



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Region 1

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**File Code:** 1570 (215)

**Date:** November 3, 1997

**Route To:**

**Subject:** Camp Reimel Ecosystem Management Project, Appeal #98-01-00-0001  
Bitterroot National Forest

**To:** Appeal Deciding Officer

This is my recommendation on disposition of the appeal filed by James Olsen on behalf of Friends of the Bitterroot, Inc.; American Wildlands, Inc.; and Alliance for the Wild Rockies, Inc. protesting the Bitterroot National Forest Supervisor's Decision Notice for the Camp Reimel Ecosystem Management Project.

The Forest Supervisor's decision adopts Alternative 1 modified to allow use of a ground-based yarding system in harvest unit 42. The decision will implement harvest of approximately 3.9 MMBF of sawlogs, roundwood, and pulp from approximately 1,241 acres. Prescribed fire will be used on 1,918 acres. Approximately 3.5 miles of road will be constructed, 24.9 miles improved, and 8.3 miles rehabilitated. Year-long travel restrictions will be imposed on 29.9 miles of road, and 5.2 miles of road will be partially restricted. Riparian area improvements will also be implemented.

The decision also includes a site-specific Forest Plan Amendment to allow lower than standard prescribed levels of elk habitat effectiveness in two third-order drainages.

My review was conducted pursuant to, and in accordance with, 36 CFR 215.19 to ensure the analysis and decision are in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policy, and orders. The appeal record, including the Appellants' objections and recommended changes, has been thoroughly reviewed.

#### SUMMARY

The Appellants allege violations of the National Forest Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, Federal and State water quality standards, the Forest Service Manual, and Forest Plan Standards.

The Appellants request the decision be remanded and an Environmental Impact Statement be completed. An informal meeting was offered, but the Appellants declined. No Interested Party comments were received.

#### FINDINGS

My recommendation is based upon the following evaluation:

##### Clarity of the Decision and Rationale

The Responsible Official is to be commended for a thorough job of documenting such a complex project. Very detailed information is provided to give a clear understanding of the process and rationale used in making the decision.

All mitigation and monitoring requirements are contained in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and referenced in the DN. Maps included in the EA are appropriate and easily understood.

I conclude the DN is long and sometimes difficult to follow, but it is appropriate for the complexity of the decision.

#### Purpose of the Proposal and Comprehension of Benefits

Each proposed action is clearly described and followed by the specific purpose and need for that action. The relationship between the purpose and need and the Forest Plan is clearly stated.

Consequences of the no-action alternative are fully disclosed and compared to the action alternatives. The rationale for the decision is discussed at length. Each decision is highlighted and tied to the purpose and need, public issues and Forest Plan implementation. The relationship between the decision criteria and selected alternative is documented, and it is clear why Alternative 1 was selected. The rationale was easy to follow for alternatives considered but not given detailed review.

I conclude the DN is well documented and demonstrates and supports the need for, and the benefits of, the proposed action.

#### Consistency with Policy, Direction and Supporting Information

The DN includes a thorough discussion of how the decision complies with the National Forest Management Act. The decision outlines the determination of non-significance for the site-specific amendment which changes elk habitat effectiveness standards.

The project is aimed toward restoring the ecosystem, including several opportunities for vegetation management and watershed improvement. The action is well supported by a description of the effects of doing nothing. The DN and EA clearly show how the selected alternative meets the purpose and need. Appendix C in the EA very clearly outlines Forest Plan desired conditions and target landscape descriptions. The project is supported by findings of the Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Assessment and is tiered to the Integrated Resource Assessment for the area.

The Finding of No Significant Impact is well supported in the EA, and the DN references this. The Responsible Official clearly determined the significance of impact in both context and intensity. Mitigation measures were cited.

I conclude the decision clearly demonstrates the proposal is consistent with all legal and regulatory requirements, as well as Forest Service Policy.

#### Effectiveness of Public Participation Activities and Use of Comments

An excellent public involvement effort was made throughout the process. Public involvement tools included letters, news releases, open houses and field reviews with individuals, groups, State agencies and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The EA does a nice job describing how public comments were used in identifying issues and why issues were selected for detailed analysis or why they were not. Public comments were considered in alternative development and are reflected in the range of alternatives.

A content analysis process was used. Responses to comments were excellent, very complete, and the Responsible Official used the responses as an opportunity to clarify some issues.

I conclude the public involvement strategy was excellent for this complex project. The close coordination with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes is commendable.

### Appeal Issues

The appeal record was reviewed with respect to the Appellants' issues. Analysis and documentation are adequate and cover the appeal points raised. It was determined that the Forest Supervisor complied with law, policy, and regulations pertaining to the appeal points raised.

### RECOMMENDATION

I recommend the Forest Supervisor's decision be affirmed and the Appellants' requested relief be denied.

/s/ Clyde G. Weller

CLYDE WELLER  
Reviewing Officer  
Deputy Director, Engineering