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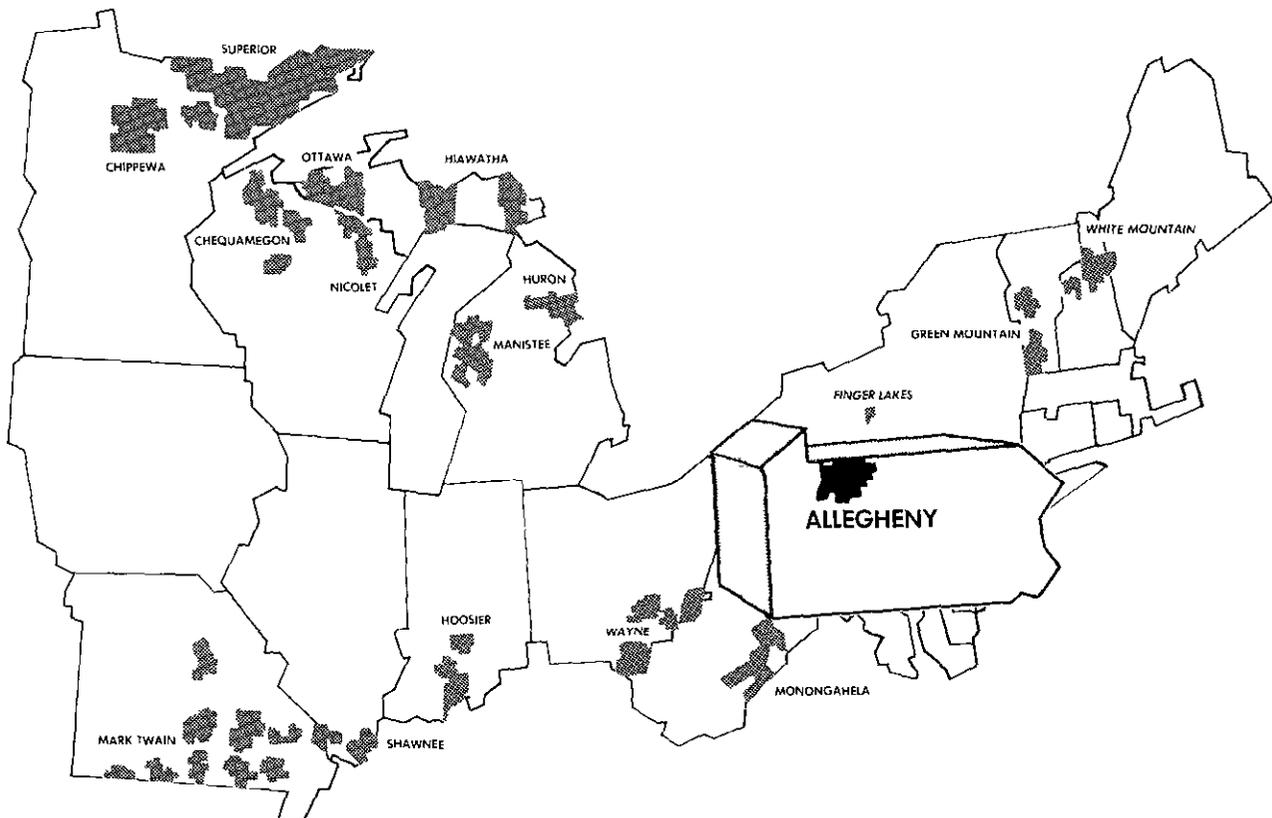
Eastern  
Region



# Record of Decision

## Final Environmental Impact Statement Land and Resource Management Plan

### ALLEGHENY NATIONAL FOREST



RECORD OF DECISION  
for  
USDA, FOREST SERVICE

Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Allegheny National Forest  
Land and Resource Management Plan

Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren Counties, Pennsylvania

ALLEGHENY NATIONAL FOREST  
RECORD OF DECISION  
FOREST PLAN

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## RECORD OF DECISION

USDA, Forest Service, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren Counties, Pennsylvania.

### I. INTRODUCTION

This Record of Decision approves the Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and also gives reasons for the alternative selected as the Forest Plan. Legal references are incorporated in Part XI of this document.

A Forest Plan for each National Forest is required by the rules implementing the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA), as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA). The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide direction for multiple use and the sustained yield of goods and services from National Forest System lands in an environmentally sound manner.

The Plan covers management actions for ten years only. The Plan will be revised in ten years, no later than fifteen years. The Plan can be revised sooner, if conditions or demands change significantly.

The Forest Plan has been prepared following rules established for National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning (36 CFR Part 219). These rules were published in 47FR 43026 on September 30, 1982.

The Forest Plan is a companion document to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS). The Final EIS has been prepared following Council of Environmental Quality rules (40 CFR Part 1500) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The Final EIS describes the range of alternatives considered and discloses their significant environmental effects. Each of these alternatives could be the basis of a Forest Plan. One alternative has been further developed as the Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Planning records contain the detailed information and decisions used in developing the Forest Plan and Final EIS. These records are available for review at the Forest Supervisor's Office: **ALLEGHENY NATIONAL FOREST, 222 LIBERTY STREET, P.O. BOX 847, WARREN, PA. 16365, (814) 723-5150.**

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Introduction

## II. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE FOREST

The Allegheny National Forest sits in the rugged plateau country of northwestern Pennsylvania. Many creeks and streams cut deeply into the plateau, creating a rolling and sometimes steep topography with a 1,300 foot range of elevations.

Such a setting offers many opportunities for recreation. Trails for the hiker, cross-country skier and snowmobiler wind for many miles through the forest. Four beaches, six boat launches, 18 campgrounds, three scenic overlooks, and nine picnic areas satisfy those who prefer developed facilities. Many recreation areas are near the Allegheny Reservoir, a 27-mile lake on the upper Allegheny River, impounded by the Kinzua Dam.

Six of the 10 campgrounds located on the shores of the Allegheny Reservoir can be reached only by boat or on foot. Two scenic overlooks offer magnificent views of the Allegheny Reservoir from atop dramatic formations of bedrock. A third overlook, located near the town of Tidioute, offers a beautiful view of the Allegheny River Valley.

The Tionesta Scenic and Research Natural Areas and Hearts Content Scenic Area feature some of the oldest and largest tracts of virgin beech-hemlock forest in the eastern United States. These three areas offer the public a rare opportunity to view unique ecosystems in a quiet, undisturbed setting.

The Forest also features the Kane Experimental Forest. This 1650 acre tract is administered by the Northeastern Forest Experimental Station as an area of forest research. This type of natural laboratory is essential to scientists if they are to develop new and better forest management practices.

Nearly 10,000 acres of Wilderness, nationally designated in 1984, receives protection on the Allegheny. The largest area is the Hickory Creek Wilderness (9,337 acres), complemented by seven Allegheny River Islands.

Also designated in 1984, the 23,100 acres of the Allegheny National Recreation Area are preserved and protected under the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act. This designation ensures the integrity of natural, scenic, historic, and other values within the area, as well as providing recreation opportunities.

The watersheds of the Allegheny National Forest provide high quality water supplies in amounts that exceed the needs of local communities. Several reservoirs and over 500 miles of streams offer outstanding fishing opportunities, with 71 species available. The State record Northern Pike (33 pounds, 8 ounces, 45-3/4 inches) and Walleye (17 pounds, 9 ounces, 36-1/2 inches) were taken from the Allegheny Reservoir in 1980.

More than 300 species of mammals, including game species such as the white-tailed deer and black bear, provide excellent hunting, as well as opportunities for photographing and watching animals in their natural habitat. Forest populations also include raccoon, gray squirrel, turkey, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and snowshoe hare, red and gray fox, beaver, mink and muskrat. Hundreds of songbirds, along with woodpeckers, hawks, herons, and owls enjoy the woodlands. Bald eagles have been spotted in the Kinzua Dam area.

Allegheny hardwood stands represent the most valuable and widespread timber type on the Forest. This type includes black cherry, red maple, yellow poplar, white ash and sugar maple. The exceptional quality of the black cherry found here makes it highly valued throughout the world for fine furniture and veneers. In 1983, over 61 million board feet of timber were harvested from the Allegheny National Forest.

The Allegheny lies in the heart of Pennsylvania's oil and gas region, only 40 miles from the site of the first oil well in the United States, . In 1981, about 17 percent of the State's total crude oil production came from mineral rights owned by private individuals within the Forest boundary. Because of its high paraffin content, Pennsylvania crude is one of the best lubricating oils in the world.

### III. THE FUTURE FOREST

The Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) is the most useful management tool the Allegheny National Forest has ever had. The Forest Plan will help obtain the goal of better integrated resource, multiple-use management of the Allegheny National Forest.

The Allegheny National Forest (ANF) now has one integrated management plan. In the past, activities were planned and implemented for individual resources. In the future, the Allegheny National Forest will use Forest Plan goals and objectives in an integrated manner to achieve a balance in multiple use.

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The Future Forest

Implementation of the Forest Plan will create changes in the current management of the Allegheny. Developed campgrounds and other recreation areas will increase through a combination of private and public investments. Camping facilities will be expanded at Willow Bay, and a new motel and restaurant complex will be developed near Kinzua Beach. Small-scale campgrounds and boat launches will be constructed along the major river corridors.

Large areas having limited road access will provide for recreation activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, berry picking, and cross-country skiing. Small, cost-efficient campgrounds will be constructed. New hiking and skiing trails will be constructed primarily in areas with limited road access and near campgrounds. The remainder of the Forest will consist of roaded areas managed to provide additional opportunities for motorized recreation activities as well as hiking, hunting, fishing, and skiing. Motorized activities include driving for pleasure, auto camping, and off-road vehicle riding.

Over the decade, timber sales will be increased above current cutting levels, but will remain about the same as that allowed under the 1975 Forest Plan (93 MMBF/Year). The Plan will emphasize financial returns from production of high-quality hardwood sawtimber. During the next ten years, sawtimber production will increase 45 percent above the current level. Even-aged silviculture will dominate, and trees will be harvested at a range of ages. Oak stands will not be cut unless they can be regenerated back to oak. The only exception will be to salvage trees killed by insects or disease.

Herbicides will be used to control unwanted understory vegetation. Forest Service policy is to minimize the use of herbicides.

Wildlife management practices will complement timber practices and lead to increased deer, turkey, and grouse hunting opportunities. Seven thousand acres will be managed intensively for grouse. Letting timber grow older before cutting it and restricting road access will be stressed in several management areas. This should increase mast production (acorns, beechnuts, black cherry seeds) and promote development of more turkey habitat across the Forest. Endangered and threatened wildlife species as well as other species of concern will receive protection and habitat enhancement. Special habitats, such as conifer

stands and openings containing fruit-producing shrubs, will be arranged to benefit small game, non-game and wildlife indicator species. Fishery habitat will be improved to a level slightly higher than what is currently provided.

On the Allegheny National Forest there are approximately 10,000 active oil and gas wells. During the period 1980-1982, an average of 700 new wells were drilled each year.

Nearly 10,000 acres of the Forest will be managed as wilderness, and 23,100 acres will be managed as the Allegheny National Recreation Area. Four areas will be proposed as candidate Research Natural Areas. They are:

- Muzette Tract - (Virgin White Pine and Hemlock)
- Crulls Island - (Virgin Riverine Forest)
- Thompson Island - (Virgin Riverine Forest)
- Sheffield Compartment 126 - (Black Cherry Type)

The planning process strives to identify and resolve issues which concern the public. This plan, developed after careful study of the alternatives, seeks to resolve the issues and concerns related to land and resource management on the Allegheny National Forest.

#### IV. DECISION

This decision approves the Forest Plan that is identified as Alternative D in the Final EIS. Alternative D is further explained in the companion document, the Allegheny National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

This decision is controlled and guided by 36 CFR Part 219.1. This regulation requires that a Forest Plan "shall provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the National Forest System in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner".

A determination of net public benefit cannot be reduced to any kind of single index for comparison of the alternatives in making the decision. All of the information on benefits, costs, public issues, comments on the Draft EIS, and other environmental effects were considered together. Responsiveness to public issues and comments was given particular consideration in the decision making process.

Management direction in the form of goals, objectives, management practices, and standards and guidelines will be followed while working towards the future desired conditions of each management area. The Forest Plan Management Area Map shows where these conditions are to be created.

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Decision

The decision to approve Alternative D narrows the scope of future environmental analyses to be performed for actions arising from the Forest Plan. Future environmental analyses and documents will tier to the Plan's direction and the Final EIS. The Forest Plan and Final EIS are treated as combined documents for purposes of NEPA disclosure and tiering.

V. EXCEPTIONS TO THE DECISION

In 1978, Public Law 95-625 (an amendment to the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act - PL 90-542) identified the Allegheny River from Kinzua Dam to East Brady as a study river. The Forest Service is currently in the process of preparing a legislative EIS for this study river. The draft EIS should be available late in 1986. Following public review, a Final EIS will be transmitted to Congress for consideration.

No decision regarding designation of parts of the Allegheny River as "Wild", "Scenic", or "Recreation" is implied in the Forest Plan. All alternatives considered, along with existing management direction, were designed to protect the river's existing resource values and preserve its eligibility. If Congress passes legislation designating the Allegheny River as a Wild and Scenic River, the Forest Plan will be amended to comply with the legislative requirements.

VI. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This section describes the significant factors forming the basis for the decisions in the Forest Plan. These considerations were derived from the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified through the planning process, as well as from public comments on the Draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan (Appendix C of the Final EIS).

No single factor determined the decision. Rather, all factors were considered and weighed in making the decision that Alternative D comes nearest to providing maximum net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner.

RESPONSE TO MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

One of the major reasons for selecting a proposed action is how well it responds to public issues and management concerns. Many of these issues and concerns represent conflicting viewpoints and may be interpreted differently by different people. Appendix A of the Final EIS describes how these issues and concerns were formulated into what we call "management problems". Management problems describe the conflicting ideas people have about management of the Allegheny National Forest and the outcomes desired from management

activities. These problems guided the development and evaluation of alternatives. For additional information, consult pages A-18 to A-44 of the Final EIS.

### 1. Providing Developed Recreation

The following public issues and management concerns were considered in determining the Forest Plan's response to providing developed recreation. Comparisons between alternatives are based upon long-term projections. Consult the Final EIS, pages 2-49 to 2-53 and C-24 to C-31 for a more detailed discussion of this management problem.

#### Allegheny Reservoir

Some are convinced that the reservoir can accommodate more modern campgrounds and boating facilities and still retain its scenic beauty. Others want to see no additional development and retention of the reservoir's undeveloped character. The majority of respondents supported the latter viewpoint.

The Forest Plan provides for expansion of Willow Bay Campground, development of a motel and restaurant complex adjacent to Kinzua Beach, and construction of two bank fishing trails for the handicapped over the next ten years. In addition, long term projections call for reconstruction of Dewdrop Campground in the third decade. In contrast, Alternatives A and B call for no new developments, and Alternative E has about the same amount of development as projected in the Forest Plan. Alternative C would provide for the most new development, including expansion of three campground/boat launch facilities and construction of two privately-financed resorts in the Kiasutha and Sugar Bay areas.

The Forest Plan achieves the most balanced recreation program for the Allegheny Reservoir. The proposed developments will provide additional capacity to meet expanding recreation demand, and will also correct deficiencies at existing facilities which may have discouraged some recreational use.

Alternatives A and B were not selected because they do not provide additional developed recreation opportunities. Alternatives C and E were not selected because the developments proposed under these alternatives would open up new areas of shoreline for development. Developments planned under Alternative D are located in areas currently developed

for recreation, thus preserving the existing undeveloped character of the Reservoir. The selection of Alternative D also means that less resort-oriented recreation opportunities will be provided during this planning period than possible under either Alternatives C or E.

#### Allegheny and Clarion Rivers and Tionesta Creek

Use studies indicate that boating and fishing on these waterways is increasing, but public access and campgrounds are limited. Some people believe more developed recreation facilities should be provided, while others wish to preserve the shoreline's undeveloped character.

The Forest Plan calls for development of two boat launches and a trailhead parking facility (with toilets) during the first decade. If Forest Plan Management Direction were to continue beyond the first decade, a total of three new campgrounds, two new boat launches, and three new trailheads (eight facilities) would be in place by the end of the fifth decade. In contrast, Alternatives B and C would provide less new development (None and six facilities, respectively), and Alternatives A and E would provide more (Nine facilities each). For more information, see Table 4-3 and the discussion on pages 4-9 to 4-11 of the Final EIS.

Currently, the public is accessing these rivers from roads and many informal boat launches. The Plan would provide safe, properly-spaced, access points containing those facilities necessary for an enjoyable outing. Trailhead parking, toilet and camping facilities would be provided to meet the needs of those individuals desiring a more primitive camping experience.

Alternative D was chosen over Alternatives B and C because their level of new development was too low. Alternative D was chosen over Alternatives A and E because these alternatives (as indicated in Figure 2-3 of the Final EIS) emphasized campground development over boat launches, and a more balanced program was desirable.

Most of the public who voiced an opinion, desired to maintain the undeveloped character of these rivers. None of the proposed developments should significantly alter the undeveloped nature of the shorelines. The natural characteristics may even be improved as some existing, informal launches and campsites are closed and restored to their former natural condition.

### Public or Private Financing of Recreation Facilities

Historically, the Allegheny National Forest has used public funds to finance construction of most recreational facilities. The alternatives developed for the Allegheny National Forest propose, in varying amounts, to finance some recreational developments through private sources and some through traditional public financing. Public comment has generally opposed the use of private financing.

The Forest Plan calls for private financing of a motel and restaurant complex near Kinzua Beach during the first decade and possible development of a campground at Hopkins Farm (on the Allegheny River) sometime in the second decade. In contrast, Alternatives A and B call for no use of private financing, and Alternative E about the same amount as indicated in the Forest Plan. Alternative C proposes the greatest use of private financing including development of two resorts in the Kiasutha and Sugar Bay areas.

Alternative D was selected because it balances the need for additional developed recreation facilities against available investment opportunities. Throughout our deliberations, close consideration was given to public comments on this issue. Most of the reasons given in opposition to private financing appear to be linked to a perceived loss of control by the Forest Service. To avoid this loss, a thorough analysis will be made to determine the effects various development proposals would have on existing physical, biological, economic, and social conditions. Designating a development for private financing only means that this option will be considered during the environmental analysis. All private development will be regulated through a special use permit and each permit will contain stipulations designed to meet Forest Plan Management Direction.

Given these considerations, the Forest Service can utilize private financing without compromising Forest Plan Objectives. Public funds for new development are becoming increasingly scarce; Alternative D offers a good opportunity to test the feasibility of private financing with minimal risks. Alternatives A and B were not preferred because they offered no opportunity for using private investment. Alternative C was not selected because it called for substantial use of private investment. It is more prudent to first test private financing on a small scale before committing the Forest Service to a large program. Similarly, Alternative E was not

selected because of the large scale of the Hodge Run resort and its impact on an undeveloped portion of the shoreline.

This decision also reflects changes in our original proposal as a result of public comment. Sugar Bay resort is no longer a part of Alternative D. In its place, we have entered the proposed motel/restaurant complex discussed above. This motel/restaurant complex is smaller and less controversial than Sugar Bay resort and will be built near existing developments, thus lessening the impact on visual quality and the undeveloped shoreline. Sugar Bay resort would have opened up a new area to recreational development.

## 2. Providing Dispersed Recreation Opportunities

The following were considered in responding to conflicts between dispersed recreation users.

### Recreation Opportunities

This problem was addressed by managing different natural resource settings for various recreation opportunities. These settings are described by the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes and are a part of each management area prescription.

Some individuals prefer dispersed recreation opportunities that involve the use of vehicles. They appreciate the access provided by roads built for timber harvesting and oil development. Others prefer solitude, few encounters with other forest users, and natural-appearing landscapes. The Forest Plan assigns 30,000 acres to a semi-primitive non-motorized recreation setting. This acreage will provide visitors desiring a quiet, undisturbed landscape with an estimated 296,000 Recreation Visitors Days (RVDs) of use over the next ten years, more than twice the opportunity offered in any of the other alternatives. Areas assigned to a semi-primitive non-motorized setting include the Hickory Creek Wilderness, Allegheny Islands Wilderness, and the four Management Area 6.2 areas identified on the Forest Plan Management Area Map.

Non-motorized recreation activities will also be emphasized in the Allegheny National Recreation Area (23,100 acres) and in the Clarion River/Manister Valley areas (approximately 4,000 acres in size and described on page 4-115 of the Forest Plan).

The Forest Plan provides 131,000 acres of semi-primitive, motorized setting. Such settings have a limited amount of road access, and provide a moderate opportunity for solitude while limiting encounters with other Forest users. The Plan also provides about 342,000 acres of roaded natural recreation setting. These areas usually have ample road access, and provide for more social interaction in a forest setting.

Recreation settings labeled semi-primitive generally emphasize non-motorized activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, berry picking, and cross-country skiing. Roaded natural recreation settings include similar activities, but also include activities more dependent on road access, such as auto camping, driving for pleasure, power boating, off-road vehicle use, picnicking, and firewood gathering.

Alternative A would manage the most acreage under a semi-primitive motorized setting (296,000 acres). Alternative B is next, followed by the Forest Plan and Alternative C, which have similar levels. Alternative C would manage the most acreage under a roaded natural setting (411,000 acres). For further details, see Figure 2-5 and Table 2-11 in the Final EIS.

The mix of recreation opportunities offered in Alternative D is appropriate. It provides the most semi-primitive, non-motorized recreation opportunities, while still offering moderate amounts of semi-primitive motorized and roaded natural settings. The public demands all of these types of opportunities from the Forest's limited landbase.

#### Motorized and Pedestrian Trails

Concerning motorized trails, some people desire more off-road vehicle trails; while others want less. Public sentiment generally favored development of additional pedestrian trails. See pages C-32, C-33, C-36, and C-37 of the Final EIS for details.

The Forest Plan features construction of 48 miles of pedestrian trail and 156 miles of motorized trail over the next 10 years. The pedestrian trails planned are of two types: trails that connect campground areas and trails that begin and end at specified trailhead facilities. The motorized trails will be constructed either within the five intensive off-road vehicle use areas or as trails connecting these five areas. Motorized trails will use some existing roads.

If current management were to continue, the Forest Plan would construct 89 miles of pedestrian trail and 312 miles of motorized trail over the next 20 years. In contrast, Alternative E proposes the most intensive trail building program, with 142 miles of pedestrian trail and 392 miles of motorized trail planned over the next 20 years. The remaining alternatives propose less trail construction than the Forest Plan. Each was formulated to emphasize only one type of trail construction. As a result, Alternative A proposes 142 miles of pedestrian trail, while Alternatives B and C propose 313 and 235 miles, respectively, of motorized trail over the next 20 years. For additional information, see Figure 2-6 and Tables 4-5, 4-6, and 4-7 of the Final EIS.

The trail construction program presented in the Forest Plan is appropriate. The off-road vehicle mileage figures presented in Alternative D are based on the results of public involvement done while developing the 1977 Off-Road Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement. These figures were generally supported by current public comments on the Proposed Plan. New trails will also increase the use of existing and planned campground facilities.

Alternatives A, B, or C were not chosen because they emphasized only one type of trail, and the public indicated a desire for both. Alternative E was not selected because it proposed a level of trail development higher than that recommended in the 1977 Off-Road Vehicle Environmental Impact Statement, and this was not supported by public comment.

In making this decision, the Forest Service recognizes that the projected demand for these types of dispersed recreation facilities will not be met. This tradeoff appears necessary, considering divided public opinion. More or less trails could be constructed should public opinion change in the future.

### 3. Timber Management

The following items were considered in determining the Forest Plan's response to the timber management problem statement. All comparisons for long-term sustained yield (timber volume) are for 150 years, whereas the rest of the comparisons cover a much shorter time period, as indicated. Consult the Final EIS, pages 2-58 to 2-63, for a more detailed summary of this management problem and pages C-40 to C-55 for a summary of the public comments received. Timber management practices are also tied very closely to the wildlife discussion under Management Problem 4.

## Timber Volume

Timber is a valuable economic resource on the Allegheny National Forest, especially high-value black cherry. The level of total timber volume and sawtimber volume to harvest during each decade must be defined. To satisfy some, the Forest Service would have to harvest more timber than proposed in the Forest Plan, while others feel the harvest should be lower.

The National Forest Management Act directs each National Forest to plan for a level of timber sale volume that does not decline from one decade to the next. Temporary departures are permitted if justified in specific situations. Our timber demand analysis indicates the Allegheny National Forest could double sawtimber sales immediately. Industry representatives indicate they could accommodate this additional volume without major investment. On the other hand, pulpwood supplies are expected to remain high and the market demand low.

Increasing the timber harvest volume generally means assigning more acres to timber harvesting prescriptions, particularly to even-aged management if the emphasis is on high-valued species. This requires some trade-off in recreation opportunities, particularly those related to semi-primitive dispersed recreation.

The 1975 Timber Management Plan calculated a long-term sustained yield of 137 MMBF per year and authorized an annual sale volume of 93 MMBF for the period 1976-1984. The Forest Plan proposes about the same amount, 95 MMBF of average annual sales volume for the first decade. The Plan's long-term sustained yield is also 95 MMBF per year. Historically, the Allegheny National Forest has harvested less than the authorized level. Alternative B, the current situation, proposes a harvest level of 62 MMBF per year.

The Forest Plan's total annual sale volume is second only to that in Alternative C with 103 MMBF. Compared to the current situation, Alternative C proposes a 66 percent increase, followed by Alternative E with a 44 percent increase and Alternative A with a 21 percent reduction. Alternative B represents the Forest's current sales program of 62 MMBF. (See Figure 2-7 or Table 4-8 in the Final EIS for a display of this information.)

Concerning sawtimber production, Alternative C offers the highest sawtimber volume in Decade 1. At 54 MMBF/year, Alternative C is 40 percent higher than the next highest harvest level which is in Alternative D. By the third decade, however, Alternatives D and E offer sawtimber volumes which equal or surpass those in Alternative C. Alternative A offers the lowest sawtimber volume. (For a display of this information, see Figure 2-8 and Table 4-8 in the Final EIS.)

Pulpwood production was not a factor in making the decision. Market values for pulpwood are low and pulpwood cutting is done mainly as a by-product of silvicultural prescriptions which emphasize sawtimber production. (For more information about the role of pulpwood cutting, see Appendix D of the Forest Plan and the response to comment 49 on page C-54 of the Final EIS.)

The Forest Plan provides the most balanced timber program, considering the demands for other resource uses. It responds to industry and consumer demands for increased production of high-quality sawtimber. This means better utilization of existing mill capacities and additional employment opportunities.

Alternatives C, D, and E all reflect higher sawtimber production and are likely candidates to satisfy this consumer need for increased high-quality sawtimber. There are several indicators which measure the differing emphasis on quality sawtimber production among these alternatives. The three best indicators are 1) the difference between direct costs and direct benefits of the timber element (see Table B-53 in Appendix B of the Final EIS); 2) the returns to the U.S. Treasury (see Table B-64 in Appendix B); and 3) payments to counties (see Table 2-17 in the Final EIS). Alternative C has the highest values in these three areas, followed by Alternative D and then Alternative E.

Though Alternative C provides the highest timber benefits, Alternative D was preferred because of the higher level it provides of wildlife habitat improvement work, the mix of recreation opportunities, and the level of trail construction. Alternative D was selected over Alternative E because it has a stronger emphasis on quality sawtimber production. The difference between timber management benefits and costs in Alternative D is 38 percent higher than for Alternative E.

Timber sales may be used in place of other management practices to meet wildlife and dispersed recreation objectives. Accomplishing wildlife and recreation objectives, such as creating wildlife habitat and visual diversity, may lead to an occasional below cost sale, but these occurrences will remain uncommon on the Allegheny National Forest. Below cost timber sales will be considered only when the expected total resource benefits exceed project costs and the timber sale represents the most cost-efficient treatment for accomplishing the area's resource objectives.

#### Vegetative Treatments

The public expressed concern over the use of clearcutting, selection cutting, and herbicide use on the Allegheny National Forest. Although some supported more clearcutting, others supported more selection cutting. Many expressed concern over the safety of herbicides. The public is also firmly against any oak conversion.

The Forest Service recognizes that clearcutting is controversial. Clearcuts and shelterwood cuts are the primary management practices associated with even-aged management. In the planning documents, these practices are discussed under the heading of "final harvest" cuts. Important public concerns are the size, shape, and appearance of individual cutting units; and the total acreage scheduled for final harvest across the Forest. Management area standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan are consistent with those in the Regional Guide for the Eastern Region, and establish a maximum 40-acre size limit on clearcut openings. Historically, clearcuts on the Allegheny have averaged between 20-25 acres. The Forest Service will continue to stay within this 40-acre limitation and the small average size of clearcuts will continue.

Visual concerns are addressed in the Forest Plan, and we will maintain the visual quality objectives (VQO) stated for each management area. In each alternative, final harvest cuts would be used to remove an area's overstory only after abundant seedlings are present, which further reduces the visual impact of the final harvest cuts.

The acreage of final harvest was also a concern. The Forest Plan calls for harvesting 3,300 acres each year during the first decade, of which 10 percent will be clearcuts and 90 percent shelterwood cuts. Final harvest in the Forest Plan is at the middle of the range established by the other alternatives, and slightly more (200 acres) than that proposed in

Alternative B, the current situation. The Forest Plan level of harvest emphasizes habitat for wildlife species requiring early successional stages of vegetation, maintaining high-value shade intolerant trees on the good sites, and assuring visual variety in the Forest landscape.

Appendix D of the Forest Plan discusses the rationale behind even-aged and uneven-aged silviculture. Chapters 2 and 4 of the Final EIS discuss how these two silvicultural systems will be used to create wildlife habitat, visual, and vegetative diversity.

As indicated above, the public opposed any oak conversion. Under current management practices, when an oak area is cut on the Allegheny National Forest, it generally does not regenerate back to oak without substantial investments. The loss of mast (acorns) could be detrimental to wildlife. In the Forest Plan, oak stands will be cut only in those situations where either there is abundant advanced regeneration (creating a high probability that the oak areas can be retained) or when cuts are necessary to harvest trees killed by insects and disease. In the meantime, assistance has been requested from the Northeastern Forest Experimental Station in developing new feasible methods for regenerating oak.

Alternative D calls for the use of herbicides to control understory vegetation, as do all of the other alternatives except Alternative B. Estimates are that up to 50 percent of the Allegheny is covered with dense understories of striped maple, fern, and grass. This type of vegetation competes directly with the tree seedling for light, nutrients, and water. The ferns also secrete chemicals which inhibit tree seedling germination and growth.

The public is concerned over the use of herbicides. Research has shown, however, that selected herbicides can be applied safely to the environment. Given current technology, herbicide treatment is the most cost effective method of controlling this unwanted understory vegetation.

Effects of herbicide use have been examined in Chapter 4 of the Final EIS. There is a potential for some non-mitigated effects on visual quality and vegetation. Using herbicide to control or eliminate undesirable understory vegetation affects visual quality for one to three years after application. The effect on vegetation would be a short-term change in vertical diversity. Most effects can be mitigated.

The effect of glyphosate herbicide on human health was also examined. Recent studies of the tumor-producing ability of glyphosate led the Environmental Protection Agency to consider it to be a weak cancer-causing agent. However, based on the information available, EPA does not expect any significant risk from the level of glyphosate to which humans are likely to be exposed (Dept. of Justice, 1985). Long-term studies on tissue accumulation show that feeding small doses of glyphosate to laboratory animals results in no abnormal mutation, birth defects, or nervous disorders (Scendy, et al., 1979).

Alternative D calls for use of herbicide on 2,000 acres a year. This is the lowest amount proposed except for Alternative B, which calls for no herbicide use. Alternative A calls for 3,100 acres per year; Alternative C, 2,800 acres; and Alternative E, 4,800 acres. For more information, see pages 4-37 to 4-41 of the Final EIS.

Alternative B was not selected as the preferred alternative because of its lower emphasis on timber volume, wildlife, recreation, payments to counties, and returns to the U.S. Treasury. Based on the EPA Studies, the Forest Service plans to use herbicides to provide for a continuous flow of timber volume and to meet the other goals and objectives of Alternative D. Forest Service policy on the Allegheny National Forest is to minimize the use of herbicides. If other economical and biologically feasible methods of regenerating timber are developed, they will be used.

#### 4. Wildlife Habitat

The Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Fish Commission, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and the USDA Forest Service cooperatively manage wildlife and fish habitats on the Allegheny National Forest. This was considered, along with the following information, in determining a response to the wildlife problem statement.

##### Deer Populations

Deer populations on the Allegheny National Forest currently exceed the habitat's ability to support them. Deer are generally small in size and have poor antler development. Severe foraging of the understory vegetation by deer has displaced many other wildlife species and forced the use of expensive timber regeneration practices. This issue is a

major management concern to the Forest Service. Public response to this issue has generally supported a reduction in the deer herd as indicated on page C-56 of the Final EIS.

Included in the Forest Plan (and all of the alternatives) is an objective to manage the deer herd at a population level compatible with habitat carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is defined as the maximum number of animals that the habitat can sustain while maintaining a variety of understory vegetation in a healthy, vigorous condition. The process used to develop carrying capacity levels is described in Appendix B of the Final EIS, pages B-74 and B-75. Successful achievement of these levels will require the Forest Service and Pennsylvania Game Commission to cooperate in developing stable habitat conditions and regulating deer harvest levels.

In Alternative D, the Forest Service will final harvest 3,300 to 3,400 acres annually in the first and second decades. This will increase the acreage of hardwood timber in early successional stages and facilitate current deer management practices. In addition, the Forest Service will continue working with the Pennsylvania Game Commission to reduce the deer population to a level at or near carrying capacity. The Forest Service plans to continue efforts to encourage deer hunting in newly-cut areas by snowplowing roads, distributing hunter maps and providing more temporary access during hunting seasons in areas where vehicle use is otherwise restricted (gated roads).

While all alternatives would manage deer at a level equal to the habitat's carrying capacity, the habitat types provided by each alternative differ significantly. Since each type of habitat has a different wildlife carrying capacity, the total capability of each alternative to support wildlife populations varies. This total capability of each alternative is called "habitat capability". The Forest Plan would produce the highest big-game habitat capability levels of all alternatives considered, about 40 percent higher than those projected under Alternative B, the current situation. This translates into higher big-game population levels and better hunter success. For additional information, refer to Figure 2-9 and pages 4-103 to 4-108 of the Final EIS.

In addition to deer, the big-game figures mentioned above include effects on turkey and bear. Under Alternative D, the turkey habitat capability would increase significantly over the long run. This is a result of an active turkey management program which includes: 1) protection of key habitats,

2) regulation of public access, 3) wildlife improvement work, 4) reduction in the size and better distribution of regeneration cuts, 5) providing a good distribution of old growth stands (particularly in Management Areas 5, 6.1, 6.2, and 6.4), 6) increasing timber age class diversity, and 7) providing a variety of food sources by encouraging development of food-producing vegetation which currently exists in minor amounts.

In comparison, Alternatives A and E would show increases similar to those in the Alternative D. The turkey habitat capability levels for Alternatives B and C will be less than those of Alternative D.

Bear habitat would increase slightly during the first decade under Alternatives A, D, and E and then level off for succeeding decades. The bear habitat for Alternative B would remain at the current level, and decrease under Alternative C.

The Forest Plan offers the best approach to the deer problem. It recognizes the importance that residents place on high deer population levels, while striving to bring these levels in line with habitat carrying capacity. Alternative D also provides more habitat for turkey and bear, thus supporting higher populations and better hunter success.

#### Road Access

Human activity is encouraged by providing road access. This activity can adversely affect wildlife during nesting and young-rearing periods and in the critical winter season. The presence of roads also affects the recreational experiences of many Forest users. Resource managers can use road access as a tool to manage wildlife population levels by closing roads during nesting season and opening them during hunting season. The public has expressed concern over the number of new roads planned under each alternative, and has indicated a need to close or restrict vehicular access on many existing roads. Public comment on this issue is discussed on pages C-58, C-84, C-85, and C-86 of the Final EIS.

There is much public misunderstanding about National Forest roads. Some people become alarmed about the number of miles of road because they visualize high standard, two-lane roads such as those found in their own neighborhoods. Most National Forest roads are single-lane (about 12 feet wide) and unpaved. In the Forest Plan, about 90 percent of the proposed road construction will involve low standard (TSL D)

roads. Most of these low standard roads will be constructed for use in timber sales and they will be closed to the public after the sale ends, seeded with grass and then reopened 10-20 years later for use in another timber sale. In the meantime, the grassed roadways will benefit wildlife and be available for other dispersed recreation activities. Many areas of the Forest will have no roads at all.

Enclosed with this Record of Decision is a copy of the "National Forest Roads For All Uses" brochure. This brochure is designed to answer questions concerning National Forest roads.

The road management policy of each alternative was formulated under a management philosophy called the "Traffic Service Level" (TSL) concept. Under this concept, roads are provided only as needed to meet the specific resource objectives of each management area. Generally, roads will be built to a lower standard and cost less per mile than in the past.

Unfortunately, the TSL concept tends to increase the number of miles included in the National Forest road system inventory by adding low standard roads, previously classified as "temporary", to the road system inventory. The number of miles of road actually built will not change from the Draft EIS, but the miles counted on paper, as part of the road system inventory, will increase. These low standard roads are needed for timber harvesting and are discussed above.

Road density varies between alternatives as a result of differing resource objectives and management area assignments. The Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for each alternative specify the road management policy to be practiced in each management area, including provisions to mitigate the adverse effects of roads on wildlife. Figure 4-17 of the Final EIS summarizes the long-term results of implementing the road management policy proposed for each alternative.

The alternatives were evaluated against two criteria: 1) the total miles of road construction/reconstruction proposed; and 2) the miles of road to be left open, closed, or restricted to public vehicle use.

The Forest Plan calls for construction/reconstruction of 353 miles of road in the first decade. Most of these roads will be constructed for use in timber sales and closed to public vehicular use after the sale ends. In comparison, Alternative E proposes 293 miles; Alternative A, 268 miles;

Alternative C, 230 miles; and Alternative B, 204 miles. For additional information, refer to Tables 4-12 and 4-13 in the Final EIS.

The estimated long-term effects of carrying out the road construction/reconstruction program proposed under each alternative are displayed in Figure 4-16 of the Final EIS. Currently, there are 898 miles of National Forest system roads on the Allegheny National Forest. The Forest Plan would have 1,675 miles of National Forest system road in place by the end of Decade 5. By comparison, Alternative C has 1,741 miles planned followed by Alternative E, 1,587 miles; Alternative A, 1,515 miles; and Alternative B, 1,494 miles. All long-term comparisons are based on the assumption that current management direction would continue for the next 50 years. This, of course, is not necessarily the case since the Forest Plan will be revised every 10-15 years.

The Forest Plan features the most restrictive road management policy, leaving open the fewest miles of road for public vehicular use (315 miles). In contrast, Alternative C would leave open 351 miles; Alternative B, 426 miles; Alternative A, 576 miles; and Alternative E, 680 miles. Expressed as a percent, the Forest Plan will have about 20 percent of its road system open for public vehicle use; 60 percent will be closed; and another 20 percent will have restricted use. This information is summarized in Figure 4-17 of the Final EIS and involves projections over the next 50 years.

This is an important public issue, but the level of road construction/reconstruction cannot be set at any fixed amount without adversely affecting the ability to meet an alternative's other goals and resource objectives. The reason for this is that road construction and reconstruction are supporting activities. The levels planned under each alternative represent the minimum mileage necessary to carry out the other management practices proposed for that alternative.

Since the level of road construction/reconstruction is determined by other resource objectives, the decision was based on how well each alternative's road management policy would mitigate the adverse affects of these roads. Alternative D is preferred because it proposes the most restrictive road management policy. This is the type of road policy supported by most of the general public.

Road access to the Forest will still be available, but the adverse impacts on wildlife, and on recreationists desiring experiences away from motor vehicles, will be reduced. It is recognized that this decision could adversely affect some recreationists, particularly those engaged in activities dependent on motor vehicles. These effects should be minimal, however, and will be partially offset by new motorized trail construction and judicious use of seasonal road closures.

#### Small game and Non-game Wildlife

The public has expressed support for increased management emphasis on small game and non-game wildlife species. The public is also concerned about timber harvest methods, the age when timber areas are regenerated, and the diversity of tree species. Public comments on these issues are discussed in the Final EIS on pages C-44 to C-46, C-50, C-52, C-53, C-59, C-60, C-63 and C-65.

The numbers and types of wildlife species inhabiting an area are dependent upon the amount of horizontal, vertical, and vegetative diversity. For purposes of this discussion, horizontal diversity refers to the relative abundance of large groups of trees with different ages; vertical diversity refers to the relative abundance of different tree ages within an area; and vegetative diversity refers to the number and types of vegetative species present across the Forest.

Timber harvesting is one of the most effective methods for influencing wildlife habitat. Table 4-25 of the Final EIS displays by alternative the projected amount and age class distribution of primary timber types of the Allegheny National Forest. This table shows that the Forest Plan would create greater age class (horizontal) diversity than Alternatives A, B, or E, but would be somewhat similar to Alternative C.

Concerning vertical diversity, Alternatives A and E would be the most diverse, followed by Alternatives B, C, and D, respectively. Differences in diversity between alternatives are primarily due to the amount of uneven-aged silviculture proposed under each alternative. Uneven-aged silviculture creates large areas of trees with greater vertical diversity, but with less horizontal diversity than even-aged silviculture.

In terms of vegetative diversity, the composition of timber types under the Forest Plan will remain about the same as it is today. If management direction were continued over the entire 150 year planning horizon, the Forest would be composed of the following timber types:

Allegheny hardwoods (Cherry, Maple, Ash, Poplar)	51%
Oak	18%
Northern hardwoods (Sugar Maple, Beech, Birch)	16%
Savannahs	4%
Conifers	4%
Wildlife Openings	5%
Aspen	2%

In contrast, vegetative diversity (as measured by a balance of timber types) would increase under Alternatives A and B, as some of the older Allegheny hardwood stands convert to northern hardwoods; and decrease under Alternatives C and E, as oak is converted to northern hardwoods.

In addition to timber management, numerous wildlife practices such as developing ponds and permanent openings, or planting fruit trees and shrubs, can be used to create additional habitat for certain wildlife species. These same methods are also used to increase the capacity of existing habitat to support wildlife. Tables 4-16, 4-17, and 4-18 of the Final EIS show that the Forest Plan would provide for a moderate level of wildlife and fish habitat improvements. In contrast, Alternatives A and E propose the highest level of improvements, followed by Alternatives D (Forest Plan), B, and C, respectively. In all cases, the level of these improvements planned over each decade will be substantially higher than that of the current situation (Alternative B).

The effects of all timber and wildlife practices on wildlife habitat types are displayed in Table 4-26 of the Final EIS. This table shows that the Forest Plan would create the most balanced arrangement of deciduous and mixed hemlock-deciduous habitat types. The other alternatives would provide greater or lesser amounts of specific habitat types, but none show the same overall balance featured in the Forest Plan.

In addition, Table 4-27 and its subsequent discussion evaluate the effects of management practices on the habitat requirements of 15 key wildlife indicator species. These species are featured because their population levels can be monitored, and because their responses to habitat changes are similar to those of other wildlife species with similar habitat requirements. This analysis indicates the Forest

Plan would increase the habitat capability levels of seven species, maintain four species at their current level, and decrease habitat of the remaining four species. In comparison, Alternatives A and C would increase the habitat capability levels for nine species, followed by Alternatives B, D, and E with seven each.

Given these facts, the vegetative conditions created under the Forest Plan offer a balanced wildlife program. Each indicator species would be managed to at least minimum viable population levels, and the levels of many other wildlife species would be increased.. Horizontal diversity is maximized, and the array of habitat types balanced.

The Forest Plan favors those species associated with: 1) regenerating deciduous habitat, 2) regenerating hemlock habitat, and 3) old growth mixed hemlock-deciduous habitat. This mix of habitat types is appropriate and will support other Forest Plan objectives associated with visual quality and recreation opportunities. It is also recognized that this decision leads to reduced population levels for those species requiring mature deciduous habitat type.

#### 5. Private Oil and Gas Development

This management problem was not a factor in making the decision on the preferred alternative. The rate of private oil and gas development and the effects on outputs were the same for each alternative. Also, production of private oil and gas reserves is not impaired by Forest Service management of surface resources in any alternative.

This nation's oil industry began 125 years ago within a few miles of the Allegheny National Forest. To date, ten percent of the Forest's surface area has been developed for oil and gas production. Extensive oil and gas deposits still underlie the National Forest.

Private owners control development of 94 percent of the oil, gas and mineral rights under the Forest. The future rate of oil and gas development is speculative, so both low and high demand projections were made in order to determine the environmental effects. The Forest Plan displays outputs and activities for both the low and the high oil and gas demand variations.

The Forest Service will continue to cooperate with private owners in development of mineral resources on the Allegheny National Forest in a manner which reduces the impacts on

surface resources. Reducing impacts may include such actions as relocating a proposed road to a better route, shifting a proposed drilling site to avoid a sensitive area, or providing stone to surface roads.

## 6. Wilderness

This management problem was not a factor in selecting the preferred alternative. Each alternative allocates 9,337 acres to the Hickory Creek Wilderness, 368 acres to the Allegheny Islands Wilderness, and 23,100 acres to the Allegheny National Recreation Area. These areas were created through the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act of 1984. The legislation also released all remaining roadless areas from wilderness consideration during this planning period (10-15 years).

### COMPATIBILITY WITH PLANS OF OTHERS

The Allegheny National Forest took into consideration the compatibility of the alternatives with the plans of other private and public organizations. All alternatives are compatible with these other plans. Consultation with others is described in Appendix A of the Final EIS.

- o Dispersed recreation activities and the construction of new trails are compatible with those provided by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. See the Pennsylvania Recreation Plan, 1980-1985.
- o Making National Forest land available for oil and gas leasing is required by law and is consistent with mineral management activities of the U. S. Department of Interior.
- o The production of a variety of timber products is compatible with the objectives of the Commonwealth Forest Resource Plan, 1985.
- o Improvements in wildlife and fish habitat are compatible with the objectives of both the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Fish Commission.
- o The protection of special or unique values, such as State Scenic Rivers and some State threatened and endangered species, is compatible with the State's interests. The State supports identifying and evaluating such values.

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Compatibilty with Plans of Others

POTENTIAL FOR  
CONTROVERSY

Public controversy that might be caused by the alternatives was considered. Controversy would increase or decrease the same in the alternatives unless otherwise noted.

Although controversy will continue, we believe that adequate response has been made to the public issues by the range of alternatives considered. Also, to consider alternatives which would require changes in existing laws would not be appropriate, given the strong and opposing beliefs of so many people. The views of one side versus another are adequately reflected in the alternatives. The Forest Plan provides a wide range of environmental conditions and choices for goods, services and uses.

- o Recreation use patterns will change because of a combination of road closures, road construction, and redistribution of the kinds and amounts of use according to the location of management areas. Some people will be opposed to these changes.
- o The controversy over new development on the Allegheny Reservoir will continue. The management objectives for this area reflect the input received during the public review process.
- o The controversy over private oil and gas development will continue. Private individuals will continue to control about 94 percent of the subsurface mineral rights on the Allegheny National Forest.
- o The controversy over even-aged silviculture will continue. Based upon the acreages involved, controversy would be highest in Alternative C and lowest in Alternatives A and E.
- o The controversy over high deer populations and their effects on timber regeneration will continue. The combination of more cutting, improved habitat conditions, and lower population level targets (of Pennsylvania Game Commission), will slowly reduce the problem and lead to a healthier deer population.
- o The controversy over the recognition and management of special areas will be greatly reduced. Some people will continue, however, to push for more wilderness while others would like to eliminate it altogether.

- o Opposition to road construction will continue, but closing many of the new roads should help to alleviate some of the concerns.

## COST EFFICIENCY

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires that "each alternative will present to the extent practicable the most cost-efficient combination of management practices examined that can meet the objectives established in the alternative."

Cost efficiency is measured through the use of present net value. Present net value (PNV) is the difference in dollars between anticipated benefits and anticipated costs. A large PNV indicates that taxpayers, as owners of the National Forest, could realize a large net return from their investment. A smaller PNV indicates a smaller net return. Since these benefits and costs are realized in the future, their value must be discounted back to the present.

The Forest incorporated cost efficiency into the planning process in several places to assure this requirement was met. Cost estimates were included in the management prescriptions by the interdisciplinary team. The tentative prescriptions were then screened. Those which were not cost efficient and added no further benefits were deleted and not used in the analysis. Additional information on the development of prescriptions and their role in the analysis can be found in Appendix B, the section titled "The Forest Planning Model, Identification of Prescriptions".

A linear programming technique (FORPLAN) was used to select the most cost-efficient set of prescriptions to meet the goals and objectives of each alternative. This was accomplished by selecting prescriptions within each alternative that have the highest net economic priced benefits. This was done while still meeting the other objectives of the alternative.

Each alternative developed for the Allegheny National Forest has a different set of goals and objectives in response to the management problems, and each consists of the most cost-efficient set of prescriptions needed to meet those goals and objectives. Lower PNV in an alternative represents the economic cost of producing non-priced benefits and addressing issues and concerns. The decision as to whether the values of these non-priced benefits are worth their cost is based on the reader's judgment.

Tables 1, 2, and 3 summarize the benefits, costs, and present net values of each alternative considered in the Final EIS.

TABLE 1 - SUMMARY OF PRESENT NET VALUE, TOTAL DISCOUNTED BENEFITS, AND TOTAL DISCOUNTED COSTS BY ALTERNATIVE  
(Million Dollars)

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Present Net Value</u>	<u>Total Discounted Benefits</u>	<u>Total Discounted Costs</u>
E (RPA)	583	758	175
D (Preferred)	541	704	163
C	521	673	152
A	506	646	139
B (Current)	440	553	114

TABLE 2 - SUMMARY OF DISCOUNTED BENEFITS BY ELEMENT<sup>1</sup>  
(Million Dollars)

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Rec.</u>	<u>Wilder-ness</u>	<u>Wild-life</u>	<u>Tim-ber</u>	<u>Oil/Gas</u>	<u>Sup-port</u>	<u>Totals</u>
E (RPA)	347	4	172	234	1	0	758
D (Preferred)	271	4	139	290	1	0	704
C	238	4	117	313	1	0	673
A	299	4	213	129	1	0	646
B (Current)	236	4	132	181	1	0	553

TABLE 3 - SUMMARY OF DISCOUNTED COSTS BY ELEMENT<sup>1</sup>  
(Million Dollars)

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Rec.</u>	<u>Wilder-ness</u>	<u>Wild-life</u>	<u>Tim-ber</u>	<u>Oil/Gas</u>	<u>Sup-port</u>	<u>Totals</u>
E (RPA)	36	1	19	73	2	44	175
D (Preferred)	37	1	16	67	2	39	163
C	32	1	4	72	2	40	152
A	34	1	26	39	2	36	139
B (Current)	28	1	5	42	2	36	114

<sup>1</sup> Comparisons of benefits and costs provide a broad indication of relationships, but it should be noted that some costs are difficult to separate by resource element under the multiple-use management concept.

As shown in Table 1, Alternative E has the highest total PNV of all alternatives considered in the EIS. Even though all alternatives maximize PNV and include the most efficient mix of management prescriptions, differences in PNV for each alternative do occur for the following reasons:

- o Alternatives have different goals and objectives.
- o Alternatives respond differently to management problems.
- o Alternatives achieve different levels of nonpriced outputs.

The goals and objectives of both Alternatives D and E emphasize the production of market and non-market goods and services. To examine where the emphasis is placed in an alternative, discounted benefits and costs by resource element must be analyzed (Tables 2 and 3).

Alternative E emphasizes increases in dispersed and developed recreation, wildlife and fish; long rotation and uneven-aged timber management. These emphases are reflected in the discounted benefits and costs by element. The discounted benefits in recreation are higher in Alternative E than in any other alternative, due to the high emphasis on both large and small-scale recreation developments, resorts and dispersed recreation. The timber element reflects high costs and low returns for the volume produced due to the emphasis on long rotation and uneven-aged management which increases timber sales costs and favors less valuable species than even-aged management.

Alternative D emphasizes moderate increases in recreation and wildlife, and an even-aged silvicultural system for timber management. The moderate investment in recreation results in a lower discounted benefit in that element as compared to Alternative E. The timber element actually has higher discounted benefits and lower discounted costs than does Alternative E, because of Alternative D's emphasis on even-aged management.

Examination of the remaining alternatives shows variation based on each alternative's emphasis. Alternative C emphasizes market outputs and, therefore, has the highest discounted benefits in the timber element. Alternative A emphasizes nonmarket outputs and, as a result, the benefits in the recreation and wildlife elements are high.

Other economic indicators, in addition to PNV, were used in the selection of the preferred alternative. These indicators are net receipts, total costs, total receipts, non-cash benefits, payments to counties, and returns to the U.S. Treasury. A complete discussion of these indicators can be found in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS, pages 2-66 to 2-74.

In the selection of a preferred alternative, the alternative that maximizes net public benefits must be selected. Economic efficiency is only one factor to be considered when evaluating alternatives for net public benefits. Other factors are social effects, environmental effects (both physical and biological), and public concerns. Some are quantifiable, and some are non-quantifiable or non-priced benefits. All must be evaluated prior to making a decision. This means that an alternative that maximizes PNV may not necessarily be the alternative that maximizes net public benefits when all factors are considered.

Alternative E, the alternative with the highest PNV, was not chosen because it had lower timber benefits and higher timber costs, less returns to the U.S. Treasury, and less payments to counties than Alternatives C and D. The PNV for the timber element is 38 percent higher in Alternative D than in Alternative E. Alternative C was not chosen because the levels of wildlife improvement work, the mix of recreation opportunities, and the level of trail construction planned under Alternative D were preferable to those offered in Alternative C.

ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONSEQUENCES AND  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
PREFERABLE  
ALTERNATIVE

All alternatives are environmentally, technically and legally feasible. An environmentally preferable alternative is one that will cause the least effects to the physical and biological environment. It is also one that better protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Damage to the physical and biological environment is caused by implementing management practices and is described in the Final EIS, pages 4-8 to 4-60. All of the alternatives meet the minimum legal requirements of NFMA, but the type and amounts of management practices will vary by alternative. Smaller total amounts of the management practices are indicative of less human activity and less risk of effects on the environment. Table 4 summarizes by alternative the type and amount of each management practice planned for Decade 1.

The cumulative effects on each environmental element of implementing all of the management practices are discussed in the Final EIS, pages 4-61 to 4-122. Table 5 summarizes the results of this discussion by ranking the alternatives, based upon the estimated cumulative effects of each alternative on the elements of the environment. The higher the ranking, the more severe the potential effects of implementing an alternative. Table 5 includes only those elements of the environment that show a difference between alternatives. The environmentally preferred alternative would then be the alternative with the lowest overall ranking.

TABLE 4 - COMPARISON OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES BY ALTERNATIVE  
(Amounts planned for Decade 1)

Management Practice (expressed in units indicated in parenthesis)	Alternatives				
	A	B	C	D	E
New/Expanded Rec Areas					
- Large Scale Areas (#)	0	0	4	2	2
- Small Scale Areas (#)	1	1	0	3	3
Trail Construction (miles)	73	318	238	204	465
Even-aged Harvest (Thousand acres)	3	30	67	33	7
Thinning/Uneven-aged Harvest (Thousand acres)	78	29	8	100	150
Road Const/Reconst (miles)	268	204	230	353	293
Non-structural Wildlife Improvements (acres)	35	20	17	24	31
Impoundments (#)	5	0	0	1	1
Structural Wildlife Habitat Improvements (#)	132	4	0	59	118
Herbicide Use (Thousand acres)	31	0	28	20	48

TABLE 5 - COMPARISON OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS BY ALTERNATIVE  
(Scale of 1-5: 1 = Least Effect; 5 = Most Effect)

Elements of the Environment	Alternatives				
	A	B	C	D	E
Soils	2	1	3	4	5
Mineral Materials (Other Minerals)	2	1	4	4	3
Visual Resource	1	3	5	4	3
Water Quality	2	2	3	4	5
Noise	2	2	4	3	4
Riparian Areas	1	4	4	3	2
Vegetation	5	3	2	2	4
Fish	1	5	5	3	2
Recreation Opportunities	1	3	4	3	5

Environmental Consequences and Environmentally Preferable Alternative

Based upon the summary of management practices (Table 4) and our evaluation of the estimated long-term cumulative effects (Table 5), Alternative A would create the least disturbance and Alternative C would create the most disturbance to the environment. Therefore, we believe Alternative A is the environmentally preferable alternative, both in the next decade and in the long term. Alternative B is also environmentally preferable to the Forest Plan.

Given this fact, however, the Forest Plan is still the best choice. Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines are designed to mitigate the potential for severe environmental damage. In addition, we believe Alternative D provides the most desirable level of goods, services and uses to the public. Alternatives A and B will result in less variety of recreation uses, less visual, wildlife, and timber diversity, and lower timber outputs.

## VII. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Forest Service conducted an active public involvement program. Federal, State, and local agencies have been informed and consulted throughout the planning effort, and Forest users have had an opportunity to participate. See Appendix A of the Final EIS for a description of the public participation activities undertaken.

The public participation activities described in Appendix A comply with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) regulations [40 CFR 1500.2 (d)]. The public input received was used as the basis for adjusting the preferred alternative.

A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the Forest Plan was published in the Federal Register, January 19, 1981 (Vol. 26, No. 12, p. 5029). This notice started the scoping process to identify issues and concerns and asked Federal, State, and local agencies and the public to comment on an initial list of issues and concerns developed by the Forest. These public issues and management concerns established the scope of the EIS (40 CFR 1501.7 and 1508.25).

Throughout the planning process, meetings were held with leaders from all interest groups and government agencies. Information was exchanged from both sides and every effort was made to keep people informed on what was happening. A list of these meetings is disclosed on pages A-1 to A-6 of the Final EIS.

A Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS and Proposed Forest Plan appeared in the Federal Register on January 18, 1985. Over 1,100 copies of the Proposed Plan and Draft EIS documents were distributed to the public.

Public meetings were held during the comment period which lasted until April 29, 1985. One thousand, nine hundred three (1903) comments were received from various individuals, groups and agency representatives. These comments were considered in preparation of the final documents and in the final decision.

Following the close of the public comment period, all letters and petitions were read and evaluated. During this review, it became apparent that additional public contacts would be necessary to clear up misunderstandings, clarify proposed changes, and discuss possible solutions. A list of the interest groups and government agencies contacted after the close of the comment period is contained in the Final EIS, page A-7.

MAJOR CHANGES  
MADE IN RESPONSE  
TO PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments on the Draft EIS expanded some issues and changed the significance of others. The following is a list of the major changes made to the planning documents. The page numbers shown in parentheses at the end of each change refer to the section in Appendix C where that change is discussed.

- o Removed from Alternative D the proposed resort at Sugar Bay and added a motel and restaurant complex near Kinzua Beach (pages C-24 to C-28).
- o Revised the amount of planned off-road vehicle trail construction in each alternative to provide for a wider range of investment levels (pages C-32 and C-33).
- o Modified the acreage assignments to Management Areas 5 and 6.4 in all alternatives to reflect provisions of the Pennsylvania Wilderness Act of 1984 (pages C-71 to C-74).
- o Modified the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for Management Area 6.1 to exclude off-road vehicle use in the Clarion River and Minister Valley Areas (pages C-33 and C-35).

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Major Changes Made in Response to Public Comment

- o Changed each alternative to reflect four new candidate Research Natural Areas - Muzette Tract, Crulls Island, Thompson Island, and Sheffield Compartment 126 (page C-35).
- o Changed Alternative B, the current situation, to reflect no herbicide use (pages C-42 and C-43).
- o Revised the Final EIS and Forest Plan to explain that most planned regeneration cutting is shelterwood cutting, not clearcutting (pages C-44 to C-45).
- o Modified Alternative D by moving 15,000 acres from Management Area 6.1 to Management Area 6.2. This increased the acreage assigned to even-aged management and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation (pages C-33, C-34, and C-47).
- o Revised Alternative D to eliminate any conversion of oak to Allegheny hardwoods (page C-50).
- o Modified assignments in Alternative D to include 7,000 acres of Management Area 1. This acreage was removed from Management Area 6.1 and will be managed intensively for ruffed grouse (pages C-47, C-60, and C-61).
- o Improved the wildlife management discussion in the 2600 section of the Standards and Guidelines for all management areas. Revised standards and guidelines for Management Area 6.1 to explain what type of timber harvesting will be made for wildlife purposes (pages C-47 to C-49 and C-56 to C-66).
- o Completed a sensitivity analysis of the effects of a high rate of oil and gas development on Alternative D. Revised the Final EIS to show the estimated effects of a high rate of development on all the alternatives (page C-69).
- o Expanded the discussion in the Plan and in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Final EIS to explain leasing procedures, management of mineral materials, availability of mineral resources, oil and gas demand, and private mineral values (pages C-67 to C-70, C-72, and C-73).
- o Explained the Traffic Service Level (TSL) Concept in the Final EIS. The TSL concept allows the Forest Service additional flexibility in linking road standards to the resource objectives of each management area. Under this

concept, new roads will be built to a lower standard and thus cost less per mile than is possible under current management. The total miles of Forest Service System Road will also increase due to inclusion of roads previously classified as "temporary" (pages C-84 to C-86).

#### VIII. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The National Forest Management Act Regulations [36 CFR 219.12(f)] require that a broad range of reasonable alternatives be formulated. An interdisciplinary team was used to develop these alternatives and to identify which alternative comes nearest to maximizing net public benefits.

This section describes only those changes affecting the goals and objectives of each alternative. It does not address the many editorial changes made to clarify various sections of Planning Documents.

The process used to formulate the alternatives is described in the Final EIS on page 2-5. Changes made between the Draft EIS and Final EIS are discussed in the Final EIS, pages 1-19 to 1-24, and consist of:

- o Alternative B changed to exclude all herbicide use for Decades 1-15.
- o Changed the road mileage figures for all alternatives to reflect the Traffic Service Level Concept for road management.
- o Changed the management area assignments for Alternative D. The acreage in Management Area 6.1 was reduced by 22,000 acres while the acreage in Management Areas 1 and 6.2 were increased by 7,000 and 15,000 acres, respectively.
- o Modified documents to reflect the effects of high and low oil and gas demand on all alternatives.
- o Provided a range of alternatives for off-road vehicle (ORV) trail development.
- o Prohibited any conversion of oak to Allegheny hardwoods in Alternative D.
- o Deleted Sugar Bay resort from Alternative D.
- o Modified documents to reflect 1984 Pennsylvania wilderness legislation.

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Alternatives Considered

- o Added a discussion on Research Natural Areas to all alternatives.
- o Revised Alternative D to provide for a minimum of 15,000 acres of old growth in all decades.

ALTERNATIVES  
CONSIDERED IN  
DETAIL

The following alternatives are described and evaluated in detail in the Final EIS:

- Alternative A. Emphasize non-market benefits to society -- those benefits that do not return dollars to the U.S. Treasury. Examples include hiking, hunting, and birdwatching.
- Alternative B. Provide goods and services at approximately the current level (the No Action Alternative or current situation).
- Alternative C. Emphasize the production of priced market benefits, those that return dollars to the U.S. Treasury. Examples include sawtimber volume and developed recreation.
- Alternative D. Emphasize a moderate increase in the production of both market and non-market benefits.
- Alternative E. Emphasize the production of both market and non-market benefits with a moderate emphasis on increased sawtimber production and a high emphasis on both developed and dispersed recreation.

ALTERNATIVES  
CONSIDERED BUT  
ELIMINATED

Alternatives considered but eliminated include: 1) Equal Age Class Distribution Alternative, 2) Intense Semi-Primitive Recreation Alternative, and 3) Departure from Non-declining Flow (Timber) Alternative. These are discussed in detail on page 2-21 of the Final EIS.

IX. IMPLEMENTATION,  
MONITORING, AND  
MITIGATION

The Forest Plan, with exceptions as noted on page 6, will be implemented 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Plan, Final EIS, and Record of Decision appear in the Federal Register. The time needed to bring all activities into compliance with the Plan will vary depending on the type of project.

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Alternatives Considered in Detail

The Forest Plan incorporates, without change, the special area plans for the Kane Experimental Forest, Tionesta Scenic Area, Tionesta Research Natural Area, and Hearts Content Scenic Area (Title 36, 219.2). These plans were required by Secretary of Agriculture Regulations U-3 and U-4.

The Forest Plan is not a plan for the many activities needed to carry on the day-to-day internal operations of the Allegheny National Forest. For example, the Plan does not address personnel matters, law enforcement, fleet equipment, or organizational changes. However, it is a plan for managing the public lands in an environmentally sound manner to produce goods, services and uses in a way that maximizes long-term public benefits.

The emphasis of the Plan is not site-specific decisions or specific outputs. Rather, it is the application of management practices to areas of land to achieve multiple-use goals and objectives with economic efficiency. To respond to changing needs and opportunities, Congressional land designations, catastrophic events, or new technologies, the Plan may have to be amended or revised. If the change significantly affects the Plan, it must be made by the same procedure used in the development and approval of the original Plan. If the change does not significantly affect the Plan, the Forest Supervisor may amend it by a less formal process which includes public notice and compliance with NEPA.

It is important to note that all proposals in the Plan can be accomplished from a physical, biological, economic and legal perspective. It is not certain they will be accomplished. First, the outputs proposed by the Plan are projections of targets. For example, the number of recreation visitor days meeting Recreation Opportunity Spectrum class standards is a target number the Forest will strive to attain. Another example is long-term sustained yield. That is the maximum regulated volume of timber that can be produced over the planning period, not the volume that will be sold.

Secondly, all outputs may be affected by the budget. Inherent in the Plan's proposed outputs is the budget to achieve them. The Plan is implemented by way of various site-specific projects, such as the building of a road, development of a campground, or the sale of a timber stand.

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Implementation, Monitoring, and Mitigation

If the budget is changed in any given year, the projects scheduled for that year may have to be rescheduled; however, the management area prescriptions and the areas to which they are applied in the Plan will not change unless the Plan is revised. If the budget is significantly different from that in the Plan over a period of several years, the Plan itself may have to be amended [36 CFR 219.10(e)] and, consequently, will reflect different target outputs.

As a long-range strategy for the Forest, this Plan and accompanying Final EIS are programmatic in nature. During implementation, when the various projects are designed, more site-specific analyses will be developed. These analyses (Forest Service Handbook 1909.15) may result in environmental assessments (40 CFR 1508.9), environmental impact statements (40 CFR 1508.11) or categorical exclusions (40 CFR 1508.4) and possibly an amendment or revision of the Plan [36 CFR 219.10(f) and (g)]. Any resulting documents will be tiered to the Final EIS for the Plan (40 CFR 1508.28).

Existing projects, as well as contractual obligations, will continue as originally planned. During implementation, however, the following minimum requirements, subject to valid existing rights, will be met. The Forest Supervisor will assure that 1) annual program proposals and projects are consistent with the Plan; 2) program budget proposals and objectives are consistent with management direction specified in the Plan; and 3) implementation is in compliance with the Regional Guide and 36 CFR 219.10(e), 36 CFR 219.11(d), and 36 CFR 219.27.

Proposals to use National Forest System (NFS) lands will be reviewed for consistency with the Plan. Management direction contained in Chapter 4 of the Plan will be used to analyze any proposal involving use of NFS lands. All permits, contracts and other instruments for occupancy and use of the NFS lands must be consistent with the Management Direction in Chapter 4 as required by 16 USC 1604(1) and 36 CFR 219.10(e).

Implementation is guided by the management requirements contained in the Forest Direction, including the management area prescriptions, found in Chapter 4 of the Plan. These management requirements were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or avoid long-term adverse effects.

Any unavoidable adverse environmental effects, such as the disruptive effect of timber harvest on recreation, will be temporary and will involve only a small percentage of the Forest at any one time. To the best of our knowledge, all practical mitigation measures are included in Chapter 4 of the Plan. These measures are hereby adopted.

The monitoring and evaluation requirements established in Forest Plan Chapter 5 are hereby adopted. Management practices will be observed and their effects recorded in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan are being met and that the anticipated results are the actual results.

The monitoring results will be evaluated at intervals established in the Forest Plan in order to determine whether changes are needed to make it more effective or to respond to changed or unexpected conditions. Data gathered during monitoring will be used to modify implementation schedules, improve mitigation measures and assess the need for amending or revising the Plan.

Amendment of the Plan may be done at any time by the Forest Supervisor, as needed to carry out the goals and objectives of the Plan. Revision will normally be done on a ten-year cycle or at least every 15 years. The Plan may also be revised whenever the Forest Supervisor determines conditions in the planning area or other items have changed significantly [36 CFR 219.10(f)(g)].

Copies of future amendments to the Forest Plan and supplements to the Final EIS will be sent to those listed in Appendix C of the Final EIS. Others can obtain copies by writing the Forest Supervisor at the address shown on page 1.

In review of the public comments on the Draft EIS, it was noted that some people were unconvinced that National Forest management would not have some particular adverse impacts. The Forest Service cannot address these concerns to their satisfaction except to stop using some management practices or to prohibit some uses entirely. Because of this public concern, the management practices will be carefully monitored and evaluated.

This Forest Plan is not a rigid tool developed now to manage the Allegheny National Forest forever. Change can and will be made in the Forest Plan as it is revised every 10 to 15 years. The decision made today will be reviewed

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Implementation, Monitoring, and Mitigation

periodically and, with appropriate public involvement, change will take place whenever needed, including changes in any of the management practices. Future management needs and other resource uses require the Forest Service to maintain this land management plan as a dynamic document.

X. RIGHT TO APPEAL

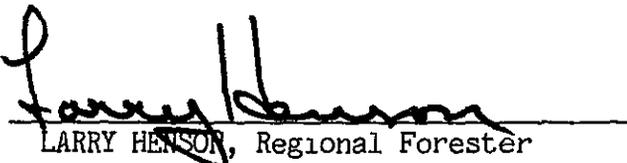
This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to Larry Henson, Regional Forester, Eastern Region, USDA Forest Service, 310 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203. The notice of appeal, a statement of reasons to support the appeal, and any request for oral presentation must be filed within 45 days after the date of this decision. In accordance with 40 CFR 1506.10(b)(2) and 36 CFR 211.18(c)(3), the appeal period cannot expire prior to 30 days after publication by the Environmental Protection Agency of the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS in the Federal Register.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. A stay of the decision must be requested. A stay may be requested at any time during the appeal period until a decision on the appeal is made by the Chief, USDA Forest Service.

No decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document, although a number of projects are identified. Those projects identified in various parts of the Plan or Final EIS are only included in order to clarify discussions, illustrate a point, or show that Forest Plan goals and objectives can be achieved.

Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Forest Plan implementation after appropriate analysis and documentation meeting NEPA requirements. Parties dissatisfied with a specific project should appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.

The appeal process for projects is the same as that described above for the Forest Plan, except notice of appeal must be sent to the person making the decision. This will normally be a District Ranger or the Forest Supervisor.

  
LARRY HENSON, Regional Forester

APR 24 1986

Date

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Right to Appeal

XI. LEGAL REFERENCES The following references and citations are included here to make the text of the Record of Decision more readable.

<u>ROD</u> <u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Citation</u>
1	NFMA planning regulations	36 CFR Part 219 47 FR 43026, 9/30/82
1	CEQ rules implementing NEPA	40 CFR Part 1500
5	Maximizing net public benefit	36 CFR Part 219.1(a)
5	Decision to approve the Forest Plan	36 CFR 219.1
6	Forest Plan and EIS as combined documents	40 CFR 1506.4 40 CFR 1508.25
6	Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act	PL 95-625 PL 90-542
25	Pennsylvania Wilderness Act of 1984	PL 98-585
27	Cost efficiency of alternatives	36 CFR 219.12(f)(8)
30	Alternative that maximizes present net value	36 CFR 219.12(j)(2)
32	Public comments on the Draft EIS	36 CFR 219.6 40 CFR 1500.2(d)
32	Scope of the EIS	40 CFR 1501.7 40 CFR 1508.25
35	Alternatives considered	36 CFR 219.12(f)
38	Changing implementation schedules	36 CFR 219.10(e)
38	Forest Plan implementation:	
	Site-specific analysis	FSH 1909.15
	Environmental assessment	40 CFR 1508.9
	Environmental impact statement	40 CFR 1508.11
	Categorical exclusions	40 CFR 1508.4
	Plan amendment or revision	36 CFR 219.10(f)(g)
	Tiering to Forest Plan	40 CFR 1508.28
38	Implementation of Forest Plan	36 CFR 219.10(e) 36 CFR 219.11(d) 36 CFR 219.27
38	Permits, contracts, and other instruments	16 USC 1604(i) 36 CFR 219.10(e)
39	Amending the Forest Plan	36 CFR 219.10(f)(g)
40	Decision subject to appeal	36 CFR 211.18
40	Extent of the appeal period	40 CFR 1506.10(b)(2) 36 CFR 211.18(c)(3)