the original stream grade that existed prior to road construction. The stream grade above and below the crossing, old soil organic layers and stumps, and the presence of streambed materials that are coarser than the road fill can be used as indicators (to supplement topographic cues) of the original terrain. Restoring the channel gradient reduces the potential for channel downcutting (scouring) and rejuvenation of channel side slopes.
3. The channel side slopes (breaklands) to the crossing must be returned to natural contour. This helps promote revegetation and minimizes the potential for sediment production and delivery to the channel.
4. As much fill as possible will be removed before displacing and removing or replacing the crossing structure (this applies to reconstruction and obliteration). This reduces the volume of fine sediment that can be entrained by the stream.
5. Silt fences, straw bales, and stream diversion/dewatering techniques will be used to minimize turbidity increases. Sediment captured by the traps will be removed before dismantling the traps (this applies to reconstruction and obliteration). This reduces the volume of sediment delivered downstream.
6. Uprooted vegetation, logs, straw, seeding and fertilization, plantings, and geotextiles (as needed) will be used to reduce surface erosion and promote revegetation on the recontoured slopes.
7. Rock or log grade control structures will be used if desired for fisheries enhancement or to prevent downcutting in situations where the original stream gradient is difficult to determine or re-establish. Log and rock structures must be keyed into the banks a minimum of 3 feet. Logs should be at least 14 inches in diameter. The top of the grade control structures will be the same elevation as the bottom of the restored channel. For log structures on perennial streams, a 3-foot wide piece of filter cloth will be placed and nailed to the upstream side of the log and sealed with bed material.

Road obliteration between stream crossings will be done using the following criteria:

1. The brushing of roads that are grown in with vegetation should avoid cutting below the road surface and should be the minimum width necessary for safe passage of support vehicles. If a dozer is used, the brush should be pushed for at least 200 feet before sidecasting to prevent creating a continuous windrow or berm of slash on the outside edge of the road.
2. Natural contours will be restored on all road segments that have unstable fill or cutslopes. The bench portion of the road (usually the inner-half of the total road width including the ditch if present) will be de-compacted by ripping to a minimum depth of 18 inches before placing excavated fill against the cutslope and on the prism. Fill material will not be stacked against seeps that are still present during the summer and fall. If end hauling of material is needed, the Forest Service will approve safe disposal sites. The topographic features of swales and draws will be reestablished if crossed by the existing road prism. This will reduce the potential for road related mass erosion.
3. The ditchline will be drained across the road by waterbars that will be no further than 30 feet apart on road segments where the road cut and fill slopes are stable (which is the case more than 95 percent of the road miles). The waterbars will be constructed so that they drain the water off of the road at roughly the same grade as the ditchline and the prism. This often requires that the skew of the waterbar be greater than 30 degrees relative to a direction perpendicular to the direction of travel. The depth between the top of the berm and the bottom of the waterbar will be about 3 feet. The intent of this measure is to assure that the down slope drainage is restored and that the waterbars are self-maintaining.
4. Uprooted vegetation, and existing available logs and slash will be scattered on the road prism to reduce surface erosion and promote revegetation, but will not be placed so that it slows the drainage of waterbars.

The following conservation requirements for Threatened and Endangered Species will be implemented in accordance with the Biological Assessment (BA) for this project:

### **Threatened and Endangered Fish Species**

- 1) Road activities will be accomplished using the design criteria as established in Chapter 4 – “Road Construction, Reconstruction, Maintenance and Obliteration;
- 2) No road construction within RHCAs;
- 3) Activities within RHCAs must be beneficial to aquatic resources (e.g. culvert fish barrier replacement/removal);
- 4) BMPs for watershed resources will be adhered to (see Chapter 4-Required design criteria for all action alternatives and Appendix B).
- 5) Replacement of culverts, road obliteration, and/or reconstruction will take place after July 1st to reduce risk of effects from sediment during spring runoff; and will be completed prior to September 15<sup>th</sup> in tributaries to bull trout streams to avoid critical spawning periods.

### **Grizzly Bear**

- 1) Barrier reconstructed roads with an earthen berm and a brush pile in front of it to conceal entry.

- 2) Post-sale administrative use would comply with administrative guidelines in effect at the time of the treatments.
- 3) Barrier an equivalent amount of currently gated roads to offset temporary potential core loss from annual timber harvesting operations. This would equate to 0.9% core in the year Cascade Creek is helicopter logged, and 0.5% in the year Myrtle Creek is helicopter logged. One potential road to accomplish this might be FS 1309 in the vicinity of Unit M19. Other roads are also available. Enough roads were decommissioned in the Ball-Trout BMU prior to the onset of this project to compensate for any losses in core habitat because of helicopter operations, consequently, no further road closures will be needed in this BMU.
- 4) Schedule the road obliteration in phases such that no portion of the implementation phase would exceed Forest Plan standards for security. Schedule must be worked out annually prior to awarding contract for work for that season.
- 5) This Biological Assessment will no longer be current 5 years from the date of concurrence with US Fish and Wildlife Service. Except for post-sale activities, which typically are either consulted on annually or fall under previously agreed consultation guidelines, activities must be completed prior to this date.

### **Upper Myrtle Creek Road Easements**

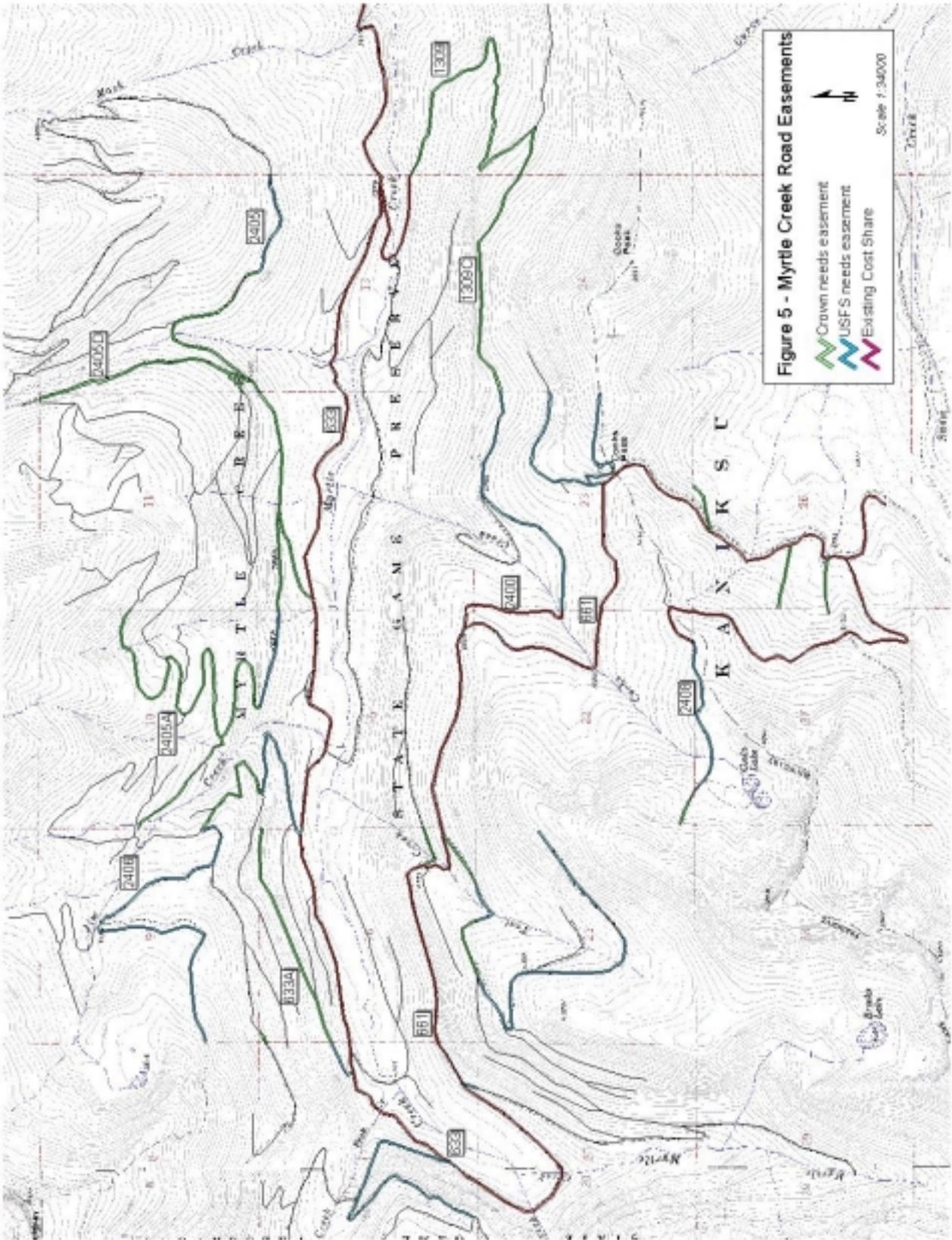
The upper Myrtle Creek portion of the project area is a checkerboard ownership pattern of National Forest and Crown Pacific, Inc. lands. There are several roads and trails common to both Crown Pacific and the National Forest. Even though both the Forest Service and Crown Pacific have several road easements for the roads in the area, there are still some roads that either the Forest Service or Crown Pacific would like to have easements. Additionally, the Forest Service does not have easements for any of the trails in the analysis area. The roads or trails where either the Forest Service or Crown Pacific need easements are shown in Figure 5. The cumulative effects analysis (FEIS, Chapter 4) includes reasonably foreseeable actions on Crown Pacific lands that were obtained directly from the landowner. The most likely activities are pre-commercially thinning and limited timber harvesting.

### **Reason For My Decision**

My decision to implement Alternative 2 is based on a review of the FEIS and consideration of public comment. Four other alternatives were considered in detail.

Alternative 1 (No Action) would defer all treatment activities at this time. Under the no action alternative none of the proposed road reconstruction and road obliteration would occur. No silvicultural treatments, prescribed burning, or other mechanical treatments would be implemented to restore vegetative composition and structure, improve wildlife habitat, or maintain hydrologic function. Stands would naturally thin themselves out as the competition for water and soil nutrients continues and natural fuels would continue to build up with continued fire suppression, leading to increased risk of stand replacing fire over time.

Alternative 3 represented a more traditional approach to forest management where specific treatments were prescribed for relatively small harvest units. Alternative 3 proposed 580 acres of even-aged regeneration harvests (irregular shelterwood) and 795 acres of partial cutting (commercial thin and sanitation salvage. No uneven-aged harvesting and no overstory removals were included in this alternative. This alternative would have reconstructed 23.4 miles of existing system roads and obliterated another 36.1 miles of existing road. Blister rust resistant western white pine would have been used where appropriate.



**Figure 5 - Myrtle Creek Road Easements**  
 Crown needs easement  
 USFS needs easement  
 Existing Cost Share

Alternative 4 was a modification of Alternative 2. A portion of the public was concerned about entry into old growth and designated roadless areas. The primary feature of this alternative is that it includes no harvest in old growth and no entry into designated roadless areas. This alternative would treat 951 acres through timber harvest and fuels treatments. Timber harvest would include 288 acres of uneven-aged regeneration harvests (group selection), 223 acres of even-aged regeneration harvests (irregular shelterwood), 225 acres of partial cutting (commercial thin and sanitation salvage, and 215 acres of overstory removal. The amount of road reconstruction, obliteration, and temporary road construction would be the same as Alternative 2.

Alternative 5 was developed in response to members of the public who wished to see an alternative that included no timber harvest. This alternative would include only the road reconstruction (32.7 miles) and road obliteration (36.1 miles) listed in Alternative 2. Funding that would be available as part of a timber sale package under the other action alternatives would not be available under Alternative 5. Vegetative treatments that are a significant part of beginning the ecosystem restoration process would not be included. Table 2 provides a comparison of all the alternatives considered in detail.

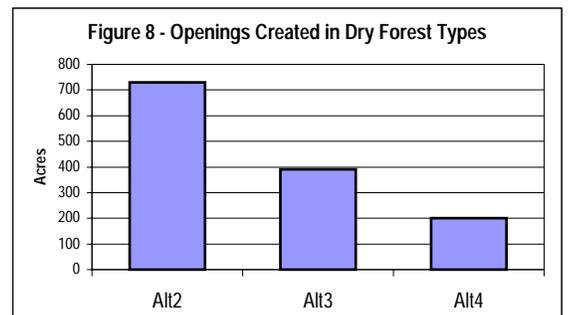
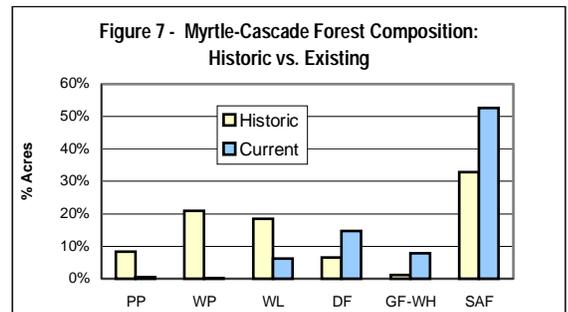
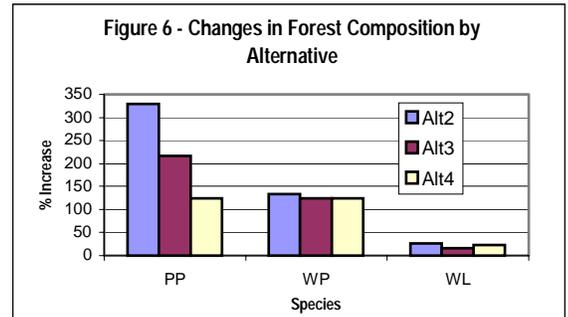
<b>Table 2- Alternative Comparison Chart</b>					
<b>Treatment Type</b>	<b>Alt 1</b>	<b>Alt 2</b>	<b>Alt 3</b>	<b>Alt 4</b>	<b>Alt 5</b>
<b>Regeneration Cuts</b>					
<i>Irregular Shelterwood (even-aged)</i>	0	441	580	223	0
<i>Group Selection (uneven-aged)</i>	0	937	0	288	0
<b>TOTAL Regeneration Cuts</b>	0	1378	580	511	0
<b>Partial Cuts</b>					
<i>Commercial Thin/Sanitation Salvage</i>	0	151	285	151	0
<i>Commercial Thin</i>	0	74	0	74	0
<i>Sanitation Salvage</i>	0	0	510	0	0
<b>TOTAL Partial Cuts</b>	0	225	795	225	0
<b>Removal Cuts</b>					
<b>Partial Overstory Removal</b>	0	215	0	215	0
<b>Total Acres Harvested</b>	0	1818	1375	951	0
<b>Logging System</b>					
<b>Ground-based</b>	0	767	472	646	0
<i>Skyline</i>	0	354	314	0	0
<i>Helicopter</i>	0	741	589	305	0
<b>Fuels Treatment</b>					
<b>Underburn</b>	0	895	540	511	0
<b>Grapple Pile</b>	0	483	447	0	0
<i>Lop and scatter</i>	0	440	388	440	0
<b>Total Acres Treated</b>	0	1818	1375	951	0
<b>Transportation Miles</b>					
<i>New Construction – Temporary Road</i>	0	0.2	0	0.2	0
<i>Reconstruction</i>	0	32.7	23.4	32.7	32.7
<b>Obliterated</b>	0	36.1	36.1	36.1	36.1

I considered applicable law, regulations, and policies referenced in page 1-1 of the FEIS. Based on this review all five alternatives met relevant laws, regulations and policies.

In choosing Alternative 2 from the FEIS, I evaluated whether this action meets the purpose and need described in the FEIS (page 1-1 through 1-3). It was clear from the analysis in the FEIS that Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 to some extent, meet the Purpose and Need since they all include silvicultural treatments that would begin restoration of forest composition and structure, and they all included roadwork that would help restore

hydrologic function. However, Alternative 1 does not meet the Purpose and Need because it includes no silvicultural treatments, road reconstruction, or road obliteration. Alternative 5 would only partially meet the Purpose and Need by including road reconstruction and obliteration, but this alternative excludes much needed vegetative treatments that are a significant part of restoring the ecological integrity of the project area. After reviewing the FEIS, I feel Alternative 2 best integrates the objectives stated in the Purpose and Need for the following reasons:

- Alternative 2 provides for the greatest increase in the restoration of seral species (ponderosa pine, white pine, and larch) in the project area (Figure 6). All of these species are well below their historic levels, especially white pine (Figure 7).
- Alternative 2 provides for the greatest amount of dry forest restoration (Figure 8) by creating forest openings that will favor the development of large-diameter ponderosa pine and western larch. In these openings the larger pine and larch will be retained, while the smaller-diameter trees, mostly Douglas-fir and grand fir, are removed.
- Alternative 2 includes 407 acres of treatment in stands with high-risk lodgepole pine
- None of the treatments proposed for Alternative 2 would trend the condition of the capable woodland caribou habitat away from suitability. This alternative would also have no direct change in currently suitable caribou habitat
- Alternative 2 has the greatest level of sediment and wildfire risk reduction for the benefit of water dependent resources relative to the other alternatives. Desired future watershed and stream conditions would be maintained or improved under this alternative



The “pulse” treatments considered original Proposed Action (FEIS, Chapter 1, page 1-1), designed to mimic natural disturbance patterns, would be the best approach to reducing fragmentation across the landscape and increasing patch size. However, this alternative was eliminated from further study because it was determined early in the process that it would not meet Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) standards and potentially jeopardize water quality standards in Myrtle Creek. Also, because of road building and some types of timber harvest, this alternative would not meet standards for woodland caribou, which is listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Alternative 2 was a modification of this original proposal. After considerations were made for Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs), INFISH, and the ESA, the size of

proposed treatment units dropped significantly. Consequently, average patch size dropped as well (Appendix E, Tables 4 and 5).

### **Consideration of Public Comments and Concerns in the Decision**

Concerns were raised over the proposed entry into old growth forests in the Myrtle-Cascade project area. In choosing Alternative 2 there will be loss of old growth that was allocated to IPNF's Forest Plan strategy. Treatments prescribed in allocated dry forest old growth will actually improve the existing condition of these stands by removing the encroaching smaller-diameter Douglas-fir and grand fir and retaining the old growth ponderosa pine and western larch. Some sort of silvicultural treatments coupled with prescribed fire in these stands will be necessary to restore the historic character of these stands. Given over 70 years of fire suppression in most of the stands a fire hot enough to kill the encroaching smaller trees would likely kill the old growth pine and larch as well. Allowing natural fire to burn in Myrtle Creek is not a feasible option at this time given that this is the municipal watershed for the city of Bonners Ferry. Entry into moist forest old growth is also included in Alternative 2. However, the units proposed for entry are not part of the Forest Plan allocation, and only lodgepole pine will be harvested in these units, which will not change the old growth character of these stands. The amount of old growth in each forest type is provided in the FEIS, Chapter 3, page 3-7. Maps of all proposed old growth entry are provided in the FEIS, Chapter 4, pages 4-7 through 4-9.

The concept of applying "pulse" treatments was considered in the original Proposed Action. The objective with these proposed treatment areas would have been to mimic the disturbance patterns that occurred historically by treating an area intensively for a short period of time and then leaving the drainage alone for several years. Members of the public questioned whether or not a commitment to this type of management would be maintained over time. Given the resource concerns over water quality and Threatened and Endangered Species this alternative was eliminated from detailed study.

One of the questions asked was how does reconstruction of over 30 miles of road fit in with an approach to mimicking natural disturbances. The district recognizes that roads were not part of the natural landscape, but with this decision over 30 miles will be obliterated in order to improve hydrologic function in the project area. The decision to reconstruct over 30 miles of road was made in order to reduce long-term sediment risk. This reconstruction will help maintain water quality standards by reducing road-related sediment risk, while allowing for public access to the National Forests. It must be pointed out that none of the reconstruction is needed to facilitate log transport and none of the proposed roadwork (reconstruction or obliteration) is required mitigation. Reconstruction will be funded as part of any timber sale package and for road obliteration multiple funding sources are potentially available and will be pursued. Finally, there will be no new road construction with this decision (the 0.25 mile of temporary road will be decommissioned). Consequently, there will be no increase in open road densities.

Questions were also raised regarding the validity and calibration of the WATSED model. WATSED was used to provide an initial background and trend estimate that reflects the cumulative history of forestry-related land management actions in each watershed. The program also provided one estimate of the response of each watershed as a result of proposed logging and roadwork. Watershed responses to restoration actions, such as road obliteration, reconstruction, stream crossing modification or removal, etc., were addressed with different tools designed for those purposes. The Forest soil scientist calibrated elements of the WATSED model through analysis and adjustments in 1991 using locally derived data and monitoring information. The components of WATSED have since been monitored and re-evaluated continuously (including the surface erosion components that are similar to the R1/R4 Sediment Guides) since the Forest Plan was implemented. Data from monitoring

and inventory and other ongoing analyses, as well as observations and analyses by the Forest's hydrologists and soil scientist to continually assess the need to re-calibrate their knowledge and confidence in the model's use within the context the model and other applications are used. Based on the experience of the IPNF Forest Hydrologist who developed the WATBAL model that WATSED is based on, there does not appear to be any need to revise the parameters of the model on the IPNF. However, monitoring and validation of the model is an on-going process that will continue.

The EPA rated this project as having "Environmental Concerns With Insufficient Data." In speaking with the EPA (Chris Gebhart) we understand that all timber sales initially get this rating. The EPA's assertion that road reconstruction will be done on roads that are "grown over and stabilized" and that "most of the streams are currently stressed" is inaccurate. As stated earlier the purpose of the reconstruction is to reduce the road-related sediment risk of existing open roads. As stated in the FEIS, Chapter 3, p.3-16, "none of the streams in the project area are listed by the State of Idaho as Water Quality Limited stream segments (303(d) listing, 1998) so the beneficial uses on National Forest Lands within the analysis area are considered to be fully supported."

The discussion on page 3-26 of the DEIS is about historical processes and reference conditions related to sediment production and delivery, and not about the locations where the District would be reconstructing roads as indicated by the EPA.

The EPA and others were concerned about continuing road maintenance backlog on National Forests. The District will not build any new permanent roads with this decision and over 30 miles of existing roads will be obliterated, thus reducing our current road maintenance backlog.

The EPA also expressed concerns over Threatened and Endangered Species (fish and wildlife). The District conducted informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and they concurred with the findings in our Biological Assessments (FEIS - Appendix B).

The watershed analysis in Chapter 4 shows that the road reconstruction will significantly reduce the risk to water quality of Myrtle Creek rather than posing "a significant threat to the water quality of the Bonners Ferry drinking water source," as contended by the EPA. Leaving the roads in their existing condition poses a greater risk to water quality.

The results of WATSED, LISA, and SIMPPLLE models requested by the EPA are included in Chapters 3 and 4 of the FEIS. The data from these models, which is voluminous, are included in the Project File for the FEIS.

Removing wood fiber from the project area and still meeting soil nutrient needs was raised as an issue. To provide for soil nutrients enough slash will be left, in various sizes, to meet coarse woody debris guidelines established by Graham et al (1994) for each given habitat type. In addition, the District will meet Forest Plan standards for maintenance of snags and replacement snags, which will help meet long-term soil nutrients.

A monitoring plan is included in Chapter 2 of the FEIS to address concerns that monitoring was not included in the DEIS.

## Roadless Area Conservation Rule

Alternative 2 includes four timber harvest units that fall within an inventoried Roadless Area. The Roadless Area Conservation Rule allows for timber harvest when the harvest meets one or more of the four circumstances listed in section 294.13 of the rule. The circumstances that will be met by the selected alternative are listed below:

(1) The cutting, sale, or removal of generally small diameter timber is needed for one of the following purposes and will maintain or improve one or more of the roadless area characteristics as defined in section 294.11

- To improve threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive species habitat
- To maintain or restore the characteristics of ecosystems composition and structure, such as to reduce, such as to 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

### Selected Unit and Prescription – MC23 and MC24 (Group Selection)

MC23 and MC24 are *capable* woodland caribou late winter and early-winter spruce-fir habitat. However, only portions of MC23 are currently rated as *suitable*, while MC24 is not considered suitable. Average tree size (less than 7 inches dbh) and average stand age (less than 120 years) are the factors that are limiting suitability at this time. Spruce and subalpine fir are the dominant species in these units as a whole, but lodgepole pine is also a major species in specific areas. Only lodgepole pine will be harvested in these units. Where lodgepole pine is the dominant species some openings (canopy coverage less than 25%) will be created up to three acres in size. These areas dominated by lodgepole pine are not currently suitable habitat for caribou. Removing the lodgepole pine will accelerate forest succession towards subalpine fir and spruce, species that are indicative of suitable caribou habitat. In areas where lodgepole is only a minor component of this unit, residual canopy coverage would be in excess of 60%. Long-term improvements in suitability would be expected as these stands grow older, average tree size increases, and the openings created with this entry convert to spruce and fir.

*Timber harvest in roadless is needed for the following purpose (section 294.13 of the Roadless Rule)*

- To improve threatened, endangered, proposed or sensitive species habitat

*Characteristics of roadless areas (section 294.11 of the Roadless Rule) that will be maintained or improved through timber harvest*

- Diversity of plant and animal communities
- Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species

*How selected unit meets purpose and need of Myrtle-Cascade FEIS*

- Reduce the overmature lodgepole pine component in stands where this species is currently susceptible to mountain pine beetle infestations

- Improve the diversity of forest structures in the area. This will provide for wildlife, fish, and plant habitat diversity and security. The project area contains stands that are relatively similar in size and age, and therefore, not providing a wide range of wildlife habitats

### **Selected Unit and Prescription – M02 (Irregular Shelterwood)**

The Myrtle Cascade LAU (Lynx Analysis Unit) contains roughly 20,940 acres of capable habitat. Lynx habitat consists primarily of two structurally different forest types occurring at opposite ends of the stand age gradient, although they also use other habitats. Lynx require early successional forests that contain high numbers of prey (especially snowshoe hare) for foraging and late-successional forests that contain cover for kittens (especially deadfalls) and for denning (Koehler and Aubrey in Ruggiero et al., 1994, p. 86). The *maximum* preforage habitat (unsuitable) allowed in any given LAU is 30%. The amount of preforage habitat in the Myrtle Cascade LAU is 1.3%, which is far below the allowed level. This condition is of concern because it is too low to provide for a continued amount of forage habitat in the next decades. The amount of denning habitat in the LAU is 22%, which exceeds minimum requirement of 10%. Harvesting unit M02, which is located in suitable denning habitat, would increase the number of acres of preforage habitat in the LAU. Within 15-20 years, this would increase the relatively small number of acres of early foraging habitat. This loss of denning habitat, which is not limiting in this LAU or on the district as a whole, would be offset by a long-term increase in the more limiting forage habitat.

Unit M02 is an overmature moist forest stand dominated by Douglas-fir, grand fir, cedar, and hemlock. Larch and white pine are either declining in health, or have been replaced as significant components of the stand. In the case of white pine, blister rust has almost completely eliminated this species. Unit M02 will be a regeneration harvest designed to open up the stand enough to allow for the restoration of white pine and larch as significant components of the stand. An estimated 20-30 percent of the forested canopy would be retained. Preference would be to leave the largest and healthiest larch, white pine and Douglas-fir as seed trees.

*Timber harvest in roadless is needed for the following purpose (section 294.13 of the Roadless Rule)*

- To improve threatened, endangered, proposed or sensitive species habitat
- To maintain or restore characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure

*Characteristics of roadless areas (section 294.11 of the Roadless Rule) that will be maintained or improved through timber harvest*

- Habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and sensitive species
- Diversity of plant and animal communities

*How selected unit meets purpose and need of Myrtle-Cascade FEIS*

- Improve forest composition, structure, and diversity of the landscape by providing for tree species and stocking levels similar to historic levels that better resist insects, diseases, and wildfire, and that wildlife are adapted to
- Reestablish western white pine as a significant component of its historic range

## **Selected Unit and Prescription - Unit MC10 (Irregular Shelterwood)**

This unit includes dry forest old growth that historically was characterized by open-grown large-diameter ponderosa pine and western larch. Prior to successful 20<sup>th</sup> century fire suppression efforts these types of stands contained about 27 large trees per acre. The total density of trees greater than 3 inches in diameter averaged about 43 per acre. These same forests now contain more than 200 trees per acre greater than 3 inches in diameter, with Douglas-fir as the dominant species. Removing the small-diameter Douglas-fir and grand fir that have taken over after more than 70 years of fire suppression would restore the old growth character of these stands. The large-diameter ponderosa pine and western larch that are providing the old growth character of these stands would be retained indefinitely, i.e., no subsequent overstory removals would be scheduled. Created openings would allow for regeneration of pine and larch that would not occur under existing stand conditions.

It is estimated that this risk of stand-replacing fire on over 750 acres of dry forest types will be reduced about one-third, compared to no action, with the selected treatments, which includes MC10. This reduction of severe fire risk is crucial in maintaining the flow and affordability of clean water to the city of Bonners Ferry.

*Timber harvest in roadless is needed for the following purpose (section 294.13 of the Roadless Rule)*

- To maintain or restore characteristics of ecosystem composition and structure

*Characteristics of roadless areas (section 294.11 of the Roadless Rule) that will be maintained or improved through timber harvest*

- Diversity of plant and animal communities
- Sources of public drinking water

*How selected unit meets purpose and need of Myrtle-Cascade FEIS*

- Improve forest composition, structure, and diversity of the landscape by providing for tree species and stocking levels similar to historic levels that better resist insects, diseases, and wildfire, and that wildlife are adapted to.
- Reduce the number of trees per acre, and favor the development of large diameter ponderosa pine and western larch on dry forest types.

## **Legal Requirements**

I have determined that implementation of the selected alternatives would be consistent with requirements of the following laws and regulations.

- *The Preservation of American Antiquities Act, June 1906*
- *The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1980 and 1992*
- *Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979*
- *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990*
- *Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 1993*

- *American Indian Religious Freedom Act, 1978 as amended in 1994*

We consulted with the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho regarding this project; they were briefed on all aspects of the project. The existing cultural resources and known tribal interests will be protected in this project. Please see the FEIS, Appendix A , page A-12, and the project files for more detail.

**The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 1969** - We have followed the direction in 40 CFR and Forest Service Handbook (FSH 1909.15) throughout development of this FEIS and project.

**The Endangered Species Act, (ESA), 1973** - Under provisions of this Act, federal agencies are directed to seek to conserve endangered and threatened species and to ensure that actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any of these species.

Results of Biological Assessment (FEIS, Appendix B) state that the proposed project will have "*no effect*" on:

- gray wolf, woodland caribou, Canada lynx, bald eagle, white sturgeon, water howellia, and Ute ladies'-tresses

The proposed project "*may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect*":

- grizzly bear and bull trout

The proposed project "*is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence*":

- Spalding's catchfly

Results of the biological assessment were sent to US Fish and Wildlife Service who concurred with the findings on February 26, 2001 and therefore no formal consultation or preparation of the Biological Opinion is necessary. Concurrence by the Service is contingent upon implementation of the conservation measures presented in the BA.

**Clean Air Act Amendments, 1977-1999** - Clean Air Act - The Forest-wide standard for air quality is to coordinate all Forest Service management activities to meet the requirements of the State Implementation Plans, Smoke Management Plan and Federal air quality standards. This will be done under the selected alternatives, and burning will be conducted to maintain the air quality requirements. This project is consistent with the Clean Air Act and state monitoring requirements. Refer to Appendix A of the FEIS.

**The Clean Water Act, 1982** - The Clean Water Act, as amended (33 USC 1323) directs the Forest Service to meet state, interstate and local substantive as well as procedural requirements respecting control and abatement of pollution in the same manner, and to the same extent as any nongovernment entity. The Forest Service has the statutory authority to regulate, permit and enforce land -use activities on the National Forest System lands that affect water quality. The Watershed and Fisheries Report (Project File) of the FEIS establishes the connection between the Soil and Water Conservation Practices Handbook employed by the Forest Service and BMP's identified in Idaho Water Quality Standards (IDAPA 16.01.2300.05). It identifies how the Soil and Water Conservation Practice Standard Specifications for the Construction of Roads and the Timber Sale Contract provisions meet or exceed the rules and regulations pertaining to the Idaho Forest Practices Act,

Title 38, Chapter 13, Idaho Code. The relevant portions of the rules and regulations developed under the Idaho Stream Protection Act are also covered. The design features, mitigation measures and monitoring listed in Chapter 2 of the FEIS and the Watershed and Fisheries Report include project design to protect water quality. This section of the FEIS is fully incorporated in the Record of Decision. This project is consistent with the Clean Water Act.

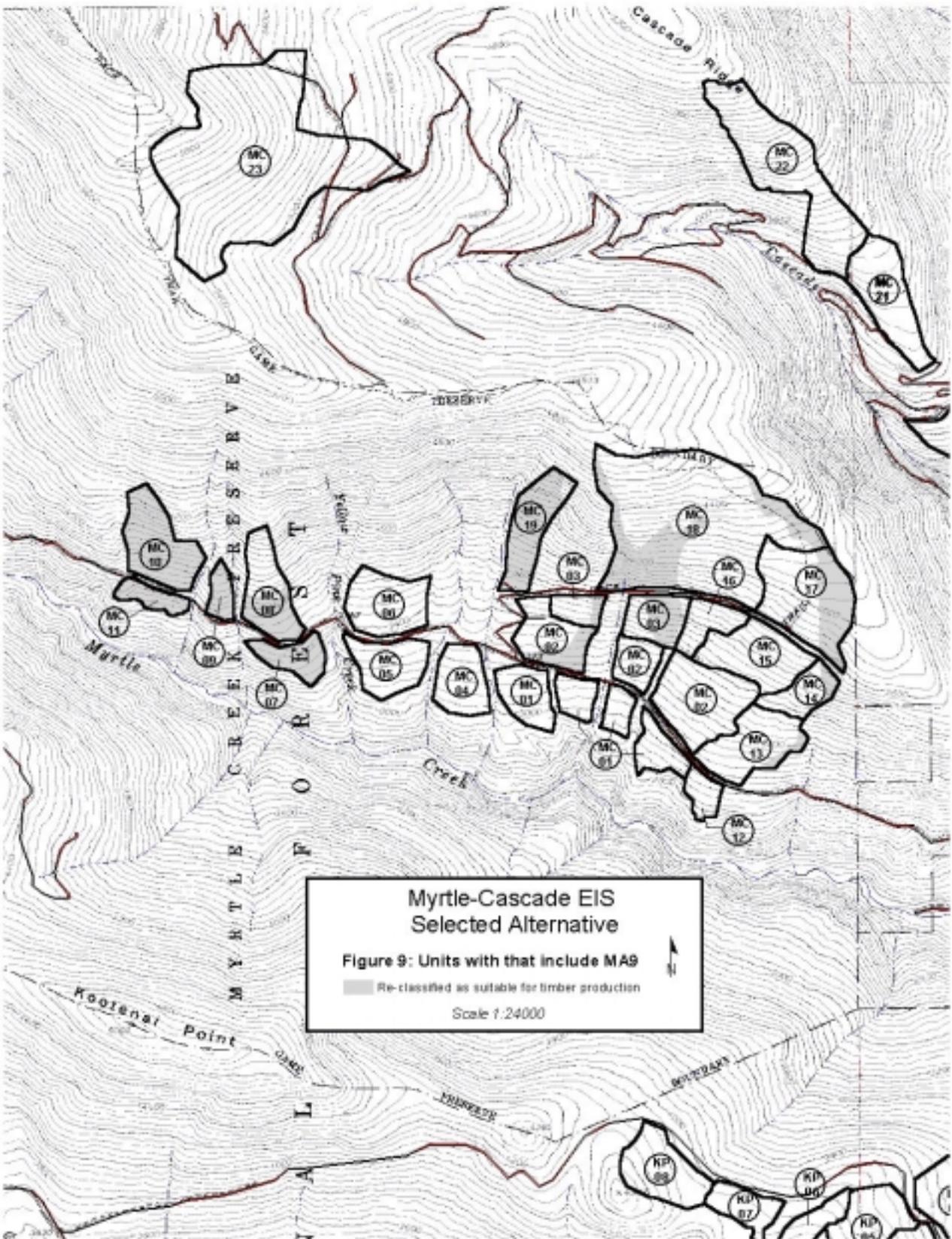
**The Idaho Panhandle Land and Resource Management Plan (Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan) 1987, as amended with the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH)** - This project is consistent with the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Plan as amended by INFISH. The Watershed and Fisheries analysis conducted for the Myrtle-Cascade project and my decision to select the course of action as defined in this Record of Decision complies fully with the management direction and goals and objectives for the 1995 Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH).

**The National Forest Management Act, (NFMA), 1976 and Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act** - The National Forest Management Act and accompanying regulations require that specific findings be documented at the project level. These findings are as follows:

*Forest Plan Consistency* -The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and accompanying regulations require that "All resource plans...must be consistent with the Forest Plan" [16 U.S.C. 1604 (i)]. Management of lands in the Myrtle-Cascade project area are guided by the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (RMP or Forest Plan), approved in 1987. Upon review of the information disclosed in the Myrtle-Cascade FEIS, for each resource, I find that my decision is consistent with all Forest-wide and management area standards and guidelines. A summary of Forest Plan management direction is provided in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. Alternative 2 is consistent with the Forest Plan as amended by the Inland Native Fish Strategy, (INFISH). The selected alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan land management allocations and with the standards and guidelines from the Forest Plan.

*36 CR 219.14 (a) Lands Suitable for Timber Production*

The selected alternative (MC02, MC03, MC07, MC08, MC09, MC10, MC11, MC17, MC18, and MC19) includes lands that were designated as unsuitable for timber production in the Forest Plan (MA9). The Forest Plan (Timber Standard 3, page II-32) allows for changes in land suitability classification based on recommendations of a certified silviculturist. In accordance with this standard lands within the units listed above have been field reviewed and re-classified as suitable for timber production (Figure 9).



*36 CFR 219.27 (a) Resource Protection*

1. The selected alternatives conserve soil and water resources and do not allow a significant or permanent impairment of the productivity of the land (FEIS Chapter 4, Watershed and Aquatic Resources)
2. Activities will not affect most potentially serious natural hazards. The vegetative and fuels treatments will reduce the unwanted effects of catastrophic fire, should it occur, by reducing fuel concentrations. (FEIS Chapter 4, Vegetation)
3. The timber resource will be managed consistent with the Forest Plan objectives of minimizing hazards due to insects and disease by maintaining stand vigor and diversity of plant communities and tree species. (FEIS Chapter 4, Vegetation)
4. Water bodies and their values are appropriately protected (FEIS Chapter 4, Watershed and Aquatic Resources)
5. The selected alternatives will provide and maintain diversity of plant and animal communities (FEIS Chapter 4, Vegetation and Appendix A, Wildlife sections)
6. The activities will either not affect or will maintain sufficient habitat for viable populations of existing native vertebrate species and management indicator species consistent with the multiple-use objectives established in the Forest Plan (FEIS Appendix B, Wildlife section and Appendix B, Biological Assessments).
7. The FEIS assesses potential physical, biological, aesthetic, cultural, engineering and financial impacts of the selected alternatives and consistency with multiple uses planned for the areas.
8. Implementation of the selected alternatives will not affect critical habitat for threatened and endangered species (FEIS Appendix B, Wildlife section and Appendix B, Biological Assessments).
9. No right-of-way grants are being issued as part of these activities.
10. The proposed road reconstruction is designed according to standards appropriate to the planned uses, considering safety, costs of transportation and effects upon lands and resources (FEIS Chapter, Features Common to All Action Alternatives, and Chapter 4, Watershed and Aquatics).
11. Based on the analysis provided in Chapter 4 of the FEIS, I have determined the necessity for reconstructing the roads identified in the FEIS. I have also determined that the design standards are appropriate for the intended uses and those roads that were not deemed necessary for the permanent transportation system, will be reclaimed and vegetated.
12. Federal, State and local air quality laws, standards and regulations will be met (please see above under Clean Air Act)

### *36 CFR 219.27 (b) Vegetation Manipulation*

1. Be best suited to the goals stated in the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan allocated National Forest system lands in the project areas to eight different Management Areas. Goals for each management area are briefly described in Chapter I of the FEIS and in detail in the IPNF Forest Plan. After review of the expected environmental consequences of the various alternatives (FEIS Chapter 4) I believe the selected alternative is well-suited to initiate Idaho Panhandle National Forest Plan direction and meet the multiple-use goals established for the area.
2. Assure that technology and knowledge exists to adequately restock lands within five years after final harvest. Technology and knowledge does exist to comply with this requirement. The IPNF have traditionally had high success rates for both artificial and natural regeneration. The vegetation analysis is provided in Chapter 4 of the FEIS and in the project file documents this assurance.
3. Not be chosen primarily because they will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber (although these factors shall be considered). Economic factors were considered in my decision, and the selected alternative does have a high economic value. However, the alternative was chosen primarily for the reasons documented in this Record of Decision (i.e. meeting Forest Plan goals and responsiveness to key issues and public comment) and not because of economic value.
4. Be chosen after considering potential effects on residual trees and adjacent stands. - The analysis considered the effects on residual trees and adjacent stands (FEIS Chapter 4, Vegetation and Project File) and these were considered in my decision. I find the treatments in the selected alternative are designed to protect the reserve trees and adjacent stands, including riparian areas, to the extent possible.
5. Be selected to avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and to ensure conservation of soil and water resources. The use of Best Management Practices (BMP's), avoidance of problem soil areas, regulation of yarding and site preparation operations, and the application of improvement and mitigation measures, as documented in Chapters 2 and 4 of the FEIS, will assure that site productivity is maintained and soil and water resources are protected.
6. Be selected to provide the desired effects on water quality and quantity, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired tree species, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and other resource yields. After review of the FEIS, I find that the selected alternative will provide the desired effects on water, fish, vegetation, scenery and other resources within the project area. It will also have acceptable effects on soil and wildlife resources within the project area, as discussed in Chapter 4, Appendix A, and Appendix B of the FEIS.
7. Be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements and total costs of preparation, logging and administration. Data presented in the FEIS and project file relative to transportation, economics, and harvesting requirements indicate to me that the selected alternative is feasible and practical.

### *36 CFR 219.27 (c) Silvicultural Practices*

1. No timber harvest, other than salvage sales or sales to protect other multiple-use values, shall occur on lands not suitable for timber production [16 U.S.C. 1604 (k)]. Guidelines for determining suitability are found in the Forest Plan, and proposed harvest units are within productive habitat types as described in the

Forest Plan. Timber harvest will occur within Management Areas (MA) 2, 3, and 7 as described in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Plan.

### *36 CFR 219.27 (d) Even-aged Management*

1. The location and shape of openings that will be created by timber harvest included in the selected alternatives will achieve the desired combination of multiple-use objectives as described in the FEIS (Appendix A and The Visuals Report – Project File).
2. The openings that will be created shall be 40 acres or less unless approval is granted by the Regional Forester to exceed this size limit. The largest unit under the selected alternative will be 135 acres (M02). Northern Regional Guides provide direction on how to proceed. The public was notified of the larger opening size via public scoping and the DEIS and the Regional Forester has given approval to exceed this limit.

*Clearcutting and Even-aged Management* - When timber is to be harvested using an even-aged management system, a determination that the system is appropriate to meet the objectives and requirements of the Forest Plan must be made. Where clearcutting is to be used, it must be determined to be the optimum harvest method [16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(F)(i)].

Alternative 2 will employ the use of the irregular shelterwood method, which is an even-aged harvest system. A description of this system is provided in the FEIS, Chapter 2, Table 2-6, page 2-13. All of the units where this harvest system is applied will include reforestation. None of these timber harvest units will be clearcut.

Of the estimated 1,818 acres to be harvested with my decision, 441 acres will be harvested with even-aged regeneration systems (irregular shelterwood) and 937 acres will be harvested with uneven-aged regeneration systems (group selection). Further Forest Plan direction (Appendix I, Vegetation Management Practices) for the specific habitat types identified for regeneration treatment indicates that even-aged treatments ranging from clearcutting to shelterwood cutting may be appropriate for these sites. The Myrtle-Cascade FEIS (Chapter 3) and the silvicultural diagnosis (project file) disclose stand conditions, including age, species, stocking, growth, insects and diseases; ecological data, such as habitat types; and physical data such as topography and slope. Together, these provide the information necessary to make site-specific prescription determinations that are consistent with the Summary of Timber Information and Vegetation Management Practices (Forest Plan, APPENDIX A) and the Northern Regional Guide (USDA, Forest Service, 1983).

I have reviewed the silvicultural information in Douglas-fir Beetle FEIS and project record and the site-specific management objectives within the IPNF Forest Plan and have determined that even-aged management practices are appropriate (with reserve trees) as the appropriate method to achieve the multiple resource objectives on the sites selected for harvest.

### **Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

Regulations require that a record of decision specify the alternative or alternatives that were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2).

I believe that Alternative 2 provides the best balance of meeting multiple resource needs. When compared to the other alternatives, Alternative 2 does the best job of integrating the full spectrum of resource benefits in the project area.

## Findings

This actions described in this decision are consistent with the IPNF's Forest Plan and Record of Decision, dated September 17, 1987, as amended by the Inland Native Fish Strategy, dated July 28, 1995. It will help achieve the desired future condition for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests and the decision is consistent with the road building moratorium in roadless areas.

## Appeal Rights and Procedures

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.7. A written Notice of Appeal must be submitted within 45 days after the date of the notice of this decision is published in the Spokesman Review to:

USDA, Forest Service, Northern Region  
ATTN: Appeals Deciding Officer (RFO)  
P.O. Box 7669  
Missoula, Montana 59807

Appeals must meet content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Detailed records of the environmental analysis are available for public review at the Bonners Ferry District Office, Route 4, Box 4860, Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805.

If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition.

## Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, and Departmental Regulation 5600-2 direct federal agencies to integrate environmental justice considerations into federal programs and activities. Environmental justice means that, to the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, all populations are provided the opportunity to comment before decisions are rendered on, are allowed to share in the benefits of, are not excluded from, and are not affected in a disproportionately high and adverse manner by, government programs and activities affecting human health or the environment. My decision is consistent with this Order. My decision sought and incorporated public involvement. My decision will not have a discernible effect on minorities, American Indians, or women, or the civil rights of any United States citizen. Nor will it have a disproportionate adverse impact on minorities or low-income individuals. (FEIS, Appendix A, page A-20). A summary of this Executive Order is located in the project file.

## Nondiscrimination Policy

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

