



Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Northern Region / Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

R1-25-05n

January 2025

Final Record of Decision

Revised Land Management Plan

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Latah, Shoshone and
Benewah Counties, Idaho





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Final Record of Decision for the Land Management Plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Latah, Shoshone and Benewah Counties, Idaho

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Commonly Used Acronyms

CAA	Clean Air Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
DC	Desired Condition
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FRN	Federal Register Notice
FS	Forest Service
FW	Forest Wide
GA	Geographic Areas
GDL	Guideline
GIS	Geographic Information System
GL	Goal
IK	Indigenous Knowledge
LN	Legal Notice
MA	Management Areas
MMBF	Million board feet
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFS	National Forest System
NFMA	National Forest Management Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOO	Notice of Opportunity to Object
NPCLW	Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
NPTEC	Nez Perce Tribe Executive Council
NRV	Natural Range of Variation
OBJ	Objective
PTSQ	Potential Timber Sale Quantity
RNA	Research Natural Area
ROD	Record of Decision
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SA	Special Area
SCC	Species of Conservation Concern
STD	Standard
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SYL	Sustained Yield Limit
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOI	United States Department of Interior
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

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Introduction

This Final Record of Decision (Final ROD) documents the decision and rationale for approving the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Land Management Plan. The plan is a strategic framework and vision for the management of this national forest, informed by an evaluation of existing conditions and trends and with consideration of a wide body of scientific information and a robust public input process. The plan reflects the unique values of this place and what these lands provide, both intrinsic values and human use and enjoyment for current and future generations.

The decision is consistent with the Forest Service's 2012 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule at 36 CFR Part 219. The plan addresses ecological sustainability in the context of a changing climate, social and economic sustainability, environmental justice, honoring Tribal Treaty rights and interests, and cooperation with Tribes, states, counties, and other Federal agencies. This plan fosters productive and sustainable use of this national forest in a manner that will improve the overall health and resilience of the Forests. It contributes to the national goal to conserve at least 30 percent of our country's lands and waters through a thoughtful network of conservation designations and management guidance. The plan implements many of the action items in the Tribal Action Plan¹ and Equity Action Plan² through engagement and developing a shared vision of co-stewardship with the Nez Perce Tribe and collaboration with local communities to provide equitable access to resources on the Forests. The plan supports increased resilience to wildfires and disturbance events, reforestation, and improved access to recreation, while protecting wilderness and other sensitive areas. Implementation of the plan will further the Agency's goals of addressing the wildfire crisis and implementing the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy³, will increase resiliency to climate change, sustain old growth and mature forests, and help implement the Forest Service's Tribal Action Plan and Equity Action Plan.

The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests were administratively combined in 2013. This plan revises and replaces the two existing Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests Land and Resource Management Plans. This revised one plan will cover the administratively combined national forests. The plan describes desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines, as well as land suitability for project and activity decision making. The plan will guide resource management activities on the national forest for the next 10 to 15 years, or until it is amended or revised.

Forest Setting

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is located in the heart of north-central Idaho, in a seven-county region, comprising Idaho, Clearwater, Latah, Shoshone, Benewah, Lewis, and Nez Perce counties. The plan area encompasses six ranger districts: Palouse, North Fork, Lochsa-Powell, Moose Creek, Salmon River, and Red River. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is responsible for managing approximately four million acres across this landscape. The Clearwater River drains most of these acres within both forests and rugged mountain ranges, pristine rivers and streams, and extensive

¹ https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/Strengthening-Tribal-Relations.pdf

² <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fs-equity-action-plan.pdf>

³ <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/>

forested landscapes combine to create diverse ecosystems that provide spectacular recreational opportunities; substantial fish and wildlife habitat; and numerous forest, mineral, and range products.

The ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce Tribe, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests play an integral part in the past, present, and future culture of the Nez Perce people. The Nez Perce ceded this territory to the U.S. Government in the Treaty of 1855. The Treaty of 1855 is supreme law. Under the Treaty of 1855 and the Treaty of 1863, the U.S. Government is obligated to protect treaty reserved resources and meet trust responsibilities. Trust responsibilities arise from the United States' unique legal relationship with Native American Tribes. It derives from the Federal Government's consistent promise in the treaties that it signed to protect the safety and well-being of the Native American Tribes and Tribal members. Federal Indian Trust responsibility is now defined as a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation, on the part of the United States, to protect Tribal lands, assets, resources, and reserved rights, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indians and Alaska Native Tribes. This responsibility requires that the Federal Government consider the best interests of the Native American Tribes in its dealings with them and when taking actions that may affect them. The trust responsibility includes protection of the sovereignty of each Tribal government. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is responsible for the government's trust responsibility by ensuring actions do not diminish rights of Native American Tribes and Tribal members and by treating National Forest System resources as trust resources where fiduciary rights exist. Maintaining Tribal Trust is interwoven into every action and consistent with Joint Secretarial Order 3403, we manage these lands in consultation with Tribes, consistent with the treaty and other reserved rights. Native American use of the national forest since time immemorial is manifest in hundreds of archaeological, sacred sites, and other areas of traditional cultural importance, many of which are listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Significant spiritual, traditional use, and ceremonial sites are located on the national forest and are in use today by Tribal members and this Plan emphasizes sustaining these uses into the future.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests play a critical role in sustaining rural economies, contributing to social systems, and providing for sustainable ecosystems. Up to 84 percent of the counties' land base is administered by the Forest Service, and up to 16 percent of local economies are dependent on the timber industry. Vast wild areas and miles of wild rivers define the area. These counties and communities are underserved as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool⁴ for health, climate change, energy, and legacy pollution (see Environmental Justice section).

The Forests have the potential to contribute 4,000 jobs to the local rural area, supporting annual income of over \$163 million. These jobs and employment income result from timber harvest, fuels reduction, fire suppression activities, Forest Service expenditures and restoration contracts, grazing and mineral receipts, payments to counties as well as expenditures by the public during recreation, hunting and fishing activities. Due to the rural nature of the counties, the economic and social importance of the area is much greater when viewed in the regional context. Many visitors to the Forest do not contribute economically to the communities within the Forests boundaries; however, the Forests are essential to the lifestyle and economies of those surrounding areas such as Missoula and Ravalli Counties in Montana and many other areas. Inaction also has

⁴ <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/#6.09/46.226/-116.019>

an economic relationship to our communities and counties. For example, not addressing the wildfire crisis or failing to continue restoration of upland and aquatic ecological systems would have a negative impact on the social and economic systems in our area.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is home to 11 listed, candidate or proposed species under the Endangered Species Act including anadromous salmon and steelhead that migrate to the Pacific Ocean and back during their lifecycle. The Forests provide clean water and clean air, timber products, and recreation opportunities for area residents and visitors. Hunting and fishing opportunities abound on the Nez Perce-Clearwater supported by an emphasis on healthy fish and game populations and a variety of access opportunities from passenger vehicle access to multi-day hiking or horseback opportunities.

Need for Change

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans to emphasize integrated restoration of terrestrial and aquatic resources to restore vegetation composition, structure, and landscape patterns; reduce fuel loading; and improve watershed conditions to support wildlife and other resource values while contributing to the social and economic sustainability of local and regional communities.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans to provide for ecological, social, and economic sustainability in an integrated manner. Additionally, the plans need to be revised to better consider multiple uses and ecosystem services desired by local, regional, and national publics.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans to provide for a proactive and comprehensive approach for the stewardship of the land, to ensure Tribal Treaty rights are protected, and Indigenous Knowledge is considered. Co-stewardship of the Forest's resources with the Nez Perce Tribe needs to be emphasized.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans based on best available scientific information to update direction from the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) and Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy (PACFISH) with forest-specific aquatic conservation strategies. There is a need to update lynx habitat boundaries from the 2007 Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction. In addition, there is a need to incorporate direction established in the Idaho Roadless Rule.

There is a need to revise the two 1987 Forest Plans under the provisions of the 2012 planning regulations to provide the combined forests consistent, adaptable management guidance in consideration of best available scientific information while continuing to provide a range of social, economic, and ecological benefits for the present and into the future.

The purpose is to revise the 1987 plans for the Clearwater and Nez Perce Forests into a single revised land management plan under the 2012 Planning Rule.

Engagement and Consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe

Government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe began prior to the initiation of the revision in 2012 and continued up to the time of this decision. Through the years the Forest and Tribe have developed and worked through many plan components to ensure that this Revised Plan protects Tribal Treaty rights in the way that respects the views of the Nez Perce Tribe. The

Plan reflects this cooperative relationship throughout its components and within the direction. Informal and formal government-to-government consultation has occurred throughout the revision process including during the development of the assessment and the proposed action, scoping, development of alternatives, prior and after the release of the draft EIS, prior to the release of the final EIS, and during development of the biological assessment. At each step, staff to staff meetings have worked to address issues and provide each government with a better understanding of their processes and perspectives. We have convened Nez Perce Tribal gatherers to include their perspectives in the social analysis. These efforts have also allowed the Forest to begin to develop an understanding of some of the vast wealth of knowledge the Nez Perce people have with respect to the land. We have woven this knowledge into plan components as well as the plan itself. While the Nez Perce Tribe originally responded they would like to be an official Cooperating Agency, a formal Cooperating Agency Agreement was never finalized at the Tribe's request. However, the Tribe was invited to all cooperating agency meetings held over the eleven-year period this plan was being developed and attended those Cooperating Agency Meetings as a sovereign government that must be consulted during the development of land management plans. Government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe Executive Committee has occurred periodically during the development of the revised plan and the EIS.

Our relationship with the Nez Perce Tribe is unique, thus we also consider novel approaches in how we honor the Treaties with the Nez Perce, how we discharge our general trust responsibilities, and how we honor and help sustain their ability to practice their culture in the past, present, and future. We hope that this land management plan, with components throughout that honor the reserved Treaty rights and uphold our general trust responsibilities will become a blueprint for co-stewardship across the Nez Perce ancestral homelands.

Upholding our Treaty obligations is a solemn duty we have and we are committed to ensuring this plan does that in working with the Nez Perce Tribe's government. Through consultation with the Nez Perce, plan component changes, resulted in more certainty and protection for specific ecological values and less flexibility managing in the future, as requested by the Tribe. Co-stewardship of resources on the Nez Perce's ceded land was codified and strong standards stating that we will uphold and honor the Treaties of 1855 and 1863 were carried into new plan components developed in tandem with the Nez Perce Tribe during the objection period.

While a number of instructions were given by the Objection Reviewing Officers to continue government-to-government consultation, the Forests had already begun that process to rectify the concerns of the Nez Perce Tribe. In conversations with Tribal leadership and Tribal policy makers, it was determined that continued work post-objection period would focus on:

- The strengthening of plan components assuring compliance with the Nez Perce Treaties and integration of co-stewardship into every level of Forest Service project development and implementation;
- Refinement of plan components to provide abundant and harvestable populations of fish through changes to the aquatic and riparian plan components;
- Minor modification of plan components to assure management is guided to provide habitat for viable populations of wildlife (grizzly bear and elk) and abundant and harvestable wildlife populations; and

- Refinement of the monitoring plan to ensure the tracking of how plan components are moving forest conditions toward desired conditions

Despite the robust dialogue, changes to plan components and other plan content and a better shared understanding of each entity's needs and expectations, this decision on the revised plan has not resolved every concern of the Tribe. Some issues will continue to be discussed during project development and the NEPA process for projects proposed under the revised plan as part of co-stewardship. Other issues will require multiparty collaboration to ensure the best data available is being used to inform our projects and monitor our progress toward meeting desired conditions, especially as it pertains to treaty reserved resources.

Our government-to-government obligations do not end, even with this decision on the revised plan, nor is our co-stewardship work with the Nez Perce Tribe limited to these words on paper. We will continue to work together outside of the planning process to implement restoration projects, build a collective understanding of the vast ecological knowledge of the Tribe, restore traditional Place Names across the Forest, increase visitor awareness and appreciation for past, present, and future Nez Perce culture, recognize and support Nez Perce business enterprises, and much more. Again, while not every concern of the Tribe has been fully resolved, this decision is signed with a common understanding, a common goal and a commitment to continue working on the topics where the Tribe has continued concerns through project development under the revised land management plan. This decision is made standing side by side with our partners of the sovereign government knowing that while it may not be a perfect plan, it does progress the Forest and the Forest's relationship with the Nez Perce people and resources forward and gives a solid foundation to continue working together. Our desire is to exceed our general trust responsibilities into the future and this decision accomplishes that. Projects developed under this Plan will begin with a knowledge of the Tribal Trust resources and our responsibilities to uphold the Treaties at the forefront and be designed and constructed to meet those expectations socially, ecologically, and economically.

Engagement with State and Local Governments, other Federal Agencies, other Tribes, and the Public

The Nez Perce-Clearwater began public participation activities in 2012 and facilitated a multitude of public and interagency meetings to bring together information for the Nez Perce-Clearwater to consider in preparing the assessment, developing the proposed action, and developing alternatives to the proposed action. There were 22 rounds of public meetings between 2012 and 2014 to develop the 2014 proposed action. The first meeting was a summit to introduce the concepts of forest plan revision to the public. The next meetings discussed the need for change, the desired conditions, and forest resource management including wilderness and timber suitability and other plan components. Public input was compiled at each meeting, as well as throughout the process. The dialogue and recommendations from this public involvement process were used to help develop the proposed action.

In addition to postal mail and email, public meeting information was announced via the [forest plan revision website](#).⁵ The website also included a means for public comment using electronic or printed comment forms or submitting comments via an electronic database and posted meeting results and other information. Updates were posted periodically.

The [notice of intent for the proposed action to prepare an environmental impact statement](#) was published in the Federal Register on July 15, 2014. The notice of intent asked for public comment on the proposal for a 60-day period, which was extended to 120-days based on public requests. The Nez Perce-Clearwater held five public meetings to provide opportunities to better understand the proposed action so that meaningful public comments could be provided by the end of the scoping period. Using the comments from the public, other agencies, Tribes, and organizations, the Nez Perce-Clearwater interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address through changes to the proposed action, development of alternatives, or in analysis of impacts of the proposed action. A [corrected notice of intent](#) was published on September 5, 2019, to correct the anticipated dates of availability of the draft environmental impact statement from 2015 to 2019 based on changes to the timeline.

Since the scoping period, public involvement has been ongoing. Stakeholders have been defined broadly as any individual, organization, government, or Tribe that is interested in the planning process. The forest plan revision team met with thousands of individuals from hundreds of organizations since 2012. Following the scoping period, the team continued to meet with any and every organization that invited the team to meet with them. This included attendance at well over 100 meetings between 2014 and the release of the draft environmental impact statement. The Nez Perce-Clearwater convened meetings on several occasions, including a meeting in May 2015 to update the public on what has happened since scoping, a webinar in December 2017 to prepare the public for alternative development, a meeting in January 2018 to solicit input on alternatives over three days in two locations, and another meeting in the summer of 2018 to share the alternatives being analyzed with the public over six meetings across the Nez Perce-Clearwater, coined “Coffee with the Planners”. Additionally, in 2018, County Commissions were briefed in public county commission meetings in the counties of Idaho, Clearwater, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce, Benewah, and Shoshone in Idaho and the counties of Ravalli, Superior, and Missoula in Montana. Forest plan revision team members have set up displays at Nez Perce Tribe General Council meetings during key points in the process.

Comments were accepted for consideration throughout the planning process. These comments helped the interdisciplinary team develop plan components and alternatives, conduct analysis, determine the best available scientific information, conduct wilderness evaluations, create wild and scenic suitability reports, and develop a monitoring plan. Comments have also been used by the Regional Forester in development of the Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) list.

Collaboration with various diverse organized groups also provided the Nez Perce-Clearwater with information that was used the same as other comments. Forest Service staff attended meetings at their invitation but did not give any decision-making authority to these collaborative groups. However, input from groups of people with diverse perspectives working toward consensus on management issues was taken very seriously and was highly valued by the Forest Service,

⁵ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5447338>

whether it comes from an organized collaborative or from elsewhere. The interdisciplinary team has met with the following collaborative groups since 2012:

- Forest Plan Collaborative 2012-2014, U.S. Forest Service convened.
- Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) 2014-current, at their invitation
- Efficiency in Public Collaborative (EPC) 2019-current, at their invitation

The State of Idaho has been involved with forest planning since 2012. Various state agencies have been present at public meetings, met with the interdisciplinary team, provided information and data, and assisted in the development of plan components.

State agencies, offices, and commissions that have been involved include:

- Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation (lead agency)
- Idaho Governor's Office of Energy and Mineral Resources
- Idaho State Department of Agriculture
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
- Idaho Department of Water Resources
- Idaho Geological Survey
- Idaho Governor's Idaho Roadless Commission
- Idaho Governor's Lewis and Clark Trail Commission

Three agencies or governments have signed a cooperating agency agreement for plan revision with the Forest Service. These cooperating agencies participated in the development of the Land Management Plan and final environmental impact statement with regards to their areas of specialized expertise. Cooperating agency participation in the forest plan revision is not an endorsement of the Land Management Plan nor does cooperating agency status limit their ability to participate during the public involvement process. Cooperating agencies include:

- Idaho County
- Clearwater County
- State of Idaho by and through the Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation

The Forest Service has consulted with the Nez Perce Tribe through the life of the revision of the land management plan. The Tribe has been influential in the preparation of both the draft and final environmental impact statements. Staff to staff meetings between the Tribe and the Forest Service began in 2012 and continued up until the time of this decision. Forest Leadership met with the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee to provide updates and incorporate important components to the land management plan. The Tribe received documents and analysis during the

Cooperating Agency reviews as well as throughout the process. See previous section for a more thorough (but not exhaustive) summary of our engagement with the Tribe.

Consultation with other Tribes has largely relied on a deferment from other Tribes to the expertise and knowledge of the Nez Perce. In 2012 Tribes were invited to participate and most either remained silent or informally deferred to the Nez Perce. Involvement during development of the plan and draft record of decision was limited to the Nez Perce. In 2024 the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) filed a belated objection letter concerned about their Tribes' cultural resources and the increase in winter motorized recreation along the Montana border, specifically in the Hoodoo Roadless Area. Staff to Staff meetings with CSKT clarified the importance of the area and resources to them and updated CSKT on the work that has been done to reach this decision. A shared appreciation of the importance of the Forest and an agreement to continue government to government consultation for projects proposed under the revised plan within CSKT's area of concern, especially future motor vehicle use determinations, emerged.

Following the release of the draft environmental impact statement, the publication of the [Federal Register Notice](#) on December 20, 2019, initiated a formal 90-day comment period. The comment period was extended for 30 days, concluding on April 20, 2020, for a total comment period duration of 120 days. Public meetings were held in Kamiah, Grangeville, Orofino, Elk City, Lowell, Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Moscow, Riggins, McCall, and Boise in Idaho and Superior, Missoula, and Hamilton in Montana. Comments were accepted through the Forest Plan Revision commenting site, by e-mail, and by written mailed or hand delivered comment.

During the formal comment period, 19,837 comments were received in total. 1,329 unique comment letters were received. Within these letters, 4,134 individual substantive comments were identified. The substantive comments were grouped into 133 concern categories with over 400 concern statements developed from these substantive comments. See Appendix M of the FEIS for additional information and a response to the concern statements.

Decision and Rationale for the Decision

Decision

This decision is being made by an acting Forest Supervisor on the eve of the beginning of the tenure of the next permanent Forest Supervisor on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. This revision has been overseen by two permanent Forest Supervisors and four acting Forest Supervisors since the Forests were named the first early adopter of the 2012 Planning Rule in early 2012. While this signature is made by one, it is a reflection of years of work done by the planning team, the Forest Leadership Team and those Forest Supervisors, permanent and acting, that have preceded this signature – together with robust tribal, state, county and public engagement. This plan was developed collaboratively with the input of countless stakeholders and a large number of Forest Service staff that provides for social, economic and ecological sustainability now and in the future—in short, the revised plan embodies the mission of our Agency and that is something any person in this position understands and embraces. The signature on this decision is a formal authorization of the revised land management plan, but the work done to get here spans over a decade and involvement from many. I am honored to be the final signature acknowledging that without previous leadership to get us here and without future leadership to lead us forward, this authorization would not be possible.

I have reviewed the environmental analysis disclosed in the FEIS, the planning record, and comments from our government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, local and State government partners, engagement with other Native American Tribes, other Federal agencies, and the public. I also considered how the revised land management plan meets the identified needs to change and the requirements of 36 CFR 219. I have modified the plan, the FEIS and this decision based on instructions of the Objection Reviewing Officers and have included those changes in my review and consideration. The draft EIS did not include a Preferred Alternative and our commenters reviewed the full array of alternatives. This allowed our Forest leadership and revision team to build a Preferred Alternative that was shaped by stakeholder input and based on analysis trade-offs. After review of the analysis, listening to and reading comments from the public and the Nez Perce Tribe, considering the legal and ethical obligations of the Agency, the Forest Leadership crafted an alternative using the building blocks of the four action alternatives in the draft EIS. In a process spanning months of preparation and review, culminating in a week of discussion and collaboration, the team reached consensus on an alternative that best addresses governmental and public comments and concerns. We were able to utilize the large expanse of the Forest to provide for the myriad of uses people want and contribute in a meaningful way to our local communities. The Preferred Alternative is predicated on sustaining the ecological, social, and economic resources to honor the past and provide for the present and future of the Nez Perce people. In order to address climate change and embrace fire as an essential ecological process, our leadership team considered landscape level restoration needs while making decisions in what areas to recommend for formal designation and in determining what uses are suitable on various parts of the Forests. The team overlaid different land management allocation options, including the decisions to be made of Recommended Wilderness, Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers, Research Natural Areas and Special Areas with the existing designations of Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Idaho Roadless Areas, Research Natural Areas, and Special Areas with habitat needs of specialized species such as wolverine, anadromous fish, grizzly bear, and unique ecosystems such as the coastal disjunct ecosystem. With this layering of ecological, social, and economic values and needs, we were able to apply land allocations across the vast 4 million acres of the Forest to sustain all resources at that scale. No single acre provides all ecosystem services or benefits all ecological values, however, by being deliberate and thoughtful in the boundaries of recommended areas and suitable uses, we are providing for the social, ecological and economic sustainability of the Forests at the Forest scale.

It is not appropriate, possible, or realistic to provide for everyone and everything on every acre. For instance, in order to improve the health of the forested and meadow vegetation, we need to rebuild more resilient stands and move toward the historic range of variability. Without taking those actions to restore resiliency and species diversity to the uplands, all the work within the stream will be for naught. Yet, some of the tools available to manage the upland vegetation can have impacts to other resources. In crafting the Preferred Alternative, we considered these short and long-term trade-offs. Less than 25 percent of the entirety of the Forest is considered suited for timber harvest as a tool to move toward NRV. These areas are generally in the rural, motorized areas near communities where the need for fuels reduction and precise restoration techniques is the greatest. On over 75 percent of the Forests, wildland fire will be the primary tool and movement toward NRV will be less precise or predictable. This vast acreage, over 3 million acres, will remain less developed or undeveloped with more secure habitat. We considered the specific language and protections of different land allocations in our Wild and Scenic Rivers suitability to determine the best management to sustain the outstandingly remarkable values of the eligible rivers in consideration of the larger landscape. Underlying ALL those land allocations, are a suite of forest plan components that ensure ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The

foundation of the plan, those forestwide plan components meet the Agency's obligations under law and regulation.

The Preferred Alternative was developed from the range of alternatives in the DEIS, considering Tribal and public comments coupled with knowledge based on the actual analysis, not assumptions of impacts. On behalf of the leadership team of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest, and the Forest Supervisors that have come before me, I have selected the Preferred Alternative as described in the FEIS and the accompanying Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Land Management Plan.

Land management planning can be an abstract process, with rules, procedures, and language that are difficult to understand or relate to. At its core, this new plan is our new "contract" with the Nez Perce Tribe and public for how these National Forests will be managed into the future. In reflecting on our conversations throughout this process, the one area of consensus has been about the incredible value that these lands hold for so many people and for so many reasons. There is also agreement that these lands deserve our best efforts in shared stewardship.

My role as the decision maker is to put forth a plan that provides for long-term sustainability (ecological, economic, and social), meets obligations within the Treaty of 1855 with the Nez Perce Tribe and considers the richness of interests and the uniqueness of affected communities. The Forests also wished to develop a plan that reflects the indigenous knowledge of the Nez Perce Tribe blended with the knowledge the Forest Service has gained through 100-plus years of management experience across the national forest while providing for continuing evolution of our social and ecological scientific understandings. We want everyone who participated in the process to see their fingerprints somewhere in this plan for the future. This plan is our plan.

As the Forests have engaged with communities, partners, Native American Tribes, cooperators, and many, many people who care about this national forest, we have been humbled by the knowledge, commitment, energy, and passion that has been shared. We appreciate the respectful manner with which people have interacted with our team and with others who hold different views. The common desire is for a plan that recognizes and protects what people care about now and into the future. We are also keenly aware there is no way to satisfy all interests, nor a way to bridge all values held by our public.

We look forward to working with all our stakeholder citizens, who value this landscape, each in their own way, and for their own reasons. This is a momentous step toward our common goal of sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of this Forest for current and future generations. Thank you to those who collaborated with us and each other to find common ground and raise all the ships in the harbor. Your passion, wisdom, and energy helped us make this decision. We realize that there are endless permutations of how we could have applied the management direction, that is the nature of long-range planning. We put this puzzle together in our own way, informed by analysis and comments from all of you, in consideration of those who do not have a voice.

Key Elements of the Decision

Key elements of the selected alternative include:

- A suite of plan components that provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability; diversity of plant and animal communities; and multiple uses within the inherent capability of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

- A Tribal Trust section of plan components that help ensure the U.S. Government Treaties with the Nez Perce of 1855 and 1863 and Tribal Trust are upheld. Additionally, the plan components honor the past and present and future culture of the Nez Perce by articulating a collective vision of co-stewardship as a best practice in land management for the duration of the revised land management plan. There are over 300 plan components that contribute to and ensure that all activities under this plan honor Tribal Treaty rights, incorporate indigenous knowledge and uphold our solemn trust relationship.
- Programmatic plan components, informed by the natural range of variability, that maintain the forest's ecological integrity and resilience to key stressors such as climate change and preserve rare and unique habitat types, including old growth forests and coastal disjunct ecosystems.
- Fire and fuels management direction that emphasizes active vegetation management within the wildfire crisis strategy landscape, while embracing the role that wildfire can play in moving toward resilient ecological conditions. Plan components help move the Forests toward the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and reduce risk in the natural and human ecosystems. Desired conditions are predicted to be on a trajectory to be met within 30-35 years, acknowledging that desired conditions that require trees to grow into larger size classes may take more time.
- Land Allocation decisions shaped through Tribal and public engagement and collaboration, and in consideration of the need to restore resilient ecosystems, including:
 - ◆ Recommending for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System the:
 - Mallard Larkins Recommended Wilderness Area (82,286 acre)- modified and expanded from the 1987 boundaries (66,377 acres).
 - Hoodoo Recommended Wilderness Area (108,276 acres)- modified and slightly reduced from the 1987 boundaries (111,986 acres).
 - East Meadow Creek Recommended Wilderness Area (72,795 acres)- a new area recommended through this land management planning process.
 - ◆ Wild and Scenic River Eligibility and Suitability
 - Finding suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system, thereby applying Interim Protection Measures in addition to hundreds of plan components to protect and enhance Outstandingly Remarkable Values:
 - Cayuse Creek
 - Fish Creek
 - Hungery Creek
 - Weitas Creek
 - Kelly Creek
 - North Fork Kelly Creek
 - Middle Fork Kelly Creek
 - South Fork Kelly Creek
 - Colt Killed Creek
 - Meadow Creek
 - Salmon River (undesignated portion) will remain suitable

- Finding the Little North Fork Clearwater River eligible with no decision on suitability for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.
- Seventy-seven rivers determined to be “not suitable” and will be protected by other plan components as well as other federal laws and regulations which will sustain the resources within and surrounding these rivers, but not managed under interim protection measures.
- ◆ Proposing two new Research Natural Areas.
- ◆ A Geographic Area, Pilot Knob, to preserve, protect and restore the cultural importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- ◆ Proposing six new Special Areas, including wispin’itpe (as one travels out of the timber, upon coming over the divide) at Packer Meadow and Lolo Pass area where the focus will be on enhancing and restoring Tribal interests.
- Creating Management and Geographic Areas, including:
 - ◆ Three Management Areas reflecting varied uses of the Forests, and
 - ◆ Four Geographic Areas including: the Lower Salmon River Geographic Area, Pilot Knob Geographic Area, Gospel Hump Geographic Area, and the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark Geographic Area.
- Making suitability determinations for a variety of uses, including timber suitability, suitability for motorized vehicle use, the suitability for recreational pack goat use, and suitability of uses in recommended and designated areas. These suitability determinations overlay the vast landscape of the Forests, like the pieces of a quilt which when stitched together, provide ecological, social, and economic sustainability across the entirety of the 4 million acres.
- Establishing a Projected Timber Sale Quantity (PTSQ) of 190 to 210 million board feet annually, resulting from up to 10,000 acres of timber harvest annually, predominately as a byproduct of restoration activities to address the wildfire crisis, meet desired conditions for forested vegetation and manage landscapes to be within the natural range of variability. The Preferred Alternative predicts an additional estimated 50,000 acres of disturbance annually from planned and unplanned fire ignitions work with the timber harvest projected volumes to substantially move toward desired conditions within 35 to 40 years for those desired conditions that require disturbance (desired conditions requiring vegetative succession may require more time). The plan includes an objective to restore 3,300 to 4,700 acres of aquatic systems and 65 to 175 miles of streams every five years, ensuring that projects are integrated, and we restore landscapes and watersheds from ridgetop to ridgetop. Soils impacts from past disturbance will be mitigated on up to 200 acres annually, in addition to requirements to rehabilitate and reestablish soil function on all new soil disturbance resulting from our actions over the life of the plan.
- A suite of aquatic and riparian plan components that contribute to the recovery of ESA listed species, improve aquatic conditions, and provide the ecological conditions to support the persistence of all aquatic dependent species on the Forest and use these same principles to enhance habitat at the Forest scale. These plan components replace the 1995 Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy (PacFish) and Inland Native Fish Strategy (InFish) interim direction, including biological opinions on these interim direction decisions, resulting from the listing of salmon and steelhead. These components, coupled with the plan components designed to restore resiliency to forests, meadows and rangelands, represent the full suite of

management within the control of the Forests to support salmon and steelhead recovery and meet the Presidential Memorandum of September 27, 2023 “Restoring Healthy and Abundant Salmon, Steelhead, and other Native Fish Populations in the Columbia River Basin”, sections 1 and 2 ([88 FR 67617](#)).

- Deliberate identification of motorized vehicle suitability to provide for habitat connectivity of wide-ranging species and species sensitive to winter motorized use, including grizzly bear, wolverine, elk, fisher and more, while considering how critical those uses are to rural community social and economic sustainability.

Nature of Land Management Plan Decisions

The purpose of this plan is to guide future projects, practices, and uses to assure sustainable multiple-use management on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests over the next 10 to 15 years or until amended or revised. In contrast to site-specific Forest Service projects, land management plans do not authorize site-specific activities such as where to put a recreation trail or what timber will be harvested, but instead provide a framework to guide management activities across the national forest. A land management plan establishes goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and land suitability to assure coordination of multiple uses (such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness) and sustained yield of products and services. Carefully identifying an appropriate mix of multiple uses are an important part of land management planning to protect resources, support sustainable uses, and maintain healthy ecosystems. Planning in national forests and grasslands ensures thoughtful use and protection of the many resources of public lands. Like pieces to a puzzle, the land management plan determines suitability of the many uses, fitting them across the landscape in a cohesive tapestry.

The plan does not authorize projects or activities, commit the Forest Service to take any specific action, or dictate internal operations (such as personnel matters, law enforcement, budget, or organizational changes). Management direction will be implemented through site-specific activities that must be consistent with the plan (36 CFR 219.15).

As we begin to implement the Plan, it will be critically important for all of us to remember that the plan is only as successful as the sum of its parts. We intend to wholeheartedly propose actions to move toward all the desired conditions, with equal emphasis and resources. Our goal of sustainable ecological, social, and economic systems depends on us implementing the Plan in its entirety. If we only collaborate to implement one piece of this plan and ignore or refuse to work on the other pieces, we will not complete the puzzle. Integration is critical to actually provide for the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of this 4-million-acre landscape or the communities and cultures that rely upon it.

The National Forests will also follow all treaties, laws, regulations, and policies that relate to managing National Forest System lands. The plan is designed to supplement, not replace, direction from these sources. The final environmental impact statement lists and considers this direction for each of the revision topics and specific resources, but the plan generally does not repeat treaties, laws, regulations, or program management policy, practices, or procedures.

Rationale for the Decision

Based upon my review of all alternatives, I have decided to implement the Preferred Alternative which provides for a wide array of multiple uses, promotes long-term sustainability of plant and

animal species, recognizes the unique role and perspectives of Tribal sovereign government and local elected officials, puts forth a thoughtful scheme for protecting the existing character of wild places, and provides sound scientific guidance with appropriate management flexibility for managing these lands into the future.

We have carefully considered the requirements to avoid or minimize environmental harm in selecting the Preferred Alternative. This alternative reflects the best overall arrangement of multiple uses while providing plan components to guide management activities in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental effects.

An explanation of the decision rationale is organized below by the ecosystem services the Forests provide to local, regional, and national interests.

Providing Ecosystem Services

The Preferred Alternative optimizes the ecosystem services the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests provided to the American public. Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from nature. Ecosystem services encapsulate what the public, both local and national, ask for from the management of National Forests. This decision is described and framed through an ecosystem services lens as ecosystem services are how the public interacts with our Forests. It gives an opportunity to speak directly to the issues people care about rather than couch them in terms typically used by the agency to describe decisions. The specific categories of ecosystem services, described below, were validated, and tailored to our Forests by social scientists and economists specializing in ecosystem services through meetings with the public, the interdisciplinary team, and collaboratives on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. The Preferred Alternative provides what people ask of the National Forest System lands by supporting the broad categories of ecosystem services including: Cultural Values that include Tribal values, historic and prehistoric cultural values as well as protection of and access to cultural resources; Recreationist Values including motorized, non-motorized, general visitors, consumptive activities and non-consumptive activities; Regional Economy Values including timber, ranching, energy and minerals, and general economies; Resident Values including clean air, clean water, consumptive uses, flood protection benefits, soil stabilization, erosion control, and protection of life and property; and Non-use Values including existence and bequest values, wildlife, diverse ecosystems, carbon sequestered, climate regulation, recommended and designated areas.

Cultural Values

The Nez Perce-Clearwater has a rich cultural history. The ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce Tribe—our Forests are inseparable from the culture and history of the Nez Perce people. The Corps of Discovery traversed our landscape as Lewis and Clark made the journey to the Pacific Coast and back again. The Forest Service history on the Forest is also notable—we have a showcase of early ranger stations, lookout towers, the first jump by a smokejumper and some of the first wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers in the Nation. Acknowledging, protecting and, when appropriate, showcasing this rich history and contemporary Tribal culture is a key piece of the decision.

The Nez Perce have impressed upon us how they see themselves in relation to their ancestral homeland. They do not differentiate between the land and themselves. They are deeply and inseparably interconnected with the land and the resources. To the Nez Perce, there would not be one without the other. In the words of one Nez Perce elder “Our traditional relationship with the earth was more than just a reverence for the land. It was knowing that every living thing had been

placed here by the Creator, and that we were part of a sacred relationship...entrusted with the care and protection of our Mother Earth. We could not stand apart from our environment” (Elise Maynard, Salmon and His People). Recognizing this connection, the planning team set out to ensure that the Nez Perce values and the land and resources the Forest Service manages, were integrated in the plan revision from the onset. Development of the Assessment, Need for Change and the Proposed Action were done with a representative of the Tribe attending many meetings. As plan components were developed for the draft revised plan for the DEIS, the planning team met regularly with staff of the Tribe. We met with Tribal staff, leadership, and Tribal members both formally and informally. Over this decade of developing the plan, we have listened, and we have learned. Early on we acknowledged that Tribal Trust are not tied solely to either the physical landscape nor to human uses of the forest and asked the planning team to work with the Tribe in creating of a new section in the plan titled Tribal Trust. This section is located between the ecological and human uses sections- just as the Nez Perce look at themselves as an integration of the land and people, our plan is also structured to highlight this relationship.

Nez Perce staff participated in developing plan components for elk and for aquatic and riparian habitat aimed at protecting recovering fish populations. The planning team continued to meet with the Tribe during plan development and while every topic was discussed, specific changes were made to address concerns with invasive species, shrubs and grassland management, air quality, wildlife, the Regional Forester’s Species of Conservation Concern list, general wildlife management, aquatic and fish management, wild and scenic rivers, access and recreation and recommended wilderness. Two Geographic Areas (GA) are directly tied to the Nez Perce’s values- the Pilot Knob GA and the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark. The plan components in these GA’s recognize the importance of these areas from a cultural and spiritual aspect and provide direction to reduce impacts of modern infrastructure on those uses, as technological advancements allow. Special areas including séewisnime (Musselshell Meadows), and wispin’iitpe (Packer Meadows and Lolo Pass) were also identified to highlight the important value to the Nez Perce Tribe. The names of these two special areas have been changed in our documents and in our maps to reflect their Nez Perce name. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we developed the section on Tribal Trust in concert with the Nez Perce Tribe and incorporated direct language from Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC) proclamations.

The Nez Perce are strongly connected to water and fish; salmon, in particular, are the topic of many Tribal legends and folklore. In the words of elder Del White, “People need to understand that the salmon is part of who the Nez Perce people are. It is just like a hand is part of your body” (Salmon Return, page 156). Another elder explains, “We are taught that if anything happens to the birds, elk, deer, land, or fish that we need to pay attention because the same thing could happen to humans” (Donna Powauke, Salmon Return, page 156). As a modern testament to that connection, the Nez Perce Tribe is a major partner and key contributor to the effort to recover anadromous fish species on their ancestral homeland. The Nez Perce Tribe was part of a group chartered by the Regional Forester to assist in developing a proactive strategy to incorporate recovery of anadromous fish within the larger revised plan and overall restoration goals and multiple use mandate. This effort resulted in the aquatic and riparian plan components for this plan. The Nez Perce Tribe, along with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service were the chartered members of the group that collaborated on and came to consensus on the plan components needed to meet our goal to sustain fish and wildlife populations, recover threatened and endangered species and manage resources consistent with our unique legal and political relationship with.

People have traversed the lands now known as the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests for millennia. Starting with the Nez Perce and other Tribes, continuing through exploration of the West, including the Corps of Discovery, through development of mining, trading, and trapping routes, to settlement of rural communities, the development and popularization of the automobile and to modern day, people have moved and crossed these lands. Some of these routes are considered historic travel ways. Some have formal designation, such as the Nez Perce (Nee-me-Poo) National Historic Trail and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The Southern Nez Perce Trail is the oldest trail in the world that is in its original footprint and still used today. Other travel routes, such as the Elk City Wagon Road and Magruder Corridor, do not have national designation but are no less important to historic and modern movement of people through time and space. This decision not only acknowledges these travel ways in both their historic and modern context, but emphasizes their importance to people, past, present, and future. Our aim is to preserve the historic integrity of these routes, to highlight their National, Regional and Local significance, and to ensure they are available for use today. The plan components allow for them to be maintained in a way that highlights and compliments their historic integrity while providing access for a variety of vehicle types, accessible regardless of social or economic status.

The Forests also contain some remarkable examples of early Forest Service history. Historic Ranger Stations, guard stations, fire lookouts and workstations are scattered across the Forests. A tribute to a time when Forest Service employees aimed to be as close to the resource as possible—when Districts were the size of postage stamps and Proclaimed Forests were smaller as well, the Nez Perce-Clearwater is home to a great deal of early history. From the historic Moose Creek and Fenn Ranger Stations to a showcase of different lookout construction types over the years, from the guard stations at Kelly Forks and Canyon Creeks, to the location of the first smokejumper fire in the Nation, our Forests contain a lot of agency history. Lochsa Historical Ranger Station and Elk Summit Guard Station, run by stalwart volunteers, provide visitors with a glimpse into the characters and places that shaped our collective past. This decision honors that history and intends to highlight the importance to ourselves, the historians of the Forest Service and to the rural communities that were, and in most cases still are, so dependent on the work we do.

The decision to implement the Preferred Alternative not only supports, but really highlights the importance of cultural and historic values across these areas. The diversity and context of cultural history in this area is perhaps second to none in the National Forest System. The geographic and special areas highlight the connection of the Nez Perce Tribe to this land since time immemorial and plan components perpetuate that connection. I am proud to implement this plan that honors these cultural and heritage values and ultimately protects them for future generations.

Recreationist Values

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests are unique and remarkable in the number of different activities that you can do on the Forests and that you can get to remote locations to do these activities using a wide variety of transportation modes. Locations for rafting, hiking, skiing, solitude, vast wilderness, foraging, hunting, and fishing among many others are accessible by foot, by motorized vehicle, by mountain bike, by raft, by horseback and more. A transportation system of roads and trails for both motorized and non-motorized use provides access to some of the most remote locations in the lower 48 states. Continued use of stewardship tools to reduce resource impacts of the transportation system has resulted in more equitable access to our underserved communities. Visitors do not need expensive and technical gear or transportation to enjoy the health and lifestyle benefits of the Forests. The Preferred Alternative continues to guide management of this unique combination of access opportunities, continuing to ensure there is

something for everyone, and the Forests are accessible to all people, regardless of social or economic status while making deliberate decisions to adjust opportunities where needed. The decision to select the Preferred Alternative considers and acknowledges the critical role motorized transportation has in sustaining local economies and rural communities. The opportunity for motorized access is increased in some areas for this explicit purpose. These additional areas suitable for motorized use, and corresponding plan components, are included to be responsive to local government and public comments expressing desire for the recreation and economic benefits of motorized road and trail access. We heard area residents and visitors speak about how their ability to visit the land is dependent on being able to get there. In total, approximately 2.3 million acres of the Forests are suitable for motorized use in the winter and approximately 2.1 million acres in the summer. Motorized access is the lifeblood of many rural communities and the ecological benefits of continuing to reduce the motorized transportation network need to be considered in the context of the real negative impact closures have on people, communities, and economies. The analysis in the FEIS shows, and I am confident in the fact, that potential significant ecological impacts are mitigated by the plan components in the revised forest plan. The sheer size of the Forest and the fact that 45 percent of the Forest will remain unsuitable for motorized use in the summer and about 40 percent in the winter ensure there are opportunities for all types of recreationists.

While neither the Preferred Alternative, nor any other alternative, maximizes motorized access, the Preferred Alternative sets the stage for consideration of specific areas to provide for additional access during motor vehicle use designation planning and during project development, which has the benefit of allowing people that cannot access lands without motorized vehicles to be able to enjoy these lands. The many plan components related to reducing negative impacts of the transportation system on the natural environment also improve access to all user groups. For example, roads with graveled surfaces and culverts at stream crossings reduce sediment delivery to streams and also improve access for the people who cannot afford expensive, specialized equipment like UTVs and pickups. In the underserved communities that surround the Nez Perce-Clearwater, it is critical that all people, regardless of ability, knowledge, or station, can experience the physical, economical, and spiritual values of the natural world. Providing access so that the public can enjoy their public lands and awaken their own connections is one of the central tenets of the Forest Service's [Equity Action Plan](#). This revised plan pieces together different land management allocations to insure that into the future.

While the Preferred Alternative does provide for additional opportunities for motorized access, it also continues the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests long history of being a wild place with lands available to non-motorized users with plentiful opportunities for solitude. The Preferred Alternative identifies 263,357 acres of recommended wilderness, and an additional 1.6 million acres of lands where motorized use is unsuitable in the summer. All alternatives include 1.1 million acres of designated Wilderness where motorized use is prohibited. In total, about 40 percent of the forest in the winter and 45 percent of the Forests in the summer are not suitable for motorized use.

Hikers, equestrian users, and other non-motorized and non-mechanized user groups will see no loss in areas suitable for their preferred activities, though they may have to share the trail with motorized users on trails in areas that change from non-motorized to motorized in the summer after site-specific motor vehicle use designations are completed.

Bicycle users, specifically mountain bike users, are a subset of non-motorized users that often were not planned for during past strategic planning efforts. We heard from many mountain bike users and advocacy groups on the importance of being specific in the suitability of this use. While perspectives differ on whether users prefer to align more closely with the motorized or non-motorized communities, we heard regardless that they want to be able to access areas within all recreation opportunity classes from rural to primitive. While they may not be able to cycle within all classes, they, as do other user groups, want to have the ability to access a variety of areas and have a variety of experiences. As with motorized users, loop opportunities are particularly desired to the mountain bike community. In the Preferred Alternative, all trails other than trails closed to mechanized use would be suitable for mountain bike access. The only trails found not suitable for mechanized use at the Forest Plan level in the Preferred Alternative, are trails in recommended wilderness, in the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River Corridor and trails in designated wilderness. The boundary of recommended wilderness areas specifically considered the desires of mountain bike users and boundary changes were made specifically to allow for this use in some areas (see Administrative Recommendations for more information). Additionally, all trails in areas suitable for motorized use would also be available for e-bike users.

General visitors to the Forest enjoy an opportunity to connect with a working forest and the ability to discover a rich heritage and history. The Preferred Alternative provides a mix of roaded natural, semi-primitive and primitive opportunities across the landscape. Plan components for education, interpretation, and public information help to ensure that visitors have a positive and informative experience. Users will still be able to visit very primitive areas without specialized equipment. Promoting creative stewardship and working with partners, the plan components protect wild spaces and keep them accessible to people, regardless of social and economic status.

Consumptive uses are critical to the social and economic fabric of North Central Idaho. These uses, including hunting, fishing, foraging, firewood gathering and more, are part of the way of life for many. Many local residents do not consider these activities “recreation” but rather part of a subsistence lifestyle. Hunting, fishing, and gathering are all part of the physical and spiritual fabric of Nez Perce culture. The Treaties of 1855 and 1863 reserved these rights for the Nez Perce Tribe and they are integral to current and future culture of the Tribe. Providing for these consumptive uses requires a high level of integration between resource areas and is not simple to do, but the Preferred Alternative optimizes the many factors that go into providing for these uses. Plan components in the Tribal Trust section provide for Tribal uses and incorporating the Nez Perce Tribe’s vast ecological knowledge into how areas are managed in the future. Ecological plan components ensure the resources are present and in harvestable populations. The Preferred Alternative ensures that fish and wildlife populations are healthy and harvestable. Desired conditions for vegetation aim at managing within the natural range of variation (NRV), which would provide resources in the amounts they have historically been available. The plan includes components for improving habitats integral to Nez Perce culture and provide certainty that Tribal gathering will not be impaired at the Forest scale. Firewood collection and foraging for huckleberries, mushrooms and others will be benefited by managing within NRV. However, providing for consumptive uses requires more than just ensuring the resource is plentiful; access and the ability to successfully harvest is also critical. Maintaining a transportation network that reaches the resources is part of providing for the consumptive use and subsistence resources. Ecosystem Services and infrastructure plan components in the Preferred Alternative ensure that Tribal members and the public can access important and traditional areas for hunting, fishing, and gathering; while plan components for aquatic and riparian habitats, wildlife, soils, and more ensure access can occur in a manner that minimizes environmental harm. The Preferred

Alternative includes plan components to uphold treaty obligations and to give primacy to Tribal use of forest products. The new plan components set the stage for incorporating Indigenous Knowledge into our projects and analyses. The Preferred Alternative provides opportunities for additional motorized access within areas traditionally used for consumptive purposes. The integration between the plan components, as discussed in the FEIS, carefully overlay the ecological needs of the species with the need to provide access for area residents and visitors. The Preferred Alternative is successful in doing this and optimizes the relationship between access and ecological sustainability, allowing this revised plan to provide more of all opportunities we hear the Tribe and public asking for.

As noted throughout the decision and rationale, one particularly important part of consumptive uses is providing for the traditional cultural resources and treaty reserved rights of the Nez Perce Tribe. For the aforementioned reasons, these treaty-reserved rights and access to traditional resources will be maintained into the future through over 300 plan components. In addition to this resource allocation optimization, an additional section of plan direction is included in the Preferred Alternative and analyzed in Chapter 3 in the FEIS under the “Tribal Trust” section. This section focuses on providing for fish, wildlife, vegetation, and access to spiritual places at levels sufficient to meet and exceed our general Tribal Trust. This section sets the stage for incorporating Nez Perce traditional ecological understanding through co-stewardship. As the Nez Perce do not differentiate themselves from the land, this section was deliberately placed between the Biophysical Environment and Human Uses of the Forest sections as a bridge between the land and people, a position the Nez Perce have held since time immemorial.

Non-consumptive uses, such as wildlife viewing, photography, driving for pleasure, rest and relaxation opportunities and spiritual connection are benefited from and provided for by the same suite of plan components as the consumptive uses.

Regional Economy Values

The Forest Service and the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests are a significant part of the local and regional economy. The Preferred Alternative recognizes this critical contribution while balancing for other social and ecological needs. The Forest Service’s contribution to the regional economy includes benefits to jobs and income. Job and labor income contribution comes from industries that facilitate recreation experiences, harvesting and processing timber into forest products, grazing, mineral resources and raw material production, Forest Service employment and expenditures and payments to counties.

Two primary contributions to regional economies are contributions to the forest products sector as well as contributions to recreation-based economies and the indirect benefits of those activities. While the tie between National Forest System lands and the forest products industry is well documented, well studied, and easy to quantify (see Economic Sustainability section in the FEIS), contributions to the recreation related resources are harder to define and harder to quantify. However, they are real, and this decision positively impacts the economic sustainability of rural economies in real ways, as discussed in the FEIS, Economic Sustainability section, Potential Indirect Qualitative Economic Contributions. Two primary economic contributions from recreation related resources include those associated with consumptive uses, primarily hunting, fishing, and gathering, as well as recreation-based users of all types.

Benefits of the selected alternative to contribute to and improve the economies of rural communities over time are focused on providing harvestable levels of fish, wildlife, and plant

species; opportunities for motorized recreation and access to a variety of recreation opportunities by motorized vehicles; and maintaining forest vegetation in a healthy condition informed by the natural range of variation and by predicted impacts of climate change.

Specific decisions made to benefit rural communities in the Preferred Alternative include:

- Emphasizing providing for motorized recreation that connect communities and provide for loop opportunities (FW-DC-REC-08 and FW-DC-REC-11)
- Ensuring that motorized access to areas continues to be provided for and that alternate access is considered anytime a route is closed due to ecological concerns (FW-GDL-ES-01).
- Emphasizing salmon and steelhead recovery through over 120 plan components in the Aquatic Riparian Conservation Strategy and identification of priority watersheds for restoration.
- Increasing the amount of timber sold annually to 190 to 210 million board feet over the life of the plan (FS-OBJ-TBR-01) using Forest capacity along with Tribal, state, and local government partnerships.
- Ensuring that minerals are available for prospecting, exploration, and development to contribute to local employment (FW-DC-EM-01).
- Allowing for grazing of transitory forage created by forest vegetation moving toward desired conditions (FW-DC-GRZ-02).
- Opportunities for hunting and fishing are present across the Forests and wildlife are distributed across the area (FW-GL-WLMU-01 and FW-DC-WTR-03).
- Emphasizing recovery of elk populations in the Clearwater region and across the Forests (FW-DC-WLMU-01, FW-DC-WLMU-06 and FW-DC-WLMU-07).
- Restoration of degraded watersheds and impaired soil on the Forests (FW-OBJ-SOIL-01, MA2 and MA-GDL-SOIL-03).

Leaders, business owners and residents in rural communities across the Forests shared their concerns with us as part of this revision process, and motorized recreation and quality hunting and fishing opportunities were economic contributions from Forest Service lands that came up time and time again as being critical to the long-term economic health of businesses and communities. The most rural communities in the Region, such as Elk City, are most dependent on these contributions. While increases in timber harvest help the regional economy, the economy of these most rural communities and individuals' livelihoods are intimately tied to motorized recreation, hunting and fishing.

The Forests have a long history of mining, a tradition that continues across many parts of the Forests. While leasable and saleable mineral extraction is very low across the Forests, there is continued interest in locatable mineral extraction, especially for gold with potential interest in rare earth minerals. While there are no large commercial operations, there are a number of recreational and small commercial mining operations on the Forests. This activity is expected to continue in the future, acknowledging that there are many unknowns related to prices of locatable minerals and the need for rare earth elements that may be found on the Forests. This decision keeps available 2,383,574 acres available for locatable mineral entry. There may be increased restrictions regarding access to mineral deposits, especially in and near riparian areas, however, those plan components cannot preclude access to mineral materials and the Forest will be

consistent with the General Mining Act of 1872. These plan components associated with mitigating impacts of mining activities on critical resources are likely to reduce profit margins. This decision does make recommendations regarding land allocations that, if approved by Congress, would withdraw additional lands from mineral entry- specifically in Recommended Wilderness Areas and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers if Designated in the future by Congress. No changes in lands available would occur until action is taken by Congress. Should Congress designate all recommended areas, 2,073,807 acres would remain available for mineral entry.

Grazing job and income contribution is expected to remain static under the revised plan as compared to the no action alternative. Some increased in grazing may be possible as additional animal unit months are allowed in some allotments due to increases in transitory range as a function of vegetation management practices creating additional openings of early seral vegetation (forage) within allotments. However, suitability restrictions to provide for bighorn sheep and Tribal cultural practices could reduce grazing contributions at a fine scale.

Resident Values

A core mission of the Forest Service embodied in the principle of ecosystem services is to provide resident values—including clean air, clean water, consumptive uses, flood protection benefits, soil stabilization, erosion control, and protection of life and property. The 1987 Forest Plans were developed as a rulebook to provide for clean air, clean water, healthy populations of fish and wildlife, healthy soils and protection of life and property against wildfire. The Preferred Alternative continues this important tradition while focusing on moving toward healthy ecosystems according to desired conditions. These desired conditions include: forested and non-forested vegetation within the natural range of variability; for aquatic ecosystems and riparian areas to provide clean water and recover salmon and steelhead populations; reduction and prevention of invasive weeds; protection of sensitive ecosystems; reduction impacts to wildlife species and minimizing impacts to air quality. Plan components optimize resident values while providing for economic and social sustainability and are based on the best available scientific information for climate change, fire spread and insect and disease with a renewed comprehension of ecosystem services. The plan components acknowledge that our understanding of ecological and social systems change over time, especially considering a changing climate, and allow for changing science rather than ‘locking in’ antiquated assumptions and outdated analysis methods as the 1987 Plans did.

Clean air is provided by the land management plan by continuing important partnerships with local, regional, and Tribal partners to reduce cumulative air quality impacts. It is the desired condition to meet applicable federal, state, and Tribal air quality standards. Additionally, by managing vegetation toward desired conditions, the fire-adapted ecosystem will function similarly to how it evolved. While smoke in the summer may always be a part of living with fire-adapted ecosystems, managing for the desired conditions, over time, should reduce the intensity and duration of the smoke. Compared to the no action alternative, smoke impacts from wildfire are expected to be increasingly less over time as vegetation moves to desired conditions.

Providing clean water is a central theme of the plan. The aquatic and riparian plan components were designed by an interagency working group to ensure that clean water is provided now and in the future. This interagency group included the Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho Fish and Game, NOAA Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Forest Service. The group developed over 120 plan components to ensure clean water and restore healthy fish habitats. Clean water is essential to communities and downstream users—and it is also critical for native fish species including ESA-

listed anadromous fish. These fisheries are dependent on clean water. The aquatic and riparian plan components put significant bounds on the activities that can occur near riparian areas. This strategy builds on the 1995 PacFish interim strategy designed to prevent further degradation and incorporates the “Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project to the Revision of Land Use Plans and Project Implementation (ICBEMP)” agreement made by the Regional Forester of Regions 1, 4 and 6, the West Coast Region NOAA Fisheries, BLM of Oregon/Washington and Idaho, the USFWS, Pacific Region and the EPA, Region 10. The revised plan’s strategy includes riparian management zones, limitations on sediment producing activities and specific restrictions within the riparian management zone for timber harvest, infrastructure, energy and minerals activities, livestock grazing, lands and special uses and recreation. Additionally, the aquatic and riparian plan components define a conservation watershed network intended to support recovery of listed aquatic species. Although it began years before the September 27, 2023 Presidential memorandum, “Restoring Healthy and Abundant Salmon, Steelhead, and Other Native Fish Populations in the Columbia River Basin”, was released, the Forest Plan Revision process and especially the interagency aquatic working group exemplifies the process that is directed in the White House memo, to “pursue effective, creative, and durable solutions, informed by Indigenous Knowledge, to restore healthy and abundant salmon, steelhead, and other native fish populations in the Basin”. This revised plan represents just such a durable and creative solution, informed by collaboration and cooperating with the Nez Perce Tribe and other stakeholders. We acknowledge this restrictive compilation of plan components places bounds on the Forests’ ability to achieve all the public’s desired social, economic, and ecological potential outcomes for a plan the size of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, meeting the obligations of the Endangered Species Act to support recovery of ESA-listed species provides an ultimate benefit to clean water and all that depend on clean water. This restrictive framework within the aquatic systems makes it more important to restore uplands to within the NRV so the entire system is more resilient in the face of climate change. Flood protection and erosion control are also benefited by the aquatic and riparian plan components through plan components designed to greatly reduce if not eliminate sedimentation that results from management actions.

Protecting property adjacent to National Forest System lands is a fundamental obligation of our land management. Private property is always and will always be a critical value at risk for planning during any emergency event. While much attention is placed on the management of individual events in the moment of crisis, the land management plan sets the stage for ensuring life and property are prioritized. The revised land management plan takes into careful consideration the boundaries and inholdings within the administrative area. The need to restore fire into the ecosystem was a key factor in both land allocations and allowable uses within those allocations.

The decision to implement the Preferred Alternative best addresses risk to both adjacent property and life and human safety on and off National Forest System lands. The desired conditions for our Forests are the foundation for this. By moving our forested lands and shrub lands toward the desired conditions, informed by the natural range of variability, we are creating a more resilient and resistant ecosystem. The desired conditions were developed using climate change models and represent our best prediction of a forested landscape that continues to be resilient in the face of a changing climate. By focusing restoration efforts on shrublands and mollisol soils, we can address the concerns on the lower elevation lands most likely to abut private property. An increase in timber harvest as a management tool as we move lands, particularly within Management Area 3 and within community protection zones, toward the desired conditions will help address the wildfire crisis and allow for suppression of fire to be a tactic that is successful

when deemed appropriate during the incident. Across the Forests the desired conditions acknowledge the interdependence with wildfire and the need to restore fire back onto the landscape. By increasing fire under appropriate conditions, we can restore the landscape, realign with the fire disturbance ecology that created our Forests and do so with much less risk to life and property. This need is foundational to the decision on both recommended wilderness and Wild and Scenic River suitability. When considering those land allocations, the leadership team and planning team adjusted boundaries, allowable uses, and suitability determinations to promote the re-introduction of disturbance across the Forest. The additional constraints on management activities that accompany these recommendations and designations could have the unintended consequence of preserving the uncharacteristic condition that is widespread across the Forests due to fire suppression and past management activities. Especially in consideration of a changing climate and the need to incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into our management, we have concluded that restrictive land allocations are not warranted in many instances, see Appendix I and Appendix II. The Fire Risk Assessment prepared to support this revision effort will be used to assist fire managers in making decisions during fire events and in prescribed fire planning. This risk assessment identified all adjacent property as a very high value at risk and predicted severe consequences if fires move from National Forest System lands to private property. We will continue to work with our partners, including local governments, to address concerns within the wildland urban interface as this work continues. While disturbance processes such as fire will always be a part of the Nez Perce-Clearwater, setting ourselves up for disturbance that is within the natural range of variability by meeting our desired conditions is at the forefront of the decision. Through this, we will continue to be good neighbors and protect life and property on and off NFS lands, using the best mix of tools.

This decision has levels of recommended wilderness, lands available to active management, and use of a full range of fire management activities, including both prescribed and natural fire in all management areas that would allow for movement toward desired conditions within 35 to 40 years. This also allows for potentially less impact on workforce capacity through utilization of opportunities for allowing fire as a restoration tool across all management areas, however active management activities will still have a sizable impact on workforce capacity. This decision to select the Preferred Alternative also allows for maintenance of infrastructure such as roads and administrative sites to provide safe access and egress to wildland fire responders and to communities within community protection zones, and maintenance of trails. It also addresses snag retention within community protection zones and egress routes, allowing snags to be removed during fuels mitigation projects within these areas. Pilot Knob communications site will be retained but phased out as suitable technology allows removal of the site.

Non-Use Values

The Forest Service mission “to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations”, is well represented in non-use value ecosystem services (existence and bequest values, wildlife, diverse ecosystems, carbon sequestered, climate regulation, recommended and designated areas). Non-use values sustain, conserve, and preserve natural resources for their own benefit, not for the benefit of people. Functioning ecosystems, a preservation system, limits on where and when humans interact with the natural world and thoughtful planning for a changing climate, including maintaining the productivity of soils, restoring, and retaining old growth forests, and sequestering carbon are all important components of the decision made for this revised plan.

While Congress designates Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers, this plan provides for management of these congressionally designated areas consistent with their enabling legislation. Over one quarter of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, consisting of the entirety of the Gospel Hump Wilderness Area and parts of both the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, are set aside for preservation “in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness.” It is on these lands that the revised plan provides plan components to preserve the wilderness character and manage “as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.” We also acknowledge that the Nez Perce people have been an indistinguishable part of the land, and the legislative definition of Wilderness contradicts how the Nez Perce lived harmoniously with the land, including in what are now Wilderness Areas, since time immemorial.

The revised plan also provides management direction for three designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, including the Lochsa, Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Rivers, a portion of the Salmon River and Rapid River, consistent with their enabling legislation, to “preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.” The value of these congressionally designated areas is immense. As Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Vice Chairman Miles states, “the streams and rivers in Nez Perce country are among the most beautiful in the world. My grandmother used to say that you can count every rock on the bottom. When I go to other places, I feel sorry for them because their rivers are not as beautiful as the rivers we enjoy” (Salmon and His People, page 22, and pers. comm.). This decision finds 11 more rivers suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system, in addition to the undesignated portion of the lower Salmon River which was previously found suitable, and other plan components ensure that the rivers found eligible, but not suitable, retain their outstanding characteristics. In terms of ecosystem services, they provide much more than existence and bequest values. They make important contributions to diverse ecosystems, provide research values, and in many cases showcase the natural role fire historically played in the ecosystem.

The decision also recommends three areas to Congress for inclusion in the Wilderness Preservation System and proposes establishing two new Research Natural Areas. These recommended and suitable areas, combined with the Idaho Roadless Areas and lands previously designated by Congress ensure that there are areas of the Forests set aside from modern human development—and these lands total nearly 75 percent of the total lands within the administrative boundary of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. These lands provide a bequest value to future generations. Coupled with the 25 percent of the Forest that is open to sustainable multiple use management, the revised plan ensures that future generations have access to Forest Service lands that have been managed to provide a wide range of ecosystem services well into the future. Additionally, we are providing an existence value to citizens of the United States near and far, as well as to the world—contributing wild lands, clean water, habitat for fish and wildlife species, and opportunities to learn from a variety of management techniques for the Nation and for the world.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, since the first land management plans in 1987, have all been managed as sustainable forests and for the conservation of natural resources. This revised plan continues that. In total, 4 million acres will be managed for the long-term health and sustainability on natural systems, as described in the 2021 report “[Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful](#)” implementing Executive Order 14008 that called on the United States to

conserve 30 percent of the land and water by 2030 (30x30). While the initiative specifically includes working lands, lands managed for multiple uses, and lands managed for outdoor recreation as contributing toward the 30 percent goal, it also should be noted that the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests also contribute 2.7 million acres toward lands that are generally managed in a passive manner with restrictions on actions such as road building, timber harvest, discretionary minerals activities and motorized recreational access.

The entirety of the Nez Perce-Clearwater provides habitat for wildlife and fish. Using the ecosystem/species-specific plan component approach to species conservation, our analysis demonstrates that the revised plan will both maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities and support the persistence of native species in the plan area. This includes supporting recovery of ESA-listed species such as salmon and steelhead and maintaining viable populations of species of conservation concern. See the Requirements of the Planning Rule section for more information.

Similarly, the Nez Perce-Clearwater is home to a wide variety of diverse ecosystems. This revised plan sustains and conserves those ecosystems. From dry grasslands and shrublands on the Salmon River to highly productive timber lands of the Palouse to Coastal Refugia ecosystems disjunct from the Pacific coast range in the North Fork Clearwater drainage to the subalpine ecosystems of the Selway Bitterroot wilderness, the Nez Perce-Clearwater has immense diversity. Sustaining diverse ecosystems is reliant on both managing for a natural range of variation and incorporating climate change adaptation strategies into management activities and project planning. Generally, the forests, grasslands and shrublands of the Nez Perce-Clearwater evolved with and were created by disturbance, primarily fire. Since time immemorial the Nez Perce people have been a part of landscape, including using fire. Recognizing this historic land management is critical to moving forward to sustain the diversity and ecosystems while mitigating effects of climate change. This decision clearly and loudly reaffirms our current understanding that forests developed in, through, and from fire and must be managed with fire to preserve the diverse ecosystems, adapt through climate change, and protect critical values at risk, including homes and private property. The plan includes components valuing indigenous knowledge and codifies co-stewardship with the Nez Perce Tribe to continue their relationship with this land.

To reduce departure from the natural range of variability, our analysis and science shows that in order to return to more appropriate conditions that are resilient to climate change and support community protection, we must actively manage the forest vegetation – particularly in the front country. The revised plan focuses on maintaining diversity of ecosystems, improving sustainability, and adapting to climate change in the long term. The Preferred Alternative will move the forests, grasslands and shrublands of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests toward being within the range of desired conditions in 35 to 40 years using a combination of wildland fire, timber harvest, aquatic and meadow restoration, and soils rehabilitation.

The decision regarding which areas and rivers to administratively recommend (see below) considered the sensitivity of the ecosystems being proposed for administrative recommendation in each alternative and how they might respond to a changing climate with the additional layers of protection the respective recommendations would provide. Some areas, like the Hoodoo area, are well suited to a more passive management regime and being a recommended wilderness area, or designated wilderness in the future should Congress act, would be an overall benefit to the diversity of the area. Action needed to implement a climate change adaptation strategy would be consistent with the management regime of the recommended areas. Yet other areas of the Forest,

such as the coastal disjunct refugia on the North Fork Clearwater River could ultimately be lost without active management. Coastal disjunct ecosystems remain intact due to the lack of stand-replacing disturbance events over thousands of years. Without mitigation of fuels in the uplands and areas surrounding these ecosystems, a single large fire event could spell disaster for these most sensitive ecosystems. For these reasons and others, some areas proposed for administrative recommendation were not selected in the Preferred Alternative in acknowledgement of the work we must do to prepare these most sensitive ecosystems for the effects of a changing climate.

The revised plan components, suitability determinations and land allocations, combined with utilization of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan (Appendix G of the FEIS), will help to position the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests to be resilient to the effects of a changing climate.

The recommended wilderness area and suitable wild and scenic river determinations are made within the context and connected to the other desired outcomes of the plan. The plan will not succeed if we do not implement ALL parts. Approximately 80 percent of the 4-million-acre forest is not suited for timber harvest and within the 20 percent that is, there are hundreds of plan components dictating how that will be done that will restrict the amount and nature of these projects. Given that, we felt it necessary to work at the highest level of organizational capability to meet forested vegetation desired conditions to toward the range of variability in 35 to 40 years. We have listened to Tribal elders' concerns about the dead trees spreading through our forests like a cancer. We have watched as wildfires threatened our communities time and again. We have seen our collective success in saving habitats and people from uncharacteristically severe wildfire in areas where we have previously treated the vegetation. This plan sets forth desired conditions and integrated plan components to do that at a larger scale than many are used to. However, this is a necessary trade-off for the land allocations that leave 80 percent of the landscape up to a much less predictable and less precise tool of prescribed fire and natural ignitions. Just as recommended wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and the Idaho Roadless Rule have been stitched together to provide a cohesive blanket of more restrictive land uses, in Management Area 3, where timber harvest road and motorized trail access are suitable; where the Forests are accessible to all people regardless of their ability and socioeconomic status; where areas most critical to public safety, community protection, and sensitive resources including WUI, critical ingress/egress routes, visitor infrastructure and critical fish habitat; and where more control over the outcomes is needed. These are areas where it is also most necessary to have the benefits of reforestation to restore more resilient ecosystems in the face of the wildfire crisis and climate change. From this small area comes the vast majority of the economic contributions that are SO vital to the rural, underserved communities, providing the basis of stable social systems such as schools and health care.

Tribal Trust

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests is wholly within the ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce Tribe and the land managed under this plan was ceded to the U.S. Government in the Treaties of 1855 and 1863. It is a great responsibility and humbling endeavor to develop a land management plan that honors the moral and legal responsibilities that result and to honor the past, present, and future culture of the Nez Perce People.

Some key decisions we have made regarding Tribal Trust include:

- A separate Tribal Trust section of the revised plan was developed with plan components that honor and signify our obligation to uphold the treaties and honor the Nez Perce culture. A

first in the realm of forest planning, this section is a deliberate action to highlight our solemn responsibility. As the Nez Perce do not differentiate themselves from the land, this section was deliberately placed between the Biophysical Environment and Human Uses of the Forest sections as a bridge between the land and people, a position the Nez Perce have held since time immemorial.

- An introduction paragraph to the Tribal Trust Responsibilities section highlighting and conveying to readers of the plan in the future the importance and meaning of these resources to the Nez Perce.
- Co-stewardship of the land and resources is codified through a desired condition and management approach that demonstrate our intent to steward the land with the Nez Perce. By working together, we are confident the Forest Service can better meet its general trust responsibilities, honor the treaties and Nez Perce culture, meet the multiple use mandate, and provide ecosystem services to everyone.
- The Pilot Knob geographic area was developed to acknowledge the cultural importance of that specific area to the Nez Perce. While there are likely hundreds of similar locations on the Forest, this area in particular has been the focus of numerous Nez Perce resolutions and brought to us as a potential place where the land could be managed hand in hand with the Nez Perce. The existing infrastructure and management of the area has an impact on Nez Perce traditional uses. The plan components provide a framework for working together to reduce the negative impacts while improving access for Tribal members.
- Additional special areas specific to the Nez Perce and the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail were proposed to the existing list of special areas carried over from the 1987 plans, which included wispin'iitpe (as one travels out of the timber, upon coming over the divide) for its cultural importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. We have included the original place names for some of these areas, in Nimiipuu, as a reminder that these areas are part of the Nez Perce present and future and to serve as a bridge between cultures.
- Considerable engagement over the Regional Forester's Species of Conservation Concern list has occurred with the Nez Perce Tribe since 2014. The list was heavily informed by the Tribe's additional scientific information and monitoring data. For three species, bighorn sheep, Spring-Summer Chinook salmon and lamprey, this additional data provided sufficient information to indicate there is substantial concern for the species persistence in the plan area. Thus, they were added to the final SCC list. The Tribe also provided species specific data regarding fish populations and habitat data that augmented the data available from the State of Idaho, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and our own data. This data was used for several purposes including development of the aquatic and riparian plan components and defining and applying "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" for wild and scenic river inventory and eligibility evaluation.
- The Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail, a part of the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark, is included as part of Management Area 1 signifying the National designation of the trail.
- A decade of work with the Tribe's technical staff resulted in collaboration on plan components of many resource areas important to the Nez Perce Tribe. While collaboration occurred for many sections of the plan, two exemplary examples include the aquatic and riparian section plan components and the elk plan components. The Nez Perce Tribe participated in a group, chartered by the Regional Forester, to help develop a suite of plan

components that would provide for recovery of ESA-listed aquatic species. This “ARCS” group worked for several years and reach consensus on over 120 of the aquatic and riparian components contained in this plan. Similarly, an elk working group consisting of our cooperating agencies, Tribe staff and representatives from research, met for several months to ensure that the plan components address the most important aspects of elk habitat to meet the shared objective of increasing elk herd numbers by developing desired conditions for high quality habitat through improving nutritional resources for elk.

- The Nez Perce Tribe was consulted as part of both the recommended wilderness evaluation and the wild and scenic river evaluation processes. The Tribe did not provide formal comment on recommended wilderness but did provide very helpful input in the wild and scenic rivers evaluation—specifically in the development of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) definitions as well as provided data to demonstrate river segments having ORVs. The Tribe provided data to help determine which rivers were the best of the best for several resource areas, including fish, botany, hot springs, and others. We also used their information to develop a seventh category of ORVs, as provided for in the planning rule handbook, titled “Nez Perce Cultural.” This ORV goes hand in hand with the previously defined “Cultural” ORV but looks at it from the Tribe’s perspective rather than through an archeologist’s lens. The addition of the ORV category allowed the process to be more responsive to factors such as having Nez Perce Tribe creation sites, hunting, and fishing camps, other folklore sites, etc. The application of this Nez Perce Cultural ORV to rivers was done solely by the Nez Perce Tribe and any river with this ORV was automatically deemed “eligible” as are any rivers having any one or more ORV.

We invited the Tribe’s leadership to brief our national leaders on this revised plan. Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, then Vice-Chairman Miles spoke to the Chief of the Forest Service about the relationship between the Tribe and the Forest as well as their remaining concerns with the plan. This historic event was the first time a Tribe had been invited to participate in the planning process at that level. We sincerely appreciate the Nez Perce Tribe’s willingness to engage at this level of detail for a prolonged period. The amount of time and resources spent helping us to craft a plan consistent with our Tribal Trust and forward co-stewardship as the new way of planning and implementing projects moving forward was immense. Our plan itself, this decision and our process is much improved based on the cooperation, collaboration, and consultation the Nez Perce Tribe has provided thus far and will continue to provide as we co-steward these lands.

This decision is consistent with and implements the 2022 Tribal Relations Action Plan on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships and compliments the USDA Action Plan on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation-to-Nation Relationships. This builds on the Presidential Memorandum of 2021 and Executive orders 13007 (1996) and 13175 (2000).

Administrative Recommendations

In fitting the pieces of areas analyzed for administrative recommendations together, we looked at the underlying reasons that our analysis and public comments indicated were the most important and special. This allowed us to use the many varied land allocations including recommend wilderness, wild and scenic river suitability, motorized vehicle suitability, and others to best manage and highlight those key features. We also considered what those designations would do to benefit or harm other resources. For example, we used the more stringent management

requirements for recommended wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and Idaho Roadless Areas to provide secure habitats for large mammal dispersion along the east side of the Forests. Along the Highway 12 corridor and north of the Selway we used motorized vehicle suitability through the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum to provide secure winter habitat for elk, wolverine and to support outfitter and guide activities. When pieced together like a puzzle, these allocations provide a secure corridor for wildlife to disperse north and south and east and west across the forest.

We chose not to layer these different managements schemes on top of each other, instead, we fit them together across the landscape to build an integrated and cohesive, suite of management objectives that better provides for all uses, while focusing on the outstanding features of different areas. For example, many commenters talked about, the Bighorn-Weitas Creek Idaho Roadless Area and its values. Weitas Creek is also an eligible, wild and scenic river segment. My team evaluated the comments and the ecological features of the area, and we determined that the stream itself was the highest held value even in those comments about the area being recommended wilderness. Given the other land management designations already in the area, such as being an Idaho Roadless Area, we felt the best management for the future would be to focus on those outstanding remarkable values of the river itself. Thus, we found Weitas Creek suitable for designation in the wild and scenic river system but did not recommend the entire area for wilderness since existing land allocation took care of those non-river-based values.

To provide for connectivity of habitats for wide ranging species, from the Mallard Larkins all the way to the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, we have created a landscape that will largely, with a few exceptions, be managed in a way that allows natural processes as the most prevalent form of management. The area has sparse motorized access currently, and through this decision will continue to provide large blocks of secure area for animals such as grizzly, bear, wolverine, and elk. We have also protected small, rare, habitat features, such as year-round mountain goat habitat. Wolverine denning habitat needs were considered as we overlaid both recommended wilderness and winter motorized recreation opportunity spectrum suitability determinations onto the landscape. With the more restrictive land allocations of Recommended Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River suitability, we considered what, if anything, they would improve in terms of management over those plan components in the plan. In many cases additional recommendation as a suitable wild and scenic river or recommended wilderness area would hamper our ability to sustainably manage and retain many of the important attributes in the face of climate change while embracing fire ecology and traditional ecological knowledge. We realize that some people may not agree with that assertion, yet our team evaluated each specific area in drawing our conclusions. I relied upon that analysis and leadership discussions in making the decision. The local governments and citizens have firmly and resoundingly stated that they do not support any additional wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. And indeed, at the local level, on this forest the vast majority—approximately 75 percent or 3 million acres—is already managed as designated wilderness or Idaho Roadless. These land allocations have both negative and positive effects on local economies, and one can argue that they limit access for our underserved community members. Yet, this is a plan for the Nation, and we must consider the regional and national social and ecological needs. We carefully considered all these factors for each administrative recommendation for wilderness and wild and scenic rivers, along with the Forests' obligation to contribute to the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of our communities, in making this decision.

Recommended Wilderness

Through the planning process, we considered each of the 33 Idaho Roadless Rule Areas as well as other unroaded areas identified by the planning team and brought forward by the public for their appropriateness to be recommended to Congress for Wilderness Designation. One Idaho Roadless Area, Lolo Creek, was not evaluated as the total area of this roadless area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests is 100 acres with the remaining 17,400 acres being on the Lolo National Forest—evaluation of this roadless area will be done with the Lolo National Forest land management planning process. The topic of what to recommend or not recommend for wilderness designation was the single largest recipient of comments during the DEIS formal comment period, resulting in 18 percent of the total draft EIS comments. We heard social, ecologic, and economic rationale in support of and against many of the areas evaluated. Based on the analysis, and leadership team discussions, and informed by public comments, we are recommending three areas to Congress for addition to the designated wilderness system. These three areas will be shown as Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWA) in the revised land management plan.

Table 1. Recommended Wilderness Areas on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Recommended Wilderness Area	Acres recommended	First recommended in:	Original acres recommended in previous plan:	Difference between original and revised recommendations:
Hoodoo a.k.a. "Great Burn"	108,276	1987 Land Management Plan	111,986	- 3,710 acres
Mallard-Larkins	82,286	1987 Land Management Plan	66,377	+ 15,909 acres
East Meadow Creek	72,795	2025 Land Management Plan	N/A	+ 72,795 acres

The decision regarding the Recommended Wilderness areas considered the diversity of perspectives expressed through public engagement and the interdisciplinary team analysis as reflected in the suite of alternatives described in the draft EIS and final EIS.

Considering the various combinations of these alternatives, I find that the range of alternatives, and their effects as analyzed in the final EIS, encompasses the recommended wilderness areas in this decision, including the acreage, location, and configuration of recommended wilderness areas. We also considered the presence of wilderness characteristics, wildlife habitat and security, opportunities for motorized, non-motorized, and mechanized activities, as well as non-motorized adventure, self-reliance, solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

We have also decided that these recommended areas will be managed such that uses not allowed in the Wilderness Act will also not be suitable uses by the public in recommended wilderness areas on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. This includes motorized travel and mechanized transport not being suitable year-round. I made this decision after consideration of public comments on the range of options in the DEIS, in conference with my forest leadership team. Instead of allowing motorized and mechanized travel that would be nonconforming to the wilderness act if designated in recommended wilderness, we considered those uses when determining which areas were recommended and which were not. Boundary adjustments were utilized, when appropriate, to provide for desired uses that would be non-conforming in areas where the impacts of those uses were acceptable. This ensures that the presence of uses that would be nonconforming would not

influence potential future Congressional designations, thereby maintaining the integrity of the ecological and social wilderness characteristics.

Administrative use of mechanized and motorized equipment, as well as administrative uses related to management responsibilities, including but not limited to monitoring, landing of aircraft, and research will continue to be a suitable use consistent with Forest Service policy and directives.

We are also no longer recommending Sneakfoot Meadows or North Fork Spruce, commonly known as the “Selway Additions” for designation as wilderness. These two areas adjacent to the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness in the 1987 plans totaled 19,330 acres and through this decision will now be managed through the Management Area 2 plan components and the Idaho Roadless Rule, which will protect the roadless characteristics these areas possess while making them available for additional management opportunities, including for motorized over-snow use in the winter. My finding to not recommend these areas is also based on the need to introduce fire into these areas to reduce risk to the infrastructure and resource values at Lolo Pass. Due to the number and length of roads excluded from the designated and previously recommended areas, commonly referred to as “cherry stems,” and the existing Research Natural Area, we find that recommended wilderness is not conducive to the management needed for sustainability of the larger area.

Appendix E of the FEIS documents the wilderness evaluation process and this Record of Decision documents the decision.

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related recommendations for wilderness designation.

Hoodoo

The Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, also known as the Great Burn, received more public and collaborative interest than any other single topic or area on the Forests. Despite varying perspectives on how the full area should be managed, all agree that this is a special place and that some portion of the area warrants recommendation as wilderness. A variety of social and ecological perspectives were mentioned in public meetings, in comment, and as we talked with the public, organizations and governments about the Hoodoo area. We heard the need to protect sensitive ecosystems and habitat for at-risk species, including wolverine and grizzly bear. Mountain goat populations in the area are also a great concern of the public, conservation groups, and State and Tribal governments. We heard from over-the-snow winter motorized users that legally used portions of the area up until 2012 and they inform me that there are no replacements for the opportunities provided here. We spoke with many about the solitude this area provides, regardless of the mode of transportation, motorized or nonmotorized, or the season of use. We spoke with our counterparts on the Lolo National Forest and wilderness managers at the Regional Office, and we spoke with many individuals and organizations concerned about how the decisions made here will impact future planning efforts on adjacent units.

We asked these groups to come together and propose an alternative solution that everyone could live with, and promised to analyze an action alternative with those boundaries should they be

provided. Yet, no collaborative compromise solution was reached. Therefore, as the responsible official, I made this decision after considering all alternatives (including those not analyzed in detail), review of all the comments, the science, after talking with partner organizations, collaborative agencies, the Nez Perce Tribe, and adjacent Forest Service units. The Forest leadership team and revision team looked at all the options, each bringing forward unique perspectives based on their role in the process, community representation and professional experience. This diversity of perspectives allowed us to craft boundaries that provided for both ecological and social uses.

First and foremost, I decided that the entirety of the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area should be non-motorized in the summer with one exception: the area encompassing Fish Lake Trail #419 will remain suitable for motorized use. The benefits to roadless and wilderness character are clear and there is no group specifically asking for the area to be suitable for summer motorized use outside the Fish Lake trail corridor. I have also decided that maintaining a motorized recreation opportunity along the Fish Lake Trail corridor would be responsive to the high value some members of the public hold for access to this area, while not adversely affecting the Forests' ability to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for the broader Great Burn area's suitability for wilderness designation. This is consistent with the public comments and environmental analysis in the Clearwater Travel Plan administrative record.

Additionally, I have decided to implement the recommended wilderness boundary identified in the Preferred Alternative which excludes the Divide Trail #738. This 150-foot corridor area will continue to be managed as not suitable for summer motorized use, but is suitable for mechanized use, allowing for bicycle and mountain biking opportunities along the State Line trail.

Larger boundary adjustments were made to allow winter over-snow motorized use to continue to occur in locations that were utilized legally prior to the 2012 Clearwater Travel Plan decision. This includes an area from Blacklead Mountain, following the North Fork Ranger District boundary north of Williams Peak, Goat Lake, and Williams Lake, then southeast along Williams Creek to Road 595. The Final EIS considers the impacts of winter motorized use across the entire Hoodoo Roadless Area. I have concluded that two areas in particular could be managed for over-snow motorized use while meeting all regulatory obligations for maintaining the diversity of plant and animal communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area. Thus, I have decided to find suitable for winter motorized use a portion of the Hoodoo Roadless Area in the south of Williams Peak near Goat Lake, Williams Lake and Williams Creek and exclude that area from the portion I'm recommending for wilderness designation. Similarly, the area north of the ridge immediately to the south of the Fish Lake Trail was excluded for the same rationale. There is ample space across the 4-million-acre Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests to provide additional over snow winter motorized opportunities while also providing for quiet recreation and wildlife habitat. These winter motorized recreation opportunities are unique. Finding other areas of the Forest suitable for winter motorized use does not replace the highly valued, and unique recreation opportunities available in the Hoodoo Area. In fact, within a several state area, there are no opportunities that replace the terrain, snow condition, elevation, access, and treelessness combination found here. Thus, while looking at multiple use opportunities and desires, it would be extremely difficult for me to conclude that winter motorized use in a portion of the Hoodoo area is inappropriate provided we are meeting our other regulatory and legal requirements at the plan level. Specifically, this decision is providing habitat for wildlife, providing for wildlife connectivity, and supporting recovery of ESA listed species. The Final EIS demonstrates we are meeting all obligations for providing for recovery of species under the Endangered Species Act

and providing habitat for native and at-risk species under the 2012 Planning Rule, so it is clear that allowing for this valid recreation opportunity is the responsible decision to make given our multiple use mandate.

These areas excluded from the Hoodoo Recommended Wilderness Area also provide opportunity for non-motorized mechanized use such as mountain biking, in an area that was popular for this activity prior to closure through the 2017 travel management decision. These adjustments provide opportunity for this non-motorized activity in the future, while allowing the portions of Hoodoo recommended for wilderness to be managed in a manner that protects and maintains the social characteristics that provide the basis for its suitability for wilderness designation.

While this final specific boundary configuration was not delineated in an individual alternative of the draft EIS, the effects of the preferred alternative recommended area is within the range of effects analyzed in the draft EIS.

Mallard-Larkins

The Mallard-Larkins Recommended Wilderness Area, Idaho Roadless Area and Secretary's Pioneer Area have benefited from some level of designation since before the first land management plans were written. These areas are special and unique, as exemplified by the long history of documents calling attention to this area in the North Fork Clearwater River Basin. Unlike the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Rule Area, there is very little controversy of the Mallard-Larkins. While some are opposed to any recommended wilderness additions, we heard very little if any disagreement on the recommendation of Mallard-Larkins. This decision expands the previous recommended wilderness area boundary and adds approximately 16,000 acres. Several boundary adjustments were made from the existing Idaho Roadless Area boundary, to allow for better manageability of the area and to allow for connections for motorized recreation opportunities in the far eastern and far western portions of the IRA, including a potential future location for the Gem Trail. These boundary adjustments will positively affect wilderness characteristics by making the boundaries easier to manage on the ground by tying to easily identifiable natural and constructed features. An adjustment on the western portion of the area will increase the size of the recommended wilderness area from what was analyzed in other alternatives. This 3,900-acre addition moves the line to be more distinguishable on the ground in all seasons and adds in an area north of Minnesaka Creek in the Bear Creek drainage.

While this final specific boundary configuration was not delineated in an individual alternative of the draft EIS, the effects of the preferred alternative recommended area is within the range of effects analyzed in the draft EIS.

East Meadow Creek

The Meadow Creek drainage has long been looked at as potentially being suitable for wilderness designation. East Meadow Creek in particular, bounding the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, exemplifies many of the criteria evaluated for during recommended wilderness evaluations. This decision adds a new recommended wilderness area, titled East Meadow Creek, that includes a large portion of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area and a smaller portion of the West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area. Combined, this nearly 73,000-acre area provides opportunities for solitude, has ecological value and is natural in appearance, as considered in the wilderness evaluation.

The Preferred Alternative excludes the southern portion of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area from recommended wilderness area. This excluded area includes all the roadless area east of Road 285 and south of Road 357 and Trail 533 to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary, approximately 32,700 acres. A corridor 300 horizontal feet either side of center line along Road 285 from the junction with Road 357 north to the terminus of the road at the intersection with Trail 517 is also excluded from the recommended wilderness. Road 285 and Road 357 are important travel routes for the public and for administrative use of the area and provide access in the summer to a fire lookout and trailheads used to access the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, especially by outfitter and guides. Road 285 and Road 357 would remain suitable for summer motorized use, but beyond that the area encompassing the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area would be in a summer recreation opportunity spectrum class of semi-primitive non-motorized, not suitable for summer motorized use. The 32,700-acre excluded area would be in a winter semi-primitive motorized classification suitable for motorized over snow vehicle use as currently available under the 1987 Nez Perce Forest Plan.

This decision also excludes approximately 107,000 acres of the 115,973-acre West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area from recommended wilderness. This area is currently open to and popular for summer and winter motorized recreation. The excluded area would be in a summer and winter semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunity spectrum classification, suitable for year-round motorized activities. Additionally, the Fire Risk Assessment identified this excluded area as being critical to protecting private land and other values at risk near the Elk City Township. The West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area borders the township and, in some cases, private land. Prescribed fire, and mechanical fuels treatments as pre-treatment to planned and unplanned ignitions, are necessary for the long-term sustainability of the area and the protection of Elk City from wildfire events.

These boundary decisions were made based on the input of hundreds of groups, individuals, organizations, and governments. Outfitter and guides described the importance of having motorized access to trailheads accessing the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. This, coupled with the need for administrative use to fire lookouts, was factored into the decision to exclude roads 285 and 357 from the recommended wilderness boundary and retain summer motorized use as a suitable. Speaking with local over-snow motorized users it became apparent that the southern portions of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area is a valued winter motorized area, however, it is acknowledged that use becomes very infrequent as you get further away from local communities and from groomed routes and closer to the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness boundary. The southern boundary provides a compromise between managing for over-snow use in the winter and preserving wilderness characteristics by excluding from recommendation areas that have moderate to high levels of historic over-snow motorized use rather than allowing uses that would be non-conforming if designated under the Wilderness Act. Similarly, the western boundary of the new recommended wilderness area was carefully selected to decrease conflicts with summer and winter motorized uses, keeping motorized and mechanized transport as not suitable within the recommended wilderness area but being deliberate in the boundaries to allow these uses to continue where they are established uses.

While this final specific boundary configuration was not delineated in an individual alternative of the draft EIS, the effects of the preferred alternative recommended area is within the range of effects analyzed in the draft EIS.

Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers

Consideration of potential wild and scenic rivers is an inherent part of the land management planning process. At a minimum, the planning rule requires the study of river eligibility be completed during plan development or revision. However, before a designation recommendation can be made to Congress, the river's suitability for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System must be studied. Many land management plan revision efforts defer this step to a later planning effort, which often means it's not completed before the next plan revision cycle begins again. For example, the Forest Service never came to a decision on suitability of the 29 rivers found eligible in the 1987 Nez Perce and Clearwater plans. A joint Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management suitability study required by Section 5 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was completed in 1975. This study found the undesignated portions of the Salmon River suitable. Additional Forest Service studies evaluated suitability of other eligible rivers, but a suitability determination was never made in the years between revision efforts. Thus, there was no formal finding of suitability for any of the eligible rivers and none were recommended for designation and forwarded to Congress.

In the comprehensive land and resource evaluation process of this revision effort, the Forests found 88 rivers to be eligible. At the urging of partners, including State and Local governments, collaboratives, non-governmental organizations, and the public, the Forests decided to complete the suitability study as part of this land management plan revision. Our primary rationale is that through this process we have the public and other stakeholders engaged and ready to put their time into our planning process. We had a dedicated interdisciplinary team convened and the resources to complete detailed study of alternatives. We had an informed, engaged leadership team to look at land allocations and the multiple management uses desired by partners across the entirety of the Forests. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and Planning Rule provide the discretion for both suitability determinations and recommendations for designation during plan revision.

History of the agency shows that stand-alone suitability studies are rare and incredibly expensive. Our experience shows that completing the suitability study the revision process is possible, and even preferable. The National Forest Management Act charges the Forest Service with developing an integrated, forestwide, plan to guide management of the land and resources providing for multiple uses and other statutory requirements such as the Wilderness Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. Plan development and revision are exercises in evaluating all the desired land uses across the 4-million-acre landscape and finding the appropriate mix of management priorities and representation of the diverse public values. Evaluating wild and scenic river suitability at the same time as all the other multiple use values provided in alternative land allocations allowed us to mix and match the best plan components to provide the ecological and social values expressed in public comment. Similar to the evaluation of which lands to recommend for wilderness, this is the right time and place to complete our obligation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and make a recommendation to Congress. The Forests firmly believe that our suitability recommendation is better and more integrated than it ever would be if done outside of a comprehensive, all land use consideration planning process, and it did not add extra time or cost to the process.

As described in the plan's distinctive roles and contributions (LMP, p. 5-7), the three major river systems – Salmon, Clearwater, and Snake – and their accompanying tributaries provide important aquatic and riparian habitat for many species, including bull trout, steelhead, westslope cutthroat trout, and Chinook salmon. The sheer number of endemic aquatic species within the planning

area is notable and exemplary within the western United States. The Selway, Salmon, Clearwater, and Lochsa river basins are world-renowned for fishing and boating recreation, with nationally renowned blue-ribbon fisheries in Kelly Creek, the North Fork Clearwater River, and the Lochsa River. With 1.2 million acres of some of the most spectacular wilderness areas in the country, many of Forests' rivers in those areas have scenic outstandingly remarkable values, particularly the high cirque lakes and craggy peaks in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. It's not surprising then that some of these rivers are currently Congressionally designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Nor is it surprising that the Forests determined 88 additional rivers have one or more outstandingly remarkable values, indicating they are eligible for designation. Given the abundance of these exemplary rivers and their remarkable values, the Forests gave careful consideration of those truly worthy for addition to the national system in the context of public input and sustaining the other multiple uses across the plan area.

Appendix i. of this Record of Decision documents the river-by-river determination, highlighting 3 out of 13 evaluation criteria from FSH 1909.12, section 83.21, that the study in appendix F of the FEIS indicate varied the most from river to river within the study area. This included the worthiness (criterion 1), potential changes in land and resource uses (criterion 3), and support or opposition to designation (criterion 11). As with the recommended wilderness evaluation, the Forests heard input both in support of and against the suitability of the rivers evaluated. Some stakeholders advocated for no additional wild and scenic river designations in their comments and through a County advisory vote. Others advocated for every rivers' suitability in their comments and petitions with one objector stating at the resolution meeting that the value of the rivers remaining undammed outweighs all other values. However, the Forest Service must consider multiple land and resource values under the National Forest Management Act and Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act. Thus, the suitability study considered the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water which would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the national wild and scenic rivers system as required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (final EIS, appendix F).

Based on the analysis, leadership team discussions, and public comments, the Forests found 11 rivers suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system. These include: Meadow Creek, Cayuse Creek, Colt Killed Creek, Fish Creek, Hungry Creek, Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, Weitas Creek, and the undesignated portion of the Salmon River will remain suitable. (Table 2).

The suitability for the Little North Fork Clearwater River has been deferred given the shared administration with the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The Idaho Panhandle National Forest's 2015 land management plan also finds the Little North Fork Clearwater River eligible, but did not conduct a suitability study. This river will be managed under interim protection measures as identified in the land management plan. This is the only eligible river on the Forests that now does not have a suitability determination.

Of all eligible rivers, the South Fork Clearwater River and North Fork Clearwater River received the most attention from stakeholders. While both rivers have multiple ORVs that may make them worthy additions to the National System, the potential for wild and scenic river-specific protections curtailing necessary management actions to protect the river values led to the determination they were not suitable for designation. Especially for the North Fork Clearwater River, we determined that the increased level of protections afforded to wild and scenic rivers to protect and enhance all its Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) may be too restrictive to

maintain and enhance the most sensitive ORV- the coastal disjunct ecosystem (Botany ORV). For designated rivers, the Act requires the primary emphasis be given to protecting the esthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features of the river corridor. The coastal disjunct ecosystem has the least resilience to climate change and management in support of resistance to the effects of a changing climate may be what is needed to perpetuate this ecosystem in the long term. The Forests found the need for active vegetation management is a benefit of non-designation that exceeds the benefits of designation.

Some objectors disagreed with the idea that a river is not suitable because wild and scenic river designation could curtail the Forests' ability to actively manage the vegetation in a river corridor. While neither the Wild and Scenic River Act nor Forest Service policy expressly prohibit timber harvest or fuels reduction, those activities are often curtailed or even foreclosed entirely given the extra scrutiny and promotion of other values resulting from designation. The Act itself states "particular attention shall be given to scheduled timber harvesting, road construction, and similar activities that might be contrary to the purposes of this Act" (16 U.S.C. 1283(a)). This has played out in numerous situations on the Forests over the past decade where management activities needed to address insects and disease, wildfire mitigation, or improve recreational access were avoided or legally contested due to potential adverse effects to the scenic values of a wild and scenic river corridor or viewshed.

Finding a river suitable and recommending Congress designate it within the National Wild and Scenic River System deserves that "particular attention". Thus, the Forests carefully weighed the important obligation to prioritize river values against the multiple use management needs and government and public values across plan area as each river was evaluated for suitability.

Table 2 shows the 11 suitable wild and scenic rivers by proposed classification and ORV. These 11 rivers, plus the Little North Fork Clearwater River, for which no suitability determination was made as part of this planning process, will be subject to the interim protection measures in the Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers portion of the land management plan. The rivers found eligible but not suitable will not be subject to these measures, but the analysis shows the outstandingly remarkable values will be maintained through other land management plan components, law, regulation, and policy (see crosswalk of plan components that protect outstandingly remarkable values located in the planning record).

Table 2: Summary of Nez Perce-Clearwater Suitable Wild and Scenic River Segments by Proposed Classification

Stream	Proposed Classification	Miles	Acres	ORVs
Cayuse Creek	Scenic	4.5	1,440	R, F
Cayuse Creek	Recreation	1.7	544	R, F
Cayuse Creek	Wild	29.7	9,504	R, F
Colt Killed Creek	Scenic	13.7	4,383	R, S, F, W
Colt Killed Creek	Wild	9.6	3,072	R, S, F, W
Fish Creek	Scenic	20.2	6,464	F, W
Fish Creek	Recreation	0.9	288	F, W
Hungry Creek	Scenic	5.6	1,792	F, W
Hungry Creek	Wild	8.2	2,624	F, W
Kelly Creek	Recreation	11.2	3,584	R, S, F, C, NP, W

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Stream	Proposed Classification	Miles	Acres	ORVs
Kelly Creek	Wild	15.0	4,800	R, S, F, C, NP, W
Meadow Creek	Recreation	2.0	640	R, C, NP, F, W
Meadow Creek	Scenic	16.5	5,280	R, C, NP, F, W
Meadow Creek	Wild	25.9	8,288	R, C, NP, F, W
Middle Fork Kelly Creek	Wild	4.9	1,568	S
North Fork Kelly Creek	Wild	5.9	1,888	S
South Fork Kelly Creek	Wild	6.2	1,984	F
Salmon River	Recreation	23.2	7,424 ¹	R, S, W
Weitas Creek	Scenic	28.5	9,120	F, R, NP
Total	n/a	233.4	74,867	n/a

ORV (Outstandingly Remarkable Value) key: R= recreation, S= scenery, F= fish, C= cultural, NP= cultural Nez Perce Tribe, W= wildlife, G= geology, B= botany.

¹ Includes lands administered by the Payette National Forest

This suitability recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, or the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The remaining 77 rivers found eligible but not suitable will be managed under the forestwide and applicable management area or geographic area plan components but will not be managed under the interim protection measures for the life of this plan. While the plan components are not equal to the higher level of protection and scrutiny provided via interim protection measures for rivers recommended as suitable for wild and scenic river designation, the analysis shows that outstandingly remarkable values will be maintained through other land management plan components, law, regulation, and policy (see crosswalk doc). For example, scenic integrity objectives protect a river's scenic values, but it may be at a "high" level rather than the "very high" required by the interim protection measures. Other ORVs such as fisheries, wildlife, botany, geology, recreation, cultural and Nez Perce cultural ORVs are protected through the plan components at a level equivalent to the interim protection measures. The aquatic and riparian plan components provide more protection than the interim protection measures for all resources other than scenery. While Riparian Management Zone widths are less than the ¼ mile corridor applied to suitable wild and scenic rivers, additional aquatic and riparian plan components prohibit negative impacts to fish bearing streams and ESA listed species critical habitat regardless of the distance these activities occur from the river.

Table 3. Nez Perce-Clearwater Wild and Scenic Study Rivers

Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Potlatch River	6.4	W	No	No
Beaver Creek	1.5	B	No	No
Bostonian Creek	5.0	F	No	No
Boundary Creek	3.1	F	No	No

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Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Caledonia Creek	0.5	F	No	No
Cave Creek	4.6	S	No	No
Cayuse Creek	35.9	R,F	Yes	Yes
Chateau Creek	2.6	S	No	No
Cliff Creek	3.9	G	No	No
Elk Creek	4.9	R,S,B	No	No
Elmer Creek	0.4	B	No	No
Falls Creek	2.1	G	No	No
Graves Creek	2.0	F	No	No
Isabella Creek	5.4	B	No	No
Kelly Creek	26.2	R,S,C,NP,F,W	Yes	Yes
Lake Creek	11.7	R,S,F	No	No
Little North Fork Clearwater River	4.3	R,S,NP,F,B	Suitability Recommendation Deferred	Yes
Lost Pete Creek	4.0	G	No	No
Middle Fork Kelly Creek	4.9	S	Yes	Yes
North Fork Kelly Creek	5.9	S	Yes	Yes
North Fork Clearwater River	78.9	R,S,C,NP,F,W,B	No	No
South Fork Kelly Creek	6.2	S	Yes	Yes
Weitas Creek	28.5	NP,F	Yes	Yes
Clear Creek	0.9	F	No	No
Lolo Creek	19.8	R,NP,F,W	No	No
Musselshell Creek	2.1	C,NP	No	No
South Fork Clear Creek	7.0	F	No	No
Big Sand Creek	19.9	S,F	No	No
Brushy Fork	4.9	S,W	No	No
Canyon Creek	0.6	W	No	No
Colt Killed Creek	23.3	R,S,F,W	Yes	Yes
Crooked Fork	23.2	F,W	No	No
Fish Creek	21.1	F,W	Yes	Yes
Glade Creek	3.3	W	No	No
Hopeful Creek	4.7	F	No	No
Huckleberry Creek	0.8	R	No	No
Hungry Creek	13.8	F	Yes	Yes
Imnamatnoon Creek	1.3	W	No	No
Lake Creek	5.6	F	No	No
Lowell Creek	1.0	W	No	No
North Fork Storm Cr	3.2	S	No	No
Old Man Creek	8.3	S	No	No
Rye Patch Creek	2.7	W	No	No

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Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
South Fork Storm Creek	3.7	S	No	No
Storm Creek	10.8	S	No	No
Upper Lochsa River	1.8	R,F,W	No	No
Warm Springs Creek	6.4	R,S,G	No	No
Waw'aalamnime Creek	2.1	F,W	No	No
Bear Creek	22.8	S,C,NP,F,W	No	No
Brushy Fork Creek	8.0	S	No	No
Buck Lake Creek	12.0	F	No	No
Cub Creek	16.6	S	No	No
East Fork Meadow Creek	7.0	F	No	No
East Fork Moose Creek	34.6	S,C,F	No	No
Gedney Creek	9.1	F	No	No
Meadow Creek (Selway)	44.3	R,C,NP,F,W	Yes	Yes
Moose Creek	3.8	S,C,F	No	No
North Fork Moose Creek	20.8	S,C,F	No	No
O'Hara Creek	2.3	W	No	No
Rhoda Creek	16.3	S,F	No	No
Running Creek	16.9	NP	No	No
Three Links Creek	14.7	S	No	No
West Fork Gedney Creek	10.0	S	No	No
West Fork Three Links Creek	6.0	S	No	No
West Moose Creek	9.1	F	No	No
Wounded Doe Creek	9.2	F	No	No
American River	3.0	W	No	No
Gospel Creek	7.0	S	No	No
Johns Creek	18.3	S,F	No	No
Meadow Creek (S.F. Clearwater)	14.7	NP	No	No
Mill Creek	0.9	W	No	No
Red River	6.5	R,NP,F,W	No	No
Silver Creek	12.2	NP	No	No
South Fork Clearwater River	34.5	R,S,C,NP,F,W	No	No
West Fork Crooked River	5.4	F	No	No
West Fork Gospel Creek	5.6	S	No	No
Allison Creek	8.4	NP,W	No	No
Bargamin Creek	25.6	S,F	No	No
Big Mallard Creek	3.6	S,G	No	No
Noble Creek	8.9	S,F,G	No	No
North Fork White Bird Creek	5.6	NP	No	No
Papoose Creek	0.6	W	No	No

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Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Sabe Creek	15.3	F	No	No
Salmon River	23.2	R,S,W	Yes	Yes
Slate Creek	11.4	NP,F,W	No	No
South Fork White Bird Creek	12.4	NP	No	No
Van Buren Creek	5.3	F	No	No
Yeva Agai Naokwaide	1.2	F	No	No

ORV (Outstandingly Remarkable Value) key: R= recreation, S= scenery, F= fish, C= cultural, NP= cultural Nez Perce Tribe, W= wildlife, G= geology, B= botany.

Research Natural Areas

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 directs the Forest Service to establish research natural areas typifying important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, and aquatic ecosystems. Eighteen RNAs have been designated on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Two proposed research natural areas that were in the 1987 Land Management Plans, one expansion of a designated research natural area, and two new candidate research natural areas are included in this decision, Table 4.

Table 4. Designated, Proposed and Candidate Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas	Status	Acres
Aquarius	Designated	3,709
Bald Mountain	Designated	369
Bull Run Creek	Designated	383
Bull Run Creek Expansion	Candidate	370
Chateau Falls	Designated	198
Dutch Creek	Designated	302
Elk Creek	Designated	6,957
Fenn Mountain	Proposed	603
Fish Lake	Designated	753
Four-Bit Creek	Designated	392
Grave Peak	Designated	379
Lochsa River	Designated	1,508
Moose Meadow Creek	Designated	940
Mud Springs Ridge	Candidate	288
No Business Creek	Designated	1,385
O'Hara Creek	Designated	7,049
Rhodes Peak	Proposed	307
Sneakfoot Meadow	Designated	1,946
Square Mountain Creek	Designated	704
Steep Lakes	Designated	797
Fred Rabe Upper Hemlock Creek	Candidate	1,378

Research Natural Areas	Status	Acres
Upper Newsome Creek	Designated	1,192
Warm Springs Creek	Designated	537

A description of the location and value of the candidate and proposed Research Natural Areas included in this decision is documented below and in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Proposed Research Natural Areas

Fenn Mountain Proposed Research Natural Area

This previously proposed research natural area is located 18 air miles east-northeast of Lowell, Idaho, in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of the Lochsa-Powell Ranger District. Selection is based upon Regional Office direction to include high elevation aquatics, subalpine vegetation communities, and rocky habitats not represented in the research natural area system. This research natural area was formally proposed by the 1987 Forest Plan and retained here.

Rhodes Peak Proposed Research Natural Area

This previously proposed research natural area is located 11.5 air miles north-northwest of Powell, Idaho, in the Hoodoo, also known as Great Burn, roadless area on the Lochsa-Powell Ranger District. Selection is based upon Regional Office direction to include high subalpine and alpine habitats and uncommon vegetative communities not represented in the research natural areas system. This research natural area was formally proposed by the 1987 Forest Plan and retained here. A preliminary establishment record has been written but has not been formally completed.

Candidate Research Natural Area

Bull Run Creek Expansion

The Bull Run Creek Expansion Research Natural Area is contiguous to the designated Bull Run Creek RNA described in the FEIS and the general description of the designated RNA applies to the expansion. The best representation of many of these features were excluded at the time of original designation because they occurred on adjacent private land. In the mid-1990s this ground came to the Forest Service in a land exchange. Internal and external interest have been calling for an expansion to include these areas since that time. With this expansion, the total acreage of the Bull Run Research Natural Area will be 753 acres.

Mud Springs Ridge Research Natural Area

This candidate research natural area on the Salmon River Ranger District is approximately 3.5 air miles northwest of Lucile, Idaho. The intact and unusually diverse grassland communities of Mud Springs Ridge are not represented in the research natural areas system. One federally threatened plant species, one sensitive species, and at least four local endemic plant species are well represented here. The site also includes under-represented ponderosa pine forests and shrub communities. This area is the site of ongoing monitoring and provides substantial opportunities for range and invasive species research. The Mud Springs Ridge Proposed RNA totals 288 acres.

Fred Rabe Upper Hemlock Creek Research Natural Area

This candidate research natural area is in the Hemlock Creek basin, within the Big Horn–Weitas roadless area of the North Fork Ranger District, approximately 10 miles east of Pierce, Idaho. The proposal is based upon aquatics and various meadow communities within the grand fir mosaic forest, as well as a core, high priority vegetative community called for in the regional research natural areas assessment. This research natural area was recommended in the mid-1990s with local vetting completed at that time; however, proposal in a forest plan or an amendment to such has never occurred. The total size of the Fred Rabe Upper Hemlock Creek Proposed RNA is 1,378 acres.

Special Areas

Special areas are a category of administratively designated areas defined as an area or feature managed to maintain its unique special character or purpose (36 CFR 219.19), including those that may be botanical, geological, recreational, scenic, zoological, paleontological, or historical in nature. Such areas are protected and managed for public use and enjoyment and are identified due to their unique or special characteristics. Special areas are not congressionally designated but are administratively designated by the Chief of the Forest Service, regional forester, or forest supervisor (FSM 2372). Table 5 lists the designated special areas and the six proposed special areas under the Preferred Alternative.

Table 5. Special Area by theme and approximate acreage.

Special Area Name	Year Designated ⁶	Theme	Acres
Giant Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	44
Morris-Perkins Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	48
Devoto Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical and Historical	15
Heritage Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	153
Colgate Licks	1987 Forest Plan	Geological and Historical	39
séewisnime (Place of Mussels)	1987 Forest Plan	Historical	163
Walde Mountain	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	82
Lewis and Clark Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Historical	58
Sing Lee Fen	2025 Land Management Plan	Botanical	25
Clear Creek Basalt Glades	2025 Land Management Plan	Botanical	267
wispin'iitpe (as one travels out of the timber, upon coming over the divide)	2025 Land Management Plan	Botanical and Historical	336
Elk Creek Falls	2025 Land Management Plan	Recreational	443
Colt Killed Creek Campsite	2025 Land Management Plan	Historical	159
Smoking Place	2025 Land Management Plan	Historical	173

⁶ Special Areas new in the 2025 Land Management Plan are proposed until designated by the appropriate official per FSM2372).

Requirements of the Planning Rule

The Land Management Plan has been prepared in compliance with the Forest Service's 2012 Land Management Planning Rule at 36 CFR Part 219. The Land Management Plan meets the specific Rule requirements at sections 219.8 through 219.12 as follows.

219.8 Sustainability

Ecological Sustainability

The plan provides ecological sustainability by including plan components that address ecosystem integrity: air, soil, and water, and riparian areas. The plan includes plan components that address the composition, structure, function, and connectivity of vegetation types. The plan also describes management direction focused on potential vegetation types, system drivers, ecological processes, and stressors and threats (see plan Physical and Biological Ecosystems).

Plan components are designed to provide for the maintenance and improvement of vegetation conditions within the fire-adapted ecosystems that are prevalent on the national forests. Plan components promote vegetation and landscape conditions that reflect the natural range of variation and are resilient in the face of future stressors and threats such as fire, drought, or invasive species (plan, terrestrial vegetation section). For example, plan direction emphasizes managing for large trees that can survive low to moderate fire severities and contribute to the regeneration of the national forest after disturbance, thereby promoting resilience and providing long-term structural diversity and wildlife habitat.

Multiple resources, including wildlife, fish, soil, and water benefit from managing for vegetation conditions for a natural range of variation and resiliency. Plant and animal species benefit by providing healthy and sustainable habitat that supports the full diversity of native species, including federally designated threatened, endangered, candidate, and proposed species and species of conservation concern (see Chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement for lists of these species). Forestwide plan components address maintaining and (or) restoring key ecosystem characteristics associated with terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities.

The plan will maintain the existing high quality of the water, wildlife, and forest resources across the entire national forests. Large, relatively undeveloped areas will be maintained, mainly within designated wilderness, Idaho roadless areas, and recommended wilderness areas, which together comprise about 75 percent of the national forests. These areas have limited human impacts, and the vegetation will continue to be influenced largely by natural disturbances such as fire or insect activity. Accordingly, these disturbances will largely determine the vegetation conditions and patterns that will exist, and the associated wildlife habitat conditions and diversity. The plan articulates the role of fire, including both planned and unplanned ignitions, as a tool to achieve desired vegetation and wildlife habitat conditions, and provides direction related to its use and management. The plan also provides direction for fuel management to protect identified values, such as in wildland-urban interface areas.

Social and Economic Sustainability

The plan contributes to social and economic sustainability by addressing social, cultural, and economic conditions; sustainable recreation; multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and the national economy; ecosystem services; areas of Tribal importance, and cultural and historic uses.

Plan direction is designed to manage for resilient and resistant forest conditions so forests can adapt to whatever pressures and uncertainties the future may hold. Resilient forest conditions also provide important social and economic benefits, including enhancing the diversity of recreational opportunities, maintaining scenic integrity objectives, and contributing to a sustainable production of timber and other forest products.

The benefits to people (the goods and services provided) include clean air, water quality and quantity, carbon sequestration, and climate regulation; forest products such as timber and firewood; forage for livestock; minerals; outdoor recreation; scenery; cultural and heritage values, inspiration, spiritual values, and solitude; habitat for fish and wildlife; hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife viewing; and research and education, income, and jobs. See Providing Ecosystem Services section, above.

219.9 Diversity of plant and animal communities

The plan provides for the diversity of plants and animals and provides for ecological integrity by:

- Supporting ecological integrity through plan components designed to maintain or restore key ecological characteristics for ecosystem composition, structure, ecological processes, and connectivity within the natural range of variation, as well as providing for the retention of key features such as old growth, snags, large trees, and coarse woody debris (plan, forestlands; meadows, grasslands and shrublands; wildlife, and soils sections).
- Supporting the recovery and persistence of the 11 threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species (4 terrestrial, 5 aquatic, and 2 plant species) and 39 species of conservation concern (5 terrestrial, 2 aquatic, and 32 plant species) through plan components that promote the necessary habitat conditions and minimize threats and stressors (plan, terrestrial ecosystems; aquatic ecosystems; and wildlife sections).
- Including species-specific plan components to support or promote species whose needs may not be met by ecosystem-level plan components, such as bats, elk, fisher, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, lamprey, western pearlshell mussel, Coeur d'Alene salamander (plan, wildlife; across the landscape; water and aquatic resources; section).

The plan uses the tiered approach to conserve and maintain species diversity, which first involves an analysis of the ecosystems on the national forest and the species whose habitats are dependent on them. The plan then further supports species-specific approaches, which include the protection of sensitive habitats such as riparian zones and wetlands and habitat for threatened and endangered species. I find that the plan has the appropriate components to restore and maintain the diversity of ecosystems. The desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines were developed based on best available scientific information and will restore or maintain key habitat characteristics for all vegetation groupings.

The Northern Region regional forester identified 39 species of conservation concern on the national forest. Species of conservation concern are species known to occur in the plan area and for which there is substantial concern for the persistence of the species. Most habitat needs for these species are met through the plan components for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and those that promote the key ecosystem characteristics required by each species. For some species or species groups, plan components to meet species-specific habitat needs are included in accordance with 36 CFR 219.9(b).

After review of the plan and final environmental impact statement, I find that the plan components will provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain viable populations of all identified species of conservation concern within the plan area.

219.10 Multiple use

The plan provides integrated resource management for multiple uses (219.10(a)) by including plan components at the forestwide level and the geographic-area scale that establish suitability for a variety of compatible uses. Each geographic area has unique characteristics, and specific plan components provide for and manage multiple uses within that area. The plan emphasizes working closely with partner agencies, Native American Tribes, Federal, State, and county government, universities, permittees, nongovernmental organizations, and private landowners to achieve joint management goals. The plan provides for multiple uses by:

- Supporting a variety of multiple uses and ecosystem services across the national forests and in each management area through an array of plan components that establish suitability for various uses and guide those uses in order to be compatible with each other as well as ecosystem integrity and social and economic sustainability (plan, human uses of the forests).
- Providing clean water and water quantity, as well as improving watershed conditions where needed, through plan components that support aquatic ecosystem integrity and limit potential negative impacts to these resources, support important ecological and social services such as productive soils, plant and animal diversity, wildlife habitat, and water supplies (plan, aquatic ecosystems sections).
- Recognizing and protecting historical, cultural, and Tribal uses associated with the Nez Perce-Clearwater (plan, Tribal Trust; geographic areas; and cultural resources sections). Upholding the legal and moral obligations of the United States as articulated in the 1855 and 1863 Treaties with the Nez Perce Tribe.
- Providing rangeland for livestock grazing to support livelihoods while also supporting ecological integrity of rangelands and riparian management zones (plan, livestock grazing and livestock grazing (aquatic and riparian) sections).
- Providing a supply of forest products in a sustainable manner, which in turn supports local economies and communities, through plan components that establish suitability and guide the extraction of timber from National Forest System lands (plan, timber section).
- Providing opportunities for the development of mineral resources, where appropriate (plan, energy and minerals section).
- Including plan components that guide the management of infrastructure (plan, infrastructure section).
- Providing economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable recreation opportunities through an array of plan components that support a variety of recreation uses. Recreation opportunities also considered tourism, ecosystem integrity and capacity, recreation access, and changes in local demographics (plan, sustainable recreation; designated areas and plan land allocations sections).
- Providing opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing along with associated cultural and socioeconomic benefits (plan, aquatic and riparian ecosystems; and wildlife sections).

- Including plan components that establish desired scenic integrity (plan, scenery section).
- Including plan components that emphasize consolidated land ownership and improved access to National Forest System lands (plan, land ownership and Land Uses section).
- Maintaining the wilderness character of the three existing designated wilderness areas, the wilderness characteristics of three recommended wilderness areas through plan components to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for their suitability for wilderness designation (plan, designated areas section).
- Protecting the free-flowing nature and outstandingly remarkable values of 3 designated, 11 suitable, and 1 eligible wild and scenic rivers (plan, designated areas section) through interim protection measures. Sustaining the free-flowing nature and outstandingly remarkable values of 76 eligible, but not suitable, rivers through hundreds of plan components.

219.11 Timber requirements based on NFMA

The plan identifies lands suited and not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(vii) and 219.11). The lands suitable for timber production and the role of timber harvest as a tool to meet ecosystem management and social and economic objectives has changed since the Nez Perce and Clearwater 1987 plans were developed. The plan presents new plan components for lands suitable for timber production and for timber harvest. These plan components will facilitate an active vegetation management program that meets both ecosystem and socioeconomic objectives.

Lands suitable for timber production were determined following 36 CFR 219.11(a) and Forest Service Handbook direction (1909.12 chap. 61). First lands are identified that may be suitable for timber production and are those that are legally available and technically feasible for harvest (forested lands with no potential for irreversible soil or watershed damage and where regeneration can be ensured). Then, identification of lands that are suited and not suited for timber production is based on compatibility with desired conditions and objectives stated in the plan (plan components). In lands suitable for timber production, active vegetation management and some regular flow of timber products is expected to occur. Unless prohibited by other plan components, timber harvest may occur on lands unsuitable for timber production to meet other resource objectives.

Under the plan, about 1,042,519 acres (26 percent of the national forests) are suitable for timber production, with the remaining approximately 2,896,537 acres are not suitable for timber production. Of the 2,896,537 acres not suitable for timber production, about 197,821 acres are suitable for timber harvest for such purposes as fuel reduction or wildlife habitat enhancement.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that land management plans provide information regarding possible actions that may occur on the plan area during the life of the plan, including the planned timber sale program, timber harvesting levels, and the proportion of probable methods of forest vegetation management practices expected to be used (16 U.S.C. 1604(e)(2) and (f)(2)). The plan addresses this requirement through establishing objectives, and description of possible management actions and strategies (see appendix 4 of the plan).

Timber harvest is conducted to provide for societal goods and to maintain or move vegetation on the national forest toward desired conditions. Under the plan, the projected timber sale quantity is 190-210 million board feet per year and the projected wood sale quantity is 37-43 million cubic feet per year.

Alternatives considered a range of potential timber sale quantities, from 60 million board feet annually (alternative Z) up to 261 million board feet, a departure from the Sustained Yield Limit for a period of 20 years in alternative X. All alternatives were modelled to be possible to achieve and consistent with all plan components, provided funding is available. Each alternative's PTSQ is predicted to achieve forest vegetation desired conditions in varying timeframes, from 20 years to more than 100. The decision to implement the Preferred Alternative factors in the need to meaningfully respond to the wildfire crisis and to consider ecologic, social, and economic sustainability. The Preferred Alternative is not the lowest nor the highest predicted output but does move our Forests toward NRV within 35 to 40 years.

As required by the 2012 Planning Rule, the estimated timber outputs consider the fiscal capability of the planning unit and can be achieved consistent with all plan components. However, the estimates of timber outputs may be larger or smaller on an annual basis, or over the life of the plan, if budget or other constraining factors change in the future. We remain concerned that our ability to meet identified outputs will be difficult in the face of declining budgets and the increasing cost of litigation related to forest management activities. However, opportunities for shared stewardship, additional legislative authorities, or partnerships could potentially increase the timber output capacity.

Maximum Quantity of Timber

The plan also identifies the maximum quantity of timber that may be removed from the plan area (36 CFR 219.7 and 219.11 (d)(6)). Based on Forest Service Handbook direction (1909.12 chap. 64.3), this maximum is termed the sustained yield limit and is the volume of timber that could be produced in perpetuity on lands that may be suitable for timber production. The timber suitability analysis used in plan development identified about 1,042,519 acres on the national forests that may be suitable for timber production. The calculation of the sustained yield limit is not limited by plan desired conditions, other plan components, or the national forest's fiscal and organizational capabilities. The sustained yield limit and maximum quantity of timber that may be removed from the plan area is determined to be 241 million board feet average annual volume.

219.12 Monitoring

I have reviewed and determined that the plan provides adequate monitoring to inform the progress of achieving plan desired conditions, goals, and objectives (plan appendix 3). The monitoring plan addresses the eight requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule in the form of questions, indicators, data sources, collection frequency, and associated plan components that are all included in appendix 3 of the plan. The monitoring plan addresses what we believe to be the most critical components that inform management and is within the financial and technical capability of the agency. Every monitoring question links to one or more of the desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, or guidelines. However, not every plan component has a corresponding monitoring question.

The monitoring plan was designed to be cost effective and can be implemented during rising and falling budget cycles. Incorporating monitoring data from other agencies and partners will help ensure that our program is more independent and objective than solely relying on Nez Perce-Clearwater staff that often have other program priority work.

This monitoring program is not intended to depict all monitoring, inventorying, and data-gathering activities undertaken on the national forest, nor is it intended to limit monitoring to just the questions and indicators listed. Consideration and coordination with broader-scale monitoring

strategies adopted by the regional forester, multi-party monitoring collaboration, and cooperation with state and private forestry or research stations will increase efficiencies and help track changing conditions beyond the national forest boundaries. In addition, project and activity monitoring may be used to gather information for the plan monitoring program if it will provide relevant information to inform adaptive management.

Response to Public Comments

A review of comments received on the revised land management plan highlights that some stakeholders have differing, and often conflicting priorities in relation to the types of recreation opportunities, such as motorized, mechanized, and quiet; level of economic opportunity and timber harvest the Nez Perce-Clearwater should provide; and different perspectives on which areas and rivers should be recommended as Wilderness or eligible or suitable for Wild and Scenic River designations. Appendix M of the FEIS includes a response to each of the concern statements developed from the voluminous public comments.

The majority of comments were in regard to levels of recommended wilderness, suitable wild and scenic rivers, or motorized/non-motorized opportunities in the summer and winter. These comments were addressed through analysis in Chapter 3 of the EIS and in the development of the Preferred Alternative, including land allocations, suitability determinations and plan components. Comments also assisted in a refinement of the old growth plan components and analysis, carbon change analysis and carbon sequestration analysis. Comments from cooperating agencies and regulatory agencies aided in the refinement of plan components for listed species, elk, and aquatic habitat. Literature references provided by the public were reviewed in detail and incorporated into the analysis when I deemed them to be best available scientific information—and a rationale of the major themes of literature provided, and why they were not included, if applicable, is documented in the project record.

Changes from DEIS to FEIS

The Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act require an agency to assess and consider comments on a draft environmental impact statement, both individually and collectively; and for the final environmental impact statement, respond to substantive comments by:

1. modifying alternatives,
2. developing and evaluating new alternatives not previously given serious consideration,
3. supplementing, improving, or modifying the analyses,
4. making factual corrections, or
5. explaining why comments do not warrant further agency response.

The primary change between the DEIS and FEIS was the development of the Preferred Alternative for the final environmental impact statement. At the time of release of the DEIS, we clearly told the public that no alternative in the DEIS was a Preferred Alternative, but that a Preferred Alternative would be developed based on public comments from the range analyzed in the DEIS alternatives. True to that promise, the Preferred Alternative includes parts of each alternative analyzed in the DEIS but is not based on any one alternative in particular. It responds to public comment and internal comments raised on the DEIS. I find the Preferred Alternative to be qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives and effects discussed in the draft

environmental impact statement. The components of the Preferred Alternative fall within the scope of analysis previously provided to the public for comment. Appendix M of the final environmental impact statement includes the summary response to the substantive comments received.

After carefully considering the comments received on the draft environmental impact statement, minor adjustments were made to plan components in all alternatives including the Preferred Alternative; and the analyses were clarified or corrected as needed and described in the individual resource sections of chapter 3 in the final environmental impact statement.

In response to comments on the DEIS, continued work with the Nez Perce Tribe and Cooperating Agencies and further internal review, the following is a summary of the key changes to the final environmental impact statement and the plan, excluding minor editorial and organization changes, clarifications, and typographical errors:

- Updated and new plan components in the Tribal Trust section to ensure Tribal Treaty rights are maintained and our general trust responsibilities met. A standard was revised through government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe post objection period (FW-STD-TT-01). A Desired Condition was added to show the intent of the Forests to honor and preserve cultural practices of past, present, and future Nez Perce people. The plan components that protect access to first foods and life sources, commonly referred to as special forest products for non-Tribal members, were updated to reduce conflict with gathering by Nez Perce Tribal members. Dozens of plan components were modified from guidelines to standards during government-to-government consultation and additional plan components to protect access to resources associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights were added.
- Through consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, aquatic plan components were modified to ensure habitat is available to assist in recovery of ESA listed species. This includes modification to several plan components as they appeared in the DEIS version of the draft plan, and two additional plan components that are new since the DEIS version of the draft plan. One requires a plan of operation for suction dredge mining activity in stream with ESA listed species or critical habitat (FW-GDL-AREM-03), while the other ensures the transportation network will adapt with changing climates and the potential for increased runoff (FW-DC-ARINF-02). Numerous other plan components were edited for readability, ability to implement, and to respond to internal, external, cooperating agency, regulatory agency, and Nez Perce Tribe comments. Additional watersheds, Musselshell Creek and Crooked River, were added to the priority watershed list to acknowledge the importance of these watersheds to ESA listed species and species of conservation concern, as well as the ongoing work by the National Marine Fisheries Service and Nez Perce Tribe in these watersheds.
- The Wildlife section was updated. Plan components were added for grizzly bear. The elk plan components in the multiple use wildlife section were updated through discussion with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Nez Perce Tribe, USFS Research Stations and the public. Plan components discussing livestock grazing in relation to bighorn sheep were modified, including FW-STD-WL-02 and FW-GDL-WL-05. Changes to the fisher fine filter plan component also were made to ensure the availability of habitat to support viable populations of fisher.
- An additional goal for invasive species was added to emphasize working with other agencies, groups, and adjacent landowners to support integrated invasive species management. The

desired conditions were consolidated with more focus on retaining ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.

- Three additional Special Areas were proposed based on discussions with the National Park Service and the Nez Perce Tribe to acknowledge high potential historic sites on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail. Names of special areas were changed to the Nimiipuu names for areas designated because of their Tribal importance.
- Glover Creek was inadvertently identified as eligible and included in the Draft EIS. Its eligibility was based solely on the presence of the Coeur d'Alene salamander. The Coeur d'Alene salamander was reviewed for its potential as a wildlife species outstandingly remarkable value but was determined not to be a wildlife species that warrants identification as an outstandingly remarkable value. This species did not meet the screening criteria as a wildlife ORV for the following reasons: the species is water dependent but not river dependent; it is not a species of conservation concern and therefore was not identified as having regional or national significance; while it has narrow habitat characteristics it has an area of distribution from the Selway River north into southern British Columbia, including parts of western Montana; and, a study by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game determined that populations were present at 95 percent of previously surveyed locations and the populations are stable. Since the Coeur d'Alene salamander was the only element that determined Glover Creek's eligibility, and this species was not a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value, Glover Creek was removed from eligible status, and no further analysis of eligibility or suitability was conducted.
- The eligible status identified for the Salmon River in the draft EIS was changed to suitable status in the final EIS. Consistent with Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 80, 83.11, river segments previously found suitable through earlier study but not yet congressionally designated do not need to be reevaluated unless changed circumstances warrant consideration of a change in river status. Upon review as documented in the FEIS Appendix F, there are no changed conditions in the Salmon River segment that would warrant further consideration. Given that there are no changed conditions, and congressional direction to manage the lower Salmon under Wild and Scenic guidelines, this segment of the lower Salmon River retained its status as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Management approaches for all resource areas were modified to aid in implementation of the plan in the future.
- The monitoring section was modified to ensure indicators were meaningful, data sources were available and that the monitoring plan will be able to be completed biannually with anticipated budgets and staffing levels, as required by the planning rule.
- Chapter 3 of the FEIS was updated to reflect best available scientific information, additional analysis, respond to public comments and analyze the Preferred Alternative and changes to plan components including:
 - ◆ Included additional discussions relating the current distribution of old growth types to natural disturbance regimes including wildfire. The old growth discussion has been expanded to include a discussion relating old growth types to potential vegetation groups and the relationship to dominance types and habitat type groups and included tables to illustrate both the metrics used to define old growth, old growth forest

potential vegetation groups and the disturbance processes which give both rise and decline of old growth on the forest.

- ◆ Updated desired condition ranges for dominance type and size class based on updated natural range of variation (NRV) analysis which incorporated an updated climate model with improved predictive performance of regional climate scenarios.
- ◆ An updated baseline carbon assessment was conducted, utilizing new available tools from the USDA Forest Service Office of Sustainability and Climate and has been included in Appendix D.
- ◆ Additional analysis of fire regimes using mean fire return interval to determine expected amount of fire to be within a fire regimes natural range of variability. The associated analysis in the final environmental impact statement highlights where fire deficits are most pronounced and how the current conditions of fire severity compare to what would historically have been expected, based on the fire regime.
- ◆ In the wildlife section, more rigorous spatial overlays in nearly every section of the wildlife analysis to evaluate the effects of land allocations, improved vegetation modeling and queries to evaluate the effects on habitat, a more robust grizzly bear analysis, and changes in response to plan component changes. There was a more refined habitat model to evaluate the trend in fisher habitat including the development of a spatial query to evaluate how the plan would affect the spatial distribution of preferred female home ranges. The elk query was combined with a nutrition potential model to evaluate the changes in available high-quality nutrition as a result of the plan which should support higher elk and other ungulate populations for multiple uses. Appendix C provides a new cross walk of species, their habitat, key ecosystem characteristics of habitats, and how plan components provide for those habitats. It also provides a cross walk of how plan components address threats to at-risk species.
- ◆ In the sustainable recreation section, corrections to the misapplication of ROS classes as presented in the DEIS were made. The ROS maps for the No Action alternative have been removed and replaced by maps that accurately portray the areas open and closed to summer and winter motorized recreation under the 1987 Plans. The corrected acreages were then used for comparative purposes of the effects of ROS classifications in the action alternatives.
- ◆ The timber analysis added an indicator of “coarse woody debris retained” as a measurement indicator for use in evaluating the effectiveness of each action alternative to achieve desired conditions and to correlate sustainability of harvest measurement indicator to long-term site productivity.
- ◆ Updated PRISM and SIMPPLLE model analysis to incorporate the Preferred Alternative and changes to plan components.
- ◆ The Economic Sustainability section of the FEIS has been updated to include an economic contribution analysis with additional Preferred Alternative and changes to total wood sale quantities estimated in the Sustained Yield Limit Tables of the Timber subchapter. Additional qualitative discussion has been included covering in greater detail topics of Tribal, recreation, ecosystem services and other economic value concerns not fully represented in the quantitative economic contribution analysis. Additionally, the IMPLAN model in the FEIS includes changes to agriculture and grazing, national employment multipliers.

- ◆ The Social Sustainability section of the FEIS has been updated to include additional relevant policies and executive orders, an update to the term traditional industries to land-based livelihoods, and an analysis of the Preferred Alternative.
- Updated analyses throughout the final environmental impact statement using updated data layers, such as new ownership and trails layers. Numbers and acres were updated throughout the documents based on these changes in analysis and layers.

For a summary of changes made to the FEIS and Record of Decision as a result of the Objection Period, refer to the FEIS and Record of Decision Modifications section.

Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected “preferred” alternative, we considered five other alternatives, which are discussed below. The Preferred Alternative was the environmentally Preferred Alternative. A more detailed comparison of these alternatives can be found in the FEIS, Chapter 2.

References to acreages in any alternative, including the Preferred Alternative, are approximate and based on Geographic Information System technologies available. Decisions and analyses should not be construed to assume that illogical boundaries or exact acreages are binding into the future. As technology improves and Geospatial systems evolve, acreages and boundaries will be modified to reflect our current understanding, consistent with the decisions made in this Record of Decision.

Four action alternatives were developed based on input, including comments received since the release of the proposed action in July 2014, and through collaboration on alternative development during the winter of 2017-2018. All alternatives analyzed in the final environmental impact statement met a minimum bar of being ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable per the 2012 Planning Rule. Furthermore, each alternative contributes to rural prosperity and other Department of Agriculture strategic goals. Alternative themes and their relation to the significant issues are described below.

The action alternatives were developed based on the Nez Perce-Clearwater’s Assessment (2014), the need for change, desired conditions, implementation and monitoring of the current forest plan, public meetings, and comments received during the public involvement period, interagency meetings, and meetings with the Nez Perce Tribe. The alternatives represent a range of possible management options from which to choose. Each alternative emphasizes specific land and resource uses and de-emphasizes other uses in response to the revision topics. Some components may vary between alternatives to address the issues identified during scoping; see the description of the alternatives for specific details. Much of the plan direction for desired conditions, standards, and guidelines remains constant for all action alternatives. Where plan direction varies by alternative, the text indicates such. A table of plan components that vary by alternative is included in Appendix H of the FEIS.

A fifth action alternative, titled the Preferred Alternative, was added, and analyzed in the FEIS in response to public comment. This alternative was developed using the range analyzed in the DEIS. Using the analysis from the DEIS as the base, the Forest Leadership Team and planning team worked together to build an alternative that best addressed public comments on the four alternatives in the draft. See Decision section for more details on the process used to develop the Preferred Alternative.

For each resource area or land allocation that varies by alternative, the Preferred Alternative is within the range of effects of what was analyzed in the DEIS.

Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative was developed following the comment period on the draft environmental impact statement. This alternative integrates concerns from the public and attempts to find the appropriate mix and compromise with the major issues. This alternative responds to public comments and is a compilation of portions of all other alternatives analyzed in detail in the draft environmental impact statement. The Preferred Alternative integrates ecological, social, and economic sustainability while responding to Tribal, local, and national interests.

The forest leadership crafted the Preferred Alternative using the building blocks of the four action alternatives in the DEIS. To develop the Preferred Alternative, they reviewed the analysis, listened to, and read comments from the public and the Nez Perce Tribe, and considered the legal and ethical obligations of the Agency. The process spanned months of preparation, culminating in a week of discussion and collaboration to reach consensus on an alternative that best addresses governmental and public comments and concerns. The Preferred Alternative utilizes the large expanse of the Forest to provide for the myriad of uses people want and contribute in a meaningful way to our local communities. It addresses climate change and embraces fire as an essential ecological process, integrating the landscape level restoration into suitability determinations. To develop the Preferred Alternative, the leadership team overlaid different land management allocations options with habitat needs of specialized species such as wolverine, anadromous fish, grizzly bear, and unique ecosystems such as the coastal disjunct across the vast 4 million acres of the Forest to sustain all resources at that scale.

The Preferred Alternative is designed to move the forest to within the Natural Range of Variation (NRV) within 35 to 40 years for desired conditions that require disturbance (desired conditions requiring succession may take longer to achieve). Less than 25 percent of the Forest is considered suited for timber harvest as a tool to move toward NRV. These areas are generally in the rural, motorized areas near communities where the need for fuels reduction and precise restoration techniques is the greatest. On over 75 percent of the Forests, over 3 million acres, fire will be the primary restoration tool and movement toward NRV will be less precise or predictable. This alternative integrates terrestrial vegetation and aquatic system restoration in a wholistic, ridgetop to ridgetop approach. It includes more Recommended Wilderness acres than the No Action and finds 11 rivers suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It responds to public comments and underserved community needs through application of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum suitability which would allow increased motorized opportunities in key locations. Underlying ALL the land allocations, are a suite of forest plan components that ensure ecological, social, and economic sustainability.

No Action

Under the no-action alternative, the two land and resource management plans (1987) would continue to guide management of the plan area. The no-action alternative includes plan components developed under the 1982 planning rule that offer protections and restrictions on management. It includes three designated wild and scenic rivers, one suitable wild and scenic river and 29 eligible rivers. It includes three designated wilderness areas, and three recommended

wilderness areas. The no action alternative allows motorized use on 61 percent of the Forests in the summer and 63 percent of the Forests in the winter. Additional information on the specifics of the No Action Alternative is available in the FEIS.

Alternative W

Alternative W acknowledges that resources and land allocation on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are not mutually exclusive. It may be possible to have high levels of timber harvest, sustain rural economies, recover listed fish and wildlife species, provide clean air, and clean water, and provide habitat for viable populations of wildlife species all at the same time. For instance, areas evaluated for recommended wilderness are independent from most areas that provide for timber harvest due to the Idaho Roadless Rule. As such, it is possible to recommend all or nearly all Idaho Roadless Rule Areas for recommended wilderness and have a very high level of timber outputs. This thought process led to the idea of a “have it most” alternative. This alternative has higher levels of recommended wilderness coupled with a higher timber output and a faster rate of movement toward forest vegetation desired conditions. The analysis anticipates Forest vegetation desired conditions would be minimally achieved within 30 years. Areas not selected as recommended wilderness are suitable for motorized use, including in the roadless areas. Wild and Scenic Rivers suitability stem from a collaborative approach that looks at rivers outside the wilderness. The intent of this alternative is to couple management strategies that are often viewed as being mutually exclusive to take an analytical look at the scope of possibility on a 4-million-acre landscape.

Alternative X

Alternative X responds to several state and local land use plans which call for fewer or no areas of recommended wilderness, fewer or no suitable wild and scenic rivers, and higher timber outputs. In this alternative, zero areas are recommended as wilderness. The Idaho State Rivers Program is used as a surrogate to continue to protect key tributaries to the North and South Fork Clearwater Rivers while not pursuing Wild and Scenic River Suitable status on any river. Modelling indicates Forest vegetation would be within the lower bound of the desired conditions within 20 years.

Alternative Y

Alternative Y provides for intermediate level of recommended wilderness and moves toward forest vegetative desired conditions for size class distribution and species composition in 50 years. Historic snowmobiling areas in the Great Burn are removed from consideration as recommended wilderness resulting in a boundary change from the 1987 plan recommendation, but within the areas recommended for wilderness uses that may preclude designation as wilderness in the future are not suitable. This alternative also looks at the major rivers not designated in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including the North Fork Clearwater and South Fork Clearwater, as suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

Alternative Z

Alternative Z was crafted to respond to requests to have an alternative in which natural processes dominate over anthropogenic influence. In this alternative, a proposal for recommended wilderness that was brought forward by a group of national and state wilderness advocacy groups was mostly carried forward. Additionally, rivers were viewed as part of a larger system, and major tributaries to our largest rivers are analyzed as being suitable for inclusion in the wild and

scenic rivers system. Reliance on natural process would warrant a slower movement toward achieving forest vegetation desired conditions in an anticipated 100 years or longer. Timber outputs would also be lower and near a lower threshold needed to provide for economic sustainability and sustain rural economies. Additional plan components related to snag guidelines, live tree retention, and elk security are included that limit uncertainty regarding how and where these features will be located on the landscape.

Comparison of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

Table 6. Comparison of Alternatives analyzed in Detail in the FEIS- land allocations by estimated acreage

Management Area	No Action ¹	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
1(a)- Designated Wilderness	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059
1(b)- Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers	57,891	57,891	57,891	57,891	57,891	57,891
1(c) National Historic Landmark	55,760	55,760	55,760	55,760	55,760	55,760
MA1 subtotal	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638
2(a) Idaho Roadless Areas	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636
2(b) Recommended Wilderness	197,695	856,932	0	309,332	569,755	263,357
2(c) Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers	155,477	74,646	0	110,252	166,176	76,032
2(d) Gospel-Hump-MA2	30,164	28,498	28,498	30,164	28,498	28,498
2(e) Designated RNA	29,499	29,499	29,499	29,499	29,499	29,499
2(f) Proposed RNA	2,946	2,946	2,946	2,946	2,946	2,946
MA2 subtotal	1,489,736	1,468,505	1,463,081	1,487,434	1,472,364	1,467,078
MA3 subtotal	1,217,683	1,238,913	1,244,337	1,219,984	1,235,055	1,240,340
Forest Acreage ²	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832

¹No Action Alternative numbers are estimates to compare against alternatives. The 1987 Forest Plans had dozens of management areas.

²Forest Acreage numbers represent the administrative Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary.

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Table 7. Comparison of Alternatives-land allocation and objectives

Resource Topic	No Action	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
Recommended Wilderness	Hoodoo, Mallard-Larkins, Portions of: North Fork Spruce-White Sands and Sneakfoot Meadows	Bighorn-Weitas, Hoodoo, North Lochsa Slope, Mallard-Larkins, East Meadow Creek, Moose Mountain, Rapid River, North Fork Spruce-White Sands, Sneakfoot Meadows, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork	None	East Meadow Creek; Hoodoo with Boundary change to create GA for snowmobiling; Mallard Larkins; Rapid River	East Meadow Creek, West Meadow Creek, Hoodoo, Mallard-Larkins, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork; North Fork Spruce-White Sands, Rapid River, Rawhide, Sneakfoot Meadows, Pot Mountain	Mallard Larkins (82,286 acres); Hoodoo (108,276 acres) and East Meadow Creek (72,795 acres)
Mechanized/Motorized Recreation Uses in Recommended Wilderness	No over-snow motorized travel. No summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use.	No over-snow motorized travel. No summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use	n/a	No over-snow motorized travel. No summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use	Winter over-snow motorized travel allowed. Summer mechanized travel allowed. No motorized summer travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use.	No winter motorized travel, no summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use.

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Resource Topic	No Action	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
Wild and Scenic Eligible and Suitable Rivers	1 Suitable: Salmon River; 28 Eligible: Bargamin Creek; Bear Creek Complex (Bear, Brushy Fork, Cub, Paradis, Wahoo); Cayuse Creek; Fish Creek; Hungery Creek; Johns Creek; Kelly Creek; Lake Creek; Little North Fork Clearwater River; Meadow Creek (Selway); Moose Creek Complex (East Fork Moose, Moose, North Fork Moose, West Fork Moose Creek, Rhoda); North Fork Clearwater River; Running Creek; Slate Creek; South Fork Clearwater River; Three Links Creek Complex (Three Links, West Fork Three Links); West Fork Gedney Creek; White Bird Creek; White Sand Creek (renamed Colt Killed Creek)	12 Suitable: Cayuse Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Johns Creek, Kelly Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River, Meadow Creek (Selway), Middle Fork Kelly, North Fork Kelly, Salmon River, South Fork Kelly, Weitas Creek	0 Suitable: manage 21 rivers consistent with the Idaho Department of Water Resources "State Protected Rivers" direction. North Fork Clearwater River Subbasin: North Fork Clearwater River, Weitas Creek, Elk Creek, Isabella Creek, Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, Cayuse Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River South Fork Clearwater Subbasin: American River, Johns Creek, Gospel Creek, West Fork Gospel Creek, Meadow Creek, Red River, Silver Creek, South Fork Clearwater River, West Fork Crooked River	14 Suitable: Cayuse Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Johns Creek, Kelly Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River, Meadow Creek (Selway), Middle Fork Kelly Creek, North Fork Clearwater River, North Fork Kelly Creek, Salmon River, South Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Kelly Creek, Weitas Creek	37 Suitable: Systems Approach: Bargamin Creek, Bear Creek, Big Sand Creek, Bostonian Creek, Boundary Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, Buck Lake Creek, Caledonia Creek, Colt Killed Creek, Crooked Fork Creek, Cub Creek, East Fork Meadow Creek (Selway), East Fork Moose Creek, Fish Creek, Graves Creek, Hungery Creek, Johns Creek, Kelly Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River, Meadow Creek (South Fork Clearwater River), Middle Fork Kelly Creek, Moose Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, North Fork Moose Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, Rhoda Creek, Running Creek, Sabe Creek, Salmon River, Silver Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Storm Creek, Storm Creek, Upper Lochsa River, Weitas Creek, West Moose Creek, Wounded Doe Creek	11 Suitable: Cayuse Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Weitas Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, Colt Killed Creek, Meadow Creek (Selway) and the Salmon River. 1 Eligible: Little North Fork Clearwater River

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Resource Topic	No Action	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
Access	Clearwater travel plan; site specific closure orders in some areas on the Nez Perce Forest (no Forest wide motor vehicle use designations in place)	All Backcountry Restoration IRA's motorized ROS in summer; most areas open in winter	More summer motorized access, Motorized loop opportunities expanded in MA2	Motorized loop opportunities expanded in MA2	Similar to existing condition in summer, increased winter motorized	More summer and winter motorized access. Important areas for non-motorized access in the future delineated.
Percentage of Forest in Motorized ROS Category	Summer: 61 percent	Summer: 47 percent	Summer: 58 percent	Summer: 44 percent	Summer: 43 percent	Summer: 55 percent
	Winter: 63 percent	Winter: 48 percent	Winter: 70 percent	Winter: 62 percent	Winter: 70 percent	Winter: 60 percent
Percentage of Forest in Non-Motorized ROS Category	Summer: 39 percent	Summer: 53 percent	Summer: 42 percent	Summer: 56 percent	Summer: 57 percent	Summer: 45 percent
	Winter: 37 percent	Winter: 52 percent	Winter: 30 percent	Winter: 38 percent	Winter: 30 percent	Winter: 40 percent
Acres of Disturbance / Restoration Annually to be within Natural Range of Variability ¹	40,000	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500
Timber Harvest Acres annually	4,300	12,600	14,000	7,500	3,700	8,825-10,000
Timber Output Restoration potential timber sale quantity	50-60 MMBF	221-241 MMBF	241-261 MMBF (Departure)	120-140 MMBF	60-80 MMBF	190-210 MMBF
Max Regen Unit Size	40 acres	207 acres	207 acres	207 acres	207 acres	207 acres

¹ Disturbance acres include wildfire, prescribed fire, timber harvest and other fuels treatments designed to meet desired conditions and be consistent with NRV

For recommended wilderness areas, the boundaries of the preferred alternative are not identical to any alternative analyzed in the draft EIS, however, they are a compilation and within the range of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS. The preferred alternative in the final EIS, as related to the three recommended wildernesses, considered a compilation of the alternatives in the draft EIS including:

- the entire East Meadow Creek, Hoodoo, Bighorn-Weitas, Moose Mountain, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork and the majority of the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless areas as recommended wilderness in alternative W.
- the entire East Meadow Creek and the majority of West Meadow Creek, Hoodoo, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork, Rawhide, and the majority of the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless areas as recommended wilderness in alternative Z.
- no recommended wilderness in alternative X.
- the exclusion of everything in the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area south of Kelly Creek, and along the ridgeline from Hoodoo Pass south to Steep Lakes in alternative Y.
- the area north of the Fish Lake basin and the area south of Williams Peak not recommended in the Preferred Alternative.
- Boundary adjustments to recommended wilderness in the Hoodoo, East Meadow Creek, and Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless areas in alternatives W, Y, Z, and the Preferred alternative.

The alternatives include various adjustments to ROS suitability for summer motorized uses. These range from all areas suitable for summer motorized in the No Action alternative except the 1987 Plan recommended wilderness areas; the entire Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area not suitable in alternatives W, Y, and Z; and the entire Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area not suitable except the Fish Lake trail corridor in alternative X and the Preferred Alternative.

The alternatives also include various adjustments to ROS suitability for winter motorized uses. These include the 1987 Plan recommended wilderness not suitable in the No Action alternative; the entire Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area suitable for winter motorized uses in Alternatives X and Z; the area south of Kelly Creek and the ridgeline from Hoodoo Pass south to Steep Lakes suitable in Alternative Y; the entire Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area not suitable in alternative W; and the area north of the Fish Lake basin and south of Williams Peak suitable in the Preferred alternative. Each alternative including the Preferred alternative is analyzed in the final EIS and shown on maps in Appendix 1.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by the NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the proposed action provided suggestions for alternative methods of achieving the purpose and need. Some of these may have been outside the scope of what can be included in the Nez Perce-Clearwater Land Management Plan, or duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail. Fifteen alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed consideration for the reasons summarized in the Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study section in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Alternatives eliminated from detailed study include:

- Proposed Action
- Framework for Alternative Development
- Timber Target Unconstrained by Budget
- Maximum Recreation Alternative
- Ecological Processes, a.k.a. “Citizen’s Alternative”
- Additional Areas for Over-Snow Motorized Use
- All Idaho Roadless Areas as Recommended Wilderness
- Additional Areas as Recommended Wilderness
- Additional Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers/Fewer Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers
- No Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Study
- Manage Eligible Rivers Under Interim Guidance
- Include All 88 Eligible River Segments as Suitable
- All Idaho Roadless Areas as Non-Motorized
- Specified Motorized Road and Trail Densities
- Add Plan Components for Trail Maintenance in Recommended Wilderness Areas

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

National Environmental Policy Act regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives that are considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). The environmentally preferable alternative is “the alternative that will best promote the national environmental policy as expressed in section 101 (42 U.S.C. 4321 of the National Environmental Policy Act). Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is that which causes the least harm to the biological and physical environment; it is also the alternative which best protects and preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources” (36 CFR 220.3).

I find, based upon the laws and regulations guiding national forest management, that the Preferred Alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. When compared to the alternatives analyzed in detail, it best contributes to, and moves the Nez Perce-Clearwater toward, ecological,

social, and economic sustainability and desired conditions that will benefit future generations (see the explanation of how the plan components meet the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule, in the section titled “Findings required by other laws and regulations” of this record of decision). While other alternatives allow fewer acres of ground-disturbing activity (Alternative Z), allow fewer acres available for motorized recreation in the summer (Alternative Z) and winter (Alternative W), and have more suitable wild and scenic rivers (Alternative Z) and more acres of recommended wilderness (Alternative W) they do not address the six goals of the National Environmental Policy Act as well as the Preferred Alternative does. Additionally, the Preferred Alternative moves toward the natural range of variability the fastest and has the highest objectives for resource restoration. I base my finding on the following comparison showing how the alternatives address the goals of section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. This is a summary of the rationale, provided in more detail in previous sections of this ROD.

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations.

The Preferred Alternative emphasizes moving forest conditions toward desired conditions, while contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The Preferred Alternative, as well as alternatives W and Y, provides a set of plan objectives that enhance aquatic, vegetation, wildlife, cultural, recreation, and infrastructure resources while providing movement toward vegetation desired conditions and sustainable levels of timber harvest similar to or greater than current levels. While alternative W proposes the highest acreage of recommended wilderness, this alternative also proposes a lower Forest sustainable share of products and uses demanded by the public, and the lowest percentage of the national forest in which to actively move toward vegetation desired conditions. There are more acres suitable for timber production in alternative X, with an expected higher level of management intensity and more timber production. However, because of an emphasis on production of wood products, it does not move toward vegetation desired conditions as much as the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative also has the highest objectives for restoration of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The Preferred Alternative best manages resources associated with the Tribe’s reserved Treaty rights over the long term.

Alternative Z would provide the slowest progress toward achieving ecological desired conditions.

2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.

The Preferred Alternative achieves maintenance of a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing national forest better than the other alternatives because it provides the best mix of resource utilization, active and passive management, and motorized and non-motorized recreation uses along with the safeguards provided by standards and guidelines for maintaining water quality, scenery, and wildlife habitat. The Preferred Alternative provides recommended wilderness areas that incorporate the suggestions of the public. The Preferred Alternative provides timber harvest levels necessary to substantially move toward forest vegetation desired conditions in 35 to 40 years and are higher than the No Action alternative. The Preferred Alternative provides for more motorized and mechanized recreation access than alternatives W, Y, Z, and the no action, but less than alternative X. Although alternative X and W provides higher levels of timber harvest and

access opportunities, alternative X does not provide the levels of recommended wilderness areas that are currently enjoyed and desired on the national forest.

This alternative continues to recommend large portions of the recommended wilderness areas from the 1987 Forest Plans and adds the new Meadow Creek Recommended Wilderness Area, finds 11 rivers suitable as wild and scenic rivers, has lands available to active management, and use of a full range of fire management activities, including both prescribed and natural fire in all management areas that would allow for movement toward desired conditions within 35 to 40 years. This also allows for potentially less impact on workforce capacity through utilization of opportunities for allowing fire as a restoration tool across all management areas, however active management activities will still have a sizable impact on workforce capacity. This alternative also allows for maintenance of infrastructure such as roads and administrative sites to provide safe access and egress to wildland fire responders and to communities within community protection zones, and maintenance of trails. Management flexibility is similar to alternatives X and Y, allowing for restoration of fire resilient landscapes utilizing natural and prescribed fire. It also addresses snag retention within community protection zones and egress routes, allowing snags to be removed during fuels mitigation projects within these areas. Pilot Knob communications site will be retained but phased out as suitable technology allows removal of the site.

3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.

The beneficial uses that are most varied between alternatives and that I considered in this finding are: wood fiber production, access to treaty reserved resources associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights, resource enhancement, and a reasonable range of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

The Preferred Alternative provides a balanced set of objectives that enhance aquatic, vegetation, wildlife, cultural, recreation, and infrastructure resources while providing movement toward vegetation desired conditions and sustainable levels of timber harvest similar to or greater than current levels. The Preferred Alternative has greater impact on existing motorized and mechanized recreation access than alternative X, but less but less than alternatives W, Y, and Z.

Alternative X and W provide higher levels of wood fiber production and motorized recreation allocations, but they do so at the expense of objectives for resource enhancement.

Alternative W provides the highest acreage of recommended wilderness, and a high timber sale quantity; however, it provides less motorized recreation opportunity and does not achieve forest vegetation desired conditions as quickly as the Preferred Alternative. It would limit access in areas to underserved communities and in some areas, create barriers to Tribal access for hunting and gathering. Alternative Y has the greatest impact on existing motorized and mechanized recreation access.

4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.

Part of preserving our historic and cultural national heritage is recognizing that humans are a natural aspect of our national heritage—humans, specifically the Nez Perce, have utilized the

physical and cultural resources offered by the national forest for thousands of years. Recognizing this, we find that the best way to preserve this heritage and support it into the future, and an environment that supports diversity and variety of choice, is to manage the national forest to provide for physical resource use and the appropriate protection of cultural resources. Based on the final environmental impact statement, I find that the Preferred Alternative meets this goal better than the other alternatives. It improves on the no action alternative and provides the best assortment of multiple uses between alternative W's emphasis on wilderness values and alternative X's emphasis on achieving desired conditions through mechanical means. As discussed in the Tribal Trust section, the Cultural Values section, and consistent with the process described in Engagement and Consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, the Preferred Alternative meets treaty obligations to the Nez Perce and provides the best opportunity for exceeding legal, ethical and moral requirements associated with managing the ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce.

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use, which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

The public demands a variety of products and uses from their national forests. National Forest System lands and resources are important local resources that contribute in many ways to the quality of life in the region. The final environmental impact statement alternative analysis compares the various public values that define quality of life, varying from economic resource extraction values (timber harvest and minerals) to less tangibly defined resources such as wilderness character and semi-primitive recreation opportunities. The challenge is in defining the balance sought in this goal, and I find that the Preferred Alternative achieves that balance. The Preferred Alternative provides more resource use than alternative Y but more opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities than alternative X. The Rationale for the decision section describes this in more detail.

6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

I find that the Preferred Alternative enhances the quality of renewable resources and provides sustainable use of renewable resources. The standards and guidelines and the plan land allocations under the Preferred Alternative provide for levels of resource use that are higher to the no action alternative to achieve desired conditions at a faster rate, while providing protection measures for aquatic ecosystems, roadless areas and recommended wilderness areas. Alternative Y emphasizes a greater amount of backcountry and recommended wilderness but do so at the expense of resource utilization. Alternative W also emphasized a greater amount of non-motorized opportunities and recommended wilderness and has a faster rate of achievement of desired conditions; however, it does not balance the needs of the public as well as the Preferred Alternative.

Short-term Uses and Long-term Productivity

Short-term uses are those expected not to exceed the planning period (approximately 15 years), including recreation use, timber harvest, and prescribed burning. Although the Forest Plan does not directly implement these uses, the potential for these uses is described in the Forest Plan goals and objectives, both at the forestwide and management area levels (see Land Management Plan).

Long-term productivity refers to the capability of the land to provide resource outputs for a period beyond the planning period. Minimum management requirements established by regulation (31

CFR 219.27) provide for the maintenance of long-term productivity of the land. Minimum management requirements are contained in forestwide and geographic area standards and guidelines and would be met under any alternative. They ensure that the long-term productivity of the land is not impaired by short-term uses.

Monitoring and evaluation, as described in the Land Management Plan, applies to all alternatives. The primary purpose of monitoring is to ensure that long-term productivity of the land is maintained or improved. If monitoring and evaluation show that forest plan standards and guidelines are inadequate to protect long-term productivity of the land, then the plan will be adjusted through amendment or revision to provide for more protection or fewer impacts.

Although all alternatives are designed to maintain long-term productivity, there are differences among the alternatives in the long-term availability or condition of resources. There may also be differences among alternatives in long-term expenditures necessary to maintain or achieve desired conditions.

Best Available Scientific Information

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.6(a)(3) and 219.14(a)(4)) requires the responsible official to use the best available scientific information to inform the development of the assessment, proposed plan, including plan components, the monitoring program, and plan decisions.

The initial foundation used to develop plan components was based upon the expertise of the planning team members, who have a combined level of professional experience of several hundred years working for the Forest Service. A number of team members have been specialists and managers on the national forest for more than 10 years each. This interdisciplinary team of resource professionals compiled and evaluated the relevant information for the assessment of the national forest (2014) and the best available scientific information and analyses contained therein. From this foundation, the interdisciplinary team used the best available scientific information to develop the proposed action (July 2014), the alternatives in 2017, and the analysis and comparison of alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement (December 2019) and final environmental impact statement (January 2025).

Team members used resources that included peer-reviewed and technical literature, databases and data management systems, modeling tools and approaches, professional knowledge and experience, local knowledge, and experience of the ecosystems in the plan area, scientific knowledge from local experts, information obtained from collaborations, and information received during public participation periods. Resource specialists considered what is most accurate, reliable, and relevant in their use of the best available scientific information. The best available scientific information used to inform the plan is appropriately cited throughout the final environmental impact statement and listed in the literature cited or references sections of the Nez Perce-Clearwater's assessment and the draft environmental impact statement, as well as any additional information that was used, updated, or included in the final environmental impact statement or the planning record prior to the record of decision. The final environmental impact statement documents the best available scientific information used to inform planning, the plan components, and other plan content, including the plan monitoring program (36 CFR 219.3). The final environmental impact statement also includes science that is discussed in order to address opposing science, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

A number of Forest Service databases were utilized, including the Forest Service infrastructure database (INFRA), the management activity tracking system (FACTS), the natural resource management database (NRM), the fire severity database (MTBS), the threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants and invasive plants database (TESP-IS), the northern regional forest inventory and analysis summary database, and data from the PACFISH, INFISH biological opinion (PIBO) monitoring program, and national visitor use monitoring (NVUM) program.

Information was obtained from leadership, staff, and members of the Nez Perce Tribe, incorporating “western” science along with their indigenous knowledge. Other agencies including the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also contributed greatly to the scientific information the interdisciplinary team relied upon. Some members of the public also provide what they consider the best available scientific information with their comments on the DEIS. How this scientific literature and other information provided during the comment period was considered during plan development and analysis, is included in the planning record. If the science was used by the Nez Perce-Clearwater in the planning process and is in the project record for forest plan revision it is indicated, and if it was not used then how it was considered is indicated in this documentation.

The interdisciplinary team utilized and updated a geographic information system database to evaluate complex spatial effects resulting from implementation of the alternatives (such as the recreation opportunity spectrum and effects to wildlife habitat by species). The interdisciplinary team used an optimization model to estimate the long-term flow of timber from the plan area. This type of model is widely used by private and State land managers and is widely accepted as an accurate way of modeling timber harvest schedules.

Much of the information with respect to social and economic conditions and trends contained in the assessment and final environmental impact statement was taken from the Economic Profile System-Human Dimensions Toolkit (Headwaters Economics), developed in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. This database uses published statistics from Federal data sources, including but not limited to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the U.S. Census Bureau. An analysis of the contribution of Forest programs and expenditures to jobs and labor income utilized Forest Service corporate data and data from IMPLAN (an economic impact model) for the year 2018. Public comments and expert input contributed to the development of plan components related to social and economic conditions. Additional quantitative analysis was conducted between draft and final EIS to improve the discussion of social impacts, especially as it relates to underserved communities, environmental justice, and traditional ecological knowledge.

For all these reasons, based on my review of the final environmental impact statement and the planning record, I have determined that the most accurate and reliable scientific information available that is relevant to the issues considered in this plan revision has been used to inform the planning process and has been applied to the issues considered in the revision, as required by 36 CFR 219.3.

Findings Required by Other Laws

The Forest Service manages the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests in conformance with many laws and regulations. We have considered the statutes specific to individual resources as

described in the final EIS, and I find that this decision meets our obligations to the current statutory duties of the Forest Service. Following are summaries of how the revised land management plan addresses the relevant laws and regulations.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Federal Agencies must make a good faith effort to understand how Native American religious practices may come into conflict with other Forest uses and consider any adverse impacts on these practices in their decision making. The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests is wholly within the territory of the Nez Perce Tribe.

No negative effects and some beneficial effects on American Indian social, economic, or subsistence rights are anticipated as a result of the land management plan revision. Regardless of which alternative is chosen, the Forest Service is required to consult with Tribes when management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use. The revised plan was developed in concert with the Nez Perce Tribe to ensure our general Tribal Trust are met and treaty rights honored. In addition to integrated plan components benefiting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, wildlife, fish, and botanical species, as well as plan land allocations ensuring access is maintained for the public and the Nez Perce Tribe, we developed a Tribal Trust chapter in the revised plan to provide additional specific desired conditions to ensure we are exceeding our obligations of the treaties. In addition, several special areas and a geographic area were developed for areas of Tribal importance for all action alternatives of the land management plan. The plan components for these areas are directly related to preserving and restoring the Nez Perce Tribe's religious and cultural freedom. Therefore, I find the land management plan is compliant with this act.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

This act provides protection to archaeological resources found on public lands and Native American lands of the United States. The legislation provides civil and criminal penalties for those who remove or damage archaeological resources in violation of the prohibitions contained in the act. The act prohibits the removal of archaeological resources on public lands or Native American lands without first obtaining a permit from the affected Federal Land Manager or Tribe and requires federal agencies to develop plans to survey lands under their management to determine the nature and extent of archaeological and cultural resources.

The land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800 regulations requires assessments to document the presence of historic properties within the area of potential effect for any site-specific activities and to meet the intent of this act. The Forest will also continue to consult with Tribes during site-specific management activities that may impact cultural sites and cultural use. The plan components in the land management plan include provisions that take into consideration American Indian rights and interests and cultural resources. Therefore, I find the land management plan is compliant with this Act.

Clean Air Act

In accordance with the Clean Air Act of 1990 and the Organic Administration Act of 1897, the Forest Service has the responsibility to protect the air, land, and water resources from the impacts

of air pollutants produced within the boundaries of National Forest System lands and to work with states to protect air resources from degradation associated with the impacts of air pollution emitted outside of National Forest System lands. The FEIS Air Quality Section, chapter 3.2.8 addresses and discloses potential impacts from program activities that are approved by the forest plan, including the use of prescribed fire.

The forest plan includes desired conditions and strategies for maintaining air quality and monitoring questions for gathering information. Continued adherence to the Montana and Idaho Airshed Group management practices and all federal, state, and local regulations is expected to minimize degradation to air quality and visibility from these activities for all alternatives. Conformity determinations and more detailed air quality impact analyses will be made at subsequent levels of planning and analysis where emissions can be more accurately quantified, reasonably forecasted, and local impacts can be assessed. Therefore, I find the land management plan to be in compliance with the Clean Air Act.

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1251 et seq.) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters.

Implementing this land management plan is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfy all State water quality requirements. This finding is based on direction contained in the land management plan, application of “best management practices” specifically designed to protect water quality, and the discussions of water resources and aquatic ecosystems and fisheries of the final EIS. Management direction protecting water quality can be found in many locations throughout the land management plan, including water and aquatic resources, riparian management zones, infrastructure (aquatics and riparian), energy and minerals (aquatics and riparian), lands and special uses (aquatics and riparian) and recreation (aquatics and riparian). Project-level analysis required for land management plan implementation will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Clean Water Act. I find that the land management plan is compliant with this act.

Endangered Species Act

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to provide for the conservation of endangered species by conserving the ecosystems these species rely on. Section 7(a)(1) of the Act requires Federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species. In addition, the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to ensure that any agency action does not jeopardize the continued existence of the species (Endangered Species Act, section 7(a)(2)). The Act also requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service to base their biological opinion and subsequent agency action, respectively, on the use of the best scientific and commercially available information 916 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)).

The section 7 regulatory definition of Federal “action” includes Federal agency programs (50 CFR 402.02). Such programs may include a collection of activities of a similar nature, a group of different actions proposed within a specified geographic area, or an action adopting a framework for the development of future actions. Those future actions may be developed at the local, statewide, or national scale, and are authorized, funded, or carried out and subject to section 7 consultation requirements at a later time as appropriate. Examples of Federal programs that

provide such a framework include land management plans prepared by the Forest Service like this revised plan. For a framework programmatic action, an incidental take statement is not required at the programmatic level; any incidental take resulting from any action subsequently authorized, funded, or carried out under the program will be addressed in subsequent section 7 consultation, as appropriate (50 CFR 402.14(i)(6)).

In 2012 the Forest notified the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) of the land management plan revision process and requested lists of federally listed threatened and endangered species, species proposed for Federal listing, and candidate species to be considered for further evaluation throughout the land management plan revision process. In May 2023 the Forest received the finalized list of proposed, threatened, endangered, and candidate species that would be addressed in the biological assessment (BA).

In accordance with Section 7(c) of the Act, the BA was prepared to assess the effects of implementing the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Revised Land Management Plan on 12 federally listed threatened, endangered, proposed species or designated critical habitat known or likely to occur on the Forest in Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Latah, Nez Perce, Shoshone, and Benewah Counties, Idaho.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests have had open communication regarding consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service. Informal consultation began with early conversations on the proposed action. During the development of the assessment, alternatives and the DEIS, conversations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, along with the State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Nez Perce Tribe focused on development of plan components to address the needs of ESA listed species, including anadromous fish, grizzly bear, and lynx.

Additional consultation on wildlife and plant species with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service occurred in 2019 with informal discussion regarding how the revised forest plan was going to support recovery of listed species. Lynx consultation proceeded under the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD) framework. Consultation on botanical species was initiated in this time frame. Grizzly bear consultation began in 2020 and resulted in a comprehensive grizzly bear strategy for the plan in early 2022 utilizing plan components and potential management approaches.

Work on the biological assessment began in 2019. First drafts were transmitted in 2021 with a subsequent draft being transmitted in the Spring of 2022. By June 1, 2023, a group comprising the USFS Northern Region Regional Office, the NMFS West Coast Regional Office and FWS Northern Idaho Office agreed that we had reached closure on the BA and the regulatory agencies would accept the BA and initiate a Biological Opinion. A supplemental BA was prepared by the Forest Service on November 21, 2024. A Biological Opinion was received from the National Marine Fisheries Service on April 18, 2024, and from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on January 10, 2025. Biological opinions concluded that the revised Land Management Plan is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of ESA listed species and not likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat.

Summary of ESA Findings

Terrestrial Wildlife Species

The proposed framework programmatic action may affect and is Likely to Adversely Affect Canada lynx but has no effect on Canada lynx critical habitat. The proposed framework programmatic action may affect and is Likely to Adversely Affect grizzly bear. The proposed framework programmatic action will have No Effect on the Northern Idaho ground squirrel because it does not occur within the planning area. The proposed framework programmatic action may affect and is Likely to Adversely Affect wolverine.

The Forests received the Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on January 10, 2025.

Aquatic Species

Endangered Species Act effect determinations of the proposed framework programmatic action are Likely to Adversely Affect Bull Trout and their Critical Habitat; Snake River Steelhead and their Critical Habitat; Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon and their Critical Habitat; and Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon and their Critical Habitat.

Endangered Species Act effect determinations of the proposed framework programmatic action are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Snake River Sockeye Salmon or their Critical Habitat.

There are no Endangered Species Act effect determinations for Coho Salmon because they have been officially extirpated from the action area (i.e., Clearwater Basin; (Galbreath et al. 2014)). Hatchery-raised Coho Salmon have been reintroduced into some action area drainages but have not been listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Magnuson-Stevens Act effect determinations of the proposed framework programmatic action are May Adversely Affect essential fish habitat for Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon; Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon; and Coho Salmon.

Table 8. Summary of effect determinations for individuals and Critical Habitat listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Essential Fish Habitat listed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA)

Species	Listing Status	Individuals (ESA)	Critical Habitat (ESA)	Essential Fish Habitat (MSA)
Bull trout	Threatened	LAA	LAA	Not Applicable
Snake River Steelhead Trout	Threatened	LAA	LAA	Not Applicable
Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon	Threatened	LAA	LAA	MAA
Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon	Threatened	LAA	LAA	MAA
Snake River Sockeye Salmon	Endangered	NLAA	NLAA	Not Applicable
Hatchery Coho Salmon	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	MAA

The Forests received the Biological Opinion from the National Marine Fisheries Service on April 18, 2024, and from the Fish and Wildlife Service on January 10, 2025.

Plant Species

The implementation of the Forest Plan would contribute to the maintenance and restoration of habitat for Spalding's catchfly and result in a may affect, Likely to Adversely Affect determination. MacFarlane's four o'clock is not expected to inhabit the planning area but it does occur in adjacent areas. Because the species is not expected within the planning area, potential effects to the species are extremely unlikely to occur, and thus discountable. Therefore, with the implementation of the Forest Plan, our determination is no effect for MacFarlane's four o'clock. Implementation of the Forest plan would contribute to the maintenance and restoration of whitebark pine on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and result in a may affect, Likely to Adversely Affect determination.

The Forests received the Biological Opinion from the Fish and Wildlife Service on January 10, 2025.

The revised Land Management Plan includes desired conditions, standards and guidelines, objectives and provides broad management direction that meets our responsibilities under the ESA Section 7(a)(1). These plan components comply with the requirements of the ESA and the associated recovery plan for each federally listed species. For these reasons, I find this land management plan to be in compliance with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) applies to environmental justice populations, minority, and low-income populations, which are present in the areas surrounding the Forest. The following Counties/Areas are identified as disadvantaged in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool:

Table 9. Disadvantage status by county and Tribe reservation for planning area

County/Area	Disadvantaged?	Low Income?	Disadvantaged Burden Identified:
Nez Perce Tribe Reservation	Yes	Yes	Reservation
Idaho County	Yes	Yes	Health, Climate Change, Energy, Legacy Pollution
Clearwater County	Portions	Yes	Climate Change
Shoshone County	Yes	Yes	Climate Change, Health, Energy, Legacy Pollution
Benewah County	Yes	Yes	Legacy Pollution
Latah County	Portions	Rural Portions	Transportation
Nez Perce County	Portions	Portions	Climate Change, Housing, Legacy Pollution,
Lewis County	Yes	Yes	Climate Change, Energy, Housing

<https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/>

All alternatives considered in the final EIS would contribute to social and economic sustainability by providing benefits to environmental justice communities, improving the quality of life, and providing opportunities for income and jobs. The Forest would continue to provide for traditional, cultural, and spiritual values that are of particular interest to Native American Tribes. The Tribal Trust section in the Plan recognizes the importance of providing access for traditional practices and sustaining treaty reserved rights. As shown in the rationale for the decision, land allocations considered impacts on underserved communities and allows for access to wild spaces, regardless of social or economic status. No populations in the plan area would experience significant adverse human health impacts or environmental effects due to management actions proposed under any of the alternatives considered. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is in compliance with this executive order.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act allows for the granting of easements across National Forest System lands. The land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature. It provides guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The land management plan does not create, authorize, or execute any site-specific activity, although it does provide for the consideration of granting easements and rights-of-way. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is consistent with this Act.

Invasive Species

Executive Order 13751, which amends Executive Order 13112, directs federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species; to detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner, to monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; to provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; to conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction; to provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and to promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them. All these actions are subject to the availability of appropriations to support this work. Forest Service Manual 2900, Invasive Species Management, sets forth Forest Service policy, responsibilities, and direction for the prevention, detection, control, and restoration of effects from aquatic and terrestrial invasive species (including vertebrates, invertebrates, plants, and pathogens).

The land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing program-level guidance and direction for future site-specific projects and activities. The land management plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities that may have the potential to affect the dispersal of invasive species. The land management plan includes Forestwide desired conditions, objectives, and management approaches that stress the use of best management practices to limit the introduction of new species and limit the spread of existing populations due to management activities. Additionally, other direction provides protection of watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic conditions in ways that will reduce management-related disturbances that might introduce new populations or increase existing ones. Land management plan monitoring also includes indicators associated with invasive species, and the effectiveness of treatments. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with this Executive Order.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Executive Order 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, was issued in furtherance of the purposes of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Acts, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the NEPA. This order requires including the effects of Federal actions on migratory birds as a part of the environmental analysis process. On December 8, 2008, the Forest Service signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to complement the Executive order (USDI-USFWS, 2008), and the Forest Service agreed to incorporate migratory bird habitat and population objectives and recommendations into the agency planning process, in cooperation with other governments, state and federal agencies, and non-federal partners, and strive to protect, restore, enhance, and manage the habitat of migratory birds, and prevent the further loss or degradation of remaining habitats on National Forest System lands. The Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds was established in 2009 by the Secretary of the Interior to oversee Executive Order 13186. More than 20 federal agencies, including the Forest Service, currently participate in and have representation on the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds.

The land management plan includes forestwide direction related to key stressors for migratory birds and their habitats, including direction to maintain or improve forest resilience, composition, and structure. Future site-specific activities or projects with the potential to impact migratory bird habitat will be analyzed with site-specific analysis under the NEPA process and will comply with land management plan direction. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186.

Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act

The Forest Service manages National Forest System lands to sustain the multiple use of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. As demonstrated in the final EIS and as required by the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528-531), the land management plan guides sustainable and integrated management of Forest resources in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act.

National Environmental Policy Act

The NEPA requires that federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The Act's requirement is designed to serve two major functions:

- to provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of proposed actions prior to adoption.
- to inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

The Forest Service has developed, gathered, and reviewed an extensive amount of information regarding the potential programmatic effects of each of the alternatives considered in the final EIS. This information expands and refines the data, analyses, and public input described in the

NEPA documents associated with the draft plan and draft EIS. The decision also considers the large amount of public input, including public meetings, comments on the internet website, comments received during the 120-day comment period for the draft EIS, and objection received on the draft record of decision.

All substantive comments, written and oral, made regarding the draft EIS have been summarized and responded to in appendix M of the final EIS. During the course of this effort, the public involvement has led to changes in the analysis and the alternatives. I find that the environmental analysis and public involvement process the final EIS is based on complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). My conclusion is supported by the following findings.

- The final EIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The six alternatives considered in detail in the final EIS cover a broad range of possible management allocations based on revision topics identified through public involvement and scoping. The Preferred Alternative was a compilation of the five alternatives analyzed in the DEIS and is within the range of what was analyzed. An additional 15 alternatives were considered but not analyzed in detail (see EIS chapter 2).
- The final EIS reflects consideration of cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future land management in the plan area, including Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands. The environmental effects analysis estimates the potential effects of timber activities and timber-associated activities. The analysis of effects to wildlife was based on the assumption that these activities would take place with management constraints to ensure habitat availability at certain thresholds. Moreover, although non-Federal lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their land management guidance and practices have been thoroughly considered and coordinated, to the extent practicable, in the final EIS.
- The final EIS uses scientific integrity to support the conclusions made. The decision here does not authorize timber sales or any other specific activity on the Forest. Site-specific decisions will be made on projects in compliance with the NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and other environmental laws following applicable public involvement and appeal procedures.

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act requires the development, maintenance, amendment, and revision of land management plans for each unit of the National Forest System. These land management plans help create a dynamic management system, so an interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences will be applied to all future actions on the unit. Under the Act, the Forest Service is to ensure coordination of the multiple uses and sustained yield of products and services of the National Forest System.

The National Forest Management Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations for developing and maintaining land management plans. On April 9, 2012, the Department of Agriculture issued a Final Planning Rule for National Forest System land management planning (36 CFR Part 219).

As discussed in detail in the requirements of the planning rule section of this document, my review of the planning process, the final EIS, and the information provided in the record of decision indicate the final plan and its preparation meet requirements for revising plans under the provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule and is compliant with the National Forest Management Act.

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires each Federal agency to take into account the effects of its actions on historic properties, prior to approving expenditure of Federal funds on an undertaking or prior to issuing any license; while Section 110 of the Act outlines the Federal agency responsibility to establish and maintain a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, and protection of historic properties.

The Land Management Plan is a programmatic level planning effort that will not directly authorize any ground disturbing activities or projects. The land management plan includes desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, management strategies, and monitoring requirements for managing and protecting cultural resources listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Site-specific projects that are undertaken as a result of the direction in the land management plan will comply with laws and regulations that ensure protection of heritage resources. Significant cultural resources will be identified, protected, and monitored in compliance with the Act. Any consultation that will occur for proposed activities will be coordinated with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Nez Perce Tribe's Historic Preservation Officer. The Forests have developed a Programmatic Agreement under NHPA with the Nez Perce Tribe and SHPO to govern future consultation, with the Tribe as a signatory. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is in compliance with this Act.

Idaho Roadless Rule

Management direction for inventoried roadless areas is compliant with the 2008 Idaho Rule (36 CFR 294 subpart C). The 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule includes restrictions and prohibitions on road construction, timber harvest and discretionary minerals activities within the Idaho Roadless Rule Areas. The land management plan is a programmatic-level planning effort and does not directly authorize any road construction, timber harvest or discretionary minerals projects. Additionally plan standard MA2-STD-IRA-01 states that if any inconsistency is found between the revised plan and the Idaho Roadless Rule, the Idaho Roadless Rule will take precedence.

The Idaho Governor's Idaho Roadless Commission was briefed on the revision of the Land Management Plan on 23 occasions between the fall of 2012 and this decision. The Idaho Roadless Commission requested that following this decision, steps be taken to re-align the themes of any Idaho Roadless Areas that have a changed status as a result of this decision compared to their status when the Idaho Roadless Rule was promulgated in 2008. Specifically, areas identified as a Recommended Wilderness Area in this decision that are not assigned a Wildland Recreation theme in the roadless rule, and areas that are no longer Recommended Wilderness as a result of this decision that were assigned a Wildland Recreation theme in the roadless rule should be aligned to be consistent with this decision through future rulemaking.

In the Mallard-Larkins RWA, 21,891 acres of Primitive theme, 224 acres of Backcountry Restoration theme and 1,037 acres outside an Idaho Roadless Rule Area were identified as Recommended Wilderness and consideration should be made to move these acres to a Wildland Recreation theme.

In the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, there are 43,620 acres assigned a Wildland Recreation Theme that are no longer recommended wilderness, and consideration should be made to move these acres to a Primitive theme or Backcountry Restoration theme.

In the East Meadow Creek Recommended Wilderness Area, within the East Meadow Creek IRA there are 63,607 acres assigned a Primitive theme, 537 acres assigned a Special Areas Theme and within the West Meadow Creek IRA there are 8,651 acres assigned a Backcountry Restoration theme and consideration should be made to move these acres to a Wildland Recreation theme.

In the North Fork Spruce-White Sands Idaho Roadless Area, there are 9,485 acres assigned a Wildland Recreation Theme that are no longer recommended wilderness, and consideration should be made to move these acres to a Primitive theme or Backcountry Restoration theme.

In the Sneakfoot Meadows Idaho Roadless Area, there are 9,598 acres assigned a Wildland Recreation Theme that are no longer recommended wilderness, and consideration should be made to move these acres to a Primitive theme or Backcountry Restoration theme.

With this decision I am committing we will make a request to the Washington Office to initiate rulemaking to realign the themes as described above. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule and the Idaho Roadless Rule

Travel Management Regulations

The travel management regulations at 36 CFR establishes requirements for administration of the forest transportation system and designations of public motor vehicle use. Subpart A requires identification of the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands and use of a science-based roads analysis at the appropriate scale in determining the minimum road system. This portion of the regulations is intended to help ensure that additions to the National Forest System network of roads are those deemed essential for resource management and use; that construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of roads minimize adverse environmental impacts; and, finally, that unneeded roads are decommissioned, and restoration of ecological processes are initiated (66 Federal Register 3206, Jan. 12, 2001).

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests completed forest-scale road analyses in 2015 as required by subpart A. The analysis provided an assessment of the transportation infrastructure on National Forest System lands and a set of findings and opportunities for change to the transportation system. Those findings are being used under the current plan and will continue to be used under this revised plan to prioritize ongoing management of the transportation system and inform project development as the Forest works to effectively manage an efficient transportation system.

Together with the assessment, the travel analysis report was used to inform the plan components such as the objectives for miles of roads and trails to be maintained (see Infrastructure and Sustainable Recreation sections of the land management plan). Objectives such as these provide

measurable actions the Forest may take over the life of the plan per the findings in the travel analysis report, consistent with subpart A of the Travel Management Rule.

Subparts B and C of the 212 regulations describe the requirements for designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use; and for identifying designated roads, trails, and areas on a motor vehicle use map and an over snow vehicle use map. It's important to note that subparts B and C of the Travel Management Rule and the associated Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands, as amended by Executive Order 11989, apply to site-specific designations of motor vehicle use. As stated earlier in this record of decision, the plan does not authorize projects or activities or commit the Forest Service to act, nor does it regulate public use either through designation or prohibition of public motor vehicle use.

The revised plan's identification of certain lands as suitable for motor vehicle use is not a commitment to allow such use but only an indication that the use might be appropriate to guide site-specific designations of motor vehicle use. The requirements at 36 CFR 212.55 to consider effects with the objective of minimizing damage to resources, harassment of wildlife, and recreation conflict applies when making site-specific motor vehicle use designations.

The suite of desired conditions, standards, and guidelines that provide for wildlife diversity, ecological integrity, and sustainable recreation will provide guidance for considering the effects of future motor vehicle use designations on forest resources and recreation conflicts, as described at 36 CFR 212.55(b). These include the plan components associated with the recreation opportunity spectrum settings, infrastructure, and those that address management risks and stressors to wildlife habitat, connectivity, soil productivity, and aquatic resources.

Therefore, I find that this land management plan is in compliance with the Travel Management Rule.

Wetlands and Floodplains

These executive orders require Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short- and long-term effects resulting from the modification or destruction of wetlands and the occupancy and modification of floodplains. Forestwide standards and guidelines are provided for soil, water, wetlands, and riparian areas to minimize effects to wetlands and floodplains. They incorporate the best management practices of the Forest Service Soil and Water Conservation Handbook. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with these executive orders.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

This act establishes a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with three classifications of rivers: wild, scenic, and recreational. The purpose of the act is to protect the designated rivers "for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" and to preserve the rivers' free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values. Analysis of the plan components to protect designated wild and scenic rivers was included in the final EIS. Management area direction in the land management plan provides protection for the water quality, free-flowing conditions, and outstandingly remarkable values identified for those rivers.

In addition, the Act directs Federal agencies to identify and evaluate additional potential rivers for inclusion in the System during Agency planning (sec. 5(d)(1) of the Act. At a minimum, the planning regulations require identification of the eligibility of rivers for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, unless a systematic inventory has been previously completed and

there are no changed circumstances that warrant additional review (36 CFR sec. 219.7(c)(2)(vi)). This evaluation was completed, and 88 rivers were found eligible.

Eligible rivers may then be studied for suitability for inclusion in the National System at any time, including during the land management plan revision process. A suitability study provides the basis for determining which eligible rivers or river segments should be recommended to Congress as potential additions to the National System. The final EIS discloses the river-by-river suitability evaluation (appendix F) and the land management plan allocation effects of managing suitable river corridors as part of a nationally designated river system. Eleven rivers were found suitable, 76 were found not suitable, and the suitability decision on one river was deferred. The finding of suitability is preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by higher levels of the agency.

Plan components protect the free-flowing conditions and the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the eligible, suitable, and designated segments of rivers on the Forest. Additional interim protection measures in the Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers section of the land management plan apply to the 11 rivers we have found suitable and the one river that did not undergo suitability study and will remain eligible. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Wilderness Act

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. It provides the statutory definition of wilderness, how areas are assessed for addition to the wilderness preservation system, and management requirements for congressionally designated areas.

Evaluation of existing wilderness and areas recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System was included in the environmental analysis for the land management plan. The land management plan provides direction for designated wilderness through goals, desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and suitability that preserves the wilderness character of designated wilderness. Therefore, I find that this land management plan is compliant with this Act.

Administrative Review

The decision to approve the revised land management plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests was subject to the pre-decisional administrative review (objection process) pursuant to 36 CFR 219 subpart B. The revised land management plan, final EIS, draft ROD, and the Regional Forester's list of species of conservation concern (SCC) were made available for review on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests' plan revision webpage at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5447338> and <http://bit.ly/NorthernRegion-SCC> on November 27, 2023. The 60-day objection filing period began the day after a legal notice was published in the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* on November 28, 2023. The objection filing period closed on January 29, 2024. There were approximately 275 eligible objectors, including five objections regarding SCC from 13 objectors, and 25 interested persons requests. Associate Deputy Chief Jacqueline Emanuel served as the Reviewing Officer for all objections related to species of conservation concern, and Regional

Forester Leanne Marten served as the Reviewing Officer for all other objections. The Northern Regional Office hosted objection resolution meetings during the week of May 5, 2024. The objection resolution meetings were virtual and facilitated by the University of Montana. Based on these meetings and review of the objection received, the Reviewing Officer for the list of species of conservation concern issued a written response on September 26, 2024. The Reviewing Officer for the revised land management plan issued a written response to the objectors on September 27, 2024. The written responses constitute the final decisions by the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the objections.

The Objection Reviewing Officers found that for most issues, the FEIS, revised land management plan, draft ROD, and associated planning record established that the Responsible Official sufficiently addressed the objection issued and complied with current law, regulation, and policy. For those issues that required additional clarification or modifications, the Objection Reviewing Officer issued instructions to the Responsible Official. These are detailed in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Plan Revision Objection Response Letter, available on the land management plan webpage.

As detailed below, some instructions required or resulted in modified or new plan components. Other instructions required additional clarifications of existing information. In addition, voluntary modifications and clarifications were made in the planning record to respond to remedies or resolutions suggested by the objectors. However, not all remedies raised by objectors could be incorporated while still meeting the multiple-use mandate for NFMA, nor while meeting my intent to adopt a plan that reflects the best overall arrangement of multiple uses while reducing adverse environmental impacts. All modifications are responsive to issues identified in previous public comment periods and during objections and within the range of alternatives analyzed. Analysis for modified plan components was reviewed and updated if necessary.

Changes made as a result of instructions and voluntary modifications are organized into the following sections below: (1) *Species of Conservation Concern*, (2) *Plan Direction and Plan Content Modifications*, and (3) *FEIS and Record of Decision Modifications*.

Species of Conservation Concern

In response to the Reviewing Officer's instructions to the Regional Forester regarding species of conservation concern, the Regional Forester issued a letter to the Nez Perce-Clearwater with a final SCC list on January 10, 2025. A summary of the Reviewing Officer's instructions and modifications to the SCC list and rationale are provided in the letter. Therefore, final SCC list is reflected in the FEIS and LMP, as appropriate. In response to these objections and resulting instructions, the modifications the Forest made include:

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions that resulted adding spring/summer clearwater Chinook to the SCC list, this species was incorporated into the analysis as a species of conservation concern in the final EIS.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions regarding the rationale for not listing mountain goat as a species of conservation concern, the updated Regional Forester's letter identifying the SCC for the plan area provides the clarification that the SCC process is specific to the plan area and the determination for any given species is not only based on threats common to all populations of the species but also on best available scientific information about the condition of the population within the plan area.

- Two additional plant species were added to the SCC list (Columbia onion and Jessica's aster), these species have been incorporated in the analysis of the final EIS.

Plan Direction and Plan Content Modifications

The following plan direction and plan content changes were made in response to instructions from the Objection Reviewing Officer and also include voluntary modifications to respond to remedies or resolutions suggested by the objectors. Modifications resulting from instructions are identified as such; all other noted modifications are voluntary. A review of the EIS indicates these minor changes are within the qualitative effects disclosed in the EIS provided for public comment and objections.

Forestlands

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, desired condition, FW-DC-FOR-14, was modified to align with the broad potential vegetation types. An evaluation of other plan components resulted in modifications to MA2 and MA3-STD-FOR-01 and eliminating a guideline to describe how actions in old growth stands within all broad potential vegetation types must be designed to increase the resistance and resiliency of the stand to disturbances or stressors and if the activities are not likely to modify stand characteristics to the extent that the stand would no longer meet the minimum criteria definition of an old growth type (Green et al. 2011).
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, a modification to FW-STD-TBR-04 reflects how this standard applies to post-harvest stand stocking levels determined during project development and implementation.
- Standards FW-STD-TBR-06 and FW-STD-TBR-07 were modified to clearly incorporate the maximum opening size of 207 acres allowed before regional forester approval.

Wildlife

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the Forest evaluated whether any plan component modifications for fisher were needed after making clarifications in the final EIS on how the plan components are intended to minimize risks to fisher and how they are adequate to maintain their persistence in the short term. This evaluation resulted in a new guideline, MA3-GDL-FOR-08, that is intended to benefit fisher and other wildlife species by retaining trees in order to provide cavities, future snags, and large trees structure.
- In response to objections, suitability plan components (FW-SUIT-WL-01 and FW-SUIT-WL-02) and standards (FW-STD-WL-03 and FW-STD-WL-04) were added to reduce the risk of contact between bighorn sheep and recreational use of pack goat in bighorn sheep core herd ranges. While objectors advocated for not allowing recreational pack goats forestwide, scientific evidence doesn't indicate that drastic of a change in this form of recreation is necessary in the plan areas at this time. The plan component modifications allow for precautionary management to minimize the risk to big horn sheep while still allowing a valid recreational use.

Tribal Treaty and Trust Responsibilities

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, plan components FW-DC-TT-05, FW-STD-TT-02 and FW-GDL-TT-02 were updated to be consistent with conclusions reached through government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, Modify and add plan language regarding Tribal treaty rights, consistent with conclusions reached through government-to-government consultation. (FW-DC-TT-02, FW-DC-TT-06, FW-DC-TT-08, FW-DC-TT-09).
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, FW-DC-TT-02 was amended to be consistent with 1855 Treaty language. Plan components regarding access to Tribal treaty rights, were added or modified and are consistent with conclusions reached through government-to-government consultation (FW-STD-TT-01, FW-OBJ-TT-03 and FW-DC-TT-09).
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the text of FW-GL-TT-07 was modified and is consistent with conclusions reached through government-to-government consultation and is now FW-GL-TT-05.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, plan components addressing co-stewardship, consistent with conclusions reached through government-to-government consultation were added (FW-DC-TT-06, FW-DC-TT-07, FW-OBJ-TT-04, and FW-STD-TT-03).
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, FW-DC-TT-05 was modified, consistent with conclusions reached through government-to-government consultation.

Sustainable Recreation

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the recreation opportunity spectrum assigned along road 250 in Black Canyon along the North Fork Clearwater River has been verified to be assigned the roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum and the map for the preferred alternative has been updated in Appendix 1.
- The map in Appendix 1 displaying the summer recreation opportunity spectrum was updated to show the area encompassing the Fish Lake Trail as semi-primitive motorized setting.

Recommended Wilderness

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the following plan components were modified to read "assigned" recreation opportunity spectrum rather than "appropriate" recreation opportunity spectrum to better align with the suitability plan components: FW-DC-REC-01, FW-STD-REC-01, FW-GDL-SCENERY-01, MA2-STD-RWILD-01, MA2-STD-RWILD-02, and MA2-DC-IRA-04.
- The description for the semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class was updated to move the reference to "mechanized transport such as mountain bikes are often present" in the land management plan.

Monitoring Plan

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, additional information was added to the land management plan to clarify that the selection of the dry site ponderosa pine, as a focal species, is an indicator of the ponderosa pine xeric habitat ecotone. By monitoring dry site ponderosa pine, the indicator of this habitat, the status and progress of conserving and restoring ponderosa pine habitats will be tracked. This will be achieved through MON-FOR-07 of the monitoring plan.
- MON-WLMU-02 was clarified to apply to wild ungulate habitat by monitoring plan component FW-DC-WLMU-02 only and adding another indicator on improving habitat for wild ungulates. FW-STD-WLMU-01 will be monitoring by MON-WLMU-08 to provide information on routes closed to motorized use and measures used to exclude motorized use
- In order to better align MON-WL-01 with monitoring plan components FW-DC-WL-01 and FW-STD-WL-01, the monitoring question was modified to reflect species listed under the Endangered Species Act only (Canada lynx and wolverine). Indicators and measures were also added to this monitoring element to reflect available data sources.

FEIS and Record of Decision Modifications

The final EIS and Record of Decision were modified in response to instructions from the Objection Reviewing Officer as well as voluntary modifications in response to remedies or resolutions suggested by other objectors.

Land management planning process

- The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act was cited in the rationale for not carrying forward the "Citizen's Alternative" in the final EIS.
- This record of decision includes a description of how many acres are available for locatable mineral opportunity under the preferred alternative.

Forestlands

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, an additional clarification was added to the final EIS to explain why all old growth types are not included in the old growth plan components.

Climate Change

- The final EIS and Appendix D were updated to include the carbon assessment data from the 2024 Nez Perce-Clearwater carbon dashboard report.
- "Carbon sequestration" was added to the glossary (Appendix 2).

At-risk Species

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the final EIS clarifies the degree of effects that access and recreation management direction have on whitebark pine.

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, analysis and rationale was consolidated in appendix C regarding the sufficiency of the ecosystem-level plan components to provide the ecological conditions necessary for each of the three categories of at-risk species (species of conservation concern, Endangered Species Act listed, proposed and candidate). The determination then concluded if species-specific plan components were needed.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the final EIS clarifies how the plan components, including the new standards and suitability plan components address the risk of disease transmission between pack goats and bighorn sheep.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, additional clarifications were provided in the final EIS on how the plan components that are intended to minimize risks to fisher are adequate to maintain their persistence in the short term.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, clarifications were made in the final EIS to explain how the integrated suite of plan components will provide ecological conditions that will support persistence of white-headed woodpecker.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the species status assessment (SSA) and wolverine listing decision was reviewed and edits were made so that the final EIS effectively reflects the scientific information provided by the SSA. Because the listing reaffirmed the SSA for wolverine, no additional plan components are necessary.

Sustainable Recreation

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, a document was added to the record that is intended to that lists the key plan components that are intended to inform plan implementation consistency with the mapped recreational opportunity spectrum.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, rationale for why the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River corridor is a semi-primitive non-motorized setting was added to the final EIS.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the recreation opportunity spectrum assigned along road 250 in Black Canyon along the North Fork Clearwater River has been verified to be assigned the roaded natural recreation opportunity spectrum and the map for the preferred alternative has been updated in Appendix A.
- The Preferred Alternative map in Appendix A for the summer recreation opportunity spectrum was updated to show the area encompassing the Fish Lake Trail as semi-primitive motorized setting.

Designated Wilderness

- A statement was added to the descriptions of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and the Gospel-Hump Wilderness to acknowledge that livestock grazing existed in each area prior to designation in order to provide a clear connection to direction provided in law, regulation, and policy regarding livestock grazing in designated wilderness.

Recommended Wilderness

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, Appendix E of the final EIS, was clarified to identify that the roadless inventory and assessment were conducted and documented prior to the finalization of the planning directives in 2015 (FSH 1909.12). Recommendations for wilderness designation resulted from the analysis of the Idaho Roadless Areas. These roadless areas served as the basis for the wilderness evaluation conducted in 2013 and documented in the assessment of 2014, prior to the finalization of the planning directives in 2015. This evaluation was retrained per FSM 1920.3(9)(b) and the results of the evaluation were moved forward in the revision process under the 2015 planning directives. Appendix E was also updated on how rare animal communities were considered in the wilderness evaluation.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the spatial scale for the methodology of the sustainable recreation and recommended wilderness sections of the final EIS were clarified to include lands managed by other national forests. The cumulative effects analysis of the recommended wilderness section was modified to document how plan components for sustainable recreation, including over snow motor vehicle use and mechanized travel, impacts lands adjacent to the plan area.
- The description for the semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunity spectrum class was updated to move the reference to "mechanized transport such as mountain bikes are often present" in the final EIS.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, a document containing a crosswalk of how plan components protected the outstandingly remarkable values of those rivers found eligible and determined not suitable was added to the record.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the Administrative Recommendations section of this record of decision was updated to ensure that the suitability rationale for the suitability recommendation of each river had been described in a consistent manner. Seemingly contradictory statements between the record of decision, the final EIS, and the eligibility study (Appendix F) with regards to outstandingly remarkable values have been clarified or removed from the record of decision and Appendix i.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, clarifications were made in the final EIS that describes how the effects of management as a suitable, and ultimately a nationally designated, river corridor affects the management of the multiple resources including achieving ecological restoration desired conditions in the plan area.
- In response to the reviewing officer's instructions, the rationale under the Administrative Recommendations section of this record of decision was clarified to describe how the reasonably foreseeable land and resource uses that may be enhanced, curtailed, or foreclosed, together with the other evaluation criteria, informed the rationale for determining suitability, citing the FEIS and appendix i of the ROD.
- Clarifications to the information that informed the eligibility and suitability studies were made to Appendix F.

Plan Implementation

The revised plan set the overall management direction and guidance for future activities and projects to assure ecological integrity and sustainable multiple-use management on the Nez Perce-Clearwater over the next 15 years or until the plan is amended or revised. In contrast to site-specific Forest Service projects, land management plans do not authorize site-specific activities such as where to build a trail or what timber will be harvested, but instead provide a framework to guide management activities across the national forest. A land management plan includes the desired conditions, objectives, constraints—in the form of suitability decisions, standards, and guidelines—and appropriate management approaches on a national forest. Planning in national forests and grasslands ensures balanced and thoughtful use and protection of the many facets of our public lands.

The plan does not authorize projects or activities or dictate internal operations such as personnel matters, law enforcement, budget, or organizations changes.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater will also follow all laws, regulations, and policies that relate to managing National Forest System lands. The land management plan supplements, and does not replace, direction from these sources.

Plan direction will be implemented through site-specific activities that must be consistent with the plan, per 36 CFR 219.15. The 2012 Planning Rule prescribes that project and activity consistence with the plan will be achieved through “(a) application to existing authorizations and approved projects or activities; (b) application to projects or activities authorized after the plan decision; (c) resolving inconsistency ;(d) determining consistency; and (e) consistency of resource plans within the planning area with the land management plan” (36 CFR 219.15).

The following sections outline the decision for how that implementation will occur.

Existing Authorizations

Resource plans (example Motor Vehicle Use Designations) developed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater that apply to the resources or land areas within the planning area must be consistent with the plan components. Resource plans developed prior to this plan decision will be evaluated for consistency with the plan and updated as soon as practicable.

Authorizations for occupancy and use made before this plan approval may proceed unchanged until time of reauthorization. At time of reauthorization, all permits, contracts, and other authorizing instruments must be made consistent with the plan, subject to existing valid rights, as provided at 36 CFR 219.15(d).

Plan components applicable to livestock grazing (including the end of season stubble height guideline) will be incorporated through permit modification(s), reissuance of existing term permits, issuance of new term grazing permits, or as allotment management plan revisions and sufficiency reviews occur. Monitoring data will be used to prioritize both allotments and stream reaches. It is expected that all allotments will be managed under the plan direction within the first decade.

National Environmental Policy Act analysis will be necessary to consider closure of vacant allotments. NEPA analysis will also be required to regulate public use consistent with suitability decisions made in this revised plan, including designating over-snow motorized use in a portion

of the Hoodoo Roadless Area that was closed by the Clearwater Travel Plan decisions in 2012 and 2017, to exclude motorized use in areas that are new recommended wilderness areas including the East Meadow Creek RWA and additions to the Mallard-Larkins RWA and the Hoodoo RWA, and to designated summer motorized use on the Fish Lake Trail.

Project and Activity Consistency

As required by National Forest Management Act and the 2012 Planning Rule, subject to valid existing or statutory rights, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after approval of this plan must be consistent with the applicable plan components (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)) as described at 36 CFR 219.15. Previously approved and ongoing projects and activities are not required to meet the direction of the revised plan and will remain consistent with the direction in the Nez Perce 1987 and Clearwater 1987 Plans, as amended.

All project or activity approval documents made after the effective date of the plan will describe how the project or activity is consistent with the applicable components of the plan. When a proposed project or activity would not be consistent with the applicable plan components, the responsible official shall take one of the following steps, subject to valid existing or statutory rights:

1. Modify the proposed project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable plan components;
2. Reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity;
3. Amend the plan so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended;
4. Amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended. This amendment may be limited to apply only to the project or activity.

Maintaining the Plan

A land management plan is an integral part of an adaptive management cycle, including assessment, plan revision or amendment, and monitoring. This adaptive management cycle enables the national forest to identify and respond to changing conditions, changing public desires, and new information, such as that obtained through research and scientific findings. The plan monitoring program is an integral part of this adaptive management cycle, consisting of monitoring questions and indicators (see appendix 3 of the plan for additional information about the monitoring plan).

A land management plan may be amended at any time based on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan, which may be based on a new assessment, plan monitoring, or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. The amendment and administrative change process is described at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(2) of the 2012 Planning Rule.

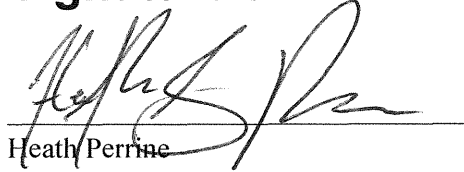
Implementation Date

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests final land management plan will become effective 30 calendar days after publication of the notice of its approval in the Federal Register (36 CFR 219.17(a), 2012 Planning Rule).

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this draft decision or the objection process, please contact Sara Daugherty, Forest Planner, at the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, Supervisor's Office, 1008 Highway 64, Kamiah, ID 83536 by phone at (208) 935-4206 or by email at sara.daugherty@usda.gov.

Signature and Date


Heath Perrine

JAN 10TH 2025
DATE

Acting Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

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Appendix i.

Introduction

This appendix documents the suitability determination for which rivers should be recommended to Congress for designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The analyses that informed the suitability determinations are in the Land Management Plan FEIS (Sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.4.2, and 3.6.2) and the FEIS Appendix F.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of October 2, 1968, was established to complement the national policy of constructing dams and other developments within river segments that were determined appropriate for such use. The Act provides for the permanent protection of designated rivers for the benefit of present and future generations to preserve and protect the free-flow, water quality and other outstandingly remarkable values that contribute to vital national conservation purposes. Emphasis in the administration of a designated river is to protect and enhance the values which caused the river to be included in the National System.

The Act establishes the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System) and documents those river segments designated by Congress for inclusion in the National System. The Middle Fork of the Clearwater River, including the Lochsa and Selway Rivers, is the first named river in the Act itself. The Act also identifies criteria that should be studied for reporting to Congress on the suitability or non-suitability of additions to the National System. For the study of rivers wholly under the Forests management, the key variables in determining the suitability for the 88 eligible rivers included “the characteristics which do or do not make the area a worthy addition to the system,” and “the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water which would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the national wild and scenic rivers system” (16 U.S.C. 1275).

Regardless of whether a river is found suitable and recommended to Congress for designation, the full suite of land management plan components will be applied and will provide protection of river values across the Forest. The Forestwide plan components provide a baseline wherein resources are maintained or restored across the Forest. Rivers found suitable for designation in the national rivers system have additional restrictions on activities to protect and enhance outstandingly remarkable values as the priority management objective. A crosswalk between the land management plan and the interim protection measures documents how protection for all outstandingly remarkable values is provided.

Wild and Scenic River Suitability Determinations

The study of wild and scenic river suitability forms the basis for recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture and Congress for legislative action (FSM 1924). Given the rivers studied are wholly within Federal management, suitability was reviewed in the context of the multiple Federal laws that govern National Forest System lands such as the National Forest Management Act, the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act. Varying suitability across the alternatives analyzed in the FEIS allowed the Forests to consider the tradeoffs associated with managing lands for a wild and scenic river designation recommendations (suitability) in the context of managing for other land management desired conditions and objectives following statutory and regulatory direction. This also allowed the

public to provide input on the full suite of alternative land management allocation options, rather than focusing their comments on one permutation of river suitability.

The 13 criteria in FSH 1909.12, Chapter 83.2, were used to evaluate the suitability of each river segment as described in detail in appendix K of the FEIS. Many of the criteria relating to land ownership and the administration of a river if designated (e.g., criteria nos. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10) didn't vary by river, as all evaluated segments are on National Forest System lands, and land acquisition or shared administration of the rivers is not proposed. As multiple statutes governing Federal land management and the 2012 Planning Rule required plan components provide protections for the eligible rivers' free-flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values similar to a wild and scenic river designation, the adequacy land use controls (criteria 8 and 12) are similar for all evaluated rivers. And importantly, the potential for water resources development such as irrigation and flood control measures, hydropower facilities, dredging, diversion, and channelization (criterion no. 13) is low for all evaluated rivers (see appendix F).

Thus, the final determinations described here in this appendix summarizes three criteria that best represent the public values regarding whether a river should be designated or not. This includes a summary of the characteristics that do or do not make river a worthy addition to the National System (criterion no. 1) and the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water that would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the National System (criterion no. 3). The consideration of these qualitative values was informed through the involvement of the public, cooperating agencies, counties, collaborators, the Nez Perce Tribe, and individuals and organizations regarding management of both a future river designation and the many multiple uses provided by Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and as summarized in the support or opposition for designation (criterion no. 11).

Context for Evaluating Worthiness (Criterion 1)

Given the many miles of exemplary rivers across the Forests with often similar and overlapping outstandingly remarkable values such as critically important fish habitat, highly valued recreation, cascading falls, and/or spectacular scenery, the determination focused on ensuring the rivers or river system found suitable had multiple ORVs that represented characteristics worthy of a national designation. This is a very value-based criteria, thus Tribal, cooperating agency, and public input provided important information and context for this aspect of the determination. Particular care was taken to review comments and input with river-specific information describing a river segment's characteristics.

Context for Evaluating Foreseeable Land and Water Uses (Criterion 3)

The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act emphasizes that national forests are to "be administered for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish species...so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people." It also authorizes cooperation with interested state and local government agencies and others in the management of national forests. The National Forest Management Act and 2012 Planning Rule requires land management plans to guide management of resources "through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources ... in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas" (36 CFR 19.1(b)). This plan area evaluation of the relative values of

all the Forests resources provided important context for reviewing uses that could be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed for the rivers studied. While each river is addressed individually in more detail in the following sections, a general finding for not suitable rivers is often based on an evaluation of which multiple uses would be enhanced, and which would be curtailed if the river values were prioritized under a national designation.

Context for Evaluating Public Support or Opposition (Criterion 11)

Input from the public was also important in making the determinations of suitability for each of these eligible rivers. The State of Idaho and Clearwater and Idaho County cooperating agencies provided input on river suitability. Many interested public and river advocate groups also provided input specifically during the river study process and during the public comment periods. The feedback from local governments, interested public, and river organizations provided information regarding the multiple use values across the plan area and the degree of support or opposition for designation of each river.

Although the Forest Service did not propose sharing costs for administration of the any study rivers with State and local agencies (criterion 5) and all studied rivers would be administered by the Forests (criterion 7), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act ensures the State Governor has an opportunity to provide comment before a study report is submitted to the President or Congress (Section 4(b)). Thus, any State and County government input is noted for each of the study rivers.

Deferred Suitability Recommendation

The Little North Fork Clearwater River forms the boundary between the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, and as such, it was not appropriate to conduct a suitability study without the Idaho Panhandle National Forest's participation. The Idaho Panhandle National Forest's 2015 land management plan also finds the Little North Fork Clearwater River eligible, but did not conduct a suitability study.

Rivers Recommended as Suitable

The conclusions described for each river are based on the FEIS and appendix F, which includes the detailed river by river evaluation of the criteria for determining suitability.

Weitas Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish, recreation, and Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Proposed Classification:** Scenic
- **Worthiness:** Weitas Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Nez Perce tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. The fish and recreation outstandingly remarkable values of Weitas Creek were added based on public comment and an exemplary trout fly fishing experience from a trail along one of the largest tributaries of the North Fork Clearwater River.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river segment is within the Bighorn-Weitas Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry/restoration theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless

areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with all the eligible rivers studied for suitability, Weitas Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Although the Clearwater Basin Collaborative was not able to provide the Forests a recommendation of rivers suitable for designation, it was notable that the group brought this eligible river forward for discussion as suitable. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended the segment of Weitas Creek as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** The combination of the multiple ORVs and some river-specific support make Weitas Creek worthy of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation which will prioritize protection and enhancement of the river values exceeds the benefit of non-designation. Regardless of designation, portions of this river fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics and riparian resources ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors. In addition, Weitas Creek is in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Suitable

Cayuse Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek

- **ORVs:** Recreation, scenic, cultural, Nez Perce Tribe cultural, fish, and wildlife
- **Proposed Classification:** Recreational, wild, and scenic
- **Worthiness:** This river system possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Nez Perce tribal staff identified the Kelly Creek segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. People travel to fish Kelly Creek since it offers a high-quality trail-based fishing opportunity in a natural setting. The north fork, middle fork, and south forks of Kelly Creek don't provide the high-quality fly-fishing opportunity of Kelly and Cayuse Creeks, but these eligible segments contribute directly to the fisheries value of Kelly Creek River system.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Kelly Creek runs through Management Area 3, the Bighorn-Weitas Idaho Roadless Area's backcountry restoration theme, the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area's wild land recreation theme, the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area's backcountry restoration theme, and the Moose Mountain Idaho Roadless Area's backcountry restoration and primitive themed areas. The North, Middle, and South Forks of Kelly Creek are within the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area's wild land recreation theme. Cayuse Creek runs through Management Area 3, the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area's wild land recreation theme, and the Bighorn-Weitas Idaho

Roadless Area's backcountry restoration and special area of historic and tribal significance themes. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not they should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Although the Clearwater Basin Collaborative was not able to provide the Forests a recommendation of rivers suitable for designation, it was notable that the group brought varying levels of support with some members indicating they felt adequate protections were already in place. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended these segments as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** The combination of the multiple ORVs and some river-specific support make this river system makes them worthy of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation which will prioritize protection and enhancement of the river values exceeds the benefit of non-designation. Regardless of designation, these segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics and riparian resources ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors. In addition, Cayuse Creek, Kelly Creek, and North Fork Kelly Creek are in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Suitable

Colt Killed Creek

- **ORVs:** Recreation, scenic, fish, and wildlife
- **Proposed Classification:** Wild and scenic
- **Worthiness:** Colt Killed Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Colt Killed Creek provides an exceptional experience for the public that enjoy fly fishing in a small stream. Although not a common activity contributing to the recreation ORV, extreme kayakers may hike two miles into the wilderness area to kayak a seven-mile stretch of this river. Colt Killed Creek is one of two major tributaries to the Lochsa River that provides significant contributions for spawning and early rearing of native steelhead trout. Public comment on the draft study report highlighted that Colt Killed Creek had the best representation of the ORVs found in the Lochsa tributaries.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Colt Killed Creek runs through private ownership, the Management Area 3, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area, and the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho Roadless Area with backcountry/restoration, primitive, and wild land recreation themes. A river designation

would provide overlapping protections similar to those provided by the wilderness designation. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management Area 3 and the roadless areas but curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. An advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended Colt Killed Creek as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** The combination of the multiple ORVs and the importance of Lochsa tributary to spawning and early spring of B-run steelhead trout make it worthy of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation which will prioritize protection and enhancement of the river values exceeds the benefit of non-designation. Regardless of designation, these segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics and riparian resources ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Suitable

Fish Creek and Hungry Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish and wildlife
- **Proposed Classification:** Wild, scenic, and recreational
- **Worthiness:** Fish and Hungry Creek possess many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values. They support significant spawning and early rearing of Clearwater River B-run steelhead trout.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Fish Creek is within the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area, with the majority of the river falling within the primitive themed area and its headwaters lying in a special area of historic and tribal significance themed area. Hungry Creek is within the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area, with the majority falling within a special area of historic and tribal significance theme, and the mouth and headwaters are in the primitive themed area. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and may curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions, but that effect is likely limited given the roadless themes' management constraints.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Fish Creek and Hungry Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying

reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be considered suitable for designation, while others preferred that no rivers be recommended as suitable for designation. An advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Although the Clearwater Basin Collaborative was not able to provide the Forest a recommendation of rivers suitable for designation, the group brought these eligible rivers forward for discussion for recommendation as suitable. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended Fish Creek and Hungry Creek as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** The combination of the multiple ORVs, the importance to spawning and early rearing of steelhead trout, and some river-specific public support make Fish Creek and Hungry Creek worthy of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation which will prioritize protection and enhancement of the river values exceeds the benefit of non-designation. Regardless of designation, these segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics and riparian resources ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Suitable

Meadow Creek (Selway Subbasin)

- **ORVs:** Cultural, Nez Perce Tribe cultural, recreation, fish, and wildlife
- **Proposed classifications:** Recreational, wild, and scenic
- **Worthiness:** Meadow Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified the Meadow Creek segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. The river has an assemblage of archaeological sites situated along the entirety of the drainage proving an outstanding example of prehistoric land use not found in other rivers of this size. Steelhead trout are wild B-run and critical to the overall population in the Selway River drainage because there is no record that hatchery supplementation has ever occurred here.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Meadow Creek is within Management Area 3, West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, a backcountry/restoration themed area, and East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, a primitive themed area. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management Area 3 and roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Meadow Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be considered suitable for designation, while others preferred that no rivers be recommended as suitable for designation. Although the Clearwater Basin Collaborative was not able to provide the

Forests a recommendation of rivers suitable for designation, it was notable that the group brought varying levels of support with some members indicating they felt adequate protections were already in place. An advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended Meadow Creek as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** The combination of the multiple ORVs, archaeological and Nez Perce Tribal historic and cultural value, and importance of Meadow Creek to overall population of steelhead trout in the Selway River drainage make it worthy of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation which will prioritize protection and enhancement of the river values exceeds the benefit of non-designation. Regardless of designation, portions of this segment falls within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Suitable

Salmon River

- **ORVs:** Scenic, recreation, and wildlife
- **Proposed Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** The Salmon River possesses many of the same characteristics as many of the eligible rivers in the plan area with multiple outstandingly remarkable values. A 1973 study found this river worthy of suitability. The river is easily accessible for boating as a large, broad, and flat river interspersed with rapids, most notably at French Creek and Ruby Rapids, three developed boat ramps, and is popular for kayaking, rafting, canoeing, drift boating, and jet boating.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The Nez-Perce Clearwater National Forests' administrative portion of the Salmon River corridor lies primarily in Management Area 3, with areas of mixed Federal and private ownership. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, the Salmon River received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should continue to be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some public wanted to see all rivers suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended as suitable for designation. An advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Idaho County submitted a letter on behalf of multiple counties indicating suitability for the South Fork Clearwater, North Fork Clearwater, and Salmon rivers was their biggest concern. The Clearwater Basin Collaborative expressed varying levels of support for the suitability of the Salmon River. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented this river should be recommended as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** The combination of the multiple ORVs and the highly valued boating and fishing recreation opportunities provided by the Salmon River continue to make it worthy of national designation as recommended in the 1973 legislative study. Therefore, the benefit of designation which will prioritize protection and enhancement of the river values exceeds the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Suitable (reaffirmed)

Rivers Recommended as Non-suitable

The conclusions described for each river are based on the FEIS and appendix F, which includes the detailed river by river evaluation of the criteria for determining suitability.

Potlatch River

- ORVs: Recreation
- **Proposed Classification:** Scenic
- **Worthiness:** Weitas Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Nez Perce tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. The fish and recreation outstandingly remarkable values of Weitas Creek were added based on public comment and an exemplary trout fly fishing experience from a trail along one of the largest tributaries of the North Fork Clearwater River.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, the Potlatch River received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended Potlatch River as suitable. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list of consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management within the immediate landscape, the Potlatch River was found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Lolo Creek

- **ORVs:** Recreation, Nez Perce Tribe cultural, fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational

- **Worthiness:** Lolo Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. A 12-mile whitewater boating run passes through a deep cedar-filled canyon.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridors is within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Lolo Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended Lolo Creek as suitable. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable. A suitability recommendation for Lolo Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs that may make it a worthy addition to the National System, the local public interest in the river values that Lolo Creek provides are rooted in multiple use management within the immediate landscape. Portions of this river segment falls within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, tribal trust, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Musselshell Creek

- **ORVs:** Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** Musselshell Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area. The cultural outstandingly remarkable value for Musselshell Meadows includes an important traditional camp and gathering place.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridors is within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Musselshell Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic

river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. River conservation groups advocated for Musselshell Creek. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable A suitability recommendation for Musselshell Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers.

- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management within the immediate landscape, Musselshell Creek was found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, tribal trust, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, Musselshell Creek is in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

North Fork Clearwater River

- **ORVs:** Recreation, scenic, fish, wildlife, cultural, botany, and Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild and recreational
- **Worthiness:** The North Fork Clearwater River possesses many of the same characteristics as the other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. It provides 79 miles of boatable water, ranging from flat water to Class IV rapids with high quality Blue Ribbon equivalent fishing opportunities and exemplary fly-fishing opportunities.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The North Fork Clearwater River runs along the boundary of a number of Idaho Roadless Areas. Siwash, Pot Mountain, Bighorn-Weitas, Mallard Larkin, and Moose Mountain, all with backcountry/restoration themes. It also runs along Mallard Larkin, Moose Mountain, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork with primitive themes. The river also runs through Management Area 3, the Aquarius Research Natural Area, and is adjacent to the Chateau Falls Research Natural Area. Minimal changes in land and resource use would occur with a national river designation in the Research Natural Areas and primitive theme roadless areas given the management constraints of those allocations. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the some of the river values in the backcountry/restoration themed roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions. Importantly, an active management approach to ecosystem restoration would provide protection for the coastal disjunct plant communities represented by the botany outstandingly remarkable value that has been identified for the North Fork Clearwater River.

The presence of climate and soil features are important elements in the maintenance of the refugia that supports these coastal disjunct species. Coastal disjunct systems are sensitive to extreme temperatures, wildfire, drought, and reduced soil moisture, which pose their greatest climate-driven threat. The sensitivity of the coastal disjunct ecosystem to climate and climate-driven changes was determined to be moderate-high⁷. Without the low elevations and warm, moist local climate of the river bottoms, the ecological conditions would be inadequate to support the coastal disjunct communities. As climate induced changes take place, the ability to apply flexible management actions may be required across the landscape to address impacts to numerous species of this ecosystem.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, the North Fork Clearwater River received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Although the Clearwater Basin Collaborative was not able to provide the Forests a recommendation of rivers suitable for designation, the group brought this eligible river forward for discussion to be recommended as suitable. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented this eligible river should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for the South Fork Clearwater River was opposed by the Efficient Public Collaboration group and the board of Clearwater County Commissioners. Idaho County submitted a letter on behalf of multiple counties indicating suitability for the South Fork Clearwater, North Fork Clearwater, and Salmon rivers was their biggest concern. Comments from environmental interests and river advocate groups recommended this segment as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While the multiple ORVs may make the river a worthy addition to the National System, and there was some agreement within the Clearwater Basin Collaborative for its suitability, the need for active vegetation management to minimize threats to the coastal disjunct ecosystem (botany ORV) is a benefit of non-designation that exceeds the benefits of designation. Portions of this river segment falls within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, tribal trust, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the scenic values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, the North Fork Clearwater River is in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Bostonian Creek, Boundary Creek, Caledonia Creek, and Graves Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild

⁷ See document in planning record: 141204_EcoAdaptNPCVulnerabilityAssessment.pdf

- **Worthiness:** Bostonian Creek, Boundary Creek, Caledonia Creek, and Graves Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified. Collectively, eligible segments included in this group comprise the most significant complex of modeled climate shield reaches for bull trout persistence in 2040 within the fish ORV region of comparison.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** These river segments are in the primitive themed Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork Idaho Roadless Area. Minimal changes in land and resource use would occur with a national river designation given the management constraints of the primitive theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers were grouped with all eligible rivers in generalized comment either supporting or opposing designation without any river-specific support. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV with robust land management protect and no river-specific public support, they were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Fish habitat quality and natural reproduction are protected by plan components and the Endangered Species Act. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics and riparian resources ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Cave Creek and Chateau Creek

- **ORVs:** Scenic
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** Cave Creek and Chateau Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified. These North Fork Clearwater River tributaries have highly scenic waterfalls, including multiple drops over pink granite.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is in Pot Mountain Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry/restoration theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers were grouped with all eligible rivers in generalized comment either supporting or

opposing designation without any river-specific support. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, they were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Cliff Creek, Falls Creek, and Lost Pete Creek

- **ORVs:** Geology
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** Although geology ORVs are less common across the plan area, Cliff Creek, Falls Creek, and Lost Pete Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area. The river waterfall was the only outstandingly remarkable value identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridors are in the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, wildland recreation theme. Minimal changes in land and resource uses would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the wildland recreation theme.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers were grouped with all eligible rivers in generalized comment either supporting or opposing designation without any river-specific support. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, they were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Elk Creek

- **ORVs:** Scenic, recreation, botany
- **Preliminary Classification:** Scenic
- **Worthiness:** Elk Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Only six segments in the plan area exhibit the core coastal refugia characteristics represented by the botany ORV.

- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** These river corridors is within Management Area 3, with areas of mixed Federal and private ownership. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river was grouped with all eligible rivers in generalized comment either supporting or opposing designation without any river-specific support. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs that may make it a worthy addition to the National System, the local public interest in the river values that Elk Creek provides are rooted in multiple use management within the immediate landscape. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, and Isabella Creek

- **ORVs:** Botany
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational and wild
- **Worthiness:** Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, and Isabella Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified. This botany ORV is represented by an extraordinary assemblage of coastal disjunct and endemic plant and animal taxa and the unique vegetation types.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The Beaver Creek river corridor is in the Aquarius Research Natural Area and Management Area 3. The Isabella Creek river corridor is in the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, wild land recreation theme and Management Area 3. Elmer Creek is in the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, wild land recreation theme. Minimal changes would occur in the Research Natural Area and roadless area portions given the management constraints of those allocations. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the Management 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers were grouped with all eligible rivers in generalized comment either supporting or opposing designation without any river-specific support. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure

maintenance of the values of these river corridors regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.

- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable
- Scenic, recreation, botany

Lake Creek (North Fork Clearwater River)

- **ORVs:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational and scenic
- **Worthiness:** Lake Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The Lake Creek river corridor is in the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, wildland recreation theme, and Management Area 3. Minimal changes would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the wildland recreation theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions. With roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure in place, this area has a need for protection of not only the Forest Service infrastructure, but also the wildland urban interface that exists as private property is along much of the greater Clear Creek drainage.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers were grouped with all eligible rivers in generalized comment either supporting or opposing designation without any river-specific support. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Clear Creek and South Fork Clear Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish, Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Scenic
- **Worthiness:** Clear Creek and South Fork Clear Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have two outstandingly remarkable values.

- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridors are within the Clear Creek Idaho Roadless Rule Area, backcountry/restoration theme, and Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless area and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions. With roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure in place, this area has a need for protection of not only the Forest Service infrastructure, but also the wildland urban interface that exists as private property is along much of the greater Clear Creek drainage.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Clear Creek and South Fork Clear Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether or not it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Clear Creek and South Fork Clear Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers.
- **Conclusion:** While this river had two ORVs, local public interest is rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. South Fork Clear Creek falls within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Canyon Creek, Glade Creek, Lowell Creek, and Rye Patch Creek

- **ORVs:** Wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational and scenic
- **Worthiness:** Canyon Creek, Glade Creek, Lowell Creek, and Rye Patch Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Glade Creek crosses a number of management areas, including the Lochsa Research Natural Area, the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area, special area of historic and tribal significance and backcountry/restoration themes, and Management Area 3. Rye Patch Creek is in Management Area 3. Canyon Creek north side is in the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area and the south side is in Management Area 3. Lowell Creek is in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land

management plan desired conditions, especially outside the roadless areas. With roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure in place, this area has a need for protection of not only the Forest Service infrastructure, but also the wildland urban interface that exists as private property within the river corridor.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Canyon Creek, Glade Creek, Lowell Creek, and Rye Patch Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Canyon Creek, Glade Creek, Lowell Creek, and Rye Patch Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Upper Lochsa River, Big Sand Creek, Storm Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, and South Fork Storm Creek

- **ORVs:** Recreation, scenic, fish, wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild, recreational and scenic
- **Worthiness:** These segments possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The recreation ORV is represented by exceptional fishing opportunities for steelhead trout and fly-fishing opportunities for cutthroat trout on the Upper Lochsa. The Upper Lochsa River, and portions of Big Sand Creek are identified as major spawning areas for native steelhead trout. Big Sand Creek is noted for stunning talus fields and vertical granite walls, in addition to fast moving water with severe drops.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The Upper Lochsa River is in the Management Area 3 with some checkerboard land ownership. Big Sand Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, and South Fork Storm Creek are in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Storm Creek runs through the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry/restoration and wild land recreation themes and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if designated as a wild and scenic river. River designation would provide overlapping protections similar to those provided by the wilderness designation. Minimal changes in land and resource use would occur in the wildland recreation themed

roadless area portion given the management constraints of that theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management 3 and the backcountry/restoration themed roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions. With roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure in place, this area has a need for protection of not only the Forest Service infrastructure, but also the wildland urban interface that exists as private property within the river corridor.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible rivers should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for these rivers was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While these rivers have multiple ORVs that may make them a worthy addition to the National System, the local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Crooked Fork Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, and Hopeful Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish, wildlife, Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild and recreational
- **Worthiness:** Crooked Fork Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, and Hopeful Creek possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Brushy Fork Creek runs through a checkerboard land ownership in Management Area 3. Crooked Creek is similar with some of the corridor in the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, wild land recreation theme. Hopeful Creek runs through the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, wild land recreation theme. Minimal changes in land and resource use would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the wildland recreation theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management

3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these rivers received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible rivers should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for Crooked Fork Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, and Hopeful Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While these rivers had multiple ORVs, local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. Portions of these river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** not suitable

Huckleberry Creek

- **ORVs:** Recreation
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** Huckleberry Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area. The undeveloped hot springs in the river corridor represents the single ORV identified for the river.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Huckleberry Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Huckleberry Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated

opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, it was found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Warm Springs Creek

- **ORVs:** Recreation, scenic, geology
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** Warm Springs Creek possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The ORVs are represented by highly recommended, undeveloped Jerry Johnson Hot Springs and a spectacular waterfall drop of 60 feet of the entire river into a “punchbowl” formation.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the Lochsa Face Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry restoration theme. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, Warm Springs Creek received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Warm Springs Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs that may make it worthy of designation in the National System, lack of river-specific public support led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation and plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

‘Imnamatnoon Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is in Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for ‘Imnamatnoon Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Waw’aalamnime Creek

- **ORVs:** Fish and wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has two outstandingly remarkable values.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is in Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to

whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for 'Waw'aalamnime Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** While this river had two ORVs, local public interest is rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Old Man Creek

- **ORVs:** Scenic
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Old Man Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, it was found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Lake Creek (Lochsa Subasin)

- **ORV:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified. This segment is a major spawning area for Snake River steelhead trout and supports multiple other salmonid species.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Lochsa Face Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry restoration theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Lake Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, it was found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Bear Creek, Cub Creek, and Brushy Fork Creek (Selway River Subbasin)

- **ORV:** Geology, scenic, fish, Nez Perce Tribe cultural, wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The designated Selway Wild and Scenic River flows through the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and many of its tributaries have high scenic quality, particularly those with high cirque lakes and craggy peaks in their headwaters. The “Salmon Hole” is a natural channel feature in Bear Creek providing a large, deep space for adult salmon to rest and hold safely during low summer flows prior to spawning in August. This resource has significant cultural and historic significance to the Nez Perce Tribe.

- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridors are within Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and Selway Bitterroot Idaho Roadless Area, primitive theme. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Minimal changes would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the primitive theme.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Bear Creek, Cub Creek, and Brushy Ford Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While these rivers have multiple ORVs that may make them worthy of designation in the National System, lack of river-specific public support led to a determination that these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. The current wilderness designation, roadless direction, and plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Gedney Creek and West Fork Gedney Creek

- **ORV:** Fish and scenic
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the Rackliff-Gedney Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry restoration theme. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Gedney Creek and West Fork Gedney Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend for suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs that may make it worthy of designation in the National System, lack of river-specific public support led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The current wilderness designation, roadless direction, and plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

O'Hara Creek

- **ORV:** Wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3 and O'Hara-Falls Creek Idaho Roadless Area, special area of historic and tribal significance and a backcountry/restoration themes. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management withing Management Area 3 as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for O'Hara Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, it was found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

East Fork Meadow Creek and Buck Lake Creek

- **ORV:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Scenic and wild
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified for each. East Fork Meadow Creek supports very high densities of westslope cutthroat trout and juvenile bull trout. Buck Lake Creek supports very high densities of juvenile steelhead trout.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, primitive theme. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Minimal changes would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the primitive theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for East Fork Meadow Creek and Buck Lake Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, they were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The current wilderness designation, roadless direction, and plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for

aquatics and riparian resources ensure maintenance of the values of these river corridors regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape

- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Moose Creek, North Fork Moose Creek, West Moose Creek, East Fork Moose Creek, Rhoda Creek, Wounded Doe Creek

- **ORV:** Scenic, cultural, and fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The designated Selway Wild and Scenic River flows through the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and many of its tributaries like these have high scenic quality, particularly those with high cirque lakes and craggy peaks in their headwaters.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Moose Creek, North Fork Moose Creek, West Moose Creek, East Fork Moose Creek, Rhoda Creek, and Wounded Doe Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs that may make it worthy of designation in the National System, lack of river-specific public support led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, these river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Running Creek

- **ORV:** Geology and Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild and scenic

- **Worthiness:** This river possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce Tribe cultural ORV is the cultural and historic importance of the Nez Perce Tribe's traditional use of the hot springs located at the confluence of Warm Springs Creek and Running Creek
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, primitive theme. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Minimal changes would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the primitive theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Running Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this segment has multiple ORVs that may make it worthy of designation in the National System, lack of river-specific public support led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The current wilderness, roadless designations, and plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Three Links Creek and West Fork Three Links Creek

- **ORV:** Scenic
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified. The designated Selway Wild and Scenic River flows through the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and many of its tributaries have high scenic quality, particularly those with high cirque lakes and craggy peaks in their headwaters. Three Links Creek also has a 400-foot waterfall comprised of a series of drops and slides falls.

- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Three Links Creek and West Fork Three Links Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, they were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

American River

- **ORV:** Wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for American River was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and

scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.

- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Johns Creek

- **ORV:** Scenic and Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Areas 3 and the Sourdough Geographic Area, with headwaters in the Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if designated as a wild and scenic river. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Clearwater Basin Collaborative members expressed reservations regarding land management constraints if designated. A suitability recommendation for Johns Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs that may make it worthy of designation in the National System, lack of river-specific public support led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. The current wilderness designation and plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, Johns Creek is in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Gospel Creek and West Fork Gospel Creek

- **ORV:** Scenic
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** These river corridors are within the Gospel Hump Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the rivers were designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether they should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Gospel Creek and West Fork Gospel Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As rivers with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Meadow Creek (South Fork Clearwater River Subbasin)

- **ORV:** Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for

designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Meadow Creek (SF) was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Mill Creek

- **ORV:** Wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Mill Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Red River

- **ORV:** Recreation, Nez Perce Tribe cultural, fish, and wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. There is a recreational outstandingly remarkable value for the Red River for the subcategory of fish and wildlife watching because it is the most reliable place to watch salmon spawning within the region of comparison. Watching salmon spawn is a unique experience and a valuable interpretive opportunity. In addition, the Nez Perce tribal staff identified the Red River segment as having a fish outstandingly remarkable value of cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Red River was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While these rivers had multiple ORVs, local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, tribal trust, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Silver Creek

- **ORV:** Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild, scenic, and recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified. The Nez

Perce tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.

- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Silver Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management within the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, Silver Creek is in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

South Fork Clearwater River

- **ORV:** Recreation, scenic, fish, wildlife, cultural, and Nez Perce Tribe cultural
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** The South Fork Clearwater River possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Distinctive features include the Huddleston Bluff, a sheer cliff noted in several comment letters. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified the South Fork Clearwater River as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe associated with its fisheries and wildlife resources.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** This river corridor lies within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, the South Fork Clearwater River received a wide range of support and opposition for varying

reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Although the Clearwater Basin Collaborative was not able to provide the Forests a recommendation of rivers suitable for designation, the group brought this eligible river forward for discussion to be a recommendation as suitable. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible segments should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for the South Fork Clearwater River was opposed by the Efficient Public Collaboration group and the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Idaho County submitted a letter on behalf of multiple counties indicating suitability for the South Fork Clearwater, North Fork Clearwater, and Salmon rivers was their biggest concern.

- **Conclusion:** While this river had multiple ORVs, local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. Portions of these river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the scenic values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, the South Fork Clearwater Creek is in the Idaho State Protected River System where the goal is to maintain free-flowing waterways and conserve unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

West Fork Crooked River

- **ORV:** Fish
- Preliminary Classification: Recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The majority of the West Fork Crooked River corridor is within the West Fork Crooked River Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration theme. A short section is in Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions, especially outside the roadless area.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this eligible river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible segments should be

recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for West Fork Crooked River was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and local public interest rooted in multiple use management within the immediate landscape, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- Suitability determination based on the study: Not suitable

Allison Creek

- **ORV:** Nez Perce cultural and wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Scenic and recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified the Allison Creek segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is in Management Area 3 and the John Day Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions, especially outside the roadless area.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this eligible river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible segments should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for Allison Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs, local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination that this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, tribal trust, and scenic integrity

objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.

- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Bargamin Creek

- **ORV:** Fish and wildlife
- **Proposed classification:** Wild and scenic
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. A scenic ORV was added for this river based on public comment. The steepness of the river and the open vegetation allow for distant views.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area and East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, primitive theme. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Minimal changes would occur in the roadless area portion given the management constraints of the primitive theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Bargamin Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, they were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. These river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. The current wilderness designation, roadless direction, and plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Sabe Creek

- **ORV:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections similar to those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Sabe Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. In addition, these river segments fall within the conservation watershed network, which prioritizes conservation and restoration of at-risk aquatic species habitat. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Big Mallard Creek

- **ORV:** Scenic and geology
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Big Mallard Creek Falls drop in a spectacular manner to the Salmon River with a near-vertical drop of approximately 300 feet.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area. No changes in land and resource use would occur if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to

whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Big Mallard was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs, lack of river-specific public support for designation led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The wilderness designation ensures maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Noble Creek

- **ORV:** Scenic and fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild and recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. Noble Creek supports the only allopatric resident westslope cutthroat trout population in the region of comparison.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The Noble Creek corridor is within the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area and Gospel Hump and Mallard Idaho Roadless Areas, backcountry/restoration themes. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if the river was designated. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management allowed under the roadless rule as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Big Mallard was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs, lack of river-specific public support for designation led to a determination this river is less worthy for addition to the National

System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. The current wilderness designation, roadless direction, and plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.

- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

South Fork White Bird Creek and North Fork White Bird Creek

- **ORV:** Nez Perce cultural and fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and have multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified North Fork White Bird Creek and South Fork White Bird Creek as segments having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** These river corridors is within Management Area 3, with areas of mixed Federal and private ownership. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for South Fork White Bird Creek and North Fork White Bird Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While these rivers had multiple ORVs, local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the immediate landscape led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Slate Creek

- **ORV:** Nez Perce cultural, fish and wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Recreational

- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and has multiple outstandingly remarkable values. The Nez Perce tribal staff identified the Slate Creek segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is within the Gospel Hump Wilderness Area, North Fork Slate Creek and Little Slate Creek Idaho Roadless Areas as backcountry/restoration and special themed areas, and Management Area 3. No changes in land and resource use would occur in the wilderness portion if designated as a wild and scenic river. River designation would provide overlapping protections like those provided by the wilderness designation. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in Management Area 3 and the roadless areas but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions, especially outside the roadless area.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, this eligible river segment received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible river segments should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for Slate Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** While this river has multiple ORVs, local public interest rooted in multiple use management in the landscape outside the wilderness led to a determination these rivers are less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers in the plan area. The current wilderness designation, roadless direction, and plan components for tribal trust, aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Yeva Agai Naokwaide Creek and Papoose Creek

- **ORV:** Wildlife
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild and recreation
- **Worthiness:** These rivers possess many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** Yeva Agai Naokwaide Creek corridor is within the Salmon Face Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry/restoration

theme. Papoose Creek corridor is within Management Area 3. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions, especially outside the roadless area.

- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. A suitability recommendation for Yeva Agai Naokwaide was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers. Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate these rivers in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.
- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Van Buren Creek

- **ORV:** Fish
- **Preliminary Classification:** Wild and recreational
- **Worthiness:** This river possesses many of the same characteristics as other eligible rivers in the plan area and only one outstandingly remarkable value was identified.
- **Land and resources uses enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed:** The river corridor is in Management Area 3 and the Little Slate Creek Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration theme. Wild and scenic river designation would enhance protection of the river values in the roadless areas and Management Area 3 but could curtail or foreclose vegetation management as an option for restoration to meet land management plan desired conditions, especially outside the roadless area.
- **Public support or opposition:** As with many eligible rivers studied for suitability, these eligible river segments received a wide range of support and opposition for varying reasons as to whether it should be recommended as suitable for inclusion as a wild and scenic river. Some members of the public wanted all rivers to be recommended suitable for designation, while others did not want any rivers recommended. Environmental interests and river advocate groups commented these eligible river segments should be recommended as suitable. A suitability recommendation for Van Buren Creek was opposed by the board of Idaho County Commissioners; and an advisory vote on ballots for Idaho County residents indicated opposition for more wild and scenic rivers.

Clearwater Basin Collaborative did not elevate this river in their final list for consideration to recommend as suitable.

- **Conclusion:** As a river with only a single ORV and no river-specific public support, these rivers were found less worthy for addition to the National System when compared to the other exemplary rivers across the plan area. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the values of the river corridor regardless of designation. Therefore, the benefit of designation does not exceed the benefit of non-designation in providing for multiple uses across the landscape.
- **Suitability determination based on the study:** Not suitable

Appendix ii.

Idaho Roadless Areas Analyzed for Wilderness Recommendation

Portions of the Frank Church–River of No Return and Selway-Bitterroot wilderness areas lie within the Nez Perce-Clearwater, along with the Gospel-Hump Wilderness in its entirety. These three, nearly contiguous, areas total 3,914,283 acres, 81 percent of the wilderness in Idaho. The Nez Perce-Clearwater manages 1,139,059 of these acres which constitute approximately 31 percent of the Forest and 24 percent of the wilderness in Idaho. These areas offer unparalleled opportunity to experience all that Wilderness has to offer: areas unaltered by human manipulation; naturally functioning ecological systems that provide habitat for innumerable wildlife, fish, reptile, insect and plant species, and outstanding opportunity to experience quiet solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, adventure, and physical and mental challenge limited only by one's own abilities and acceptance of risk.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater also includes 1,481,637 acres in 34 inventoried roadless areas identified under the Idaho Roadless Rule, approximately 38 percent of the Forest. These inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) possess many of the same characteristics and values as existing Wilderness. However, the wilderness character of these IRAs is not all the same in value or distinction, or equal in their opportunity for a wilderness experience.

Part of the Forest Plan revision process was to review these roadless areas for consideration as recommended wilderness. The objective in reviewing these roadless areas was to identify those areas that offer primeval character, natural conditions and opportunities for quiet solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation comparable to the Wilderness on and around the Nez Perce-Clearwater today, rather than simply recommending areas for wilderness because they have some level of some wilderness characteristic. Additionally, consideration was for opportunities for restorative management to address forest health concerns, that provide appropriate settings for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences not suitable in a wilderness, or that otherwise would best serve to meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives, and desired conditions under management other than as recommended wilderness.

The initial evaluation of the 34 roadless areas identified 21 of them that lack sufficient wilderness character to warrant further analysis. The remaining thirteen areas were found to possess wilderness characteristics to warrant further review in conjunction with other management opportunities they might present to meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives, and desired conditions.

In the evaluation, as documented in the Appendix E, each Idaho roadless area is shown to possess an array of the wilderness characteristics that defines its wilderness character. Following Forest Service Handbook direction as described in Appendix E, the evaluation includes a general description of the area and its apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, manageability, and other features including ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These wilderness characteristics contribute to a roadless area's overall wilderness character. Appendix E describes, in detail, the settings, features, values and wilderness characteristics for each evaluated Idaho Roadless Area.

It should be pointed out, those Idaho roadless areas not recommended for wilderness would continue to possess their individual roadless values and characteristics. The Idaho Roadless Rule outlines permitted and prohibited actions on road construction and reconstruction, timber harvest, sale and removal, and discretionary mineral development. These restrictions reduce the potential impact to roadless area values that are present in these vast areas while allowing for management to reduce threats of severe wildfire to communities, homes, and property, reducing negative effects to forests from severe wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks, and assuring access to private property within these areas. Additionally, the Idaho Roadless Rule provides opportunity for motorized and non-motorized recreation that would not be available in wilderness areas. Although the Rule allows for these limited management actions it is anticipated that any activity would occur on less than one percent of these lands per decade. Therefore, the roadless values and wilderness characteristics of these 1,481,637 acres are expected to remain present and largely intact through the life of the land management plan.

The following is a brief description of the thirteen areas that were included in alternatives and analyzed as documented in the FEIS, and the rationale why they were or were not identified to be recommended for wilderness in the Preferred Alternative. As stated earlier, Appendix E describes in detail the values and characteristics of each roadless area.

Bighorn-Weitas

With 254,800 acres, Bighorn-Weitas is the largest roadless area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Over 60 percent of the Bighorn-Weitas roadless area is within the natural range of variability (NRV), which is about average for all the areas. Approximately 63 percent is in underrepresented ecosystems, also about average for the Forest. A 400-acre Research Natural Area is in the area. Natural integrity is high and ecological processes are functioning with little human impact.

This roadless area has the most constructed features of all the roadless areas with cabins, lookouts, a SNOTEL site, and numerous trail bridges. However, most of these structures/cabins are being excluded from the area via cherry stems. These cherry stems create inclusions into the area that increase accessibility. A portion of the area has historical or Tribal significance associated with the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark. This is a key attraction and provides access to the high country of the roadless area. Much of the area is adjacent to Forest Service front country but the ratio of boundary to area is very small indicating that boundary management will not be a critical issue. A network of open, motorized trails supports well established summer motorized use to approximately 35 percent of the area. These trails are also increasingly being used by mountain bikers. Winter motorized use is also occurring.

Bighorn-Weitas IRA is the core of the northern portion of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. This undisturbed area with few roads is a large portion of Idaho Fish and Game Unit 10 that historically supported healthy wildlife populations, including a large number of elk. Subsequently, this area had been popular for big game hunting, particularly elk. However, as vegetation conditions have changed through forest succession the forest has gotten denser, forage production has dropped, big game populations have decreased and opportunity for hunter success has declined. Consequently, this is a focus area for management activities to improve elk summer habitat and forage production to meet the Forest's desired conditions for wildlife. Input through public comments indicate that the highest values of this area revolve around the stream and the fisheries values along it.

With the popularity and established use of this area for summer and winter motorized recreation, and its potential value for elk and other wildlife, the Bighorn-Weitas roadless area would best meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals and objectives by implementing management actions to improve wildlife habitat and facilitate motorized recreation, in accordance with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme. Management of this area as recommended wilderness would unnecessarily restrict motorized recreation and limit opportunity for vegetative restoration. Given the importance of the river related values of Weitas Creek, we find that the interim measures designed to protect and enhance the wild and scenic river outstandingly remarkable values through suitability is a better way to preserve the highest values in the area.

East Meadow Creek and West Meadow Creek

The East and West Meadow Creek roadless areas are adjacent to one another, separated by Meadow Creek itself, and Road #285 at the southern end of the areas. While use and management of the two areas has differed over the years, they have much in common in terms of their ecology and wilderness character. More importantly, Meadow Creek, a principal tributary of the Selway River, is recognized as an important watershed, supporting Chinook salmon, steelhead, bull trout, red band trout and westslope cutthroat trout. The current Nez Perce Forest Plan recognizes the importance of the Meadow Creek drainage for its excellent water quality and productive anadromous fishery, as well as its outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation (1987 FEIS). Prior to that, the drainage was recognized for its high wilderness character, and, in the 1979 RARE II effort, East Meadow Creek was recommended for wilderness designation. Pending timber harvest in the West Meadow Creek at that time precluded it from consideration as wilderness. However, that timber harvest was subsequently dropped, and, except for some roadside hazard tree removal, no timber harvest has occurred in the area. In this Forest Plan revision Meadow Creek is, once again, recognized for its outstanding values and has been determined suitable as a Wild and Scenic River. For these reasons, the two roadless areas have been reviewed together for their suitability as recommended wilderness or otherwise contributing to Forest goals, objectives, and desired conditions.

East Meadow Creek is 96,800 acres adjacent to the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness and has no grazing and little impact from noxious weeds, firelines or timber harvest. Two thirds of the area support underrepresented ecosystems and it has a significant amount of whitebark pine habitat. Virtually all the area is in an Idaho Roadless rule Primitive theme with 500 acres in a Research Natural Area. Seventy-one percent of the area is within the NRV. Water quality and watershed condition are high. The Meadow Creek Ranger Station is in this area. It is accessed by trail and adds historic as well as aesthetic character. There are four trail bridges that provide user convenience as well as resource protection. Most of the area is in primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS and there is little summer motorized use and no established snowmobile use. However, there are two roads that intrude into the area. They have been cherry-stemmed out, so they are not technically in the roadless area. Sights and sounds along these road corridors could affect opportunity for solitude in the area. Impacts on this area have been very light and the area appears natural. Natural integrity and ecological processes are intact and operating naturally.

At 115,600 acres, West Meadow Creek roadless area is the fifth largest roadless area on the Forest. It has a long, irregular shape with 57 percent of its boundary adjacent to front country in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape. Much of the area burned in 1919 and long-term ecological processes have just been slightly impacted since then. There has been historical sheep grazing of much of the area but today only two percent of the area is in an active grazing allotment and 15 percent is in a vacant allotment. Two lookout towers remain in the area and are

visible from various locations in the area. They are accessed by low-standard roads. Fuel reduction projects, about 10 miles of fireline and nearly 200 acres of roadside hazard tree removal have occurred in the area to address the wildfire crisis and protect values at risk, including private land in the Elk City Township. Fifty-seven percent of the area is within the NRV, 78 percent is in underrepresented ecosystems and 13,700 acres of whitebark pine habitat is present. The vastness of the area along with topography and vegetative screening provides ample opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. However, roads and trails along the boundary with the front country provide a more motorized recreation setting and sights and sounds from these areas can reduce the opportunity for solitude. Snowmobiling and summer motorized use is established in portions of this area and would present management challenges if this area was recommended wilderness.

Additional considerations of this area include: Meadow Creek is recognized as important to the Nez Perce Tribe; the Meadow Creek National Recreation Trail parallels Meadow Creek from the Selway River to the Meadow Creek Ranger Station; the Magruder Corridor Road #468 follows the Southern Nez Perce Trail at the southern end of the area and is a popular motorized route into Montana; Road #285 bisects East Meadow Creek north to south and is a popular route that accesses Green Mountain, Windy Saddle and Elk Mountain; Road #357 bisects East Meadow Creek east to west and is a popular route to access Trail #533 trailhead into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Portions of West Meadow Creek are near Elk City and Red River in critical fireheds which need vegetative management and use of wildland fire to reduce the potential for devastating fire in and around these communities.

The Meadow Creek area is a landscape that offers intact ecological conditions, historic and cultural values and uses, wilderness character and a variety of recreational opportunities. Meadow Creek provides high-quality fisheries and much of the surrounding area provides habitat for an abundance of wildlife typical of the Nez Perce-Clearwater including elk, black bear, moose, wolves, deer, Canada lynx, wolverine and, potentially, grizzly bear. The existing roads and established motorized use areas provide readily identifiable areas for semi-primitive summer and winter motorized recreation as well as access to areas for semi-primitive non-motorized activities and entrance to existing wilderness. Boundary adjustments to these combined areas would provide a large area high in wilderness character, provide for existing motorized recreation and access to and through a wild landscape and existing wilderness, and allow for traditional uses, while reducing potential conflict between these values and uses. The area not recommended for wilderness would be managed consistent with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme. Meadow Creek would be managed as a suitable Wild and Scenic River. This modified area would best meet Forest goals, objectives and desired conditions for fisheries, wildlife, recreation, wilderness values, and ecological and social sustainability.

Hoodoo

This area has no grazing, very little noxious weed infestation and minimal fireline construction or timber harvest. Ninety-nine percent of the area is in the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area with a Wildland Recreation theme, indicating little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes are predominant. Eighty-six percent of the area is in Primitive or Semi-primitive Non-Motorized ROS. A portion of the area has well established snowmobile use and some summer motorized use. Seven mining claims are known to exist in the area. Approximately 42 percent of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems and the area provides over 17,000 acres of whitebark pine habitat. Seventy-three percent of the area is within the NRV, suggesting ecological processes and natural integrity are intact and functioning. A portion of the area has

been identified as having historical or Tribal significance associated with the Nez Perce (Nee-me-poo) National Historic Trail. Water quality and watershed health are both high. Fifty-eight percent of the boundary adjoins other roadless areas and 42 percent abuts Forest Service front country. Due to its size and configuration the boundary to area ratio is very low, minimizing opportunity for external activities affecting opportunity for solitude in the interior of the area. However, snowmobiling and summer motorized use occurs either within the recommended area or adjacent to it. This use would reduce opportunity for solitude for visitors in proximity to the activity. The established motorized use will present boundary management challenges to prevent trespass into the recommended area.

The Hoodoo roadless area is 252,000 acres spanning 153,900 acres on the Nez Perce-Clearwater, and 98,100 acres on the Lolo National Forest. The Hoodoo roadless area has been recognized for its wilderness values for decades and has been included in several past wilderness bills. Natural integrity, apparent naturalness and opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation are high throughout the area. Therefore, its primeval character is intact with very little evidence of man's activity within the area. The area provides important habitat for an abundance of wildlife species including elk, black bear, moose, Canada lynx, fisher, mountain goats and, most notably, female wolverine winter denning/rearing habitat. It is also an undisturbed landscape that provides connectivity for wide-ranging species such as grizzly bear.

While snowmobiling has been a popular activity in and around the area, that activity is mostly concentrated in areas at the north and south ends of the roadless area. Mountain biking in the summer is also popular. However, this activity mostly occurs on the state line Trail #738 and trails in the Goose Creek drainage, north of Fish Lake. Summer motorized use has also been popular on many trails in the area but is now restricted to the Fish Lake Trail #419 through the 2017 travel management decision. The concentrated nature of these recreational activities provides an opportunity to make boundary adjustments to accommodate these uses while keeping a majority of the roadless area undisturbed.

Within the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, this decision also recommends four river segments suitable for inclusion in the wild and scenic rivers system: Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, and South Fork Kelly Creek. This suitability recommendation provides interim protection measures to these rivers until they are designated by Congress (see Rivers Recommended as Suitable in Appendix i.). While these river protections do not provide protections above and beyond the protections afforded as a recommended wilderness area, they do work in concert to protect both wilderness characteristics and outstandingly remarkable values including fisheries, scenery, and cultural outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers.

Considering these ecological and social factors, the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless area, with boundary adjustments for the recommended wilderness area, would best meet the Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives and desired condition for ecological and social sustainability managed as recommended wilderness rather than under the Idaho Roadless Rule with the Wildland Recreation theme. This undisturbed area would also provide connectivity for wide-ranging species, particularly grizzly bear roaming from the Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems into the Bitterroot ecosystem. Keeping the area north of Fish Lake and an area south of Blacklead Mountain and Williams Peak available for winter motorized, and a corridor along the state line trail open for mountain biking, would best meet the Forest's goals and objectives for sustainable recreation and social sustainability.

Mallard Larkins

The Mallard Larkins roadless area is one of the largest roadless areas in north Idaho. The 255,700-acre area is split between the Nez Perce-Clearwater, 126,300 acres, and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, 129,400 acres. The Mallard Larkins has long been recognized for its special features and values. In 1969 a 30,500-acre portion of the area, encompassing its highest peaks, was designated as a Pioneer Area. This area is popular for hikers and stock users who seek a primitive experience with rugged mountain peaks, high mountain lakes and 360-degree vistas. There is no grazing, no snowmobiling and one mining claim. Motorized use is prohibited; however, summer motorized use is known to occur, primarily in the western and southern portions of the roadless area. Mountain biking is also popular in the southern portion, in the Cold Springs and Pot Mountain Ridge areas.

Most of the Mallard Larkins area is primitive and semi primitive non-motorized ROS and offers outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Natural integrity and ecological processes are high and functioning with little modern human influence. About half of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems and it contains 2,159 acres of whitebark pine habitat. It is 75 percent within NRV, which is above average as compared to the other roadless areas.

The area supports big game species including deer, elk, moose, black bear, and mountain lions, and is a primary area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater that supports a stable population of mountain goats. Consequently, the area is very popular with hunters seeking a primitive hunting experience. This undisturbed area also provides connectivity for wide-ranging species, particularly grizzly bear roaming from the Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet Yakk and Selkirk ecosystems into the Bitterroot ecosystem. The area sits on a divide between three major river systems: the St. Joe, Little North Fork Clearwater, and North Fork Clearwater rivers. Headwater streams originating in the Mallard Larkins are an important source of clean, cold water to these rivers.

The long-standing recognition of the special values of the Mallard Larkins Pioneer Area, the intact primeval character, and opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation in and around the Pioneer Area indicates this area would best meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives and desired conditions for ecological sustainability and primitive recreation opportunity managed as recommended wilderness. Management of the southern portion consistent with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme, and the most-western portion managed under the Primitive theme, would maintain these areas in support of the established motorized and mechanized recreation activities. Collectively, providing this array of recreation opportunity from primitive to motorized, without conflict, would support the Forest's goals, objectives and desired conditions for sustainable recreation and social sustainability.

Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork

Eighty-one percent of the Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork roadless area is primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized. Eighty-one percent of the area is within the NRV, and it has a small amount whitebark pine habitat. Ninety-nine percent of the area is classified as Primitive under the Idaho Roadless Rule. This area adjoins front country along 43 percent of its boundary. The remainder abuts the Idaho Panhandle National Forest recommended wilderness or other Idaho roadless areas. Due to its configuration, topography, and high boundary to area ratio there is high opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation and reduced boundary management concerns. There is some summer motorized use but there is no known recurring snowmobiling activity.

There is no grazing, fireline, timber harvest, or mining claims. Due to the varied topography and dense vegetation, external sights and sounds only penetrate the margins of the area. Considering all of this, apparent naturalness is high in this area, ecological processes are functioning, natural integrity is high and opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation is high.

This Idaho roadless area is adjacent to portions of two other national forests to the north that are not recommended wilderness and Nez Perce-Clearwater Management Area 3 to the south. Given this, this area warrants consideration for management activities, primarily prescribed and wildland fire, to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire that may threaten the timber and other values in these adjacent areas. Additionally, use of wildland fire will contribute to meeting Nez Perce-Clearwater desired conditions as well as the continuation of the area's natural integrity and functioning ecological processes. For these reasons, the area would best meet forest plan goals and objectives managed under direction of the Idaho Roadless Rule Primitive theme rather than as recommended wilderness.

Moose Mountain

Two thirds of this area are primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classes. Twenty-eight percent is roaded natural due to its west boundary adjacent to Road #250 and southern and eastern boundaries along Road #255. The opportunity for solitude is low because of these two roads and, to the north, by extensive timber harvesting. Sights and sounds from vehicles on these roads and management activities are readily apparent throughout the entire area.

There are no structures or cabins, no grazing, no snowmobiling and minimal summer motorized incursions. There is a high number of mining claims and evidence of past mining activity, with some recent activity. Except for some evidence of past human activity and recent mining activity, apparent naturalness and natural integrity are high and ecological processes are functioning naturally.

Moose Mountain Idaho roadless area is not recommended for wilderness because of its pronounced lack of opportunity for solitude. Additionally, managing the area in compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Primitive and Backcountry/Restoration will contribute toward meeting Forest desired conditions and ensuring continuation of the area's high natural integrity and functioning ecological processes.

North Fork Spruce-White Sand

Northfork Spruce-White Sand is an irregularly shaped Idaho Roadless area that is approximately 14 miles long and ¼ to 5½ miles in width. It is bounded on the south and east by the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, to the west by Road #360, and Roads #368 and #369 to the north. Within the Idaho Roadless Area is Colt Killed Creek, a river that has been found suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system through this decision (see Rivers Recommended as Suitable in Appendix i.). The northeast adjoins lands that are in checkerboard private ownership and MA1 lands. There are no structures, mining claims or grazing. Two roads intrude into the area that affect natural integrity and solitude in areas proximate to them. Two thirds of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems and 63 percent is within the NRV. Natural integrity is generally high, opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is high and apparent naturalness is high.

Generally, the area is, and has been, popular for recreational activities throughout the year. The primary roads in the area provide access for hunting, hiking, backpacking, fishing, scenery, and wildlife viewing, driving for pleasure, photography, and trails into the Selway-Bitterroot

Wilderness. Snowmobiling has been a popular activity in this area for many years and is increasing in popularity. In more recent years the area has become popular for mountain biking when the area is free of snow. Given the popularity of these established uses and the access that is in place to support them, combined with the suitable wild and scenic river status given to Colt Killed Creek as part of this decision, the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho roadless area would best contribute to the Forest's objectives for sustainable recreation through management in compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Primitive and Backcountry/Restoration and through the interim protection measures for suitable wild and scenic rivers rather than recommended wilderness. Additionally, allowing these well-established uses through this allocation would serve to reduce management and compliance issues if they were restricted through designation as recommended wilderness.

North Lochsa Slope

Approximately 40 percent of the North Lochsa Slope roadless area is adjacent to front country with the rest adjoining other Idaho roadless areas or wilderness. Seventy percent of the area is in the Idaho Roadless Area primitive theme and 12 percent in Special Area – Historical and Tribal Significance. There are 14,300 acres of historical or Tribal significance associated with the Nimiipuu National Historic Trail, Lolo Motorway (Road #500), and Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. The U.S. Highway 12 corridor provides the southern boundary, and the Lolo Motorway provides much of the northwest boundary. Several low standard roads intrude into the area. There are no mining claims or grazing in the area. The roads in and around the area are very popular and provide access for hunting, hiking, backpacking, fishing, scenery and wildlife viewing, cultural and traditional uses, and driving for pleasure. Snowmobiling occurs on these roads as well and there is a groomed snowmobile trail along the north boundary. Physical evidence of man's activities is present; however, their impacts are relatively minor to the natural integrity of the area. While there are areas that provide opportunity for solitude, the presence of roads on the ridgetops and noise from U.S. Highway 12 reduces this opportunity.

Sixty-three percent of the area is within the NRV, and 73 percent is in underrepresented ecosystems. There is a 1,300-acre RNA within the area. Natural integrity is high and ecological processes are functioning naturally. This roadless area is part of a larger area that historically was important big game habitat. However, ecological changes through vegetation succession have reduced its utility due to reduced forage production. This has resulted in reduction in big game numbers and a subsequent reduction in hunter success.

The North Lochsa Slope Idaho roadless area is lacking opportunity for solitude but provides opportunity for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities throughout the year. It is also important for cultural and traditional uses. Additionally, the area presents opportunity for management actions to meet desired conditions for big game habitat by improving forage production. This decision also finds suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system Fish Creek and Hungry Creek located partially within the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area (see Rivers Recommended as Suitable in Appendix i.). The suitability determination for these two rivers provides interim protection measures for the outstandingly remarkable values, including fish and river dependent wildlife (harlequin duck). The fisheries resource in particular is one of the highest values of this roadless area and my suitability determination provides interim protection measures and a path to permanent protections for that resource. For these reasons this area would best meet Forest Plan goals and objectives managed in compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Primitive and Special Area of Historic or

Tribal Significance and the decision to find Fish and Hungry Creeks suitable and apply interim protection measures, rather than recommended wilderness.

Pot Mountain

This area is a very compact roadless area. About half the area abuts roadless areas and half is adjacent to front country. The area is practically surrounded by adjacent roads; Road #250 to the south and east, and Road #247 to the west. Road #711 lies to the north, northeast, but is not immediately adjacent to the area. There are no structures, mining claims, grazing, or snowmobiling in the area. There is minor disturbance to the natural integrity of the area. Fifty-nine percent is within the NRV, and 71 percent of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems. There are 1,444 acres of noxious weeds along road corridors around the perimeter of the area that presents management concerns. There are no firelines or timber harvest. Generally, natural integrity and apparent naturalness are high.

The area provides a mix of recreation opportunity spectrum classes (ROS), with 59 percent semi-primitive non-motorized, 22 percent semi-primitive motorized and 19 percent roaded natural. Noise from adjacent roads is obvious around the perimeter of the area. Several trails provide access throughout the area and to many of the highest peaks. Many of the trails are open to single-track motorized use, and mountain biking is increasingly popular for those looking for more extreme riding. These activities reduce opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation for those seeking that experience. Pot Mountain Ridge is a popular hiking and biking area that allows for an expansive view of the surrounding area.

Easy access from adjacent roads, the opportunity for single-track motorized use which is limited on the Nez Perce-Clearwater, and the available mix of ROS recreation experiences makes this area valuable in providing an array of recreational activities in support of sustainable recreation. For these reasons this area would best meet the Forest's goals and objectives for sustainable recreation managed in accordance with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry/Restoration theme rather than as recommended wilderness that would eliminate the opportunity for motorized and mechanized recreation.

Rapid River

This roadless area is adjacent to Hells Canyon Wilderness and surrounds the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River. The total roadless area is 78,700 acres with 21,000 acres on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and 57,700 acres on the Payette National Forest. Eighty-seven percent of the portion of the area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater NF is within active grazing allotments. There are no cabins or lookouts but there are two stock bridges across Rapid River. There is no mining, fireline or timber harvest in the area. Ninety-three percent of the area is in semi-primitive non-motorized or primitive ROS. Seventy-five percent is underrepresented ecosystems and 79 percent is within the NRV, although there is no Whitebark Pine habitat. Except for the evidence of grazing, the apparent naturalness and natural integrity are generally high, and the area has a high opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater manages approximately 27 percent of the total Rapid River Idaho roadless area, with the remainder managed by the Payette National Forest. The Payette does not recommend its portion for wilderness. To maintain consistency across unit boundaries and to allow flexibility for fire management, range management and recreation management, and because a primary value of the area is Rapid River itself, which is a designated Wild and Scenic

River, the Rapid River Idaho roadless area is best managed under the direction of the Idaho Roadless Rule Wildland Recreation theme in conjunction with the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River direction.

Rawhide

This 6,000-acre Idaho roadless area lies between two other roadless areas, sharing 75 percent of its boundary with them. The northern boundary is defined by the Stateline National Recreation Trail and is adjacent to the Lolo National Forest. Much of the area burned in the early 1900s and ecological processes have continued with little impact from human activity. Eighty-seven percent of the area is within the NRV, and the area provides a small amount of whitebark pine habitat. There are no structures, mining claims, firelines, timber harvest, or grazing. Apparent naturalness is high. About half of the area provides a roaded natural setting. The remainder provides a semi-primitive non-motorized ROS. The eastern boundary is adjacent to Road #250, a high speed, well-traveled road. Sights and sounds from this road impact most of the area and reduce the opportunity for solitude. The west boundary is defined by an old road, Road #5428, which is popular for mountain bikers along with the Stateline National Recreation Trail and Road #250.

The small size and narrow shape of this area is heavily impacted by sights and sounds from Road #250 and offers little opportunity for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Apparent naturalness is high, which can be maintained through management under the Idaho Roadless Area Primitive theme. For these reasons, the Rawhide roadless area would best meet Nez Perce-Clearwater objectives managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule Primitive theme rather than as recommended for wilderness.

Sneakfoot Meadows

This area shares 49 percent of its boundary with the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho roadless area, and 37 percent with the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Road #360 provides the east boundary and Road #362 is the northwest boundary. Road #368 intrudes into the area and provides access to Kooskooskia Meadows and a trailhead into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

Fourteen percent abuts front country and a very small piece of private land. Sixty-five percent of the area is within the NRV and there are over 5,000 acres of whitebark pine habitat. Apparent naturalness and natural integrity are high. The area resembles the adjacent Selway-Bitterroot wilderness. There are no administrative structures, cabins, mining, or grazing but there is a minimal amount of fireline construction and roadside timber harvest. There is a SNOTEL site at Savage Pass under a special use permit to the USGS. This site is small in scale and not readily apparent. The area has high water quality and watershed condition. Because of topography and vegetation external sights and sounds do not impact far into the area. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is high. There is a need for restoration of aquatic resources to support salmon and steelhead recovery in the area as well as opportunities to reduce fuels in the expanding wildland urban interface east of Powell and west of Lolo Pass.

The area is currently managed under a mix of Idaho Roadless Rule themes: Wildland Recreation, Primitive, Backcountry/Restoration and 2,000 acres of Special Area for the Sneakfoot Meadows Research Natural Area. The area is 72 percent semi-primitive non-motorized and 27 percent semi-primitive motorized summer ROS.

The Lolo Pass and Powell areas are popular for snowmobiling due to high elevation parking, and reliable snow. A groomed snowmobile trail system is located north of the Idaho roadless area and

there has been recurrent snowmobile use in the roadless area. Fires in recent years have created more open, rideable areas off the groomed system. Road #360 to the east of the roadless area is a popular route off the groomed system. Consequently, this area has become increasingly popular for snowmobiling. The area also has a low amount (6 to 20 miles) of summer motorized opportunity, and, in recent years, mountain biking has become more prevalent as well.

The increasing popularity, and suitability, of the Sneakfoot Meadows roadless area for winter motorized recreation and summer mountain biking is supported by its proximity to Powell and Lolo Pass that provide services for these recreationists. Maintaining this area for these recreational activities in an area that otherwise provides primitive and unconfined recreational opportunities best meets the Forest's desired condition for sustainable recreation. In addition, this is a critical area to be able to reduce fire risk in the expanding wildland urban interface at Powell and Lolo Pass as well as potential future aquatic restoration to support salmon and steelhead recovery. For these reasons, Sneakfoot Meadows best meets the Nez Perce-Clearwater goals and objects managed in accordance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Wildland Recreation, Primitive, Backcountry/Restoration, and Special Area rather than as recommended wilderness. Allowing and providing for these recreational pursuits reduces management and enforcement needs that would be necessary to eliminate these activities from an area that is well-suited and popular for them. Management under the Idaho Roadless Rule themes also facilitates any management or research activities associated with the Research Natural Area that potentially could be restricted un recommended wilderness.