



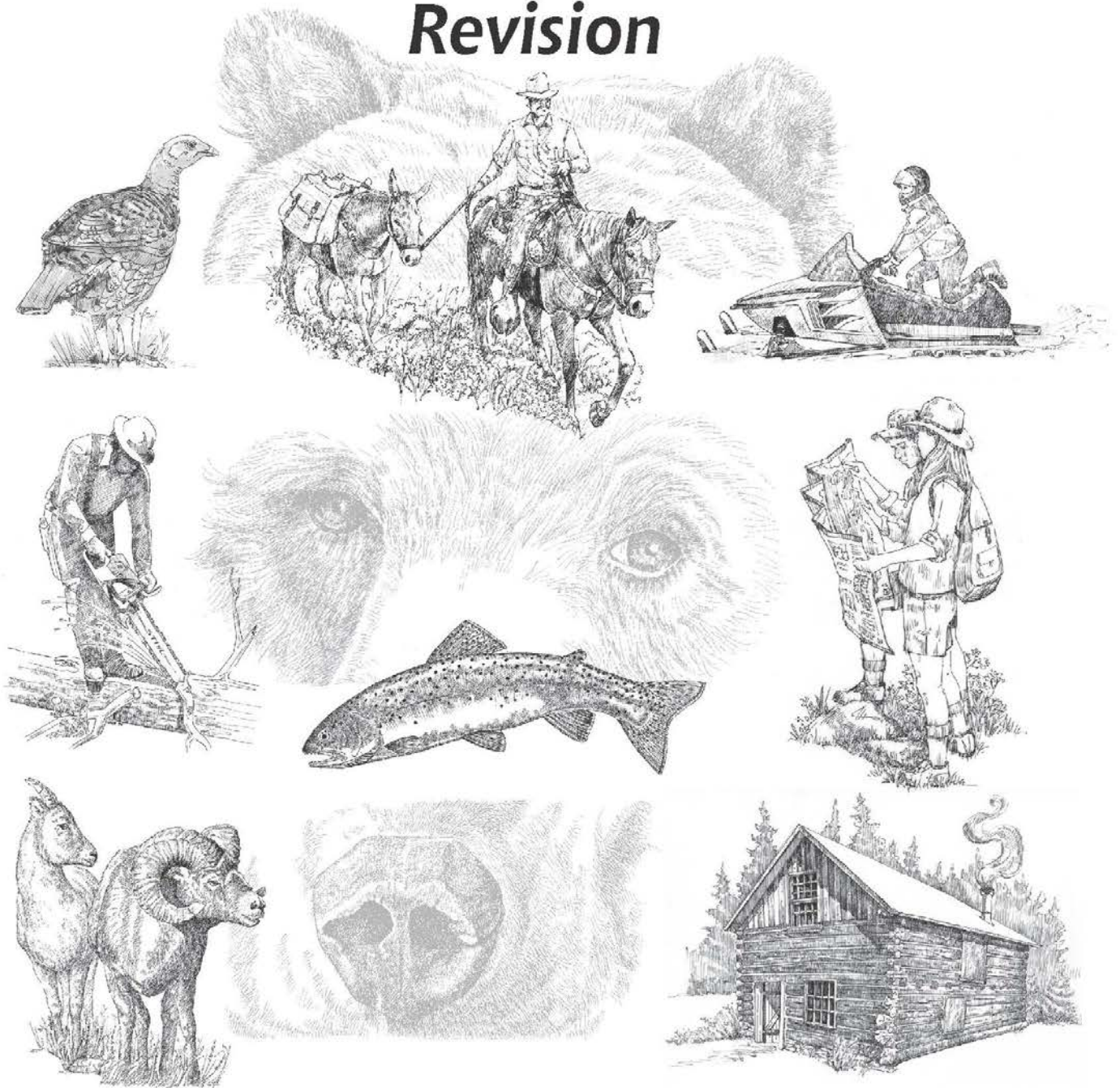
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Department of
Agriculture

Forest
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Record of Decision for the **Land Management Plan** *Revision*



Shoshone National Forest

Located within Fremont, Hot Springs, Park, Sublette, and Teton Counties, Wyoming

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This document presents the decision regarding the selection of a revised land management plan for the Shoshone National Forest. It summarizes the reasons for choosing the selected alternative as the basis for the revised Forest plan, which will be followed for the next 10 to 15 years. The long-term environmental consequences contained in the final environmental impact statement are considered in this decision.

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Introduction

This document presents the decision and summarizes the reasons for choosing the selected alternative based on the Shoshone National Forest Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), for the Shoshone National Forest Revised Land Management Plan (LMP). The long-term environmental consequences contained in the FEIS are considered in this decision. A LMP is required by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and associated regulations.

The Shoshone National Forest consists of 2.4 million acres in Fremont, Hot Springs, Park, Sublette, and Teton counties. Approximately 56 percent of the Forest is designated wilderness and 28 percent inventoried roadless under the 2001 Roadless Rule. The Forest is part of the Greater Yellowstone Area, which is a large, nearly intact northern temperate zone ecosystem. The Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee was formed in 1964 to allow representatives from the U.S. Department of the Interior (USDI) National Park Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service to pursue opportunities of mutual cooperation and coordination in the management of core Federal lands located within the Greater Yellowstone Area. This relationship added depth to the LMP because elements were considered in context with other public lands within the area.

This record of decision (ROD) *only* affects the lands administered by the Shoshone National Forest. It does not affect lands administered by the other agencies within the Greater Yellowstone Area. This LMP establishes a framework for future decision-making by outlining a broad, interdisciplinary program for achieving the desired goals, objectives, and future conditions of the landscape for the next 10 to 15 years. The LMP does not make a commitment to the selection of any specific project and does not dictate day-to-day administrative activities needed to implement the Agency's internal operations. However, by applying Forestwide management direction, the LMP is implemented through the design, execution, and monitoring of site-specific projects and activities.

My Decision

This record of decision (ROD) presents my decision to select a modified version of alternative G as presented in the FEIS to serve as the basis for the revised LMP for the Shoshone National Forest. In making this decision I reviewed the range of alternatives, read the public comments, and considered the evaluation of the alternatives in the FEIS. I modified alternative G in the FEIS and draft ROD after considering comments during additional public meetings after the FEIS and draft ROD were published. I also considered the objections filed during the formal objection period and the instructions on the objections from the Objections Reviewing Officer.

This LMP and FEIS furthers the “all-lands” approach through collaboration with key stakeholders, including other Federal landowners within the Greater Yellowstone Area, state and local governments, and American Indian tribes with an interest in the Shoshone National Forest. This coordination allowed for the revision to be consistent with the plans for the surrounding landscape.

By selecting alternative G-modified, I am approving a revised LMP for the Shoshone National Forest to provide a more a holistic approach toward the management of this landscape. In addition, alternative G-modified best responds to the identified need for change in six major plan revision topics:

1. Recreation uses and opportunities
2. Special areas and designations

3. Vegetation management
4. Wildlife habitat management
5. Oil and gas development
6. Commercial livestock grazing

Furthermore, alternative G-modified best addresses the issues raised within each revision topic. It is responsive to the comments received and is a logical outgrowth of the analysis and public involvement efforts. Alternative G-modified strikes a balance among these resources, and does not emphasize any particular element over another.

This LMP includes goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, management area direction, monitoring and evaluation direction, and recommendations for special area allocations. It identifies lands that are suitable for various uses.

This revised LMP and FEIS are programmatic and represent a broad management strategy for the Shoshone National Forest that provides direction for restoring and sustaining healthy forest and rangeland conditions. Standards and guidelines ensure that resources are managed in a sustainable manner. Needed course corrections or adjustments would be identified through monitoring and evaluation, and amendments to the LMP would be made as needed. This decision will remain in effect until the LMP is revised or amended.

My decision is being made pursuant to the 1982 Forest Service planning regulations, as allowed by the transition language of the current regulations, 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 219.17(b)(3). A copy of the 1982 Planning Regulations is available at the Shoshone National Forest office or at <http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma/includes/nfmareg.html>.

Consideration of Objections

In accordance with subpart B of the current planning regulations at 36 CFR 219, individuals or entities who had participated in the planning process were given an opportunity to object to a January 2014 draft version of this ROD along with a draft Plan. During the formal objection period, 70 objections were submitted and 10 people intervened as an interested person to one or more objection. After considering the objections and meeting with the objectors and interested persons, Jane L. Cottrell, Reviewing Officer for the Chief, sent me an objections response with instructions on December 15, 2014. These instructions addressed concerns related to potential wild and scenic rivers, potential wilderness, the Dunoir Special Management Unit, motorized travel, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, interactions between bighorn sheep and recreational pack-goats, wetlands and watershed management, Canada Lynx habitat and pre-commercial thinning, general wildlife viability, wildlife habitat management, oil and gas suitability, rangeland management, and social and economic analysis. Based on the instructions, I have modified portions of the Forest Plan and developed an errata to the FEIS. I have also clarified some of the analysis in the project file. My response to the instructions is in appendix A of this ROD.

I have discussed the required changes to the Plan with Reviewing Officer Cottrell and Forest Supervisor Joe Alexander. The Forest supervisor and I concur with the reviewing officer that the changes to the Plan in response to the objections are in the best interests of the American public and better help us meet the desired conditions for the Forest.

Components of My Decision

There are six fundamental components of my LMP decision, as follows.

1. Establishment of Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives, including desired conditions (36 CFR 219.11(b)–1982)

I am establishing goals, stated as desired conditions, and objectives, as listed and described in the Shoshone National Forest Land Management Plan, for each resource or resource area.

Desired conditions encompass the overarching goals of land and resource management. They are statements of the social, economic, and ecological attributes and values toward which management strives to achieve, and characterize or exemplify the desired outcomes of land management. They describe how the area is expected to look and function in the future. Some desired conditions are general, while others are specific.

Desired conditions are aspirations; they may only be achievable over the long term. Collectively, specific projects implemented subsequent to this Plan should contribute to maintaining and/or achieving desired conditions, but no single project should be expected to contribute to meeting all desired conditions. Identifying and establishing desired conditions is the central focus of this LMP.

Objectives are concise projections of measurable, time-specific intended outcomes. Objectives are a means of progressing toward maintaining and/or achieving desired conditions. As with desired conditions, they are aspirations, not commitments or final project decisions.

2. Establishment of Forestwide standards and guidelines (36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27–1982)

I am establishing standards and guidelines as listed and described in the Shoshone National Forest Land Management Plan for each resource or resource area.

Standards and guidelines are criteria used in project design and implementation that protect resources and provide technical guidance for project and activity decision-making to help achieve desired conditions and objectives. They are project-level operational controls that help ensure that projects are implemented in ways that reduce environmental impacts.

A **standard** is an approach or condition determined to be necessary to meet desired future conditions and objectives, and/or to ensure the long-term viability of resources. A standard (worded as “must” or “shall”) describes a course of action that must be followed, or a level of attainment that must be reached. Deviations from standards would require analysis and documentation through a subsequent LMP amendment.

A **guideline** (worded as “should”) is presumptively a requirement to meet desired future conditions and objectives, and/or to ensure the long-term viability of resources. Guidelines are put forward in this plan in recognition that there may be circumstances that could generate or require alternative, more appropriate means for meeting desired future conditions and objectives, and/or to ensure the long-term viability of resources. It is also recognized that there may be limited individual circumstances where the need for a guideline no longer exists or the applicability of a guideline is otherwise altered (e.g., changes in surrounding land use that may render a guideline ineffective). In these situations a guideline has been determined to be more appropriate than a standard by allowing some flexibility in approach as conditions change and new information is obtained. The use of guidelines in this plan is an acknowledgement that a single ideal approach for meeting our desired future conditions and objectives,

and/or ensuring the long-term viability of resources, may yet to be identified, and that there may be nuances in any given management situation that warrant a modified approach. If the responsible official for a project decision finds that deviation from a guideline is necessary, the responsible official must record the reasons for deviation as part of the project decision and explain how the intent of the guideline—as established by the desired future conditions and objectives, and/or need to ensure long-term viability of resources—is being met through alternative means. If the intent of the guideline is met through alternative means, a LMP amendment would not be required.

3. Establishment of management direction (36 CFR 219.11(c)–1982)

I am establishing six management prescriptions, called management areas, which will guide the design and implementation of future actions. These are identified using a numbering scheme commonly used in the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service. This numbering scheme uses a scale from management area 1 comprising wilderness prescriptions to management area 8 describing developed sites. (management areas 6 and 7 are not used in this Plan). Management areas describe the level of management, investment and appearance of landscapes, and the suitable uses and activities that may occur within that area.

4. Determination of lands suitable for various uses and an allowable timber sale quantity

My decision specifically includes the determination of lands suitable for timber harvest (36 CFR 219.14–1982) and an associated allowable sale quantity for the next 10 years on those acres (36 CFR 219.16–1982); the determination of lands suitable for grazing and browsing (36 CFR 219.20–1982); and provisions for a broad spectrum of outdoor recreation opportunities (36 CFR 219.21–1982).

Suitable uses are described in the LMP for each management area and for some specific areas.

My decision identifies 127,009 acres as suitable for timber production. I am establishing an allowable sale quantity for the next 10 years on the suitable acres as 22,800 thousand cubic feet.

My decision also identifies 375,368 acres as suitable for grazing and browsing.

My decision identifies which areas are generally suitable for oil and gas surface development. However, there may be restrictions and stipulations as part of the oil and gas leasing availability decision which is separate from this Forest Plan decision.

5. Establishment of requirements for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the revised plan (36 CFR 219.11(d)–1982)

I am establishing monitoring and evaluation requirements as described in chapter 3 of the LMP. The monitoring plan provides a framework for adaptive management by establishing priorities and timelines for the evaluation of ecological, social, and economic conditions and trends that contribute to sustainability and reflect progress toward the land management goals of the Shoshone National Forest. As part of the monitoring plan, we state that cooperating agencies can assist Forest personnel with monitoring forest LMP and project implementation. Maintaining the knowledge base and relationship with state agencies and local elected officials will provide continuity in the adaptive management cycle, from development of the revised LMP to plan implementation.

6. Recommendations for additions to the Wilderness Preservation System, the Wild and Scenic River Systems, and establishment of new research natural areas or other administrative designated areas (36 CFR 219.17(a), 219.18, 219.21, 219.25–1982)

Recommendations for Wilderness. Because the majority of the Forest is already wilderness, and because I am seeking balance among uses of the Forest, I am not recommending additional areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The FEIS includes an evaluation of the potential wilderness areas (Appendix C, “Evaluation of Areas for Potential Wilderness”). This evaluation was based on Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 70, which describes three tests—capability, availability, and need—to evaluate the wilderness potential of an area. The Shoshone has a number of backcountry areas that could be additions to the wilderness system. There is also a large amount of high-quality wilderness designated on the Shoshone and on surrounding national forests. I have decided to continue protecting the characteristics of these backcountry areas with plan direction that does not include wilderness recommendations. This decision maintains these areas in the conditions for which they are valued, while still allowing recreation uses and restoration opportunities that would not be available within a designated wilderness.

Recommendations for the Wild and Scenic River System. In accordance with section 5(d)(1) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA), I have identified 16 river segments as “eligible” for potential inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System. This is the first step in a two-step process to recommend these areas. The second step is to determine the suitability of these segments. The Shoshone has postponed making the suitability determination (as is allowed by Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 -83.1). The Shoshone National Forest is required to provide for the protection of river segments identified as eligible until a decision is made through a suitability study on the future use of the river and adjacent lands. Projects that affect the free-flowing characteristic of an eligible river would have to make a wild and scenic river suitability determination before the project could proceed.

These rivers may eventually be designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System by the Secretary of the Interior, or as the result of an act of Congress (Secretarial designation requires that the state’s governor make application to the Secretary of the Interior). The identification of rivers as eligible or subsequently suitable through this land management planning process does not trigger any water rights or other protections under the WSRA. In order to manage the rivers for their potential inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System, existing authorities will be used to protect the identified river’s free-flowing character, water quality, outstanding remarkable values, and recommended classification. The Shoshone National Forest has one designated wild and scenic river, the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone Wild River.

Establishment of Research Natural Areas. I am identifying eight new research natural areas in addition to the existing Line Creek Plateau Research Natural Area. Formal designation will take place after the completion of an establishment report. The new research natural areas include Beartooth Butte, Lake Creek, Pat O’Hara, Bald Ridge, Grizzly Creek, Sheep Mesa, Arrow Mountain, and Roaring Fork.

Designations of Special Interest Areas. I am identifying three new special interest areas in addition to the existing Swamp Lake Botanical Area Special Interest Area. The new special interest areas are Sawtooth Peatbed Geological Area, Little Popo Agie Moraine Geological Area, and Kirwin Historical Area.

Other Special Areas. I am establishing management direction for the following national trails:

- *Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) Corridor:* Approximately 31 miles of the 3,100-mile CDNST are located on the Shoshone National Forest in two separate sections. The

northern section runs along the western edge of the Wind River Ranger District and the southern section traverses the southwestern edge of the Washakie Ranger District.

- *Nez Perce National Historic Trail (NPNHT) Corridor:* Approximately 147 miles of the 1,170-mile NPNHT cross the Shoshone National Forest through the Clarks Fork Ranger District. The Shoshone portion comes out of Yellowstone National Park to the west and runs northeast, exiting the Forest in the vicinity of the Clarks Fork Canyon.

Rationale for My Decision

My decision to select alternative G-modified is based on a careful and reasoned comparison of the environmental consequences of, and responses to, issues and concerns identified for each alternative. I have considered public input resulting from scoping, comments on the DEIS, and during the objections process. I selected alternative G-modified because it best supports our commitment to retain and restore the ecological resilience of the Shoshone National Forest in order to achieve sustainable ecosystems that provide a broad range of services and ecological benefits.

The Shoshone National Forest conducted extensive public outreach from the initiation of this process in 2005 to the present. This involved collaborating with numerous individuals, organizations, agencies, tribes, and local governments. Alternative G-modified provides for the best mix and balance of management strategies that are responsive to the issues, concerns, and opportunities expressed by our stakeholders.

Alternative G-modified establishes ambitious, but achievable, objectives for ecosystem maintenance/restoration and recreation opportunities and management. Specific components target restoration of watersheds and native plant communities while emphasizing the wide range of recreational opportunities and nationally renowned landscapes. The alternative provides opportunities for responsible resource use and commodity production that are valued by the surrounding communities. Alternative G-modified reflects the public comments received on the DEIS and through the objections process, and provides the best multiple use approach for this unique landscape, while preserving a variety of choices for the American people into the future.

Other Alternatives Considered in Detail

Seven alternatives were considered in detail in the FEIS, including alternative G. These alternatives provide a range of responses to the plan revision topics and provide a basis of comparison of effects for considering environmental impacts. Alternative G was crafted in response to public comments on the six alternatives presented in the DEIS. The description of each of the alternatives not selected is provided below.

Alternative A represents the continuation of current management direction under the existing Shoshone National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1986), as amended. Alternative A meets the NEPA and NFMA requirement (36 CFR 219.12(f)(7)) that a no-action alternative be considered. “No action” means that the alternative reflects the implementation of existing management goals, objectives, and management practices based on the existing land use plans. Alternative A also serves as the baseline for comparing and contrasting the impacts of the other alternatives. Alternative A is based on reasonably foreseeable actions, existing planning decisions and policies, and existing land use allocations and programs.

Alternative B represents the draft LMP at the time of the draft EIS. It responds to the identified purpose and need for change from the current Forest Plan. This alternative was developed in response to public

scoping that the vegetation resources need active management to achieve biological and habitat diversity, while still providing a sustainable output of other Forest uses and a diversity of recreation opportunities. This alternative provides balance among the utilization of Forest resources, recreation opportunities, the conservation of habitat, and designation of special areas.

Alternative C emphasizes wilderness and protection of backcountry areas while moving toward desired conditions for Forest resources. Alternative C has an increased emphasis on natural disturbance processes. It identifies more opportunities for backcountry non-motorized recreation and more acres of management area 1 (wilderness) than any other alternative. This alternative was developed in response to public scoping recommending the Forest emphasize non-motorized, backcountry recreation and propose additional areas for wilderness designation.

Alternative D was developed in response to public scoping regarding the recommendation of a few, specific potential wilderness areas and the desire to emphasize non-motorized, backcountry recreation, natural processes, and undeveloped recreational settings. It also includes a continuation of commodity production and motorized recreation outside of backcountry areas.

Alternative E provides an emphasis on commodity production and motorized use while addressing issues shared by the public, local industry, and motorized user groups. Alternative E was developed in response to public scoping regarding the economic sustainability of local communities with an emphasis on expanding the commercial utilization of Forest resources into some backcountry areas.

Alternative F demonstrates the highest level of commodity production and motorized use possible within parameters, such as designated wilderness. Alternative F was developed in response to public scoping regarding the support of commodity production and motorized use of the Forest.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Several alternatives were considered during the planning process, but were eliminated from further detailed study. These alternatives are discussed in chapter 2 of the FEIS. The interdisciplinary team used prior management experience, existing laws and regulations guiding National Forest System management, and public input when designing the alternatives considered in detail. Many of the suggestions proposed by interested parties and the public were used to develop and shape the analyzed alternatives—even if they were presented in an alternative that was not carried forward in its entirety.

Rationale for Selection of Alternative G-Modified

Alternatives A, E, and F are consistent with current law, but inconsistent with the 2001 Roadless Conservation Rule. Alternatives E and F were generated early in the revision process prior to the court rulings that resolved the status of the Roadless Rule. They were included in the FEIS in response to public comment that wanted the impacts of the Roadless Rule to be analyzed and for past public input to be considered. I decided it was more responsive to the public process to include these alternatives in the detailed analysis, although they could have been eliminated from detailed study.

Alternatives B, C, and D described above are consistent with current law and regulation and could be implemented by the Shoshone National Forest; however, alternative G-modified better aligns with the purpose and need for this plan revision. I find that alternative G-modified provides the best balance of public benefits based on its responsiveness to the issues raised regarding the six revision topics. Comments received during the formal review periods, as well as the feedback and input we continue to receive through informal channels, have confirmed that these six issues persist as the major concerns of those with a stake in the management of the Shoshone National Forest.

Alternative G-modified provides a balanced response to the public concerns expressed throughout the revision process.

For those people who advocate for backcountry characteristics, wildlife habitat, and non-motorized experiences, alternative G-modified provides less area available for oil and gas surface occupancy, implements the grizzly bear conservation strategy, protects big game crucial winter range, and maintains the backcountry character of significant portions of the Forest, particularly the four backcountry areas most advocated for (Trout Creek, Francs Peak, Wood River, and Dunoir Special Management Unit).

For those who advocate for commodity production and motorized recreation, alternative G-modified maintains winter motorized recreation, maintains timber harvest and livestock grazing at or above current levels, identifies areas suitable for possible summer motorized recreation expansion that fall outside of key backcountry areas, and maintains oil and gas development opportunities in the areas with current leasing interest.

For people who like the Forest the way it is, alternative G-modified maintains the current range of recreation opportunities, maintains the current backcountry nature of the Forest, and enhances opportunities that are underrepresented without impacting other user groups.

Below I explain how my decision responds to the issues around the six revision topics:

Issue 1: Recreation uses and opportunities—continuing emphasis on high-quality dispersed recreation opportunities

In alternative G-modified, large expanses of the Shoshone National Forest are managed as non-motorized backcountry with tremendous recreation opportunities for the backcountry hiker, hunter, fisherman, horseman, camper and winter recreationist. The Forest has 1,141 miles of roads, 32 miles of summer motorized trails, 276 miles of snowmobile trails, and 1,652 miles of non-motorized trails. Alternative G-modified management allocations allow all existing motorized and non-motorized trails to be maintained. It continues to support a large diversity of recreation special use permits.

Based on public comment to the DEIS, alternative G-modified identifies areas that would be suitable for expanding summer motorized recreation in future travel management decisions. It focuses expansion in areas outside of secure habitat within the grizzly bear primary conservation areas. It maintains the non-motorized designations for key front country areas from the current plan that were identified during public comment on the DEIS.

Alternative G-modified identifies large areas that are suitable for winter motorized use, while protecting big game crucial winter range and lynx habitat. It continues to allow existing winter motorized recreation in corridors through crucial winter range, where Wyoming Game and Fish assessments indicate that use is not adversely impacting wintering big game.

Restrictions on Recreational Pack Goats within Bighorn Sheep Habitat: Throughout the process, advocates for the use of recreational pack goats have been concerned about restrictions within bighorn sheep habitat.

A number of recreational pack goat users objected to my decision to prohibit pack goats on the majority of the Shoshone National Forest to prevent disease transmission to the Forest's core native herds of bighorn sheep. They argued that they could restrain their pack animals and adopt mitigation measures to minimize contact with bighorn sheep. Forest Supervisor Joe Alexander and I appreciate

their fondness for this form of recreation and do not relish having to choose between pack goat use on the Forest and the health of core native bighorn sheep herds.

However, I have chosen to err on the side of caution and remove the potential for disease transmission from domestic goats to bighorn sheep on the Shoshone National Forest. It is the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies' collective opinion that enough is known about potential pathogen transmission from domestic goats to wild sheep to warrant their separation. Therefore, our goal is to ensure a very low risk of disease transmission from domestic goats to the Shoshone's core native bighorn sheep herds. Until further scientific information is available to prove otherwise, the conservation value of the Shoshone's native bighorn sheep herds is far too great to allow domestic goat use within core native bighorn sheep habitat. Even one disease transmission event could be catastrophic to a bighorn sheep herd.

Issue 2: Special areas and designations

Research Natural Areas and Special Interest Areas: The designation of eight new research natural areas in alternative G-modified would further the study of the biological diversity on the Shoshone National Forest. Areas of geologic and historical importance will similarly be recognized by the addition of three new special interest areas. In response to public comment to the DEIS, research natural area and special interest area boundaries in alternative G-modified were adjusted to include additional features and to exclude areas with uses that would be incompatible with area designation. Sixteen river segments are identified as eligible for recommendation as wild and scenic rivers; their eligibility will be maintained until they are analyzed for suitability.

Potential Wilderness: Alternative G-modified does not recommend any additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System, but it does not preclude recommendation of the areas of most public interest in the future. Public comment on the DEIS indicated broad public support for maintaining the backcountry character of the Shoshone. Some members of the public wanted this character maintained, but generally did not support additional wilderness designation because it limits the types of recreational uses and resource management options that can occur in these areas. Another segment of the public supports addition to wilderness designation as a means to ensure long-term protection of the areas.

In the objection response (see appendix), the Objections Reviewing Officer has asked me to clarify and expand on the logic, rationale, and supporting analysis for decisions related to wilderness recommendations, as well as how sources of public opinion were used. As I explained above, there is substantial public sentiment both for and against additional wilderness recommendations within the Forest. The FEIS describes the analysis of 32 separate areas that exhibit characteristics consistent with wilderness. Of these 32 areas, 4 distinct areas rose to the top for wilderness advocates: Francs Peak, Wood River, Trout Creek, and the Dunoir Special Management Area.

I am aware that all of these areas exhibit high value wilderness character. But the wilderness decision is not solely a technical inventory process. Forest Supervisor Alexander and I have been transparent about our decision-making rationale on this topic from the beginning of the process. A majority of the Forest is already wilderness. For these other areas, I am pursuing a balanced position, where minimal backcountry use should be permitted in a semi-primitive condition, and where we would have management flexibility over the life of the Plan. At the same time, with reductions in mechanized and motorized use of these areas as a result of the objections process, I am keeping future wilderness designation options open. Future generations may see this differently, and management area prescriptions in the Plan do not alter the character of these areas.

I agree that the backcountry character of the Shoshone should continue to be protected. I also believe that the character of these areas can continue to be protected while allowing for some uses that would not be permitted in a designated wilderness area. This includes recreation uses such as unguided big game hunting for non-resident hunters.¹ Also the implementation of restoration activities would be more compatible if the areas are not designated as wilderness. Activities such as planting and prescribed fire for whitebark pine restoration and activities to restore native populations of Yellowstone cutthroat trout are easier to conduct outside of wilderness where the foregoing activities are precluded.

National Trails: Management for two national trails, the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST) and the Nez Perce National Historic Trail, is incorporated into the revised LMP with direction consistent with the respective comprehensive trail plans.

Objections were received on how management of the CDNST was handled in the plan revision. I want to address one aspect of those objections here. The objectors felt that a new location for the CDNST should have been established through the plan revision that fully meets the purposes of the trail to provide for a non-motorized experience. I never intended to address the relocation of the trail through the revision process. Rather, the plan revision focused on providing management direction for the trail consistent with the comprehensive management plan. Relocation of the trail will be addressed in a future project-level analysis focusing on the site-specific elements that such a project entails. That level of analysis is generally not appropriate for a programmatic-level analysis like the Plan revision. I believe that the management direction provided in the revised plan for the CDNST provides a good basis for conducting a project-level analysis for relocation of the trail and provides a good framework for managing the trail consistent with the comprehensive plan until the trail is relocated.

Issue 3: Vegetation Management

Vegetation on the Shoshone provides diverse habitat for a variety of native plant and animal species, attractive settings for outdoor recreation, and resources for grazing and timber production. Impacts from insects and wildfire have dramatically changed vegetation conditions since 2000.

Restoration of ecosystems is a high priority for the Forest Service. Alternative G-modified facilitates restoration of areas impacted by bark beetle epidemics through a mix of active management, including timber harvest, mechanical treatment, and prescribed fire, along with the provision for the role of natural processes in restoring ecosystem functions. Alternative G-modified emphasizes the management of vegetation and treatment of fuels to protect infrastructure and other values in the wildland-urban interface. Emphasis is included on restoration activities for whitebark pine and aspen communities. It includes direction to continue the ongoing treatment and monitoring of invasive plant species. Alternative G-modified designates 127,009 acres of suitable timber land for timber production.

Pre-Commercial Thinning and Incorporation of Northern Rockies Canada Lynx Management Direction: During the objections process, some objectors were concerned that the proposed Plan was not considering the flexibility to do pre-commercial thinning originally provided by the broader strategy for Canada Lynx management in the Northern Rockies. I want to clarify that this flexibility has been incorporated into the Plan.

People who objected to restrictions on pre-commercial thinning in lynx habitat were concerned that growth in young stands, especially lodgepole pine stands, would be reduced if not thinned. One objector felt that the Forest's use of lynx amendment restrictions is not necessarily using best available science. In my decision, I am retaining direction developed through a previous plan amendment as part

¹ State law requires that non-resident hunters have a guide to hunt in designated wilderness areas.

of the broader Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD). Very little will change in terms of management for lynx with this decision. The Shoshone National Forest contains 597,000 acres of mapped lynx habitat. The Forest is allowed to modify up to 6 percent or 35,820 acres of this habitat within the wildland-urban interface in order to reduce fuels. Stated another way, up to 35,820 acres of lynx habitat within the wildland-urban interface can be treated using a variety of silvicultural techniques including pre-commercial thinning for purposes of treating fuels. This was true under the 1986 Plan and remains unchanged in the revised Plan.

The difference in the revised plan is that the Forest may pre-commercially thin on a maximum of 2,130 acres of lynx habitat within the wildland-urban interface for any purpose (this is a total over the next 10 to 15 years, not an annual acreage). The biological opinion returned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is clear that the 2,130 acres count towards the 6 percent limit and that pre-commercial thinning can only occur in the wildland-urban interface.

Additional opportunities for pre-commercial thinning, as well as other silvicultural techniques in non-lynx habitat, exist on the Forest outside of the wildland-urban interface. These areas will be identified during project-level analysis.

Objections Issues on the Ongoing Insect Epidemic: Objections, citing recently released literature, were received commenting that the Forest Plan did not incorporate the best available science on responding to the ongoing insect epidemic. A review of that literature did not reveal inaccuracies in the management guidance in the Forest Plan. What the review did reinforce was that the research community is not unanimous in their approach to addressing insect responses, but agrees that active management holds the best likelihood of reducing risk at the smaller scales addressed in the revised Plan. The uncertainty that exists in our knowledge on how to respond is best addressed at the project level where the analysis and monitoring can be directed at site-specific conditions.

Issue 4: Wildlife Habitat Management

As part of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, the Shoshone's wildlife habitat is very important for wildlife requiring a large land base for survival. Under alternative G-modified, habitat for endangered, proposed, and candidate species would be managed consistently with established and approved recovery plans and appropriate conservation strategies. Management direction in the alternative G-modified strives to maintain biodiversity over time across the Forest.

The Final Conservation Strategy for Grizzly Bear in the Greater Yellowstone Area contains the best available science for the management of grizzly bear habitat. This Conservation Strategy has been incorporated into alternative G-modified.

As discussed earlier, alternative G-modified incorporates the direction from the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Record of Decision. Alternative G-modified also contains provisions for 2,130 acres of pre-commercial thinning in lynx habitat for the next 10 to 15 years.

Domestic goats will not be allowed in core native bighorn sheep range in response to concerns over disease transmission to bighorn sheep.

Alternative G-modified incorporates monitoring of populations and/or habitat for federally protected species, Forest Service sensitive species, species of local concern, and management indicator species.

Issue 5: Oil and Gas Development

Alternative G-modified does not change the total acres available for leasing. However, it does limit oil and gas surface development to fewer acres. The Shoshone National Forest worked with the BLM and the State of Wyoming to have consistent oil and gas surface use along administrative boundaries.

Lands adjacent to the Wind River Indian Reservation will not have surface occupancy (designated no surface occupancy or NSO). Grizzly bear primary conservation areas and most crucial winter range will also be designated NSO. Alternative G-modified focuses surface development on lands with high potential for oil and gas development including areas with existing leases.

Objections were received commenting that oil and gas development within crucial winter range was handled differently than other management activities within crucial winter range. Plan direction is commonly handled differently depending on the administrative control available, the potential impacts or benefits of the activity, and the duration of the activity. Oil and gas development tends to be a long-duration activity and generally has no beneficial impacts to crucial winter range. This is in contrast to activities such as timber harvest that have limited duration and can have beneficial impacts to winter range.

In weighing the decision on what crucial winter range areas should be designated as suitable for oil and gas surface development (controlled surface use or CSU), I considered the likelihood that oil and gas occurred on the site, the possible impacts to winter range areas, and the input from the public and other agencies. I designated crucial winter range as suitable for oil and gas surface development where there was a high potential for oil and gas occurrence, in the vicinity of existing off-Forest oil and gas development, or in areas with existing oil and gas leases. In these areas the impacts to crucial winter range from development will be addressed through design criteria that limit timing and location of surface use. In crucial winter range areas where there was less likelihood of oil and gas occurrence, the plan does not permit surface development. This approach was generally supported by the public and the State of Wyoming.

Some local governments were less supportive of this approach including some of the objectors. Some of the public, including some objectors, point out that as technology changes there is the possibility that access to oil and gas resources could increase. Because of this they say more areas should allow surface development. I considered this viewpoint in my decision. It is important to point out that this plan is established for the next 10 to 15 years. I feel confident that the Plan direction is appropriate for that time period. I am also aware that things may change in the future. Therefore, I have allowed geophysical exploration to occur within crucial winter range subject to timing restrictions. This will allow companies to continue to explore the areas that they want, so that more information is available on oil and gas resource occurrence when the Plan is again revised. If any exploration finds new resources, my decision here can be amended in a Plan revision or in connection with an oil and gas leasing availability decision to consider the new situation.

Issue 6: Commercial Livestock Grazing

Alternative G-modified designates 375,368 acres as generally suitable for grazing. Rangelands on the Shoshone are in good condition and alternative G-modified allows commercial grazing to continue at current levels. Alternative G-modified direction allows vacant allotments to be utilized as forage reserves.

Capability and Suitability: An objection was received on the Forest's rangeland capability and suitability analysis based on the use of a maximum slope of 40 percent for cattle. The objector pointed out that in some places cattle graze areas with slopes greater than 40 percent. The concern is that by using 40 percent slopes as the cutoff, fewer acres will be determined capable for grazing by cattle.

Rangeland capability and suitability analysis for the Forest Plan was completed in accordance with the Rocky Mountain Region's Desk Guide (Desk Guide). The Desk Guide specifies slopes less than 40 percent for cattle use and slopes up to 60 percent for sheep. The Desk Guide allows national forests in

the region to modify the 40 percent figure to fit local situations where site-specific information validates such use and negative resource impacts are not occurring. The Shoshone National Forest does not have this type of data.

The following rationale is why the Forest used the general guidance in the Desk Guide concerning slope:

- The Forest Plan capability and suitability analysis will have little effect on livestock industry opportunity and no direct impact to existing stocking rates or permitted use.
- Allotment specific information is not available documenting consistent cattle use outside the general slope guidelines.
- Observed cattle use on slopes greater than 40 percent was generally dependent on herder abilities, annual precipitation events, and other factors that could not be applied across all allotments or even from year to year on the same allotment.
- Where applicable, use by cattle on slopes greater than 40 percent will be analyzed on an allotment-by-allotment basis during the NEPA process to develop allotment management plans.

Stocking rates, term grazing permits, and allotment management plans are adjusted in response to site-specific monitoring and trend data, not modeling.

Other Issues Addressed in the Plan

Inventoried Roadless Areas and the 2001 Roadless Rule: Alternative G-modified is consistent with the 2001 Roadless Rule. Vegetation within roadless areas may be actively managed to the extent allowed by the 2001 Roadless Rule and management area direction.

Climate Change: The Shoshone National Forest participated in a Westwide climate initiative case study with Rocky Mountain Research Station. Management strategies for adapting to a changing climate are incorporated throughout alternative G-modified. Information from the Rocky Mountain Research Station's 2012 publication, "Climate Change on the Shoshone National Forest, Wyoming: A Synthesis of Past Climate, Climate Projections, and Ecosystem Implications" and three vulnerability assessments on water quantity, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, and aspen communities, are incorporated into the Forest Plan.

Economic and Social Assessment: The Shoshone National Forest plays an important role in the economies and amenities of adjacent communities. Local- and state-elected officials, along with the public, stressed the importance of the economic, recreational, and scenic benefits provided to their communities by the Forest. The Shoshone National Forest is in large part a non-motorized, backcountry Forest with somewhat limited opportunities for the commercial development and extraction of natural resources. Recreation visitors, outfitters and guides, hunters, fishermen and others are important contributors to the economic health of local communities.

The Forest worked closely with economists at the University of Wyoming to analyze the economic benefits of the alternatives considered in the FEIS. The FEIS incorporated information from the University of Wyoming 2012 publication, "An Economic Profile of the Shoshone National Forest." Alternative G-modified provides positive impacts to employment and income for local economies; however, the differences among alternatives for economic impacts are slight. A 2007 Colorado State University study was also used for information regarding Forest visitation and recreational activity preferences.

Changes from Draft to Pre-Objection Draft

As background, the following describes the evolution of my decision, starting with changes from the 2012 draft Plan and DEIS to the 2014 pre-objection Plan and FEIS. Later in this ROD, I describe additional changes I made between the pre-objection Plan and FEIS to the final plan and this ROD.

Alternative G in the FEIS was crafted to respond to public comments received on the DEIS and is similar to alternative B. The main differences between the two alternatives include additional acres of winter motorized recreation outside of crucial winter range, changes to summer motorized recreation, changes to suitability for oil and gas surface development, and modification to special area boundaries.

In response to public comments, acres available for **winter motorized recreation** increased from 481,196 acres in alternative B to 592,430 acres in alternative G in the FEIS. Additional areas receiving current winter motorized use were identified and added to acres available. Other areas were considered for availability, but were not included because of potential impacts to big game crucial winter range.

Acres for **summer motorized recreation** decreased from 570,246 acres in alternative B to 529,019 acres in alternative G in the FEIS, based on response to public comment about the need to protect secure habitat within the grizzly bear primary conservation area (PCA). Areas outside the PCA were given additional consideration for availability. Alternative G maintained non-motorized designations for key front country areas that public comment wanted maintained from the current plan.

Areas suitable for oil and gas **surface development** decreased from 402,849 acres in alternative B to 129,059 acres in alternative G in the FEIS. Comments received from the public, the Wyoming Governor's Office, and the Wind River Tribes included concerns about the allocations in alternative B that were suitable for oil and gas surface development. The Tribal Government did not want lands adjacent to the Wind River Reservation to be suitable for oil and gas surface development. Substantial public comment including comment from the Governor's Office and other local government cooperators recommended that our designations be consistent with adjacent BLM lands. Public comments for the most part were unfavorable toward oil and gas development.

We received a request to consider increasing the size of the **Kirwin Special Interest Area** to include all mining features and to also apply the designation to the nearby historic **Double D Ranch**. Alternative G in the FEIS provides for the addition of 4,121 acres for the Kirwin and Double D special interest areas. This change would not impact the range of management activities available in these areas.

The suitability of the **Dunoir Special Management Unit (SMU)** for mountain bike use was changed from not-suitable in alternative B in the DEIS, to suitable in alternative G in the FEIS (as described in the pre-objection ROD).

In the FEIS and pre-objection ROD, after considering the public comment on the DEIS for mountain bike use in the area, I decided to permit continued use of mountain bikes on 6.8 miles of the Pinnacle Trail within the Dunoir SMU. However, after reviewing additional public comment and discussing this issue with the Objections Reviewing Officer, I will now make the Dunoir SMU unsuitable for mountain bike use (see discussion later in this ROD).

The Shoshone National Forest **wild and scenic river eligibility** evaluation was revisited in response to public comments and four additional eligible segments were added and one was dropped. Alternative G identifies 16 total river segments eligible for recommendation as wild and scenic.

Finally, boundary modifications were made to the boundaries of the **Sawtooth Peatbeds Special Interest Area**, the **Beartooth Butte Research Natural Area**, and the **Pat O'Hara Research Natural Area**. In all cases the modifications were made to accommodate existing or potential future motorized use.

Changes Between Pre-Objection Draft and Final Decision

The modifications of alternative G to respond to objections are discussed in the appendix to this ROD. Following is a summary of the major changes that have been made.

Management Area and Suitable Use Changes

I concur with the decision of the reviewing officer for the objections, that the following changes to management areas best serve the needs of the public while protecting the backcountry character of these areas:

- The Francs Peak and Wood River areas will remain non-motorized.
- Portions of the Lander Front will remain non-motorized.
- A small portion of the area west of Meeteetse will be suitable for surface use activities associated with oil and gas development.
- The Dunoir Special Management Unit will not be suitable for mechanized (bicycle) use (see below).

Francs Peak and Wood River

I am modifying alternative G in the revised Plan to reflect a backcountry non-motorized management prescription for the Francs Peak and Wood River areas. In essence these areas match the management prescriptions in alternative B (the preferred alternative in the Draft EIS in 2012).

Comments received from motorized users on the draft EIS led the Shoshone Forest Supervisor to conclude that additional opportunities for summer motorized and snowmobile users are needed. He assigned the interdisciplinary team with the task of looking for areas that could accommodate motorized use without negatively impacting other resources. The team felt that portions of the Wood River and Francs Peak roadless areas could potentially accommodate winter and summer motorized use without threatening the roadless character of the larger areas or resource values within them.

During the objection process we heard from people on both sides of the issue. One of the loudest messages from our users is that these two areas are very special to many people regardless of their preference for motorized recreation. My decision to assign these areas to non-motorized management areas in the revised plan is based on factors including the high quality rating of wilderness characteristics, the quality winter range for elk, the importance of the moth site on Francs Peak for grizzly bears, and the roadless quality of the Wood River area. Therefore, the Forest will change these management areas from 3.3A and 3.3B to 1.3 or other non-motorized management areas, and adjust the boundaries in the final LMP where applicable.

This does not diminish the interest or need for the Shoshone National Forest to work with the snowmobiling and motorized recreation community. Therefore, I am directing the Shoshone National Forest to analyze alternative opportunities for user groups directly affected by this decision during the upcoming travel management planning effort.

Dunoir Special Management Unit

In the draft EIS in 2012, the preferred alternative recommended the removal of mountain bikes from the Dunoir Special Management Unit (SMU) in order to “provide for non-vehicular access recreation” (Public Law 92-476). Between the draft and final several comments were received from members of the public concerning this decision. In the draft ROD, I came up with a compromise by designating a 6.8-mile mountain-bike loop that we call the Pinnacle Trail. This solution would limit bikes to one trail while providing for non-vehicular access recreation in the rest of the SMU. However, during the objection process and additional public meetings, there were numerous objections to this decision, principally related to the interpretation of the law designating the SMU. Based on my review of the SMU designation, consistent with the instructions of the Objections Reviewing Officer, I am interpreting the “non-vehicular access recreation” clause in the SMU designation as excluding bicycles. I am treating bicycles as a mechanized “vehicle.”

After reviewing the concerns of the public expressed during the objection period, and in accordance with the instructions from the Objections Reviewing Officer, my final decision is to exclude bicycles from use within the Dunoir SMU boundaries. Although bicycle use will be prohibited in the Dunoir Special Management Unit, I am directing the Forest Supervisor to analyze alternative opportunities for user groups directly affected by this decision during the upcoming travel management planning effort.

The Planning Process and Public Involvement

I want to thank all of the individuals who participated throughout this revision process and shared their ideas and concerns during our multiple public meetings and comment opportunities. The level of involvement far exceeded requirements and typical expectations for public involvement processes. Because of this we were able to reach out across the spectrum of groups, governments, Tribes, and the general public to make sure this FEIS and LMP was developed around the issues that matter most to our constituents. The focus on features, uses, and conditions of the land resulted in thoughtful conversations and comments pertinent to the task at hand—revising a plan to guide decision-making on the Shoshone National Forest for years to come.

Preliminary work on the revision of the 1986 Forest Plan began in 2005. Public meetings were conducted from 2005 through 2009, when the revision was following previous 2005 and 2008 versions of planning regulations. This work was halted in June 2009, when a California District Court struck down the 2008 version of the rule. We incorporated some information from these meetings that was not specific to the 2005 or 2008 version of the planning rule.

The strategy for public participation during revision included frequent meetings with the public, collaboration with key stakeholders, and an ongoing relationship with local government cooperators, including constant involvement and feedback on the revision process and content. The Forest Supervisor used many tools to keep the public informed about the revision process including a Forest Plan website, quarterly newsletters, news releases, and frequent face-to-face meetings. The Forest Supervisor consulted with 11 Native American Indian Tribes affiliated with the lands managed by the Shoshone National Forest. The Forest met with the Shoshone and Northern Arapahoe on the Wind River Reservation and responded to their issues and concerns regarding the effects of proposed Forest management on the adjacent tribal lands.

On September 24, 2010, a notice of intent was published to revise the Shoshone National Forest Land Management Plan in the *Federal Register*. The notice recruited public comments on the revision topics and management of the Shoshone National Forest. In March 2011 four public meetings and a cooperator meeting were held to discuss the re-initiation of the revision process and the revision topics. In April 2011

local government cooperators and interested members of the public attended a series of seven workshops regarding existing Forest conditions.

An analysis of the management situation (AMS) was developed in 2011, and shared with the public and cooperators. This document was edited and finalized in 2012. The “need for change” as identified in the AMS, along with the revision topics, formed the basis for developing six alternatives for the draft EIS.

Between March 2011 and July 2013 a total of 12 public meetings and 10 cooperator meetings were held with the purpose of sharing issues, ideas, and concerns regarding the drafting of a revised Shoshone National Forest Land Management Plan. During 2012, workshops on the topics of climate change and bark beetles were held with the intent of providing information on these topics to the public. Field trips were held for the public to view the changing conditions occurring on the Forest from bark beetle infestations and to view and discuss issues surrounding all-terrain vehicle use on the Forest. The draft LMP and draft EIS were published in July 2012, and shared with the public for a 90-day comment period that was extended by 3 weeks in response to public request.

The Forest Service received 23,475 comment letters and emails from the public during the comment period on the draft LMP and draft EIS. Comments were received from individuals, non-government organizations, and government agencies. After considering and responding to public comments on the draft LMP and draft EIS, the interdisciplinary team made changes to the documents and crafted the final alternative, alternative G.

Other Findings

Identification of the Environmentally Preferred Alternative

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy (FSH 1909.15, Section 05) defines environmentally preferable as:

An alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA....Ordinarily this is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and best protects, preserves, and enhances historical, cultural, and natural resources.

Although the Act itself does not define the environmentally preferred alternative, it does suggest national environmental policy (42 U.S.C. 4331, section 101(b)). That policy calls for the continuing responsibility of Federal government to use all practicable means to improve and coordinate plans, functions, programs, and resources so that the nation may:

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

The needs and expectations of each generation evolve based on changing values and social and environmental circumstances. In keeping with input received from the public, alternative G-modified is largely based on a continuation of management from the past, while recognizing that uses and values have evolved and management of the Forest must evolve with those changes. Alternative G-modified ensures the health of the Forest by balancing active management with the utilization of natural ecological processes. Alternative G-modified describes desired conditions that enhance and sustain the health of vegetation, soil, air, water, and wildlife, along with the guidance that will move the Forest toward these desired conditions.

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

The Shoshone National Forest has been and continues to be enjoyed by thousands of visitors every year, because it provides a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing setting. Alternative G-modified provides a wide range of opportunities for high-quality visitor experiences. Standards and guidelines are in place to ensure clean water, clean air, and visually pleasing surroundings.

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

This goal from NEPA is indicative of the Act's recognition of the need for balance in managing the environment to produce environmentally preferred results which strongly aligns with the theme of alternative G-modified. Alternative G-modified provides a wide range of beneficial uses, such as timber production, livestock use, outfitter and guide permits, dispersed and developed recreation, and clean air and water. Standards and guidelines ensure that these uses do not result in undesirable or unintended consequences.

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

This goal recognizes that humans are a natural aspect of our national heritage. The mix of management area allocations in alternative G-modified preserves the historic and natural aspects of the Shoshone National Forest and provides a variety of choices for the use and enjoyment of the Forest. Standards and guidelines ensure compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act. Alternative G-modified was developed in consultation with American Indian tribes and involvement of the public.

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

The public demands a variety of products and uses that can be provided by the Shoshone National Forest. Our challenge is in defining the balance sought in this NEPA goal, and I find that alternative G-modified achieves that balance between resource use and protection. Resource uses are sustainable and contribute to economic health, and provide amenities.

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

Alternative G-modified is designed to enhance the health of the Forest's renewable resources. Timber harvest areas as per regulations will be promptly reforested and lands where minerals have been extracted will be reclaimed in a timely manner.

Given these criteria, alternative G-modified is identified as the environmentally preferred alternative. This ROD discussed the decision process and the comparisons of the alternatives through a deliberative process. That process included the evaluation of present net value for each alternative and a finding of compliance with other laws. It is my assessment that alternative G-modified best meets the goals and the substantive requirements of section 101 of NEPA. Alternative G-modified will ensure the future health of the land by providing appropriate opportunities for active management to work in concert with natural ecological

processes. The maintenance of forest health and the physical resources is attained while securing the viability of plant and animal species into the future.

Opportunities for quality visitor experiences are plentiful. Alternative G-modified provides for a wide range of beneficial uses, such as timber production, livestock grazing, dispersed and developed recreation, and oil and gas development. Standards and guidelines within the revised LMP guard against undesirable and/or unintended outcomes. Alternative G-modified management area allocations preserve historic and natural aspects of the Forest and provide for the expression of a variety of individual preferences. I believe that alternative G-modified also achieves a balance between sustainable resource use and ecological sustainability that will best satisfy a variety of public needs and uses. This alternative provides for high quality, sustainable resource management. Enhancing forest health while providing sustainable resource production and recreation opportunities will continue to contribute to the vitality of local communities.

Alternative with Highest Present Net Value

The 1982 NFMA planning regulations at 36 CFR 219.12(j) require consideration of present net value for each alternative. Each alternative was analyzed for present net value, an analysis that includes all outputs, including timber, grazing, recreation and minerals, to which monetary values are assigned. The present net value is positive for all alternatives, indicating the alternatives are economically efficient. Alternative G-modified has a relatively high present net value; however, the differences between alternatives for present net value are slight. Alternative D had the highest present net value, followed closely by alternatives G-modified and B.

Findings Required by Other Laws

I have considered the statutes governing management of the Shoshone National Forest and I find that this decision represents the appropriate approach to meeting the current statutory duties of the Forest Service. Some of the most important laws are discussed in this section.

Clean Air Act

As discussed in chapter 3 of the FEIS, “Air Resources,” all lands managed by the Shoshone National Forest are currently in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Compliance with air quality statutes is directed in the revised LMP: Air, Standard 1: “Meet State of Wyoming and Federal air quality standards and comply with local, State of Wyoming, and Federal air quality regulations and requirements.” The revised LMP monitoring strategy requires ongoing monitoring of indicators for the Clean Air Act and Wilderness Act.

Clean Water Act

The revised LMP contains direction to ensure all projects meet or exceed state best management practices prepared under guidance of the Clean Water Act. Direction for the protection of water resources is located in the standards and guidelines for water and soil in the revised LMP, chapter 1. Implementation of the revised Plan is expected to contribute to protecting or restoring the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of waters of the United States in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

National Historic Preservation Act

The revised LMP is a programmatic document and does not authorize any site-specific projects. The LMP does designate special interest areas, which include an area that will be managed with an emphasis on historic and cultural preservation and protection. Projects undertaken in response to direction in the LMP will fully comply with Plan standards and guidelines as well as the laws and regulations that require

consideration of cultural resources. The revised LMP contains direction for cultural resource management, including direction to integrate cultural resource management with other resource management activities. Because the revised LMP does not authorize specific ground-disturbing or other potentially impacting activities, project-level section 106 (National Historic Preservation Act) consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) is not presently required. The Wyoming SHPO was involved in the revision process as a cooperator who reviewed proposed plan direction and provided feedback. It is my determination that the revised LMP complies with the National Historic Preservation Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, and other statutes that pertain to the protection of cultural resources.

Endangered Species Act

The revised LMP and FEIS address the potential effects of Forest-wide programmatic direction rather than site-specific projects. Projects developed under the direction of the revised LMP will require additional NEPA analysis to address effects to federally listed species. All projects will comply with the Endangered Species Act. In 2013 a biological assessment was prepared for the FEIS to evaluate the potential effects of the revised LMP on federally listed species and their habitats. In their letter received November 20, 2013, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concurred with the determinations of effects to species analyzed in the biological assessment. The biological assessment determined that the preferred alternative “may affect, and is likely to adversely affect” the grizzly bear. It has also been determined that the preferred alternative “may affect, and is not likely to adversely affect” critical habitat for Canada lynx.

The Shoshone’s biological assessment was updated in 2015 to reflect the change of status of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and the North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) under the ESA since the 2013 biological assessment was written.

On September 23, 2014, the Federal District Court for the District of Columbia vacated the delisting of wolves in Wyoming under the ESA. The effect of the decision is the reinstatement of Federal protections that were in place prior to the wolves’ 2012 delisting. Therefore, wolves are again listed as a nonessential experimental population in all of Wyoming. Take of wolves may be authorized only by the nonessential experimental population rules or by permits issued under section 10 of the ESA. All of Wyoming except the Wind River Indian Reservation again operates under the 1994 nonessential experimental population rule.

On August 13, 2014, the USFWS withdrew a proposal to list the North American wolverine in the contiguous United States as a threatened species under the ESA. After carefully considering the best available science, the USFWS has determined that the effects of climate change are not likely to place the wolverine in danger of extinction now or in the foreseeable future. As a result, the wolverine does not meet the statutory definition of either a “threatened species” or an “endangered species” and does not warrant protection under the ESA.

Because wolverines were not listed under the ESA, they were not considered further in the 2015 revised biological assessment. However, the analysis of possible effects to wolverines from the revised Forest Plan has not changed from the original 2013 biological assessment. The wolverine was restored to the Regional Forester’s sensitive species list following the decision not to list under the ESA. This means it will continue to receive special management attention and consideration in programs and projects on the Shoshone National Forest.

Furthermore, although some actions anticipated by the Forest Plan may adversely impact some individual gray wolves, no action would result in jeopardy to gray wolves, nor cause a loss of species viability

rangewide. In addition, under the Forest Plan, the Shoshone National Forest will continue to carry out programs for the conservation of gray wolves.

Healthy Forests Restoration Act

The revised LMP complies with and achieves the objectives of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA), in accordance with section 102, Authorized Hazardous Fuel Reduction Projects. LMP objectives prioritize vegetative fuel treatment areas by hazard and communities recognized in HFRA. The standards and guidelines were developed to achieve the HFRA objectives. In addition, the revised LMP focuses efforts, where possible, on improvement of forest health where ecosystem components are at risk from epidemic levels of insects or disease. It also references the priority areas identified in community wildfire protection plans.

Other Laws and Executive Orders

I find that the selected alternative, alternative G-modified, is in compliance with the following laws and Executive orders, as documented in the FEIS:

- Executive Order for Environmental Justice
- National Forest Management Act of 1976, as amended
- Mineral Leasing Act, as amended
- Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act
- Mining and Minerals Policy Act
- Executive Order for Protection of Migratory Birds

Implementation and Effective Date

Implementation of the approved plan may occur 30 calendar days after the legal notice of the final record of decision is published in the *Federal Register*.

Site-specific Projects

The following site-specific planning projects have been substantially developed using the direction from the 1986 Shoshone Forest Plan as amended. The decisions for these projects will be made under the 1986 Forest Plan:

Forestwide

- National Outdoor Leadership School Permit Reissuance
- Transitional Special Uses Permit Project

Washakie Ranger District

- Little Popo Agie Crossing and Reroute

For all other projects and for projects with decisions made on or after the implementation date described above, revised LMP direction will apply. In developing the revised LMP, implementing pre-existing decisions and the associated effects of that implementation were considered part of the baseline against which the alternatives were evaluated. Because we considered these earlier decisions in our effect analysis, their implementation is not in conflict with the revised LMP.

Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), “permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy” of National Forest System lands are required to be “consistent” with the current land and resource management plan. However, this requirement is not absolute. In the plan revision context, NFMA specifically qualifies the requirement in three ways: (1) these documents must be revised only “when necessary,” (2) these documents must be revised “as soon as practicable,” and (3) any revisions are “subject to valid existing rights.”

Use and occupancy agreements, which might require modification of pre-existing authorization, include those for timber harvesting and livestock grazing.

I have decided not to modify any existing timber sale contracts solely due to the revised LMP. These contracts will be executed according to their terms and these effects have been disclosed in the FEIS. Existing timber contracts will, in most cases, be completed within 3 years. The decision is left to the Forest Supervisor to determine whether to modify decisions authorizing timber sales not currently under contract.

Other use and occupancy agreements are for a substantially longer term than timber contracts. For example, grazing permits are generally issued for a 10-year term. My discretionary decision is to require grazing permits to comply with the revised LMP’s standards and guidelines. The case law is clear that grazing permits are “privileges” rather than “rights,” and are subject to modification by their terms and under the grazing regulations.

Other classes of “use and occupancy” agreements will be reviewed to determine whether or when the Forest Supervisor should exercise discretion to bring them into compliance with the revised LMP. I find that the statutory criteria of “as soon as practicable” and excepting “valid existing rights” useful in exercising that discretion.

The Forest will undertake many management activities to implement the revised LMP. Many of these activities are site-specific and require analysis and disclosure of effects under NEPA. These site-specific analyses will be done during implementation of the revised LMP.

Site-specific analysis of proposed activities will determine what can be accomplished. The outcomes specified in the revised LMP are estimates and projections based on available information, inventory data, and assumptions. More information on the difference between programmatic and site-specific projects can be found in the planning record incorporated into this ROD by reference.

I am making this plan decision in accordance with the transition provisions of the current planning regulations which permit use of the 1982 regulations for the purpose of revising the plan. However, in accordance with the current regulations at 36 CFR 219.17(c), no obligations remain for project planning from the 1982 regulations except those that are specifically included in the revised LMP.

Travel Management Planning

The Forest intends to initiate travel management planning in accordance with the 2005 Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 212) later this year. As part of this effort to address issues that arose as part of the objection process, I am asking the Forest supervisor to consider analyzing additional opportunities for mountain biking.

Potential Amendments or Adjustments to the Revised Plan

The revised Plan can be amended or revised to adjust to changing circumstances (36 CFR 219.13). The amendment process provides the flexibility to adapt the decisions made today to the realities of tomorrow.


If monitoring indicates that something in the Plan is not working as anticipated, we may consider a specific amendment to adapt and improve the plan. These amendments may be “one time” or permanent amendments, depending on the circumstances. The Forest Service will involve interested people and organizations in all amendment processes.

Conclusion

I am pleased to announce this decision and bring this phase of the Shoshone National Forest Plan revision to completion. Over the next few years we have the opportunity to work together to achieve the desired conditions and objectives of the revised Plan. The strengths of the revised Plan are:

- Guidance informed by the best available science to insure that the biological and physical resources of the Shoshone National Forest are sustained for today and tomorrow.
- Recognition of the link between the Shoshone National Forest and the citizens of the United States, especially those who live in the communities in the shadow of the Forest.
- An opportunity for the revision cooperators group, the state and local governments, to continue to be a partner in the implementation, and improvements over time, of the revised Plan.

The revised Plan is our strategic plan for ensuring the long-term health of the land. We will adapt the Plan based on what is learned from planning and implementation of projects. We will carefully monitor our activities, the condition of the land, the goods and services produced, and the effectiveness of the resource protection measures included in the revised Plan to ensure a healthy forest for future generations.



DANIEL J. JIRÓN, Regional Forester



Date

Appendix: Response to Reviewing Official's Instructions

Note: The following table contains instructions from the Reviewing Official for objections received on the Shoshone's draft revised Forest Plan and final EIS. It also contains or references the response to each instruction.

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
A. Wild and Scenic Rivers	A-1. Amend the table for Dead Indian Creek in FEIS appendix D, attachment B (page 27) to reflect that a Prehistory outstandingly remarkable value was not found on Dead Indian Creek, and adjust the explanatory notes accordingly.	■ EIS Errata	See FEIS, appendix D errata (Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Evaluation, September 2013, version 2).
	A-2. Clarify why the suitability study was delayed in the project record. Ensure consistency between the FEIS and the ROD. See also FEIS chapter 2 (page 51) and delete "to make" duplicate typo in the last sentence of the section on "Recommend All Eligible Rivers for Designation."	■ Project Record ■ EIS Errata ■ Record of Decision	The interdisciplinary team made the eligibility determinations after analyzing 35 rivers (see response to A-3). The next step is the suitability determination for eligible rivers. The Forest Service may make that determination in the Plan revision or delay it (Forest Service Handbook 1909.12(83.1)). The decision to delay the suitability study was based on a couple of factors. There was no broad consensus for designation of any particular river. Also, river suitability will be protected now and a final determination can be made in the future when the Forest has more complete information on trade-offs. See Record of Decision, page 5. See FEIS Errata.
	A-3. Identify in the project record what region of comparison was applied to each outstandingly remarkable value, describe the analysis process/criteria used to evaluate outstandingly remarkable values at that region of comparison, and better support the findings for each river segment.	■ Project Record	<i>Region of Comparison:</i> Our intent was to use regional scales for determining eligibility, but we also noted when we thought the outstandingly remarkable values were of national importance. <i>Analysis Process/Criteria:</i> All perennial streams on the Forest were considered in the first screen. Based on information from the Nationwide Rivers Inventory; the American Rivers list; input from the public, non-governmental organizations, and employees; the Shoshone National Forest planning team developed a list of 35 rivers that were then assessed by an interdisciplinary team. The rivers are listed in the

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			updated appendix D (September 2013) to the FEIS. Criteria used to evaluate outstandingly remarkable values are also discussed in the updated appendix D. See supporting document WS-01.
	A-4. Correct FEIS appendix D, page 10, to clarify it is precisely because a river-related value is significant at a regional or national scale that makes it "outstandingly remarkable." In addition, clarify this on page 8 of the new version of appendix D. Make sure the FEIS and Final LMP include the correct appendix.	■FEIS Errata (Appendix D)	See FEIS, appendix D errata (Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Evaluation, September 2013, version 2).
B. Potential Wilderness	B-1. Include the missing page for Togwotee Pass 02903, Deep Lake 02911, North Boundary 02913, Reef 02914, High Lakes NF915, and High Lakes addition NF915a to appendix C of the FEIS.	■FEIS Errata	See FEIS Errata for appendix C.
	B-2. Complete and document the analysis required under FSH 1909.12, 72.4 and 74, including a display that identifies and discloses the management area (MA) prescriptions for each of the potential wilderness areas by alternative.	■FEIS Errata	See FEIS Errata for appendix C.
	B-3. Clarify and expand on the logic, rationale, and supporting analysis for decisions related to wilderness recommendations in the final ROD.	■ROD	See Record of Decision, page 9, "Potential Wilderness" section.
	B-4. Clarify and expand on the extent of the public opinion sources that were considered when making the draft decision to not recommend any wilderness designation and explain why areas similar to current designated wilderness areas were not recommended.	■ROD	See Record of Decision, page 9, "Potential Wilderness" section.
	B-5. Acknowledge that there has been a significant delay in complying with the 1972 and 1984 statutory requirements to complete maps and legal descriptions of Dunoir Special Management Unit and High Lakes Wilderness Study Area and make a commitment to complete the work as soon as the Forest is funded to do so and is practicable.	■Response Table	In modifying the plan we acknowledge that there has been a delay in complying with the 1972 and 1984 requirements to complete maps and legal descriptions of the Dunoir Special Management Unit and High Lakes Wilderness Study Area. We understand the need to complete the work and will do so as funding is available and as soon as practical. Surveying and mapping will occur outside the Plan

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			revision process.
C. Dunoir Special Management Unit	C-1. Prohibit mountain biking in all areas of Dunoir Special Management Unit.	■ ROD	See Record of Decision, pages 14–15.
	C-2. Modify recreation standard in LMP (page 140) to reflect change in direction.	■ LMP	See LMP, page 141, “Standard MA1.6B-STAND-02.”
	C-3. Clarify how public comment was incorporated in the final decision regarding Dunoir.	■ ROD	<p>When the Forest released the draft EIS in 2012, the preferred alternative recommended the removal of mountain bikes from the Dunoir Special Management Unit in order to “provide for non-vehicular access recreation” (P.L. 92-476).</p> <p>Between the draft and final, several comments were received from members of the public concerning this decision. In the draft plan/final EIS the Forest designated a 6.8-mile mountain bike loop called the Pinnacle Trail in order to be responsive to comments. This solution would limit bikes to one trail while providing for non-vehicular access recreation in the rest of the special management unit. During the objection process the Forest received numerous objections to this decision that ranged from safety concerns for stock users to the interpretation of the special management unit designation.</p> <p>After careful consideration of the issue, objections, and opinions on both sides of the issue, the responsible official agreed with the reviewing officer that bicycle use should be removed from the Dunoir Special Management Unit.</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			See Record of Decision, page 15–16.
D. Motorized Travel in Roadless and Backcountry Areas	D-1. Clarify the rationale for exempting areas of big game crucial winter range from snowmobile closures.	■Response Table	During the February 9, 2012, Government Cooperator's meeting, county representatives raised the issue that big game crucial winter range should not all be treated the same in terms of restricting winter motorized recreation, especially in areas of existing snowmobile use. Maps of existing snowmobile use in big game crucial winter range were reviewed by Forest Service and Wyoming Game and Fish Department wildlife biologists on February 29, 2012, and March 5, 2012. Biologists proposed exempting some existing snowmobile use in areas where it was determined that use is limited and not a detriment to crucial winter range. Examples of areas exempted include designated groomed and un-groomed snowmobile trails and access to cabin owners holding special use permits. Proposed exemptions were presented at the March 7, 2012, Government Cooperator's meeting and subsequently incorporated into alternative G in the revised plan.
	D-2. Clarify how the analysis, public comments, and public sentiments were used in development of alternative G.	■ROD	Alternative G is a modified version of alternative B and was developed in response to public comment received on the DEIS. The alternative provides a diversity of Forest uses and emphasizes active management of suitable timber lands, protects wildlife habitat, maintains a diversity of recreation opportunities, and maintains the dominant backcountry character of the Forest (FEIS, page 80). Alternative G-modified is the post-objection process version of alternative G and incorporates instructions given by the objection reviewing official. It also reflects public comments received on the DEIS as well as on the FEIS through the objection process. This alternative was designed with specific components that target restoration of watersheds and native plant communities while emphasizing the wide

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			range of recreational opportunities and nationally renowned landscapes. It provides opportunities for responsible resource use and commodity production that are valued by the surrounding communities. See Record of Decision, page 1.
	D-3. Work with WGFD to correct errors with classification of winter range in the Lander Front by remapping and removing motorized use in this area.	■LMP	The Forest worked with the WGFD and made corrections to winter motorized use in winter range on the Lander Front. Maps have been updated. See LMP, map K, page 4.
	D-4. Apply alternative B to Francs Peak. MAs 3.3A and 3.3B in Francs Peak should be changed to MA 1.3.	■LMP	See LMP, map A, page 5.
	D-5. Apply alternative B to Wood River, changing 3.3B to 1.3.	■LMP	See LMP, map A, page 5.
E. Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST)	E-1. Revise the LMP and project record to include the Nature and Purposes for the CDNST.	■LMP ■Project Record	See LMP, chapter 2, MA direction for 3.6A; under "Theme," page 162. Management of the CDNST is consistent with the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Plan (USDA Forest Service 2009). That plan describes the nature and purposes of the trail as: "The nature and purposes of the CDNST are to provide high-quality scenic, primitive hiking and horseback riding opportunities and to conserve natural, historic, and cultural resources along the CDNST corridor."
	E-2. Clarify map 41 and what it shows. Also provide an explanation that any future proposed re-routes of the CDNST would be reviewed during site-specific analysis.	■LMP ■FEIS Errata	See LMP, page 162, third paragraph under "Setting." See FEIS Errata.
	E-3. Clarify that the LMP revision is not changing nor did it contemplate changing the location of the CDNST; it merely provided for management of the trail consistent with the comprehensive management plan and provided a MA that would surround the trail 0.5-mile on either side.	■ROD	See Record of Decision, page 10, under "National Trails" heading.

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
F. Bighorn Sheep Management and Pack Goats	F-1. Clarify how direct contact from disease-carrying domestic sheep and goats is believed to contribute to the death of individual wild sheep, herds of wild sheep, and entire populations, and review the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Wild Sheep Working Group updated recommendations on disease transmission from domestic sheep and goats to wild sheep. Include review findings in the project record and clarify the reasons for special designation of the Shoshone National Forest bighorn sheep population.	■Project Record ■ROD	<p>The document titled “Risk Analysis of Disease Transmission between Domestic Sheep and Goats and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep” provides a thorough assessment of the risks to wild sheep from domestic sheep and goats. It reports that although there is no direct evidence of domestic goats, and specifically pack goats, infecting wild sheep with life/herd/population threatening diseases, there are an abundance of connected actions that lead to a reasonable conclusion that domestic sheep and goats are the vectors. The analysis also provides evidence that wild sheep are unpredictable in their movements and have been shown to travel great distances which can bring them into contact with domestic sheep and goats as well as other wild sheep. The methodology and conclusions in this document demonstrate consistency with national guidance for a risk analysis of this type as well as consideration of best available science, and recommendations from the WAFWA Wild Sheep Working Group and biologists from the WGFD.</p> <p>See ROD, page 8, under heading “Restrictions on Recreational Pack Goats within Bighorn Sheep Habitat”, second paragraph.</p> <p>See supporting document BHS-01.</p>
	F-2. Strengthen the project record by additional review of currently available scientific information on disease transmission from domestic sheep and goats to wild sheep such as Herndon, C.N.; Shanthalingam, S.; Knowles, D.P.; Call, D.R.; and Srikumaran, S. 2011. Comparison of passively transferred antibodies in bighorn and domestic lambs reveals one factor in differential susceptibility of these species to <i>Mannheimia haemolytica</i> -induced pneumonia. Clinical and Vaccine Immunology 18(7): 1133–1138. Include review findings in the project record.	■Project Record	<p>Nine additional papers were reviewed in response to this instruction including the suggested paper. Six of the nine were published since 2014. The other three including Herndon, C.N., et.al. were published in 2011.</p> <p>See supporting document BHS-02</p>
	F-3. Enhance the BE with additional supporting documentation, specifically relative to cumulative effects and probability of disease transmission, specifically pages 50–55 of the BE.	■Project Record	<p>See response to F-2.</p> <p>See document “2015 Amendment to Biological Evaluation”</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			The review of additional literature was included in the “2015 Amendment to the 2013 Biological Evaluation for the Revised Shoshone National Forest Land and Natural Resource Management Plan”, which is part of the project record.
	F-4. Evaluate mitigation measures submitted by objectors, but use the following parameters; pack goats are not under constant control and may be asymptomatic and are still a viable threat to wild sheep populations.	■Response Table	<p>An evaluation of potential mitigation measures discussed in the pack goat objectors’ letters was conducted and was added to the project record.</p> <p>Mitigation measures submitted by objectors include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of a permit system for pack goats. Limiting the number of pack goats per party. Requiring that pack goats be leashed or in direct control by their owners on the trail. Requiring that pack goats be highlined or restrained in campsites. Prohibiting pack goats from drainages where bighorn sheep have the highest populations. Requiring disease testing of pack goats before entering public lands and having a certification of the testing. <p>See supporting document BHS-03.</p>
	<p>F-5. a) Clarify that the scope and scale of the social and economic effects to pack goat users was included in the Forest programmatic analysis of recreational use.</p> <p>b) Clarify that the analysis of disease transmission is not based on the work of the RADT or Payette Principles Committees, but rather the Shoshone National Forest’s own reworking and analysis of the data.</p>	■Response Table	<p>F-5. a) Social and economic analysis for the Shoshone National Forest Plan revision effort was performed using IMPLAN (Impact analysis for Planning) and FEAST (Forest Economic Analysis Spreadsheet Tool). IMPLAN is an input-output modeling system that allows the user to build regional economic models of one or more counties for a given year (see FEIS, chapter 3, under “Social and Economic” heading). Output is used to show relative differences between alternatives.</p> <p>Resource-specific data such as recreation visits, animal unit months for range, and timber volume harvested, were collected for the Shoshone National</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			<p>Forest as a whole and input into IMPLAN. Recreation information was derived from the National Visitor Use Monitoring survey. It's not possible to develop site-specific data or break the social/economic effects down to specific user groups. This is because there is considerable variability in how restrictions would be applied, and how users can substitute one activity for another one, or one place for another.</p> <p>F-5. b) The analysis of disease transmission conducted for the Forest Plan DEIS and FEIS is in no way connected to the RADT Committee or the Payette Principles Committee. Biologists relied on the science developed for and displayed in the "Risk Analysis of Disease Transmission between Domestic Sheep and Goats and Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, Shoshone National Forest 2013." Pertinent information was extracted from the Payette's risk assessment (USDA Forest Service 2006a) and brought forward into the Shoshone National Forest's risk assessment. Findings and conclusions in the Shoshone National Forest's risk assessment are based on data specific to the Shoshone National Forest's bighorn sheep populations and their habitat.</p>
G. Wetlands and Watershed Management	G-1. The definition of wetlands found on page 654 should match the one on page 795 of the FEIS, which was taken directly from EO 11990 for the protection of wetlands.	<p>■EIS Errata</p> <p>■LMP</p>	<p>Wetlands are defined as areas that are inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support and that, under normal circumstances, do or would support a prevalence of vegetation or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas such as sloughs, potholes, wet meadows, river overflows, mud flats, and natural ponds.</p> <p>See FEIS Errata.</p> <p>See LMP, glossary, page 224, under "Wetland."</p>
	G-2. In addition to EO11990, clarify any references to compliance with the Clean Water Act.	■LMP	See LMP, page 27, fifth full paragraph.

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
H. Canada Lynx Habitat and Pre-commercial Thinning	H-1. Clarify there was no remapping for lynx critical habitat.	■Response Table	<p>Critical habitat designation for Canada lynx is the responsibility of the Secretary of the Interior. In a letter dated July 26, 2013, to the Shoshone National Forest and other national forests with occupied habitat, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) proposed revision of designated lynx critical habitat for the U.S. Distinct Population Segment. To assist in this revision process the USFWS requested that any new survey, distribution, or occurrence data that the USFWS was not aware of be submitted to them.</p> <p>The Shoshone National Forest did not have new biological data or any geographical reasons to be considered during this proposed revised designation. Therefore, during the 2013 request and during Forest Plan revision, no remapping of lynx critical habitat occurred.</p>
	H-2. Clarify how lynx observations on the Shoshone National Forest contribute to the requirements that define the Forest as “occupied” by Canada lynx.	■Response Table	<p>All lynx habitat on an entire Forest is considered “occupied” by lynx when, (1) there are at least two verified lynx observations or records since 1999 on the national forest unless they are verified to be transient individuals; or (2) there is evidence of lynx reproduction on the national forest (Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction [MRLMD] Biological Opinion, 2007).</p> <p>The Shoshone National Forest was first designated as “occupied” under the Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (Ruediger et al. 2000) and is still considered occupied because of verified tracks found during the winters of 2004 and 2005 in the Togwotee Pass area adjacent to the Shoshone National Forest and on the Shoshone National Forest in the Warm Springs Creek Watershed (Biological Assessment for the Shoshone National Forest Land and Natural Resource Management Plan 2013). Records of verified tracks in 2004 and 2005 meet criteria #1 of the occupied definition in the NRLMD.</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
	H-3. Clarify how MA 5.1 is being carried out in lynx matrix habitat and the 6 percent limitation.	<p>■Response Table</p> <p>■LMP</p>	<p><i>Management Area 5.1: Managed Forests and Rangelands:</i> This MA contains both lynx and non-lynx habitat. Some non-lynx habitat also called matrix habitat has been designated as lynx “critical habitat” by the Secretary of the Interior because of its potential to provide connective corridors between patches of lynx habitat.</p> <p>The effects of the MA 5.1 designation on lynx critical habitat, including matrix habitat, were analyzed in the Biological Assessment for the Shoshone National Forest Land and Natural Resource Management Plan (2013), page 60, with a determination of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” lynx critical habitat.</p> <p>During project-level analysis (e.g., timber harvesting) in MA 5.1, matrix habitat and the effects of the project proposed in it will be disclosed under the critical habitat determination in that project’s biological assessment/evaluation.</p> <p><i>6% Limitation:</i> The Forest has approximately 597,000 acres of lynx habitat. The Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment (NRLMD 2007) allowed for up to 6% of the 597,000 acres, or 35,820 acres, of lynx habitat within the wildland-urban interface to be exempt from vegetation standards VEG S1, S2, VEG S5, and VEG S6 in the NRLMD Record of Decision. Vegetation management activities proposed in lynx habitat in MA 5.1 are subject to the 6% limitation.</p> <p>See LMP, page 45, under “Canada Lynx” heading.</p>
	H-4. Clarify and provide additional details on how the Shoshone National Forest came to 2,130 acres of pre-commercial thinning and enhance the planning record with further explanations regarding affected species such as lodgepole pine thinning in wildland-urban interface to reduce the basal area of the stand to reduce risk of wildfire.	<p>■LMP</p> <p>■Project Record</p>	<p>See LMP, page 44, “Management Approach” under “Canada Lynx”, first paragraph. Also LMP, page 79, “Management Approach” “Timber Products” section, last paragraph.</p> <p>The Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment to the Shoshone National Forest Plan (Lynx Amendment) identified a limited range of fuel or timber management projects and limited pre-commercial thinning projects for resource benefits that may occur</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			<p>in lynx habitat. These activities are permitted within the wildland-urban interface and are exempted from Lynx Amendment vegetation standards VEG S1, S2, S5, and S6.</p> <p>During the amendment process, the Forest requested the exemption on an additional 2,130 acres where pre-commercial thinning would be allowed in lodgepole pine stands for timber purposes. The 2,130 acres were not included in the Lynx Amendment preferred alternative.</p> <p>As part of the Forest Plan revision process the continued need for these 2,130 acres of pre-commercial thinning in lynx habitat was identified and these acres were included in the preferred alternative for the revised plan. Therefore, pre-commercial thinning may occur on a total of 2,130 acres in lodgepole pine in lynx habitat within the wildland-urban interface for purposes other than fuels reduction. These acres are part of the 6% limit of 35,820 acres and are a total over the next 10 to 15 years. This is not an annual amount.</p> <p>Where the Shoshone National Forest is able to pre-commercially thin, the growth of lodgepole pine will accelerate compared to unthinned stands resulting in a shorter rotation age, increased volume, and better quality timber. Thinning stands in the wildland-urban interface also reduces the risk of catastrophic fire. However, the Shoshone National Forest has limited funding for pre-commercial thinning and how much of the 2,130 acres are actually thinned in the next decade will depend on future funding levels.</p> <p>See supporting document CLH-01.</p>
	H-5. Clarify how down and dead trees are critical for hare populations, a major food source for lynx.	■Response Table	The record for the LMP does not support nor make the claim that dead and down trees are critical for snowshoe hare populations or their survival. While dead and down trees can open up the forest floor canopy allowing for regeneration of younger trees, the

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			Shoshone National Forest does not recognize dead and down trees as a critical component of hare habitat.
	H-6. Correct footnote tied to TES-GUIDE-12 that references the direction on the 2,130 acres of pre-commercial thinning. This footnote should instead be tied to TES-GUIDE-10.	■LMP	Correction made. See LMP, page 42, "TES-GUIDE-9."
	H-7. Clarify additional opportunities for pre-commercial thinning outside lynx habitat.	■ROD ■LMP	<p>Additional opportunities for pre-commercial thinning as well as other silvicultural techniques in non-lynx habitat exist on the Shoshone National Forest outside of the wildland-urban interface. These areas will be identified during project-level analysis.</p> <p>Although there is lynx critical habitat within management area 5.1 (Managed Forest and Rangelands), the goals are not in conflict for the following reason. Lynx critical habitat is different from the lynx habitat mentioned in response to instruction H-1 that is subject to the 6% exemption. Lynx critical habitat is a very large area consisting of both lynx habitat and non-lynx habitat designed to contain linkages for lynx to move between habitat areas. The non-lynx habitat within these large polygons is referred to as matrix habitat and is not subject to constraints in the NRLMD. Most matrix habitat is not affected by the 6% exemption nor was it included in the total acres of lynx habitat.</p> <p>See LMP, page 44, "Management Approach" section, under "Canada Lynx" heading, last paragraph.</p> <p>See Record of Decision, page 10, second paragraph under "Pre-Commercial Thinning and Incorporation of Northern Rockies Canada Lynx Management Direction" heading.</p>
I. Wildlife Viability	I-1. Illustrate how conservation measures for sensitive species are addressed within LMP direction and create a new table that includes all species.	■Project Record	See supporting document WLV-01.

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
	I-2. In the FEIS (page 186) under “Conservation Measures for Wolverines” (number 2) change wording to read: “Site-specific analysis will consider the impact of all winter recreation activities within suitable denning habitat for wolverines outside of wilderness boundaries (i.e. Beartooth Plateau).”	■EIS Errata	See FEIS Errata.
J. Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat Management	J-1. Provide for consistency with 40 CFR 1502.24. Demonstrate how the conservation measures referenced in the biological evaluation are addressed in the management direction for the LMP.	■LMP ■Response Table	Guideline SEN-GUIDE-07 was removed from the draft LMP. The final rule from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service authorizing gray wolf reintroduction states that land use restrictions are not needed when the experimental wolf population has reached six breeding pairs in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. That criterion has been met and the guideline is no longer needed. The Shoshone National Forest can establish additional measures during plan implementation (project phase) if circumstances warrant.
	J-2. Document how the FEIS addresses capability and suitability of NFS lands for providing habitat for management indicator species in accordance to 36 CFR 219.20.	■Project Record	See supporting document WLH-01.
K. Minerals and Oil and Gas	K-1. Document why some surface-disturbing activities in crucial winter range are managed with timing limitations and oil and gas surface development is managed with a combination of timing limitations and unsuitable designations.	■ROD	See Record of Decision, page 11, second paragraph under heading “Issue 5: Oil and Gas Development.”
	K-2. a) Document why WGFD identified crucial winter range as most critical. b) Clarify the effects of oil and gas activities on big game winter range.	■Project Record ■Response Table	K-2. a) See supporting document MOG-01. The Governor’s Office provided comments to the DEIS on which areas of the Forest should not be suitable for oil and gas surface development. They confined their comments to those areas that the Shoshone showed as suitable for alternative B. To provide input to the Governor’s Office, WGFD followed the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission’s Mitigation Policy (March 22, 2012) and identified the

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			<p>“vital” or critical crucial winter range on the Shoshone as not suitable for oil and gas surface development. Vital habitat in the mitigation policy is defined as habitat that “directly limits a wildlife community, population, or subpopulation. Impacts to species distribution, abundance, or productivity, and restoration or replacement is difficult and may not be possible, or may be possible only in the very long term.” For the Shoshone, the vital habitat identified by WGFD functions as big game crucial winter range. The mitigation policy was established in recognition of the growth, development, and land use change that will continue to occur in Wyoming.</p> <p>K-2. b) The effects to big game winter range from oil and gas activities are the same in all alternatives, except alternatives C and G. Oil and gas activities have less of an impact in these two alternatives because they identify fewer acres as suitable for surface development.</p> <p>In Alternative C, oil and gas surface development is not allowed within any crucial winter range. This resulted in 58,000 fewer acres categorized as suitable for oil and gas surface development than what was already excluded from inventoried roadless areas, recommended wilderness, MA 5.4 (managed big game winter range), and the grizzly bear primary conservation area.</p> <p>Alternative G is a modified version of alternative B and was developed in response to comments on the DEIS. In alternative G, a different approach was taken to identify lands suitable for oil and gas surface development (see FEIS, “Leasable Minerals”, page 469). The result was that 60,000 acres of crucial winter range was determined not suitable for oil and gas surface development. This includes acres of both MA 5.4 and big game crucial winter range not designated MA 5.4. In this alternative all big game crucial winter range, whether it is suitable for oil and gas development or not, also includes timing</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			restrictions to reduce disturbance effects to wintering animals.
	K-3. Explain how the combination of Forestwide and MA 5.4 LMP direction guides the suitability and management standards for mineral development on the Shoshone National Forest, including MA 5.4.4.	■LMP	See LMP, "Standards for Species of Local Concern" section, standards SPLC-STAND-03 and SPLC-STAND-05 on page 59. See LMP, "Management Approach" section for MA 5.4 on page 180.
	K-4. Document the agreements that were reached on inclusion/non-inclusion of the specific lands west of Meeteetse as unsuitable for oil and gas development, and ensure that documentation is prepared for the project record reflecting the outcome of these discussions. Include these areas on a map.	■Project Record	See supporting document MOG-2 Total acreage of the two areas is less than 1,000 acres. The Shoshone National Forest changed them from suitable for surface development to not suitable between the draft and final EIS in response to comments from the Wyoming Governor's office. After post-objection process discussions with the state, the Forest Service deciding official changed them back to suitable.
	K-5. Ensure that language referencing oil and gas surface development uses the Forest planning appropriate terms of "suitable" and "unsuitable" and do not use terms such as "available" and "no surface occupancy" which are reserved for use with leasing decisions.	■LMP	LMP updated throughout for appropriate terms.
	K-6. References on all surface oil and gas development maps and throughout the FEIS must be corrected to revise the words "available" and "no surface occupancy", to "suitable" or "unsuitable for surface development," respectively; be consistent with the description in the FEIS on page 19 to reduce confusion, and do not use terms specific to an oil and gas leasing availability analysis.	■EIS Errata	See FEIS Errata.
	K-7. Clearly document on maps which lands of the overall crucial big game winter range are being considered unsuitable for oil and gas for reasons of being "critical crucial big game winter range."	■Project Record	See response to K-2a. See supporting maps MOG-Map-01 and MOG-Map-02.

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions		
	K-8. Cross-check alternative G with the BLM Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan Revision, and review for consistency; then document any inconsistencies or determine a need to correct areas that are more restrictive on the Shoshone National Forest compared to the BLM boundary.	■Response Table	<p>The BLM Bighorn Basin office (BLM) released a supplement to their draft EIS in support of their resource management plan (RMP) revision in July 2013. The comment period ended on November 1, 2013. A revised RMP and final EIS have not yet been released. The BLM anticipates release in 2015, possibly as soon as summer. Because the BLM is behind the Shoshone National Forest in their revision process and their current proposed action was not available, the BLM's DEIS analysis and maps were used for comparison with the Shoshone National Forest's proposed lands suitable for oil and gas surface development. BLM personnel indicate they expect changes will be made to their draft proposal for oil and gas due to factors including greater sage-grouse habitat.</p> <p>The two agencies' proposals for oil and gas surface development were checked for consistency by the interdisciplinary team in preparation for the Shoshone National Forest's Forest Plan DEIS and FEIS. The two plans are consistent in many areas along the shared border on the northwest side of the Shoshone National Forest. However, there are areas where the two are not consistent. This is to be expected given the differences between the two agencies' lands in terms of elevation, terrain, issues, etc. In some areas along the border the Shoshone National Forest was more restrictive with surface development; in other areas the BLM was more restrictive. The Shoshone National Forest and BLM are not required to be consistent.</p>		
	K-9. Demonstrate how alternative G oil and gas surface development suitability overlaps with MA allocation in alternative G. This serves as a comparison with the other action alternatives as to where areas of concern lie in relation to one another.	■Response Table	<p>Acres of land suitable for oil and gas surface development by MA for alternative G:</p> <table><tr><td><u>Management Area</u></td><td><u>Acres Suitable for SurfaceDevelopment</u></td></tr></table>	<u>Management Area</u>	<u>Acres Suitable for SurfaceDevelopment</u>
<u>Management Area</u>	<u>Acres Suitable for SurfaceDevelopment</u>				

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			3.3A 13,615 3.3B 3,196 3.3C 1,891 3.5A 13,755 3.5C 7,431 3.5D 1,090 4.2 14 4.3 379 5.1 73,087 5.4 14,603 129,059
L. Rangeland Management	<p>L-1. Closely align procedures in appendix B FEIS (volume III) to determine capability and suitability with process in R-2 Desk Guide and what is also described in chapter 2 (document 02284) found in LMP-2014 Revision SNF, "Suitable Uses" pages 117–118. Process for Determination of Rangeland Capability:</p> <p>Step 3 - Slopes greater than 60 percent were subtracted. These areas are identified as not suitable (suggest changing the wording from "suitable" to "capable") for cattle and sheep grazing. In the DEIS analysis, the 40 to 60% slope range, which is generally suitable (suggest changing the wording from "suitable" to "capable") for sheep grazing was identified as not being capable.</p>	<p>■Response Table</p> <p>■EIS Errata</p>	<p>Rangeland capability and suitability analysis was completed in accordance with the Region 2 Desk Guide. The guidance in the Desk Guide specifies slopes less than 40% for cattle use and slopes up to 60% for sheep. The Region 2 Desk Guide allows forests to modify the 40% figure to fit local situations, where site-specific information validates such use and negative resource impacts are not occurring. The Shoshone National Forest lacks the data.</p> <p>The following rationale determined that only the general guidance in the Region 2 Desk Guide concerning slope would be used:</p> <p>The Forest Plan capability and suitability analysis will have little effect on livestock industry opportunity and no direct impact to existing stocking rates or permitted use.</p> <p>Allotment-specific information is not available documenting consistent cattle use outside the general slope guidelines.</p> <p>Observed cattle use on slopes greater than 40% was generally dependent on herder abilities, annual precipitation events, and other factors that could not be applied across all allotments or even from year to year on the same allotment.</p> <p>Where applicable, use by cattle on slopes greater</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
			<p>than 40% will be analyzed on an allotment by allotment basis (site specific) during the NEPA process to develop allotment management plans.</p> <p>See FEIS Errata.</p>
	<p>L-2. Modify maps 22-24 in appendix E, following procedures in R-2 Desk Guide and maps should show suitable determinations for cattle and sheep allotments separately.</p>	<p>■EIS Errata</p>	<p>See FEIS Errata for maps 81, 82 and 83.</p>
	<p>L-3. Clarify that site-specific analysis can be used to make adjustments at the project level, and that modeling of capability and suitability analysis at the LMP level can be adjusted at the project level (allotment) provided good rationale is given (i.e., “hill climbers” versus “bottom dwellers” type of cattle as reported in the literature).</p>	<p>■Response Table</p> <p>■ROD</p>	<p>Both capability and suitability may also have value when applied at the site-specific level. At this level, both capability and suitability analyses may be reviewed, updated, or made more site specific, if doing so will provide information useful to the decisions being made. However, this use of the analyses is outside the scope of Forest planning regulations and purposes and is strictly an application of a useful tool as an aid in management decision making. For instance, rangelands identified as capable and suitable for domestic livestock grazing in the land and resource management plan may include smaller inclusions that are not appropriate for domestic livestock grazing when analyzed at the site-specific level (i.e., some wetlands or some campgrounds). A more site-specific analysis at the allotment (or multi-allotment) scale may provide information useful in planning management of the given allotment(s).</p> <p>Changes to suitability determinations would involve making changes at the Forest Plan level, as suitability is a Forest planning level determination.</p> <p>Stocking rates, term grazing permits, and allotment management plans are adjusted in response to site-specific monitoring and trend data, not modeling.</p> <p>See Record of Decision, page 12, under subheading “Capability and Suitability” for “Issue 6: Commercial Livestock Grazing.”</p>

Issue Area	Instructions	Where Handled	Response to Instructions
	L-4. The FEIS mixed up the terms suitability and capability in the following sentence: "Acres with slopes 40 to 60 percent slope were subtracted as not being suitable for cattle grazing." The sentence should read: "Acres with slopes 40 to 60 percent were subtracted as not being capable for cattle grazing." In addition this step is part of the capability determination and not suitability determination as documented in the R-2 Desk Guide.	■EIS Errata	See response to L-1. See FEIS Errata.
	L-5. Clarify the LMP to qualify how Vegetation Management Guideline #4 is applied when livestock are not the reason for vegetation trends not moving towards desired conditions.	■LMP	See LMP, page 34, "VEG-GUIDE-04."
	L-6. Revise Vegetation Guideline #5, using methods other than stubble height to measure and quantify riparian health. See: http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/rge/inventory/index.shtml to help determine methodology to measure riparian health.	■LMP	See LMP, page 35, "VEG-GUIDE-05."
M. Social and Economic Analysis	M-1. Change the wording in the first line of the paragraph immediately preceding table 179 to "Table 179 shows cumulative present net value by alternative. Values used to calculate present net value are in the FEIS, Appendix B, page 1129." Table 179 in the FEIS (page 617) shows the "estimated benefits, costs, as a cumulative PNV by alternative."	■EIS Errata ■Response Table	See FEIS Errata.
	M-2. Clarify the comparison of PNV in the selected alternative to PNV of the other alternatives, using PNV numbers presented in the FEIS, Table 179, page 617.	■Response Table	The FEIS states that the PNV (present net value) is positive for all alternatives. Alternative D had the highest PNV and alternative F had the lowest. The differences among alternatives for PNV are slight (FEIS, page 617). The difference between the highest PNV (alternative D) and lowest PNV (alternative F) is 1,335. Alternative G has the same PNV as alternative B. Alternatives ranked in ascending order of PNV value are: D, A, B&G, E, C, F.