



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Pacific
Southwest
Region

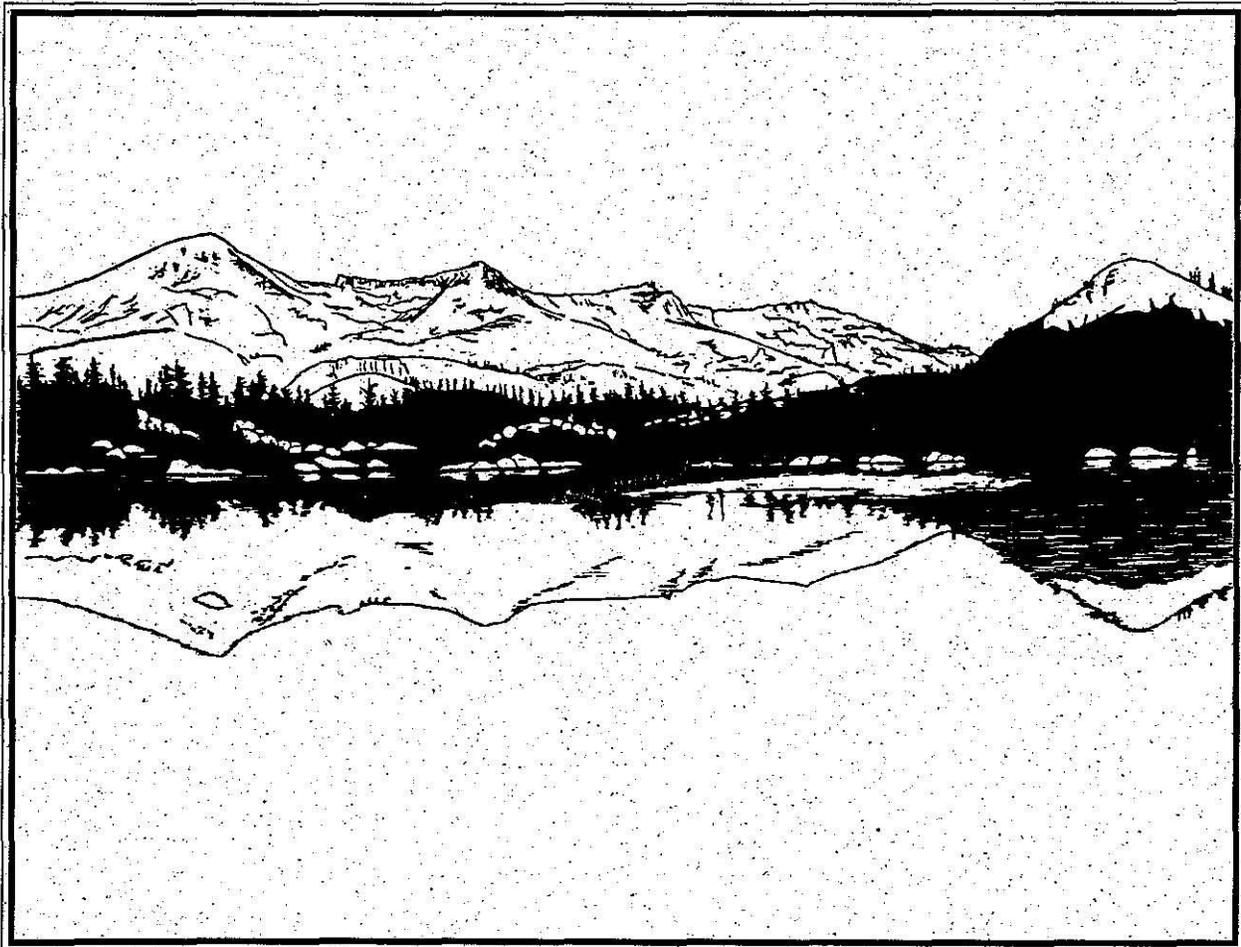
Eldorado National
Forest and
Lake Tahoe Basin
Management Unit

November, 1998



Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines

Record of Decision



**RECORD OF DECISION
USDA Forest Service**

**Final Environmental Impact Statement
Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines**

**Eldorado National Forest and Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
El Dorado County, California**

THE DECISION AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

It is our decision to implement Alternative 7, the Preferred Alternative, as outlined in the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and adopt the accompanying Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment.

This Alternative combines possible management actions that were analyzed as part of Alternatives 1 through 6 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines. The Opportunity Class descriptions, allocations, indicators and standards for Alternative 7 described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS and included in the Land Management Plan Amendment will be implemented. Additional direction that is part of Alternative 7 includes Management Considerations Common to all Alternatives and Management Requirements/Mitigation Measures Common to all Action Alternatives contained in the FEIS (Chapter 2, Sections C and D), also incorporated in the Land Management Plan Amendment. Direction on recreational shooting, implementation of the permit/quota system, outfitter/guides, recreational stock, fixed anchors (climbing bolts), and peak registers may be found there. The language in the DEIS regarding a proposed moratorium on placement of new fixed anchors in the Desolation Wilderness has been removed in the FEIS, deferring to the negotiated rule making process now being implemented to clarify national policy about permanent fixed anchors in wilderness.

In reaching this decision, we took to heart the direction in the Wilderness Act of 1964 that says wilderness is to be "...protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which...has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..". Through application of the Limits of Acceptable Change process, we sought to identify the best balance of providing for and distributing visitor use without compromising the wilderness character or impairing the values for which the wilderness was created. Implementing Alternative 7 will move the Desolation Wilderness as a whole toward a more pristine condition by adopting new Opportunity Class descriptions and allocations together with desired conditions for the Desolation Wilderness. The Limits of Acceptable Change indicator standards provide a framework to monitor both social and environmental conditions and ensure that desired conditions are achieved. The Eagle Lake Special Management Area was developed in the Lake Tahoe Basin in recognition of the special management needs and education opportunities associated with a very popular destination that is easily accessible to great numbers of people, yet lies with a designated wilderness area.

How major issues were considered and addressed:

Fire - Within limits providing for public safety, prescribed fire (both prescribed natural fire and management-ignited prescribed fire) will be allowed in the Desolation to restore fire to its natural role in the ecosystem. This is consistent with the goal to allow natural processes to play their role in Wilderness, and, in addition, will help reduce existing unnatural fuel buildups in forested areas that could result in wildfires.

Range - Standards to protect riparian conditions will be enacted, and monitoring requirements are established in the Monitoring Schedule in the Land Management Plan Amendment. Cattle in the Wrights Lake Allotment will not be herded into the Maude Lake, Gertrude Lake or Tyler Lake basins. The permittee will continue not herding cattle into the Sylvia, Lyons, Twin and Grouse Lake areas. If the Pearl Lake Allotment is filled, the permittee will not herd cattle into the Lawrence Lake Basin. These herding strategies are intended to reduce conflicts between grazing and recreation use in heavily used lake basins. The Rockbound Allotment, vacant since 1988, will be closed. Only 17% of the allotment is considered suitable for grazing, and the suitable areas are widely dispersed. Before the allotment was vacated, it required active herding on a daily basis, resulting in high operation costs. Closure of this allotment will eliminate the potential for future grazing and recreation conflicts in that area, as well as allow the area to return to a more natural condition.

Water Quality - As in Alternative 3, regulations will require mandatory 200-foot sanitation setbacks from water, trails and campsites for human waste disposal. Users will be required to pack out or bury toilet paper. Development or use of latrines will be prohibited in the Wilderness. Sanitation setbacks as well as closure of inappropriate campsites will minimize human caused enrichment of wilderness waters. Requirements for monitoring of water quality have been included in the Monitoring Schedule in the Land Management Plan Amendment.

Wood fires - Wood campfires will continue to be prohibited in all areas of the Desolation. Fully enclosed camp stoves will be permitted. The prohibition on wood campfires, first implemented in 1990, has been effective in reducing the incidence of human caused fires, reducing impacts to vegetation from firewood collection, and reducing visual impacts of fire rings and scarring of rocks in the Desolation Wilderness. Many of the public comments on this issue supported continuation of the prohibition.

Visitor Impacts - Educational materials will recommend that visitors camp in appropriate sites at least 100-feet from water, trails and other campsites. Individual campsites will be removed based on biophysical and social factors, and areas revegetated as needed. These measures will reduce physical impacts in sensitive areas and enhance solitude. Camping will be restricted to designated sites within 500 feet of the lakes in three zones: Eagle Lake, Hemlock Lake and Lake of the Woods, and within 500 feet of Avalanche Lake. This will reduce lake shore impacts in several high use areas of particular concern. In all areas of the Wilderness, recreational stock use will be limited to 2 stock per person, with a limit of 12 stock per party. There will be a minimum setback of 200 feet from water and 100 feet from campsites and trails for holding of recreational livestock. Stock limits are designed to be consistent with human group size limits and setbacks for disposal of human waste.

Quotas and Group Size - The maximum group size will be 12 throughout Desolation Wilderness to minimize social and resource impacts associated with large groups. An initial overnight camping quota of 564 persons will be implemented. This is lower than the current quota, but will still accommodate current use levels on all but the peak days. The quota will serve to put a cap on future increases in overnight use. Since it will be managed by zone, it will reduce impacts associated with concentrated use at popular destinations within the Wilderness. The quota dates will be extended to Memorial Day weekend (Friday) through September 30 of each year, inclusive. The extension will add several additional high use weekends that are before and after the current quota period. This alternative emphasizes indirect methods of managing day use in high use areas including Eagle Lake, Twin Bridges, Echo Lake, Wrights Lake area, and Rockbound Lake Area. Indirect methods include development of loop and other trails outside Wilderness to relieve pressure on the Wilderness; parking lot relocation, capacity adjustments and management strategies; and stabilization and restoration work. Day use quotas will not be implemented unless the indirect methods and other options listed in Appendix A are not successful in meeting indicator standards. Public comment regarding proposed day use quotas was mixed. Implementation for a day use quota would be complex and costly. We believe the indirect measures identified will be preferable to the hard restrictions that a day use quota would impose.

Outfitter Guides - Two equestrian outfitter/guides and five camps will be permitted to offer outfitter/guide services. In addition, 128 service days (up to 2 guides) will be made available for winter guided use and 500 service days each year for other outfitter guide services subject to established criteria. Outfitter/guide services make up a small percentage of the overall recreation use in the Desolation Wilderness. This decision carries forward existing guided use as a legitimate use of the Wilderness and will result in more direct management of that use through permit requirements. It will allow for some additional guided use subject to established criteria.

Aircraft Over flights - The Forests will not recommend that the FAA consider any changes to the existing 2000 foot AGL (above ground level) advisory. Numerous safety concerns were raised during the public comment period regarding regulation of flight levels, particularly due to the close proximity of the Desolation Wilderness to the South Lake Tahoe Airport. The Forests will, instead, work with local airports, aviation committees and pilots to minimize violations of the advisory through increased educational activities.

Dogs - The El Dorado County leash law will be enforced in the Desolation Wilderness where dogs at large are an impediment or hazard to the safety or convenience of any person, or where dogs are harassing or molesting wildlife. This will provide for consistency between agencies in addressing potential problems associated with dogs.

Trails - No new trails will be added to the trail system within the Wilderness. Areas adjacent to, but outside the wilderness will be targeted for additional use and new trail development to relieve pressure on the Wilderness. Trails will be re-routed in sensitive areas, and stream crossings will be repaired, reducing impacts that may be caused by the existing trail system. Trails will be managed for either hiker or hiker and equestrian use according to assigned difficulty standards of Easiest, More Difficult, or Most Difficult. Difficulty standards are assigned in keeping with the Opportunity Class Objectives for each area. Current trail signing will be maintained. No new wilderness trailheads will be built. Facilities at existing trailheads may be modified or relocated if needed to protect resources or improve health and safety or accessibility. There will be no net increase in parking provided at the Lyons Creek, Van Vleck, and Eagle Falls Trailheads, where the Wilderness is the primary destination. Limits on trailhead development will help prevent increases in day use that could be associated with those type of improvements.

This decision is tiered to the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and the Lake Tahoe Basin Land and Resource Management Plan and EIS, both completed in 1988. The Forest Plans discuss wilderness land allocations and provided general direction for wilderness use and management. They also required completion of addition specific management direction for the Desolation Wilderness which the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines FEIS, ROD and Land Management Plan Amendment provides. The Forest Plans, as amended, and their EIS's are incorporated here by reference. By means of this decision, the 1978 Desolation Wildernesses Management Plan, referenced and carried forward in the Land and Resource Management Plans, will be superseded, to be replaced by the new guidelines contained in the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment dated November, 1998.

In making this decision, we have considered all documents and materials in the administrative record including public input received during the scoping period; the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) dated January, 1997; public comment received on the DEIS; the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Final Environmental Impact Statement dated November, 1988; the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment dated November, 1998; and the Biological Evaluation for the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines, dated November 1998. The record is available for review at the Eldorado National Forest Supervisor's Office in Placerville, California.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CONDUCTED

The Forest Service Manual 1950.2 and the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 prescribe a series of planning steps to be followed to comply with NEPA requirements. They were followed in the development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The first of these steps is the scoping process. Through scoping, planners refine the proposed action (in this case, development of revised management guidelines for the Desolation Wilderness), identify public issues and management concerns, and establish an interdisciplinary (ID) team. Through this process, public input is solicited.

Public involvement for the preparation of the EIS officially began on May 13, 1992, with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register (see Appendix). News releases were issued to the media on May 15, 1992.

Four public scoping meetings were conducted in 1992. They were held in Placerville on June 17th, South Lake Tahoe on June 18th, Sacramento on June 23rd, and Oakland on June 25th. The main objectives of these meetings were to describe the NEPA and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) processes, answer questions, and obtain public suggestions for issues and concerns to be addressed.

In addition to the public scoping meetings, approximately 400 individuals, agencies and organizations were mailed a "scoping letter", informing them of the proposal and soliciting their concerns. The response period ended on July 10, 1992, and resulted in 49 written public responses. After the closing date of the scoping period, all of the public responses received were read and a list was developed of topics that covered the range of issues addressed. These topics were organized into categories. Finally comments were collated into topics and categories to avoid duplication and to describe the diversity of opinions expressed. This content analysis summary is part of the planning files.

Two open houses were held in May 1994 (Placerville and South Lake Tahoe) to inform the public of draft management alternatives being considered for the Desolation. Public responses from these meetings are part of the planning file.

The Desolation Wilderness Management guidelines Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released for public review January 16, 1997, and public comments were accepted through April 4, 1997. One hundred-eighty-eight letters or other responses were received. The public comment was reviewed and used to help develop Alternative 7, the Preferred Alternative, as presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Public records of the planning process are available for review at the Eldorado National Forest, 100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667.

The issues which are considered in the FEIS address public and management concerns. The public meetings, scoping letters, and specialists' input identified a range of issues and concerns with regard to conditions in and around Desolation Wilderness and their management. The following issues were used to develop and analyze the first six alternatives that were presented in the DEIS, and ultimately Alternative 7, the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the results of an analysis of seven alternatives which were developed for possible management of the 63,691 acre Desolation Wilderness. The Alternatives are described in detail in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Alternative 1

This alternative would emphasize recreation use of the wilderness. Although wilderness permits and the overnight quota would be maintained, use would increase under this alternative through an increase in the overnight quota to 793 persons per day and continued increases in day use. Some facilities are proposed, such as wilderness toilets, to mitigate the impacts of increased use. Prescribed natural fire would be allowed to occur in late season in Opportunity Class 2 only; current range management would continue, however standards would be implemented to protect riparian areas; campfires would be permitted in established fire rings; camping would occur in all zones with no limits on the number of recreational stock per group; 3 equestrian guides, 2 winter guides, 2 day hike guides and 5 camps would offer services under commercial permit; no actions would be taken to change the existing 2000 foot AGL advisory for aircraft; current management of dogs would be maintained; the existing trail system would be expanded by adding loop trails in high use areas and hiker routes to the system; and major trails would be hardened and unimproved trailheads upgraded. Under this alternative, approximately 50 % of the Wilderness would be classified under the ROS system as semi-primitive (Opportunity Classes 3 & 4), and 50% as primitive (Opportunity Class 2).

Alternative 2 (No Action)

Alternative 2 would continue current management guidelines contained in the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) for both the Eldorado National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit. The 1978 Desolation Wilderness Management Plan would continue to provide supplementary direction. Management direction and regulations vary in some cases between the two units. The current overnight quota of 700 persons per day would be continued, and there would be no day use quota. All fires would continue to be suppressed; current range management would continue; the special order prohibiting wood fires would continue; camping would occur in all zones with no limits on the number of recreational stock per group; 2 equestrian guides and 1 camp would continue to offer services under permit; no recommendations would be made to the FAA to change the existing 2000 foot AGL advisory for aircraft; current management of dogs would be continued; and current trail system and signing would be maintained. Approximately 37 % of the Desolation now meets the ROS definition of semi-primitive (Opportunity Classes 3 and 4), and 63% primitive, but not pristine, condition (Opportunity Class 2). Conditions in some heavily used lake basins making up approximately 3% of the area are considered to be outside the range of conditions acceptable under the Wilderness Act due to crowding, damage to vegetation and soils.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would place an emphasis on enhancement of the primitive recreation experience of users through reduced use in specific areas and reducing conflicts that take away from a primitive recreation experience. An initial overnight quota of 582 persons per day would be implemented. This is lower than the current quota, but still above current use levels. The quota dates would be extended. The number of day users is reduced slightly through application of a day use quota in Opportunity Class 4 areas; however, there are fewer use restrictions and limits than proposed in Alternatives 4, 5 and 6. This alternative would provide increased protection for Wilderness resources through implementation of indicator standards and monitoring. Prescribed planned and natural fire would be allowed under specified conditions; herding strategies would be implemented to minimize conflicts between grazing and recreation at popular lake basins; mandatory 200' setbacks would be required for disposal of human waste; "No trace" campfires would be permitted in designated areas in Opportunity Classes 1 and 2; Some Opportunity Class 4 areas would be restricted to day use only; Number of recreation stock would be limited and setbacks required; 2 equestrian, 2 winter, and five camps would be permitted to offer services; 250 service days would be available for individual guided trips; a 2,000 foot mandatory AGL would be recommended to the FAA; dogs would be permitted on leashes in all areas of the Wilderness; areas outside wilderness would be targeted for additional trails to relieve pressure on the wilderness; no new trailheads would be built; and the Eagle Falls bridge would be removed. Under this alternative, approximately 26 percent of the area will be classified as semi-primitive (Opportunity Classes 3 and 4), and 74% primitive (Opportunity Classes 1 and 2).

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 would reduce use, with an emphasis on improved wilderness social conditions and physical restoration of ecosystems. An emphasis is given to returning to natural ecosystem conditions through more widespread use of prescribed fire, lower group sizes, and lower visitor use. The initial overnight quota would be 495 persons per day. This is lower than the current quota, but would still accommodate current use levels on all but the peak days. A day use quota would be implemented in all areas. Within limits providing for public safety, prescribed fire would be allowed within the wilderness; herding strategies would be implemented to minimize conflicts between grazing and recreation in popular lake basins; the Rockbound grazing allotment would be closed; a 200' sanitation setback would be imposed; wood campfires would continue to be prohibited; some areas would be restricted to day use only; recreational stock group sizes would be limited; 2 equestrian outfitter/guides and five camps would be permitted to offer commercial services; a 2000 foot AGL mandatory minimum ceiling would be recommended to the FAA; dogs would be permitted on leashes; areas outside the wilderness would be emphasized for additional trails to reduce pressure on the wilderness; Trailhead capacities would be adjusted; no new trailheads would be built; and the Eagle Falls Bridge would be removed. Twenty percent of the Desolation would be managed for a semi-primitive experience (Opportunity Classes 3 and 4), while 80 percent of the area would be managed for a primitive conditions (Opportunity Classes 1 and 2).

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 would reduce use further and place increased emphasis on resource protection and a return to natural ecosystem conditions. The alternative contains measures which allow for return to natural ecosystem conditions through broader management of visitor use and additional considerations for natural fire. The initial overnight camping quota of 402 persons would be implemented, and a day use quota would be implemented in all areas. Prescribed fire would be allowed in all areas; herding strategies would be implemented to minimize conflicts between grazing and recreation in popular lake basins; the Rockbound grazing allotment would be closed; a 200' sanitation setback would be imposed; wood campfires would continue to be prohibited; some areas would be restricted to day use only; recreational stock group sizes would be limited; 2 equestrian outfitter/guides and 1 camp would be permitted to offer commercial services; a 2000 foot AGL mandatory minimum ceiling would be recommended to the FAA; dogs would be permitted on leashes; areas outside the wilderness would be emphasized for additional trails to reduce pressure on the wilderness; Trails in opportunity classes 1 and 2 would be removed when possible; and trails would be maintained for resource protection only. Trailhead capacities would be adjusted; no new trailheads would be built; and the Eagle Falls Bridge would be removed. Approximately 10% of the area is managed to semi-primitive standards (Opportunity Class 3), and 90% to primitive standards (Opportunity classes 1 and 2).

Alternative 6

Alternative 6 would place the most stringent controls on human influences in order to return the Desolation to its most natural condition. The human benefits derived from wilderness under this alternative would be dependent on the naturalness of the wilderness ecosystem. Visitor use levels would drop dramatically. An initial overnight quota of 264 persons would be implemented, substantially lower than the current quota. A day use quota, lower than in Alternative 5, would be implemented in all areas. Campsite areas at lakes would be restored to achieve more natural conditions. Prescribed fire would be allowed in all areas; herding strategies would be implemented to minimize conflicts between grazing and recreation in popular lake basins; the Rockbound grazing allotment would be closed; allotments would be rested if indicator standards are not met; visitors would be required to pack out human waste and toilet paper; wood campfires would continue to be prohibited; some areas would be restricted to day use only; the number of recreational stock per group would be reduced; 2 equestrian outfitter/guides would offer drop camp services and day rides in Opportunity Class 2 areas only; a 2000 foot AGL mandatory minimum ceiling would be recommended to the FAA; dogs would be prohibited in the Desolation; all but the major trails would be removed, and those remaining would be maintained in primitive condition; trailhead capacities would be adjusted; and no new trailheads would be built. Heavily used lake basins close to the wilderness boundary would be managed to provide Opportunity Class 2 conditions. All other areas would be managed as Class 1 areas to provide the few users with pristine condition. All areas would be rated as primitive on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.

Alternative 7, the Selected (and Preferred) Alternative

Alternative 7 represents a combination of management actions that were analyzed as part of Alternatives 1 through 6 of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines. See the "Decision and Reasons for the Decision" for a description of how major issues were addressed in Alternative 7. Approximately 22% of the area will be managed to semi-primitive standards (Opportunity Classes 3 and 4) and 78 % to primitive standards (Opportunity classes 1 and 2). Separate standards were developed for the Eagle Lake Special Management Area (less than 1% of total acreage) address the unique management concerns and opportunities in that location.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

"Environmentally-preferable" means the alternative that best meets section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. Of the 7 alternatives considered, Alternative 6 would result in the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protect, preserve, and enhance historical, cultural, and natural resources.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT

This decision will amend the Land and Resource Management Plans on both the Eldorado National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to provide more specific, updated and consistent direction for management of the Desolation Wilderness. It supersedes the 1978 Desolation Wilderness Management Plan.

On the Eldorado National Forest, the Goals, Desired Future Conditions - Opportunity Classes, and Opportunity Class Allocations including the Management Zone and Opportunity Class Map contained in the Desolation Wilderness Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment replaces the following sections of the Eldorado National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as they apply to the Desolation Wilderness: Wilderness Goals (Chapter 4, section B) and Desired Future Conditions (Chapter 4, section C). The new Standards and Guidelines in the Land Management Plan Amendment replace those contained in the Eldorado National Forest LRMP as they apply to the Desolation Wilderness (pages 4-122 through 4-129). The requirements in the Land Management Plan Amendment Monitoring Schedule replace those listed the Land and Resource Management Plan for B - Wilderness for the Desolation Wilderness (page 5-8).

On the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, the Goals, Desired Future Conditions - Opportunity Classes, and Opportunity Class Allocations including the Management Zone and Opportunity Class Map contained in the Desolation Wilderness Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment replaces the Wilderness Goal and Predicted Condition (page IV-11) section of the Lake Tahoe Basin Land and Resource Management Plan as it applies to the Desolation Wilderness. The new Standards and Guidelines in the Desolation Wilderness Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment replace language specific to the Desolation Wilderness in the following sections of Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit LRMP: Management Practices and Forest Wide Standards and Guidelines (page IV-25); and Management Area Direction for the Desolation Wilderness: V. Management Area Standards and Guidelines, VI. Proposed Resolution of Issues and Concerns, and VII. Specific Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements (pages IV-63- V-65). The requirements in the Desolation Wilderness Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment Monitoring Schedule are added to Chapter V. Monitoring and Evaluation.

It is our determination that this Record of Decision represents a non-significant amendment to both Land and Resource Management Plans according to the criteria in 16 USC 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f) and FSM 1922.5 and FSH 1909.12. The changes proposed in this amendment will be implemented late in this planning period (first 10 - 15 years after completion of the Land Management Plans in 1988). The location and size of the area involved in the change are limited, representing only seven percent of the land base in the Eldorado National Forest and approximately fifteen percent in the Lake Tahoe Management Basin Management Unit. The proposed changes add specificity for management of the Desolation. Any changes in the levels of goods and services such as grazing and recreation use that might result from this plan will be very minor. Long term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the forest plans would not be significantly affected. This amendment will further refine and clarify the management prescriptions for the Desolation Wilderness by more clearly defining desired future conditions through the Limits of Acceptable Change planning process and providing specific standards and guidelines for management of the area. These management prescriptions do not, however, significantly change or alter the overall objectives or desired condition of the area or its resources as Wilderness, or the anticipated goods or services to be produced.

APPLICABLE LAWS, REGULATIONS AND POLICY AND THE FINDINGS REQUIRED BY THESE LAWS

Implementation of decisions such as this one must meet legal requirements and public expectations of Forest Service Actions. Most of these requirements stem from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Forest Management Act (NFMA). The primary legislation specific to Wilderness is the Wilderness Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-577). The Purpose and Need Section in the FEIS (page 1-1, C. National Wilderness Management Direction) describes applicable laws, regulations and policies governing management of Wilderness in National Forests.

As required by NEPA, potential "significant environmental effects" have been disclosed. The scope of the action, a reasonable range of alternatives, and site specific environmental effects were assessed as required in the FEIS document.

NFMA requires that all resource management activities be consistent with Forest Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP's). This decision is consistent with both Land and Resource Management Plans in that it fulfills direction in the Land and Resource Management Plans for both the Eldorado National Forest and the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit to review or develop new management strategies for the Desolation during this planning period. This decision is responsive to the need to update our management strategies to address increasing use, associated impacts, and new methodologies available for management of wilderness areas. It provides standards and guidelines for adequate and consistent wilderness management direction between the two National Forest units that manage the Desolation Wilderness.

This decision has been crafted to meet the intent of the Wilderness Act of 1964 and carry out applicable USDA and Forest Service regulations that provide direction for management of Wilderness areas.

This decision is consistent with requirements of the Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1536[a]). A Biological Assessment was not completed because no federally listed threatened or endangered species were found to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed action or any of the alternatives considered. A Biological Evaluation (November 1998) determined that project implementation would not result in a trend toward federal listing for any sensitive species. This complies with Forest Services Manual 2670, ensuring that Forest Service actions avoid effects that could cause a species to become threatened or endangered.

The decision is in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. Section 470f) and implementing regulations, 36 CFR 800, which require consideration of Heritage resource values prior to any federal undertaking.

The decision is also consistent with direction for appropriate land stewardship as described in the Clean Air Act of 1977 and the Clean Water Act of 1972.

IMPLEMENTATION

The direction, standards, guidelines and actions in the decision and the Desolation Wilderness Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment will be implemented no sooner than 30 days after the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability of the EIS, Land Management Plan Amendment and Record of Decision in the Federal Register. The Amendment will be adopted as LMP direction at that time. The time needed to bring all activities into compliance with the new direction for the Desolation Wilderness will vary depending on the type of project. As soon as practicable after approval of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisors will ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, cooperative agreements and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with this direction. New regulations will be implemented in phases. Most regulations are expected to be in place by the year 2000. Specific dates for implementation of some parts of this decision are included in the FEIS.

Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines

Some projects identified in this decision will require further site specific analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, such as trail or trailhead construction, prior to implementation. These analyses will be tiered to the respective Forest Land and Resource Management Plan EIS and the Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines EIS.

All mitigation measures and monitoring requirements specified in the FEIS and the Land Management Plan Amendment are an integral part of this decision and will be carried out as described.

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR, part 217. Appeals must be filed with G. Lynn Sprague, Regional Forester, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111, within 45 days of the date that legal notice of this decision appeared in the Mountain Democrat and the Tahoe Daily Tribune. Appeals must be postmarked or received on or before _____. It is the appellant's responsibility to ensure the appeal complies with 36 CFR 217.9.

At a minimum, a written notice of appeal must: state that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR 217; include the name, address and telephone number of the appellant; identify the decision being appealed; identify the document in which the decision is contained (title, subject, date of decision, names and titles of Deciding Officers); identify the specific portion or portions of the decision that are objectionable; state reasons for objections including issues of fact, law, regulation or policy; identify specific changes sought in the decision. Appeals can be dismissed if they do not meet the minimum requirements in 36 CFR 217.9.

CONTACT PERSON

Questions related to this decision or requests for copies of this FEIS, ROD and Land Management Plan Amendment may be addressed to:

Diana Erickson
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

phone: (530) 622-5061

SIGNATURE AND DATE

It is our decision to implement Alternative 7 of the FEIS and the accompanying Desolation Wilderness Management Guidelines Land Management Plan Amendment.



for **John Phipps, Forest Supervisor**
Eldorado National Forest
100 Forni Road
Placerville, CA 95667

date



For **Juan Palma, Forest Supervisor**
Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit
870 Emerald Bay Road, Suite 1
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

date

