

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Intermountain  
Region

Wasatch-Cache  
National Forest

March 2003



# Record of Decision Revised Forest Plan Wasatch-Cache National Forest



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# **Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Revised Forest Plan)**

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## **Wasatch-Cache National Forest**

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### **Located In:**

Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Morgan, Rich, Salt Lake, Summit,  
Tooele and Weber Counties, Utah; and Uinta County, Wyoming

### **Responsible Agency:**

USDA - Forest Service, Wasatch-Cache National Forest

### **Responsible Official:**

Jack G. Troyer, Intermountain Regional Forester

### **Recommending Official:**

Thomas L. Tidwell, Wasatch-Cache NF Forest Supervisor

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# Preface

In Government jargon, what you are reading is called a Record of Decision or a “ROD.” It describes my decision to approve the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (NF) and why I made this choice. I felt a good way to describe my decision in this ROD would be an informal message to the people I work for – each and every American across this land. These are your National Forests and I thank you for your interest in them.

Specifically, this ROD has two purposes: First, it is a legal document detailing a formal decision from a government agency. Second, and equally important, it explains the “why” of that decision. It is my sincere desire that I speak clearly through this document. In those places where legal requirements make for difficult reading, I apologize.

My decision strikes a balance between competing demands expressed by many people. It addresses Americans’ needs and desires for this National Forest. Although this decision is mine, it has not been made alone. More than 4,000 comments were received during the development of the Revised Plan. These comments helped guide Wasatch-Cache NF staff members as they developed the Revised Plan. This ROD and the supporting documents will shape the management of the Wasatch-Cache NF for the next 10 to 15 years.

This revision process has been arduous, lengthy, and at times contentious. I want to sincerely thank all the people who participated in the process, especially those who became involved in the numerous collaborative efforts seeking solutions.

I want to make it clear that the Forest Service understands its special role in managing the National Forests. Through their representatives in Congress, Americans have told the Forest Service that the 191 million acres of their National Forests and Grasslands are to be managed with a multiple-use philosophy.

In recent years, many communities that are home to the National Forests have been undergoing a transformation. Economic conditions have required lumber mills, farms and ranches to become larger and more efficient. As this has occurred, more and more people are leaving rural communities. Yet, much of the local social fabric is rooted in small local operations with close ties to the National Forests. Many urban dwellers also look to the National Forests as places where they can reconnect with the natural environment.

The previous Forest Plan for the Wasatch-Cache NF reflected the desires that the public had nearly 18 years ago when the primary focus was on what the land could produce. These desires have changed, and they will continue to change. Today’s focus is centered more on the condition of the land as a basis for providing multiple goods and services.

Much history remains to be written about the National Forests. These lands can help maintain a quality of life, both for the people who live and work on these lands, and for those interested in spending time visiting these American treasures. People come to the National Forests not only to seek solitude, but also to teach their children how to hike, camp, hunt and fish – to appreciate nature. The potential for outdoor recreation to help sustain local economies is great, as is the potential to continue

the tradition of providing our children and future generations with special places to develop an appreciation of the natural resources of our country.

Recognizing that conditions on the National Forests do not remain static, that public desires change, and that new information is constantly being developed, the Revised Plan embraces an adaptive management approach. This means that as conditions change, so will the management plan. That is why there will be Forest Plan amendments that will, if you wish, involve you. Through both scientific research and talking to the people who use the Forests, I intend to keep the Revised Plan current in respect to the needs of people as well as nature's processes.

As I emphasized earlier, the National Forests are managed under a multiple-use concept. It is the job of the Forest Service to find a place on the National Forests for uses such as timber harvest, livestock grazing, outdoor recreation and mineral development, as well as habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species and lands for healthy, diverse vegetation and proper watershed function. That is not to say that each use can or should occur on every acre. The goal must be to blend the different uses in a way that is sustainable and best meets the needs of the American people.

“Sustainable” means satisfying present needs without compromising the needs of future generations. To achieve the goal of sustainability, the Revised Plan establishes goals and objectives that will provide for more diverse conditions than currently exist on the Forest. In some areas, processes such as fire, that are important in maintaining the overall health of the lands, will be reintroduced. In other areas intensive restoration and resource development will occur to provide for public use and the area’s economic health.

As a final nod toward legality I need to add that throughout the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the Revised Plan, I have asked for a Plan that is scientifically credible, sustainable, and legally sufficient but not burdened with excessive process requirements that do not contribute to good decisions. I believe the Revised Plan meets those criteria.

Thank you again for your interest in management of the Wasatch-Cache NF.

JACK G. TROYER  
Regional Forester  
Intermountain Region, USDA – Forest Service

## Forest Setting

Long before the creation of the Wasatch and Cache National Forests in the early 1900s, the mountains, uplands and valleys supported a rich array of plants and animals. Before Europeans arrived, prehistoric Fremont, Shoshone and Ute peoples lived and moved about in the valleys and mountains harvesting fish from lakes and streams, big game from the mountains, and a bounty of native plants that contributed to their culture and values. Mountain men and trappers began to arrive in the 1820s lured by the promise of economic benefits to be won from the diverse wildlife. These early explorers opened new horizons to a growing ethnic mix of pioneer settlers and miners who followed. Today, the ecosystems of the Wasatch-Cache NF continue to provide a diversity of plants, animals, and land uses that sustain and enhance the quality of life for visitors and residents of northern Utah and southwest Wyoming. Long range forest planning ensures these values will continue today, tomorrow and beyond in a framework that preserves and sustains the vitality of forest ecosystems.

## My Decision

I selected Alternative 7 as the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (Revised Plan) for the Wasatch-Cache NF. By selecting Alternative 7, I am approving a Revised Plan that describes in detail forest-wide and area-specific desired future conditions, goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, management prescriptions, and monitoring and evaluation direction.

The Revised Plan provides for a mix of resource uses, protection of sensitive resource values, and active restoration of some lands. It recognizes that to provide for long-term sustainability, ecological conditions must function properly. These decisions apply to specific areas of the Forest called Management Areas (MA). It adopts a variety of resource management approaches through multiple-use management prescriptions tailored to the diverse lands of the Wasatch-Cache NF. Suitable timber and rangelands, oil and gas availability and leasing decisions for a portion of the North Slope Uinta Mountains, and winter recreation motorized and non-motorized allocations are also elements of the Revised Forest Plan. This Plan spells out desired future conditions for each MA and calls for active participation by the growing numbers of forest users in assisting to improve user ethics and stewardship of the land. Some key elements of my decision are:

### **Vegetation management/Reintroduction of fire**

The Revised Plan will greatly increase the emphasis on active use of fire, particularly in aspen-conifer, for achieving desired vegetation composition, structure, and function to benefit watershed, wildlife, and scenery. It places a new emphasis on reducing the likelihood of wildfire in the rapidly growing urban interface by aggressively reducing hazardous fuels in cooperation with the State of Utah and communities adjacent to the Forest.



In the Revised Plan, timber management activities are refocused from the 1985 Plan's commodity orientation to using timber harvest as a tool to achieve desired vegetation composition, structure and function while providing for a realistic and sustainable flow of timber from suitable lands.

The Revised Plan builds on the 1996 Rangeland Health Amendment to strengthen management direction for livestock grazing aimed at improving rangelands in unsatisfactory condition.

### **Recreation**

In response to growing conflicts, the Revised Plan provides for separation of winter motorized and non-motorized uses in key areas to maintain quality of recreation opportunities as demand continues to grow. It also initiates an education and enforcement program aimed specifically at forest users and focused in the areas of Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use, recreation user ethics, role of fire and fuels hazards, noxious weeds, and watershed health. Thresholds are established for recreation user densities, as triggers of the need for site-specific analysis and a public process for determining whether or not limits on numbers, types, and/or timing of recreation uses are necessary.

The Revised Plan allows no expansion of current ski area permit boundaries into adjacent highly valued undeveloped areas, but continues to manage within existing permit boundaries for world-class skiing opportunities in winter; and in summer for nature-based recreation opportunities complementary to resort facilities.

### **Roadless/Wilderness**

Rather than allow development in most roadless areas as the 1985 Plan did, the Revised Plan maintains roadless area values in 75 percent of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and recommends about 73,500 acres for wilderness designation.

### **Aquatics/Wildlife**

The importance of proper watershed and aquatic habitat functioning is highlighted through much more specific management direction than was in the 1985 Plan. This is aimed at protecting and improving conditions. The Revised Plan emphasizes maintenance of recently identified wildlife corridor functions in key portions of the Forest and reduces potential for disease transmission from domestic sheep to bighorn sheep in the Uinta Mountains.

### **Oil and Gas**

Additional opportunities are provided for exploration and development of oil and gas resources in areas left undecided by the 1994 leasing decision, while protecting sensitive lands and resources.

### **Special Areas**

In the Revised Plan unique botanical resources and education/research values of the Forest are recognized through designation of several Special Interest Areas and expansion of Research Natural Areas.

## **Decision Authority**

I have been delegated the authority to make this decision by the Secretary of Agriculture and Chief of the Forest Service (36 CFR 219.10 (c)).

## **Why Alternative 7?**

I selected Alternative 7 because in my judgment it provides the best mix of benefits to address the needs for change from our 1985 Plan and the planning issues raised by the public. Although in many cases views are quite polarized and none of the alternatives considered would satisfy everyone, Alternative 7 strikes the best balance for maintaining and restoring ecological conditions, while providing for a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities and a realistic level of commodity production.

Alternative 7 addresses recreational access concerns by providing for adequate access while emphasizing the need for education and enforcement and the need for users to have a clear awareness of the potential impacts of their actions on natural resources as well as on the experiences of other users. Summer motorized use is restricted to designated open routes. However, this alternative emphasizes connecting existing motorized routes to provide extended riding opportunities.

Alternative 7 recognizes and provides for the increasing demand for snowmobiling. It also provides for non-motorized winter recreation through some separation of uses. Alternative 7 closes most critical winter range to snowmobiles to reduce potential impact to wintering big game.

Management of IRAs was one of the most contentious issues addressed in this plan. Preserving these areas was very important to many who commented. Other commentators felt just as strongly that these areas should be available for development. Many commentators just wanted the areas to continue to be left undeveloped, without any special designation. I believe that Alternative 7 addresses roadless area management by maintaining roadless characteristics on 75 percent of IRAs, while allowing varying levels of development on about 25 percent of IRAs. This alternative provides the needed protection for the highest value roadless areas for the ecological benefits and the undeveloped landscapes they provide, while recognizing that some of the IRAs provide more benefits if some development is allowed.

Alternative 7 recommends 73,500 acres of IRAs for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Public opinion on wilderness recommendations is very polarized. Some commentators asked that almost all of the IRAs be recommended for wilderness while others strongly believe that there is no need for additional wilderness on the Wasatch-Cache NF. I believe that the wilderness values of the areas that I am recommending strongly outweigh any development potential.

Alternative 7 also provides for management and land use activities that maintain biodiversity, including watershed functions, and address species viability. It provides for a variety of vegetation treatments including prescribed fire and wildland fire use. It will provide for healthy diverse vegetation sufficient to maintain viable populations of native and desired non-native species dependent on the Wasatch-Cache NF.

# Public Involvement and Alternatives Considered

## Government and Public Involvement

### Tribal Trust Responsibilities

American Indians today retain inherent rights based on provisions of the United States Constitution and treaties with the United States that obligate the United States to maintain government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes. Numerous laws, forest planning regulations and policy all speak to the recognition of American Indian governments and require consultation with Tribes regarding decisions that have the potential to affect treaty rights and traditional and cultural values.

The Wasatch-Cache Forest Supervisor has consulted with the Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians, Northwestern Band of Shoshone, and Northern Ute Tribal Councils regarding development of the Revised Plan (FEIS, Chapter 3).

### How was the public involved in developing this Plan?

In April 1999, the Forest released a report called *Preliminary Analysis of the Management Situation for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest (PAMS)* for public review. This report included information on current resource conditions and uses of the Forest, and a synopsis of what management direction in the *Wasatch-Cache National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan* (1985 Plan) needed to change. Public comment was invited on the preliminary findings contained in the PAMS.

In September of 1999 a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register*. This initiated the scoping process. At the same time, a scoping letter was mailed to interested and potentially affected publics.

During September and October the Forest hosted a series of open houses to share a draft of the “Proposed Action” alternative with the public. In November and December a series of 8 workshops were held for the public to develop alternatives to the proposed action.

Five preliminary alternatives were sent to the public in August of 2000 for review. Comments received in response contributed to developing the array of alternatives presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), including a sixth alternative identified as the Forest Service’s preferred alternative.

The DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan were released to the public in May 9, 2001. An extended comment period closed on November 1, 2001. Several open houses and briefings were conducted to introduce the DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan for interested parties. In October three public comment

forums were held. Formal transcripts from these forums were incorporated into comments received during the draft review. The Forest received approximately 3,700 letters, postcards, e-mails, and phone calls from people commenting on the draft documents. The Wasatch-Cache NF Interdisciplinary Team developed Alternative 7 in part based on those comments. (See FEIS, Appendix A, Public Involvement for more detailed information.)

## Planning Issues

As a result of the public participation process, six Planning Issues were identified.

### ISSUE 1: RECREATION USE CONFLICT AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Conflicts between and among users of motorized/mechanized vehicles and non-motorized recreation users are continuing to increase. The questions are where and how much access is appropriate for each of these groups; and what user densities should be managed for in the future. This was the issue most often mentioned in public comments.

### ISSUE 2: ROADLESS AREA MANAGEMENT

Management of IRAs was a concern for many. Concerns included were: should IRAs be protected from development or be available for development and uses; how much, where, and how should IRAs be managed; should additional acreage be recommended for wilderness designation and, if so, how much and where.

### ISSUE 3: BIODIVERSITY AND SPECIES VIABILITY

The Revised Plan should emphasize key factors and provide a proper balance of management and land use activities that can maintain biodiversity (including watershed functions) and address species viability. More specifically, the Revised Plan should maintain vegetation communities within their historic range of variation to sustain habitats for viable populations of species, restore hydrologic functions, and reduce potential for high-intensity wildfires. Also, it should maintain functional wildlife corridors, restore rangelands that are in unsatisfactory condition, recognize roadless area contributions to biodiversity, and restore vegetation composition, age class diversity, patch sizes and patterns to approximate natural disturbances. The Revised Plan should reduce noxious weed infestation and spread, protect special habitats, restore native species, and identify provisions necessary for protection of species classified as threatened, endangered, or sensitive.

### ISSUE 4: CONTINUED ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND PERSONAL/SOCIAL BENEFITS OF THE FOREST

The Revised Plan should consider traditional and current economic outputs and social benefits provided by the Wasatch-Cache NF. These include forage for livestock, timber for harvest, production of oil and gas, recreation services and all of the accompanying “quality of life/lifestyle” benefits obtained from the Forest.

### ISSUE 5: ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF USES

The Revised Plan should keep impacts of uses, including livestock grazing, timber harvest, recreation, oil and gas development, and road and trail management, to within acceptable limits. We should make sure that the impacts of these and other uses on watershed conditions, wildlife and fish habitats, recreation settings, and local quality of life are manageable and minimized.

The Revised Plan should address how much more recreation-related facility development will be allowed and where and of what types. Many participants in the planning process did not wish to see much additional facility development because they felt it detracts from scenery and might impact watershed values. Though not a major issue forest-wide, concerns about recreation development are important to the future of key areas such as the Tri-Canyon area of the Wasatch Front and other areas with growing numbers of recreation users.

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## Alternative Development

Alternatives under consideration in the DEIS were developed from the following sources:

- Monitoring and evaluation of current Forest resources and implementation of the 1985 Plan
- Review of Forest Service policy and direction
- An assessment of existing conditions, disclosed in the PAMS for the Wasatch-Cache NF and subsequent public comments
- Issues identified during the public scoping process and comments received at public meetings and comments received on the DEIS
- Management concerns and opportunities identified by the interdisciplinary team

Planning issues were used to develop a range of alternatives to the proposed action as described in the NOI. Five alternatives were initially identified, including the No Action and the Proposed Action. Later an additional alternative was developed. These six alternatives and their effects were displayed in the DEIS. In part in response to public comments on the DEIS, additional wilderness was added to Alternative 1, and Alternative 7 was developed and added to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

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## Alternatives Not Considered in Detail

The public suggested management options during public participation activities. The following options or alternatives were considered by the interdisciplinary team but were eliminated from detailed analysis.

- No or multiple management prescription categories
- Travel management decisions
- All IRAs recommended for Wilderness
- No livestock grazing/ no grazing in roadless areas
- Human carrying capacity determinations and user densities

- No new special uses for commercial purposes
- Wilderness recommendation in alternative 4 (no action)
- The CUFF (Citizens for a User Friendly Forest) alternative
- The “balanced” alternative

The FEIS contains alternative descriptions and information on the reasons for eliminating these alternatives from detailed study. (FEIS, Chapter 2, Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study)

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## Alternatives Considered in Detail

### ALTERNATIVE 1

Alternative 1 allows nature to take its course, minimizing human interference with natural processes, maintenance of roadless landscapes, and restrictive approaches to sustainability forest-wide, due to many unknowns about ecosystem functions. By “restrictive” we mean that human uses are allowed only when and where they are consistent with this emphasis. Current levels of development are maintained, but not increased. No timber harvest is allowed nor is any road construction or reconstruction in IRAs. Expected commodity outputs compared with other alternatives are lower. Winter motorized use is more restricted than currently. Snowmobiling is not allowed in IRAs nor where special habitat needs are present. Within IRAs, summer motorized recreation is allowed on designated open routes in current Travel Maps except for those within areas recommended as wilderness. User densities are managed (potential permit systems) in Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes primitive and semiprimitive.

### ALTERNATIVE 2

Alternative 2 puts a strong emphasis on biodiversity, mimicking or restoring natural processes with active human management, conservation of large roadless areas, and moderate approaches to sustainability given many unknowns. Uses are allowed when and where they are compatible with achieving restoration emphasis or maintaining properly functioning conditions. In IRAs, no road construction or reconstruction is allowed and timber harvest is strictly limited. Expected commodity outputs may be irregular in their timing with possible spikes of high and low outputs. An overall diversity of recreation settings is maintained. Where IRAs are recommended for wilderness or are next to existing wilderness, snowmobiling is not allowed. Within IRAs, summer motorized recreation is allowed on routes designated as open in current Travel Maps except for those within areas recommended as wilderness. This alternative maintains most of the currently mapped primitive and semi-primitive recreation opportunities.

### ALTERNATIVE 3—PROPOSED ACTION

Alternative 3 was originally developed as the “Proposed Action” for Forest Plan revision and was provided for public comment in September 1999. Alternative 3 provides increased recreation access in response to increasing demands, especially for winter-motorized use. Alternative 3 provides a mix of uses and protection/restoration activities. This alternative emphasizes adjusting management

activities to ensure emphasis on ecosystem functioning and sustainability while providing some commodity outputs and a variety of recreation opportunities.

#### ALTERNATIVE 4—NO ACTION (CURRENT PLAN DIRECTION)

Alternative 4 is formally the “No Action” alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It can also be described as the “continuation of management under direction of the 1985 forest plan” alternative. It represents the 1985 plan as written and amended. Alternative 4 implements general direction from the 1985 plan emphasizing various outputs but with project-by-project application of an ecosystem approach and findings from the 1992 5-Year Monitoring Report. Forested vegetation is managed for growth and yield on suited timberlands, and suited rangelands are managed primarily for livestock forage except where project analyses have resulted in another multiple use emphasis based on integration of resource management needs.

Alternative 4 emphasizes improved facilities for recreation, and accommodation of increasing demands for recreation through additional facility construction. Expansion of developed and dispersed summer and winter recreation is envisioned.

#### ALTERNATIVE 5

Alternative 5 addresses the concern that the Forest can and should be used to directly benefit economies, livelihoods, and traditions of families and local communities through predictable sustained outputs while allowing a variety of other non-exclusive uses and minimizing restrictions or requirements that increase operating costs. This alternative responds to the desires of people (rural, urban, or otherwise) who would like to see continuation of many historic and/or traditional uses of the Forest, sometimes even for new purposes, but with restrictions only as necessary to meet legal requirements. Access plays a major role in the ability to use the land. Forage for livestock, timber for harvest, oil and gas leasing, and recreation-related services and opportunities are emphasized while all of these uses together are actively managed to reduce or avoid conflicts and achieve improved productivity of the land and resources. Recreation opportunities in this alternative are more numerous in the rural, roaded natural, and semiprimitive motorized classes. More total recreation capacity is available because of increased numbers of facilities, allowance for higher user densities, and increased access.

#### ALTERNATIVE 6—PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE IN EIS

Alternative 6 was identified as the Preferred Alternative in the DEIS. It addresses biodiversity by mimicking natural processes in some areas with active human management while restoring natural processes to other areas with minimal human intrusion. Uses are allowed and mitigated to maintain ecosystem functions in some areas, while in other areas uses are restricted to achieve restoration or protection of properly functioning ecosystem conditions. In IRAs, no road construction or reconstruction is allowed and timber harvest is strictly limited. Expected commodity outputs are lower than recent years with some areas providing a limited but continual supply and others removed or reduced from commodity production to sustain other important wildland values (such as watershed functioning, ecological reserves and biodiversity corridors, opportunities for solitude, and special designation of reference benchmarks for learning, eg, Research Natural Area/Special Interest Areas). Recreation opportunities are managed intensively in some areas to meet increasing demands, especially in the wildland/urban interface. Total area available for snowmobiling is less than is currently available but high and moderate use areas are maintained as open. Summer motorized recreation is allowed on routes designated as open in current Travel Maps.

## ALTERNATIVE 7—SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative 7 was developed after public comments on the six alternatives described in the DEIS. Some components of the DEIS Preferred Alternative 6 were retained while other components were adjusted in response to comments. Alternative 7 improves the resolution of issues raised in public comments and is adapted to current policy, specifically the management of IRAs and implementation of the Roads Policy. This ROD includes details and discussion of Alternative 7 in later sections.

Other changes were made to Alternative 6 in the development of Alternative 7; these are listed in the FEIS (FEIS Chapter 2, Alternative 7, key changes made to the preferred alternative to develop this alternative).



**Introduction**

The analysis of Alternatives and public comment received on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Plan documented in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revised Forest Plan for the Wasatch-Cache National Forest* (FEIS) serves as the foundation for my decision for the Revised Land and Resource Management Plan for the Wasatch-Cache NF. My decision incorporates by reference the analysis of effects and management direction disclosed in the FEIS and Revised Plan and the planning record in its entirety. All references and citations used in this ROD are fully described in the FEIS and Revised Plan.

My decision applies only to National Forest System lands in the Wasatch-Cache NF. It does not apply to any other Federal, State, or private lands, although the effects of my decision on those lands are considered.

**Forest Plan Decisions**

A Forest Plan establishes the framework for future decision-making by outlining a broad, general program for achieving the goals and objectives of the Forest. A Forest Plan does not make a commitment to the selection of any specific project and does not dictate day-to-day administrative activities needed to carry on internal operations. The Revised Plan is implemented through the design, execution, and monitoring of site-specific activities. I am making the following decisions in the Revised Plan:

- Goals and objectives that lead to ecological sustainability, contribute to economic and social sustainability, and provide for multiple uses.
- Forest-wide requirements (standards and guidelines) that apply to future management activities.
- Management direction through the use of management prescription area designation.
- Non-wilderness allocations or Wilderness recommendations for IRAs.
- Designation of suitable timber land and establishment of the allowable timber sale quantity for the planning period and identification of suitability and capability of lands for producing forage.
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements.

I am making one site-specific decision in the Revised Plan:

- Determination of lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing and specific lands authorized for leasing for 68,300 acres on the North Slope of the Uinta Mountains.

#### FOREST-WIDE MULTIPLE-USE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (36 CFR 219.11(b))

A goal is a concise statement that describes a desired condition to be achieved sometime in the future. It is normally expressed in broad, general terms and may not have a specific date for accomplishment.

An objective is a clear and quantifiable statement of planned results to be achieved within a stated time period. An objective must be achievable, measurable, and have a stated time period for completion.

The Revised Plan includes a set of Forest multiple-use goals and objectives that include a description of the Desired Future Condition of the Wasatch-Cache NF and an identification of the quantities of goods and services that are expected to be produced or provided during the planning period. Goals and objectives are described in Chapter 4 of the Revised Plan.

#### FOREST-WIDE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES (36 CFR 219.13 TO 219.27)

Standards are used to promote the achievement of the goals and objectives; and to assure compliance with laws, regulations, Executive Orders or policy. Standards are binding limitations on management activities that are within the authority of the Forest Service to enforce. A standard can also be expressed as a constraint on management activities or practices. The Revised Plan contains both Forest-wide and Management Prescription Area standards. These are displayed in Chapter 4 of the Revised Plan.

Guidelines are used in the same way as standards but tend to be operationally flexible to respond to variations, such as changing site conditions or changed management circumstances. Guidelines are a preferred or advisable course of action and they are expected to be carried out, unless site-specific analysis identifies a better approach. The Revised Plan contains both Forest-wide and Management Prescription Area guidelines in Chapter 4.

#### MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION AREA DIRECTION (36 CFR 219.11(c))

Management prescriptions, an integrated set of management practices, have been applied to specific areas of land to attain goals and objectives on the Wasatch-Cache NF. Management prescriptions in the Revised Plan identify the emphasis and focus of management activities in a specific area; however, **emphasis**, as used in this context, is defined as a focus or a highlight and does not necessarily mean exclusive use. The specific direction stated in a management prescription determines what uses are allowed and to what extent the uses are permitted. Table 1 below lists the Management Prescription Areas established by the Revised Plan for the Wasatch-Cache NF and the acreage to which each applies. The direction for each of these management prescriptions is detailed in Chapter 4 of the Revised Plan.

Table 1. Management Prescription Areas

Prescription Category	Prescription Name (Number)	Acres
Wilderness /Backcountry	Existing Wilderness – Opportunity Class I (1.1)	143,200
	Existing Wilderness – Opportunity Class II (1.2)	139,400
	Existing Wilderness – Opportunity Class III (1.3)	26,200
	Recommended Wilderness (1.5)	73,500
Special Management Area	Research Natural Areas (2.2)	5,600
	Scenic Byways (2.5)	21,100
	Undeveloped Areas (2.6)	111,200

Prescription Category	Prescription Name (Number)	Acres
	Special Interest Areas and Special Areas (2.7)	18,600
Protection, Maintenance or Restoration	Aquatic Habitat (3.1a)	28,300
	Watershed Emphasis (3.1w)	154,600
	Terrestrial Habitat Emphasis – developed (3.2d)	89,200
	Terrestrial Habitat Emphasis – undeveloped (3.2u)	122,300
Developed/Dispersed Recreation	Backcountry Non-motorized Recreation Settings (4.1)	13,000
	Dispersed Non-motorized Recreation Settings (4.2)	3,500
	Backcountry Motorized Recreation Settings (4.3)	27,100
	Dispersed Motorized Recreation Settings (4.4)	53,800
	Developed Recreation Areas (4.5)	12,000
Forested Vegetation Management	Maintain/Restore Forested Ecosystem Integrity (5.1)	81,100
	Mixed Forested/Rangeland Ecosystem Integrity (5.1/6.1)	17,300
	Manage Timber for Growth and Yield (5.2)	34,500
Rangeland Vegetation Management	Maintain/Restore Rangeland Ecosystem Integrity (6.1)	60,000
	Manage for Livestock Forage Production (6.2)	1,600
Concentrated Development Area	Mineral and Energy Development (8.1)	3,000

#### EVALUATION OF INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS (36 CFR 219.17) AND OTHER SPECIAL AREA DESIGNATIONS

The Interdisciplinary Team examined 34 IRAs for wilderness characteristics (FEIS, Appendix C-1). Based on this information and other considerations, four additions to existing wilderness are recommended, and two new wildernesses are recommended:

- Two additions totaling 20,600 acres adjacent to the High Uintas Wilderness.
- 40 acres are added to the Wellsville Mountain Wilderness.
- 500 acres are added on the northern edge of the Mount Naomi Wilderness area adjacent to Caribou NF recommended wilderness.
- A new 38,000-acre wilderness is recommended for part of the Lakes IRA.
- A new 14,200-acre wilderness is recommended for part of the Upper South Fork IRA.

The FEIS Appendix C-2 evaluated roadless area values as defined by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (January 12, 2001). For all IRAs, management prescriptions and other appropriate management direction were applied based on their inherent values either for maintaining roadless area values or for a variety of other uses. These allocations of IRAs may be seen on management prescription maps. The selected alternative maintains roadless area values on 188,700 acres of IRA, mostly maintains roadless area values on 267,400 acres of IRA (allows trail construction but not road construction or timber harvest), and allows development in 149,900 acres of IRA.

An eligibility inventory for wild and scenic rivers was conducted in 1999 on 96 river segments that met established planning criteria. Thirty-three segments were found to be free-flowing and have at least one outstandingly remarkable value. It is required by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 that free-flow and outstanding values of eligible segments be protected until suitability studies are

conducted for the segments. The Revised Plan provides a list of these river segments and the protection standards that are applied. (Revised Plan, Appendix VIII)

#### SUITABILITY DETERMINATIONS (36 CFR 219.14, 219.16 AND 219.20)

The Revised Plan identifies the acreage of suitable timberlands (Revised Plan, Appendix IV). These are defined in our Revised Plan as coincident with the application of management prescription category (MPC) 5.2. to 34,500 acres of which 30,700 are suited. Another 171,400 acres allow timber harvest which may produce commercial products, but which is incidental to other management and not counted as part of the suitable timberlands. The calculated ASQ is 2.0 MMBF (annual average harvest over 10 years), which is harvested only from suitable timberlands. The estimated total sale program quantity (TSPQ) of 4.5 MMBF (annual average harvest) is the amount of timber that is projected to come from all lands with prescriptions that allow timber harvest.

Approximately 289,800 acres in 90 allotments are designated suitable for domestic livestock grazing (see Table RN-4 in the FEIS). My decision closes eight vacant allotments with a total of 10,300 capable acres for purposes of watershed protection and bighorn sheep habitat. Seven additional allotments totaling 17,600 capable acres are identified for closure in the event that permits are voluntarily waived without preference, to expand bighorn sheep habitat on the North Slope Uinta Mountains.

In addition to suitability, my decision adds direction to components of the 1996 Rangeland Health Amendment (USDA Forest Service, March, 1996), which has been incorporated into the Revised Plan. This direction updates the Riparian Classification Guide (Revised Plan, Appendix VII) emphasizing threatened, endangered and sensitive species. In addition the following direction is provided for improving conditions of rangelands.

Guideline 71: Maximum allowed forage utilization will be 30-40 percent, as a tool to achieve rehabilitation of upland, aspen, and riparian communities away from the greenline that are not meeting or moving toward objectives (i.e., in unsatisfactory condition).

Guideline 75: Annual operating instructions (and/or Allotment Management Plans) will be evaluated and additional site-specific objectives defined if needed for any or all of the following five parameters:

- Stubble height on selected key species on the greenline
- Stubble height on selected key species and/or the amount of bare ground within the riparian zone but away from the greenline
- Riparian woody browse utilization (trees and shrubs)
- Stream bank trampling on key reaches
- Stubble height and/or incidence of use on key species in the uplands

The 1996 Rangeland Health amendment decision did not establish utilization allowances for rangelands in unsatisfactory condition. At that time existing scientific research did not support setting lower standards for unsatisfactory conditions. Since then additional research has been completed which supports a lower utilization rate. Holechek, et al, (2001) noted that rangelands in poor

(unsatisfactory) conditions should be assigned the lower utilization level when grazed during active forage growth. Based on the findings the aforementioned guidance (Guideline 71) will be incorporated into annual operating instructions. Rangeland management specialists will apply this on a site-by-site basis.

#### MONITORING AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT (36 CFR 219.11(D))

The monitoring and evaluation section is found in Chapter 4 of the Revised Plan. It is closely related to the objectives identified earlier in that chapter. It identifies 13 topical areas to be monitored and evaluated, both to see if we are consistent in implementing our standards and guidelines, and to see how effective plan direction has been at achieving desired conditions, goals and objectives.

This section of the Revised Plan is a key to adaptive management. It indicates whether we are achieving what we intended, or if plan amendments are needed. In this revision, I have kept Forest Plan monitoring trim, specific and feasible to recognize our workload commitments in other areas, and to focus on key items. Forest Plan monitoring is only one of the many monitoring activities we do on the Forest, and the results will be integrated with other monitoring efforts.

#### DETERMINATION OF LANDS ADMINISTRATIVELY AVAILABLE FOR OIL AND GAS LEASING AND SPECIFIC LANDS AUTHORIZED FOR LEASING (36 CFR 228.102 (d and e))

Currently under the 1994 leasing decision for the North Slope of the Uinta Mountains about 140,400 acres are administratively available and have been offered for lease both competitively and non-competitively. The 1994 Leasing Decision will be brought into compliance with the updated terminology and direction of the Revised Plan.

An appeal settlement decision removed 68,300 acres from the 1994 leasing decision. The Revised Plan makes the leasing decision for that area. The decisions being made relative to oil and gas leasing are whether or not areas are available for leasing and if so with what stipulations (36 CFR 228.102(d)), and the leasing decision for specific lands (36 CFR 228.102(e)). Table 2 summarizes the leasing decision and stipulations; however, 20,400 acres of the original total will not be made available for leasing because they are in the area recommended for Wilderness. This decision does not authorize any subsequent surface disturbing activities, which may be proposed after a lease is issued. Any subsequent proposal to explore or develop a lease would require further site-specific analysis (36 CFR 228.107).

Table 2. Acres Available for Leasing on the North Slope of the Uinta Mountains

	No Surface Occupancy	Controlled Surface Use	Controlled Surface Use/Timing Limitation	Timing Limitation	Standard Lease Terms
1994 Leasing Decision	30,800	28,400	8,800	27,600	44,800
Leasing Decision made in Revised Plan	20,900	24,900	100	1,000	1,000
TOTAL ACRES	51,700	53,300	8,900	28,600	45,800

If the Roadless Area Conservation Rule comes into effect, it would overlay the Revised Plan and this leasing decision would be revised to be consistent with that Rule.

Decisions on leasing are made with consideration of Executive Order 13212 (the National Energy Policy), which directs agencies to take appropriate actions to the extent consistent with applicable law to expedite projects that will increase the production, transmission, or conservation of energy.

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## Rationale for my decision

My decision to select Alternative 7 for implementation is based on three principal factors.

1. **Consistency with National Policy and direction.** Forest plan decisions must be consistent with the extensive body of law, regulation and policy established at the national level.
2. **The relationship of my decision to planning issues identified during the planning process.** Organizations, local governments, and the general public all submitted comments that required me to take a hard look at the planning issues and how they were addressed by each alternative. In a number of cases public and agency comments helped me identify a reasonable range of alternatives and necessary management direction.
3. **Compatibility of goals of other Governments and Tribes** was another important factor that drove my decision making process. Comments received from State agencies, Indian Tribes and elected officials were considered in making my selection.

How each of these factors was considered in my decision is detailed below:

### Consistency with National Policy

In making my decision I evaluated each of the alternatives for compliance with National policy and direction. In all cases, except for the No Action Alternative, all the alternatives are consistent with National policy and direction.

#### FOREST AND RANGELAND RENEWABLE RESOURCES PLANNING ACT (RPA)

The 1982 NFMA regulations at (36 CFR 219.12(f)(6)) require that at least one alternative be developed that responds to and incorporates the Resources Planning Act (RPA) Program's tentative resource objectives for each National Forest/Grassland as displayed in Regional Guides.

The Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000), in lieu of a RPA Program, was completed in accordance with Government Performance Results Act and the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

While Forest Plans should be consistent with the broad guidance provided in the Strategic Plan and should consider the information provided by the RPA Assessment along with other available and relevant science, neither the Strategic Plan nor the Assessment contain recommended outputs that must be incorporated in specific Forest Plans.

#### GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE RESULTS ACT (GPRA) - FOREST SERVICE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Government Performance Results Act requires Federal agencies to prepare periodic strategic and annual performance plans, focusing on outcomes and results. The first Strategic Plan issued by the

Forest Service in 1997 replaced the Agency's former strategic plan created under the RPA. This plan was updated in 2000.

The goals and objectives in the Revised Plan are consistent with the Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000).

**Ecosystem Health** - The Revised Plan addresses ecosystem health in a variety of ways. The Revised Plan uses ecosystem management as the basic framework when developing management direction. Management activities were tailored to the capabilities and sensitivities of specific landscapes across the forest. The selected alternative increases vegetation and fuel treatments to move vegetation toward a desired future condition in an environmentally sensitive way. It includes standards and guidelines to protect, improve, and/or mitigate impacts to watersheds, riparian and aquatic habitats, and threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitats.

**Multiple Benefits to People** - The Revised Plan provides sustainable levels of economic contributions to communities and continuance of a variety of uses, while providing clean water, protections for at-risk ecosystem components, proper ecosystem functioning, and a broad spectrum of recreation uses.

**Scientific and Technical Assistance** - The Revised Plan is based on adaptive management, using monitoring and evaluation to enhance our understanding of the resources. Monitoring and evaluation provide an avenue for incorporating new information and obtaining technical assistance on management problems.

**Effective Public Service** - The Revised Plan was developed in response to comments from the public regarding management of the Wasatch-Cache NF. The Revised Plan provides for human uses of the environment as well as preserving much of the inherent "wildness" of some areas on the Forest. Goals and objectives throughout the Revised Plan emphasize cooperation and coordination with other interested parties in management of the natural resources on the Forest.

#### HEALTHY FORESTS INITIATIVE/NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

On December 11, 2002, the President announced a series of new administrative steps referred to as the Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires and improve the health of our nation's forests.

These actions will reduce unnecessary red tape and needless delays that have too often delayed efforts to reduce the threat of devastating wildfires and insect infestations that damage both public and private lands. The new procedures will ensure that needed environmental reviews and public review processes are conducted in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The National Fire Plan (NFP) is a long-term investment that will help protect communities and natural resources, and most importantly, the lives of firefighters and the public. The NFP is a key component of the HFI. It is a long-term commitment based on cooperation and communication among Federal agencies, States, local governments, Tribes and interested publics. Federal wildland fire management agencies worked closely with the partners to prepare a 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, completed in August 2001.

My decision for fire management provides Revised Plan direction to help implement the NFP by applying broader uses of prescribed fire and wildland fire use, hazardous fuels treatment, and fire

suppression. It applies decisions, standards and guidelines already identified in the Utah Fire Amendment (2001) and new information and analysis from the Wasatch Front Fuels Assessment Report (2002) to identify needs and opportunities for fuel reduction treatments, especially in the wildland/urban interface. The Revised Plan requires that sensitive watersheds will be studied with more site specificity than what was provided in the decision for the Utah Fire Amendment.

The Revised Plan provides for vegetation/fuel treatments of about 146,000 acres over the next 10-15 years. Much of this work will be accomplished in the wildland/urban interface in shorter fire interval oakbrush and shrub vegetation types that are in undesirable condition (fire condition classes II and III). Treatment priorities will be coordinated with the States of Utah and Wyoming to address areas identified in State Community Fire plans.

#### NATIONAL ENERGY POLICY (E.O. 13212)

In May 2001, Executive Order 13212 was signed to expedite the processing of energy-related projects. The National Energy Plan was developed to implement the Executive Order. Based on this Plan, the Forest Service adopted an Energy Implementation Plan. The Revised Plan makes a decision for 68,300 acres of federal leasable minerals (oil and gas) as explained earlier. The Forest reviewed the *Western Regional Corridor Study (1992)* in this process. The Revised Plan contains direction for allowing energy corridors on the Forest (Plan Chapter 4, Guideline 84). Hydroelectric projects on the Forest are very small and nationally insignificant. It is my determination that the Revised Plan is in compliance with Executive Order 13212.

#### ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION RULE

Management direction for IRAs was analyzed on a national scale through the Roadless Areas Conservation EIS, initiated by the Forest Service in the fall of 1999. In November 2000, the Forest Service issued the FEIS for the Roadless Area Conservation Rule in which the Preferred Alternative prohibited timber harvest and road building in IRAs.

On January 12, 2001, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) was published in *Federal Register* (36 CFR 294). The RACR prohibited road construction and reconstruction and the cutting, sale and removal of timber, with certain exceptions for the IRAs identified in the FEIS. However, timber harvest for stewardship reasons could be done. The RACR had an effective date of March 13, 2001. This effective date was later delayed until May 12, 2002.

Subsequently, several groups and States sued the Forest Service. The Idaho District Court agreed with their claims and on May 10 of 2001, the RACR was enjoined, thus never became effective. Several environmental groups appealed this decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. On December 12, 2002, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in a split decision reversed the injunction imposed by the lower Court. The Plaintiffs have requested that the entire Ninth Circuit panel of judges review the ruling. This request is pending. The District Court's injunction is still in place until the Ninth Circuit issues a mandate to the lower Court to lift the injunction.

On July 10, 2001, the Secretary of Agriculture published an advance notice of proposed rulemaking in the *Federal Register* requesting comments from the public on key issues that have been raised regarding the protection of IRAs. In it were listed five principles to consider when addressing the long-term protection and management of IRAs.

1. Informed decision-making



2. Working together
3. Protecting forests
4. Protecting communities, homes, and property
5. Protecting access to property

In December 2001 Interim Direction was provided in the Forest Service Manual (FSM 1925.04a, id\_1920-2001-1) to guide various activities affected by the RACR, including Forest planning. This direction reserved authority for certain decisions (roading and timber harvest) within roadless areas to the Chief of the Forest Service “until a forest-scale roads analysis is completed and incorporated into the forest plan” and “until a revision of a forest plan or adoption of a plan amendment that has considered the protection and management of IRAs.”

The Revised Plan applies this direction. An individual evaluation was conducted for each IRA (FEIS Appendix C2). This became the basis for applying management prescriptions to IRAs. The management approach in the Revised Plan emphasizes conservation of most IRAs. About 75 percent of roadless acres have prescriptions that maintain roadless values or allow minimal amounts of management while the remaining have prescriptions that allow development (see Chapter 4, Topic 5, under the heading “Effects on Roadless Area Values”).

I have determined that the Revised Plan is in compliance with current Forest Service policy on IRA management. Since this direction is subject to change, the Wasatch-Cache NF will follow the most current direction for management of IRAs. If the RACR does become effective it will supercede this Revised Plan, but only in those areas included in the RACR inventory used in the 2000 FEIS. Those areas in Alternative 7 that are identified as available for treatment could not be treated unless they meet the exceptions in the RACR.

#### TRANSPORTATION RULE AND POLICY

On January 12, 2001, the Chief of the Forest Service signed the *Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System; Prohibitions; Use of Motor Vehicles Off Forest Service Roads* (Transportation Rule), and *Forest Service Transportation, Final Administrative Policy* (Transportation Policy). The Transportation Rule and Policy provide guidance for transportation analysis – they do not dictate or adopt land management decisions.

The Transportation Rule requires the Forest Service to identify a minimum road system, determining which roads are needed (classified) and which roads are unneeded (unclassified). Decisions are to be accomplished through area/project planning and documented through the NEPA process, including full public participation.

Beginning on January 12, 2002, the Transportation Policy requires that a roads analysis (watershed or project-area scale) be prepared before most road management decisions are made to inform those decisions to construct or reconstruct roads. This roads analysis is not a formal decision-making process. Road management decisions are made through the NEPA process with full public participation and involvement.

The Forest Wide Roads Analysis Report for the Wasatch-Cache NF was completed in October 2002. As required by the Transportation Policy the information in that report has been used to inform my decision.

## **How the Revised Forest Plan addresses the planning issues**

One of the major reasons I have selected Alternative 7 is because it responds positively and thoroughly to the planning issues. The following is my evaluation of the Selected Alternative's response to each of the planning issues.

### **ISSUE 1: RECREATION USE CONFLICT AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT**

#### **Education and Enforcement**

I recognize that mapping and land allocations are only one step in managing these conflicts. Many constituents believe education and enforcement must be used as a cornerstone if we are to succeed in providing recreation opportunities and protecting the environment. The first and possibly most important objective in the Revised Plan (Chapter 4.A.3) is focused on education and enforcement. I want forest users to have a clear awareness of the potential impacts of their actions on natural resources as well as on the experiences of other users. Our approach will coordinate with State and Department of Interior agencies to provide key messages regarding appropriate behavior, to increase our field presence, and to encourage individuals and organizations to actively work to educate peers and to reduce user conflicts. This objective was developed in direct response to public comment. It is an important component of the Revised Plan.

#### **Winter access and user conflicts**

We have come to a point in northern Utah where population numbers and winter use conflicts demand that each user group will have to accept tradeoffs in their desire for recreation access in order to provide a fair and equitable mix of opportunities. In choosing Alternative 7, I responded to the ever-growing demand for snowmobile access while acknowledging the need for areas dedicated to winter nonmotorized use.

The Revised Plan provides for motorized use consistent with growing demand and the nature of snow machine activity (i.e., long distances can be covered), while identifying areas where non-motorized users can enjoy winter recreational opportunities.

Snowmobiling will continue to be allowed on most areas that are currently open, while some areas will be closed to snowmobiling to reduce impacts to critical big game winter range. In addition a few specific areas are closed to provide separation of uses for cross-country and backcountry skiing and in some areas where a boundary is impractical to manage. My decision for Cardiff Fork drainage in Big Cottonwood Canyon closes all National Forest System lands to snowmobiling because of conflicts with non-motorized uses and lack of suitable terrain, but allows for private property access with special use authorization.

Snowmobile access through areas closed to reduce impacts to wintering big game will be provided along designated routes. Exact locations of these designated routes will be established in coordination with the States and local users. In addition, in areas closed for wintering big-game and for separation of uses, egress for emergencies and mechanical breakdowns will also be allowed.

Although the open and closed areas are shown on winter recreation maps in the Revised Plan, these are approximate lines and the actual boundaries will be established in coordination with the State of Utah and local users to ensure that the areas are easily understood and will facilitate compliance. The actual

boundaries will be displayed on Forest travel plans and where necessary posted on the ground. Where motorized use exists now within areas recommended for Wilderness (Lakes and portions of High Uintas roadless areas), that use would be allowed to continue until such time Congress acts on Wilderness designation.

Alternative 7 decreases the amount of area currently open to snowmobiles by 15 percent. Forest wide the majority of this decrease (14%) occurs in critical big game winter range and unusable areas. One percent is for separation of uses. However, in Logan Canyon, where the majority of the area closed to separate uses occurs, there will be a substantial decrease in snowmobile opportunities.

Heli-skiing will continue to be allowed in areas where currently permitted. Many of the comments received on the Forest Plan revision dealt with continuing helicopter skiing in the Wasatch Mountains. My decision does not specifically approve or deny a helicopter skiing permit. That decision will be made through site-specific analysis. However, it is my belief that helicopter skiing is an appropriate use and should be part of the recreation opportunities provided on the Forest.

I am well aware of the growing recreational pressures on the Wasatch-Cache NF. I also recognize that it has become increasingly difficult for Forest users to find solitude and escape from the sights and sounds of civilization. In future years I anticipate this will become increasingly more difficult. In a location like the Wasatch Front, backcountry recreationists, whether skiers, snowmobilers or heli-skiers, must find ways to coexist and reach a level of acceptance for other users. Separation of uses will only take us so far.

#### **Summer access and user conflicts**

The Revised Plan provides for a variety of recreation opportunity classes with an emphasis on semiprimitive motorized and nonmotorized opportunities. This is in contrast to the 1985 Plan's emphasis on the more developed recreation settings of "roaded natural." Many Forest users (both motorized and non-motorized) favor the more rugged experience and less developed setting of semiprimitive. The Revised Plan preserves opportunities for motorized recreation on routes designated open on current Forest Travel Maps.

The decision was made early on that Forest Plan Revision would not address route-by-route decisions. However, I recognize that many Forest users would like to see some changes to current District Travel Plans. In fact, comments on specific routes (that they should be open or closed to motorized uses) were the largest category of comments received on the DEIS. These decisions are more appropriately addressed in areas smaller than an entire National Forest, so I am forwarding these comments to the Ranger Districts for use in updates to current Travel Plans. Some areas with potential routes not currently open on travel maps for Ogden and Logan Ranger Districts are identified for potential future motorized trail development (Revised Plan, Chapter 4.B.)

The concepts embodied in the proposed Shoshone Trail System are emphasized, connecting existing motorized routes on National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and State lands to provide extended riding opportunities between communities while providing an alternative to the unauthorized trails in sensitive watersheds along the Wasatch Front (Revised Plan, Chapter 4.A.3). The Revised Plan also acknowledges the potential for future loop trails, an opportunity currently lacking in certain areas of the Forest.

Due to the amount of off highway vehicle use and various resource concerns connected with motorized cross-country travel, summer motorized use is limited only to routes designated open on Forest travel plans.

Even though the demand for summer motorized use is ever increasing, I believe it is equally important to set aside areas for semi-primitive nonmotorized use. The Wasatch-Cache NF is uniquely situated to be the best provider of this opportunity in northern Utah. The Revised Plan recognizes the importance of areas other than wilderness for summer nonmotorized use.

I recognize that increasing user densities can eventually degrade the quality of the recreational experience. The Revised Plan addresses this concern by defining a range of user densities for semi-primitive opportunity classes. Monitoring will be conducted to identify where we may be approaching these densities. When monitoring results show that we are approaching these thresholds, the Revised Plan requires public notification and evaluation of whether to initiate management actions (potential permit system or other actions) to maintain a primitive or semiprimitive experience. We recognize that user preferences regarding contacts with others and acceptable user densities can vary greatly depending on site-specific factors and on individual users. A public process will be crucial to designing management actions for popular areas. Other recreation opportunity classes are managed to allow for increases in demand by taking more intensive management measures such as site hardening, user conveniences and more active management in areas of concentrated use.

## ISSUE 2: ROADLESS AREA MANAGEMENT

The Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Utah Wilderness Act of 1984 designated seven Wildernesses on the Wasatch-Cache NF comprising about 25 percent of the Forest. The Revised Plan recommends Wilderness additions of 73,500 acres out of a total of 605,900 acres in 34 IRAs.

Public opinions on the issue of Wilderness varied widely during the planning process. There was much support for recommendations of large amounts of new Wilderness across broad areas of the Forest on the Wasatch Front and in the Uinta Mountains. Wilderness recommendations were considered as important to maintaining ecosystems, and placing limits on development and motorized access. Many others wanted no new Wilderness recommendations anywhere on the Forest and were usually concerned about the areas where they had existing permitted uses or motorized access, or simply enjoyed the existing management settings and wanted no changes.

Factors considered in making my decision include: the amounts and types of Wilderness that already exist on the Forest, the quality of wilderness characteristics in each roadless area, how each area would add to the National Wilderness Preservation System, feasibility of management as Wilderness, and the trade offs between Wilderness recommendation, current uses and potential uses.

I am recommending the following IRAs (or portions) for Wilderness because I view them as having higher wilderness values compared to other potential uses and recommending them will not significantly affect any current use of the areas or management of adjacent areas.

- The core of the Lakes roadless area for its very high scenic and unique ecological character. The area is not a simple extension of the High Uintas area to the east, in part due to the cultural separation from the Mirror Lake Highway corridor, but also owing to its distinct topography and hydrologic regime.

- Two key parts of the High Uintas roadless area adjacent to the High Uintas Wilderness, which add to its manageability and to its overall ecological value. Most of this area was included in the 1983 High Uintas wilderness proposal considered by Congress. This adds some forested lands without significant tradeoffs in timber production.
- Most of the Upper South Fork roadless area as a new mid-elevation ecosystem in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The area had good public support from those familiar with its character.
- A 500-acre sliver on the north edge of the Mt. Naomi Wilderness. This area will connect the Mt. Naomi Wilderness with recommended wilderness on the Caribou NF.
- A 40-acre addition to the Wellsville Mountain Wilderness to correct an earlier technical error in how that boundary was mapped in 1984.
- In addition to the areas that I am recommending for wilderness, I also recognize the need to adjust the Mt. Naomi Wilderness boundary (30 acres) to remove a power line and facilitate Bonneville Shoreline trail use. This adjustment is proposed in pending legislation.

This recommendation allows the continued use of snowmobiles in recommended wilderness where that use currently exists. I understand that this decision is controversial and my reasoning for allowing snowmobiling in recommended wilderness is:

- The level of past snowmobiling use in these areas has not impacted the biological and physical characteristics that are the bases for my wilderness recommendation.
- There is no critical big-game winter range in these areas.
- We will not take any actions to encourage additional snowmobile use in these areas.
- Past management of these areas as semi-primitive non-motorized (summer) has maintained the wilderness characteristics of these areas and I believe that continuing to allow the current level of snowmobiling will not impact these characteristics in the near term.
- Although we will manage these areas to protect the wilderness characteristics, they are not designated wilderness.
- Congress will ultimately make the wilderness decision, and even though these areas receive only light snowmobile use, I do not want to forego the use of snowmobiles in these areas in the meantime.

IRAs that were not recommended for wilderness will also be managed to maintain roadless values, but the protections of the Roadless Area Conservation Rule are not applied to all IRAs. Rather, my decision has looked at the values of each IRA individually and as part of a larger whole and then applied prescriptions that make sense both for human use priorities and to protect more valuable natural ecosystems.

Public sentiment on IRA management was also high. Some individuals and organizations sought complete protection, while others did not think this was either necessary or desirable. However there was a strong common theme of middle ground in that many individuals and groups expressed the desire to just “keep it the way it is.” They did not necessarily want these areas to be developed, but they also did not want them designated as Wilderness. Management Prescription 2.6 was developed and applied in direct response to public comment early in the process. I believe my decision makes good use of this prescription in key areas for acknowledging the middle ground. In making this decision I have given careful consideration to roadless area values, ecosystem relationships at the local level and at broader scales, trade-offs of some types of uses and society’s diverse views.

The mapping of this decision is relatively complex for all 34 IRAs areas and can be examined on Alternative 7 management prescription maps. The details of what was decided for each area are more fully laid out in Appendix C-2 of the FEIS. The following table shows how many acres and what kinds of IRAs are protected based on values that were identified in the FEIS.

Table 3. Inventoried Roadless Area Values

Roadless Areas Values	Maintains Roadless Values (Acres)	Mostly Maintains Roadless Values (Acres)	Allows Development (Acres)	Total (Acres)
High value	162,000	68,900	95,900	326,800
Medium value	27,300	171,100	31,600	230,000
Low value	0	26,600	22,500	49,100
<b>ALT 7 Total</b>	<b>189,300</b>	<b>266,600</b>	<b>150,000</b>	<b>605,900</b>

More than 70 percent of high value areas are either maintained or mostly maintained, and 86 percent of medium value areas are either maintained or mostly maintained. 54 percent of low value areas mostly maintain values associated with roadless character and the remaining 46 percent allow development. Mostly maintained means that timber harvest and new road construction are not allowed, but new trails and mechanical fuels treatments are allowed.

### ISSUE 3: BIODIVERSITY AND SPECIES VIABILITY

The Revised Plan provides for both biodiversity and species viability. At the landscape and broader scales, it provides for return to properly functioning ecosystems with a combination of guidelines, objectives, and management prescriptions. Guidelines define desired structure/age class distribution and patterns for vegetation cover types within the historic ranges for these. Objectives focus on returning specific vegetation cover types most in need of return to proper functioning conditions. Mapped Management Prescriptions identify specific areas of land where emphasis will be on terrestrial or aquatic habitats, unique botanical resources, and forest or rangeland vegetation management needs. This management direction will result in the necessary diversity of forest and rangeland habitats to maintain important wildlife corridors and provide for diverse habitat structure, prevent additional road fragmentation in most of the inventoried roadless area, and allow for vegetation treatments and improved riparian area management to achieve proper functioning conditions.

The Revised Plan addresses species viability in several ways. Forest-wide management direction and prescriptions include standards and guidelines specifically designed to protect, improve, and/or mitigate impacts to watersheds, riparian and aquatic habitats, and threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitats. Monitoring requirements of the Revised Plan link management indicator species and habitats for learning how management activities may affect habitats and population trends.

The Biological Assessment and Evaluation for the Revised Plan identified federally listed, candidate, proposed, and Forest Service sensitive species and determined that the Plan provides for managing fish and wildlife habitat to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species. This determination was based on the Revised Plan's standards and guidelines, management prescriptions, monitoring and on the requirement for future site-specific environmental analyses of all proposed actions under NEPA. Species-specific direction from conservation strategies and agreements is integrated and incorporated in the Revised Plan making it a starting point for all future project proposals.

#### ISSUE 4: CONTINUED ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND PERSONAL/SOCIAL BENEFITS OF THE FOREST

The Revised Plan provides for sustainable levels of economic contributions to communities and continuance of a variety of uses, while providing adequate protections for ecosystem components at risk, proper ecosystem functioning (see Issue 3 discussion), and a broad spectrum of recreation uses.

Under the direction of the Revised Plan, livestock grazing on suitable range will meet stated standards and provide about the same outputs as experienced over the last ten years. Nearly 96 percent of capable acres are considered suitable. This decision closes 8 vacant allotments, however, they have been vacant since the early 1990s without requests for grazing permits.

The Revised Plan sets a sustainable timber harvest level with an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 2.0 million board feet (MMBF) and an estimated total sale program quantity (TSPQ) of 4.5 MMBF. The Forest Service plans to be a dependable supplier, among others, in the local timber market. Timber harvest will also be used as one of several methods to achieve goals for desired vegetation conditions.

While ASQ levels are constrained over the life of the plan, the TSPQ is not. As opportunities arise and new markets occur for small diameter material, the annual TSPQ may increase. However, I believe the 4.5 MMBF TSPQ is a realistic harvest projection that can be met over the life of the plan.

While no ski area expansions are allowed in my decision, the Revised Plan provides for a continuance of this important use at existing resorts with benefits to the economy and to skiers.

In our revision outreach efforts, we heard from a diverse set of constituents that the Wasatch-Cache NF is very important from personal, societal and spiritual perspectives. My decision attempts to balance many uses of the Forest, some of which are in conflict, and still provide valuable personal and social benefits for most people who use or depend on the Forest. It attempts to give something to everyone, but cannot supply everything that is demanded.

#### ISSUE 5: ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF USES

My greatest concern as Regional Forester is to ensure that resources on the National Forests under our stewardship are sustainable far into the future. To that end, every element of the Revised Plan and FEIS is geared to reducing or eliminating adverse environmental, social, and economic impacts associated with the many and varied uses of the forest. Those impacts may be associated with livestock grazing, timber harvest, recreation, oil and gas development, or road and trail development. They entail a host of associated concerns including watershed condition; terrestrial, riparian and aquatic wildlife and fish habitats; recreation settings and scenery; and local quality of life.

We address this issue in the Revised Plan in a number of ways. For example, the Revised Plan addresses the potential impacts from timber harvest by assuring that potential timber harvest is sustainable; impacts from livestock grazing are addressed through a new guideline for lower utilization on lands in unsatisfactory condition and through an objective placing greater emphasis on improving livestock permit administration; and nearly all new oil and gas leases will have special stipulations applied to them to protect scenery, steep slopes, special wildlife habitat areas, non-motorized recreation settings and other important resources. Further, in consultation with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, impacts from winter motorized recreation will be limited by closing some key winter range areas and carefully monitoring herd sizes in areas left open; establishing riparian habitat conservation areas will protect riparian and aquatic habitat, and in important Bonneville and Colorado cutthroat fish habitats designated as Management Prescription 3.1a, other uses must be made compatible.

The economic effects quantified for Alternative 7 were minimal. Social effects on local quality of life are harder to measure. One person's definition of quality of life may directly conflict with someone else's. Overall, though, the Revised Plan strikes a balance between uses and necessary mitigation measures. We will apply balanced direction that will not satisfy those who wish unlimited and unfettered use or those who prefer maximum preservation and restriction.

#### ISSUE 6: APPROPRIATE TYPES AND AMOUNTS OF FACILITY DEVELOPMENT FOR WILDLAND SETTINGS IN THE FOREST

With the Revised Plan, recreation facility development will be guided by mapped Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes and the accompanying descriptions as well as the Scenery Management System and mapped scenic integrity objectives. This means that facilities must be consistent with the types of recreation opportunities, ranging from "primitive" to "rural." It also means that the character of the landscape must be defined and any facility development must meet the objective for scenic integrity, i.e., it must "fit" the character of the surrounding landscape. Facilities at ski areas will be consistent with the Resort Natural Setting landscape character theme. The only change from existing conditions for recreation opportunity classes is within ski area permit boundaries, where the designation changes from roaded natural to rural to focus growing recreation use where facilities are available.

Given budget assumptions, maintenance or reconstruction of existing facilities is a priority over new developments. Replacement of current facilities that have unacceptable impacts on resources is emphasized. Facility design and construction must meet Revised Plan standards for watershed and habitat protection. The selected alternative provides direction for the Tri-Canyon area of the Salt Lake Ranger District through management prescriptions that emphasize the critical watershed values that must be addressed in partnership with Salt Lake City Public Utilities, while providing for recreation opportunities adjacent to a large urban population. In undeveloped areas of the forest with concentrated recreation use, site designation and access hardening to protect resources will be used to provide quality recreation opportunities without additional facility construction. Camping in these areas outside of developed facilities yet readily accessed by car or RV is a popular and legitimate recreation activity.



## **Compatibility with Goals of other Governments and Tribes (36 CFR 219.7(c))**

I considered comments received from public agencies, Indian Tribes, and elected officials in my decision making process. Based upon these comments, I have made a comparison between the selected alternative and the goals and concerns expressed by the following:

### **Skull Valley Band of Goshute Indians, Northwestern Band of Shoshone, and Northern Ute Indian Tribes**

In the briefings with the Tribes throughout the planning process, they have indicated that the Revised Plan is compatible with their goals in that it recognizes Tribal Treaty Rights and trust responsibilities up front.

### **County, State and Federal Land Management Agencies**

Consultation with other agencies indicates that there are no major conflicts between the direction in the Plan and the goals and objectives of other government entities. The Wasatch-Cache NF made various efforts during the revision process to understand and consider the policies and perspectives of other agencies and governments. Meetings and conference calls were held with different state officials in Wyoming and Utah. County planners and many county commissioners were interviewed regarding their particular concerns with the existing plan, and alternatives were developed with these considerations in mind. Cooperating agency Memoranda of Understanding were signed with Summit County, UT and Uinta County, WY to more fully consider the specific concerns and economic effects pertinent to them. Over the last two years there was substantial interaction with Uinta County, in particular, to gather information pertinent to the County and understand its concerns.

### **Utah Wildlife Resources and Parks and Recreation**

Forest wildlife biologists, fishery biologists, and other staff members have spent considerable time interacting with Utah agency counterparts to identify concerns and resolve them in our decision. Both agencies were consulted regarding big game populations and snowmobile opportunities as the decision for winter recreation was made.

# *Findings Related to other Laws and Authorities*

## Findings Required by Law

### How does the Revised Forest Plan meet other laws and authorities?

#### NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

##### Consideration of Long Term and Short Term Effects

The Revised Plan will govern management of the Wasatch-Cache NF resources for the next 10 to 15 years. The FEIS discloses the analysis of effects for a range of alternatives including No Action. It considered effects to the significant issues and other resources for this time frame and projected over the next 100 years specifically for vegetation. In the Revised Plan, the Desired Future Condition (DFC) for vegetative communities is Properly Functioning Condition (PFC). To achieve this DFC during the life of the Revised Plan would require a dramatic increase in vegetation treatments such as mechanical disturbance or prescribed fire. This is not achievable given current and anticipated staffing, budgets, and planning requirements. Nor would that level of disturbance be desirable from an environmental effects standpoint. All resources such as fisheries, wildlife, and soils are dependent upon healthy and sustainable vegetative communities. Wide-scale disturbance throughout the Forest to move rapidly toward PFC would have significant negative effects on those other resources in the short-term. Over the long-term, these same resources would benefit from more sustainable and productive ecosystems.

Land management actions permitted by the Revised Plan balance these short-term effects and current program abilities with the long term need for sustainability of vegetative communities of the Forest. The objectives in the Revised Plan reflect a smaller, more achievable number of acres treated. These treatments will be focused in key areas and ecosystems. For example:

- Emphasis is placed on restoration and regeneration of the aspen communities on the Forest, particularly those areas where conifers are becoming dominant.
- Sagebrush communities with a high degree of brush canopy cover are emphasized for treatment to improve species composition and age class diversity for achieving PFC.
- Hazardous fuel reduction is a management emphasis in the urban interface where communities could be at risk from escaped wildland fire.

Human uses of the Wasatch-Cache NF natural resources are also a major consideration in the Revised Plan. The Revised Plan balances demands for a variety of recreation opportunities. It establishes some separation of motorized and non-motorized uses in winter and provides for protection of critical big

game winter ranges while maintaining important motorized access to snowmobile play areas. Most existing areas offering semiprimitive recreation opportunities are maintained with monitoring of user densities to trigger future decision-making on whether or not actions should be taken to maintain these areas with relatively low user densities or to change the recreation opportunity class. Currently open motorized road and trail networks remain open and changes are addressed through future site-specific travel management planning. In an evaluation of roadless area values (FEIS Appendix C-2), I have determined that many of these areas should be managed to maintain their roadless character and values while a few should be available for some development (road construction and timber harvest) to improve vegetation conditions while providing for commodity production. Long and short-term effects are detailed further in the FEIS, Appendices, and the Planning Record.

### **What are the adverse effects that cannot be avoided?**

Decisions made in a Forest Plan do not represent actual irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources, with the exception of oil and gas leasing. Although surface disturbance cannot occur on leased lands without further analysis and a decision document, issuance of a lease confers certain rights on the lessee, and therefore represents a commitment of resources. The application of forest-wide standards and guidelines and resource protection measures would limit the extent and duration of any adverse environmental impacts. For a detailed discussion of effects see Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

### **Environmentally Preferable Alternative(s)**

Regulations implementing the NEPA require agencies to specify the alternative(s) considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)).

Alternative 2 is the environmentally preferable alternative and Alternative 1 could also meet the definition as will be explained below. Alternative 2 allows very limited timber harvest and road construction only outside IRAs and only for the purposes of maintaining or improving terrestrial habitat or maintaining or restoring forested ecosystem integrity. Alternative 1 applies management prescriptions that protect and maintain undeveloped areas to the highest percentage of any alternative followed by Alternative 2. Alternative 2 closes several watershed areas to livestock grazing to enhance cutthroat trout habitat.

Although Alternative 1 might be the alternative that “causes the least damage” this would depend on how and where wildland fire occurred over time since Alternative 1 does not allow use of prescribed fire nor any other vegetation management actions. Because Alternative 2 includes more acres of prescribed fire than any alternative, it would be expected to return vegetation communities to within historic ranges more predictably and sooner (depending on frequency and location of natural ignitions) than any other alternative. In the absence of fuel treatments and prescribed fire, Alternative 1 has a higher risk of experiencing uncharacteristic intensities of fire because of fuel loading. However, if wildfires happened to occur in smaller scattered patterns, these areas could serve as fuel breaks reducing this risk.

## NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT (NFMA)

### Planning Regulations

When the Wasatch-Cache NF revision effort began in May of 1999, the Agency's 1982 planning regulations were in effect. On November 9, 2000, new planning rules were adopted. However, the 2000 planning rule allowed ongoing revisions to be completed under the 1982 rule if: 1) the revision had begun before the 2000 rule was issued, or 2) the notice that the draft environmental document was available had been published in the *Federal Register* before May 10, 2001. The Wasatch-Cache NF revision effort met both criteria and therefore proceeded under the 1982 planning regulations.

### Net Public Benefit and Present Net Value

The NFMA requires identification of the alternative that maximizes the present net value (PNV) and how the selected alternative compares to this (36 CFR 219.12(j)(2)). According to the economic analysis displayed in the FEIS, Alternative 5 maximizes both financial and economic PNV. Alternative 5 has the highest PNV due to the higher level of timber harvest and oil and gas production predicted. The economic PNV (public benefits minus costs) varies by only 3 percent between alternatives. The net value ranges from a low of \$14,362 million for Alternative 1 to a high of \$14,672 million for Alternative 5. The selected alternative has an economic PNV of \$14,451 million. The financial PNV (Forest Service revenues minus costs) also does not vary much between alternatives. All alternatives have a negative financial PNV meaning that the cost of managing the forest resources exceeds inputs into the Treasury. Alternative 5 has the highest financial PNV (\$-243 million) and Alternative 3 has the lowest (\$-280 million). The selected alternative has a financial PNV of \$-277 million.

While Alternative 5 maximizes PNV, The selected alternative provides the highest net public benefit. Many benefits associated with the Selected Alternative are not captured in fees or revenues nor are they necessarily quantifiable. For this reason, the alternative that maximizes PNV is not the alternative that has the highest net public benefit. I have determined that the selected alternative has the highest net public benefit because it best balances multiple uses of the Forest and fulfills the mission of the Forest Service.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (E.O. 12898)

As required by Executive Order, all federal actions will consider potentially disproportionate effects on minority or low-income communities. Potential impacts or changes to low-income or minority communities within the study area due to the proposed action must be considered. Where possible, measures should be taken to avoid negative impacts to these communities or mitigate adverse effects. As highlighted in the Social and Economic Environment section of the FEIS, there are few minorities within the study area, and no communities are considered low-income. While there are individual households that are either minority or low-income, the communities as a whole are not.

Continued consultation and consideration of communities will be conducted as project level analyses are completed under the Revised Plan. I have determined from the analysis disclosed in the FEIS that the Revised Plan is in compliance with Executive Order 12898.

## ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT (ESA)

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) creates an affirmative obligation "...that all Federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered and threatened [and proposed] species" of fish,

wildlife, and plants. There are eleven species listed as endangered or threatened that may inhabit the Wasatch-Cache NF. A biological assessment (BA) was prepared and submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in January of 2003. The BA states that the Revised Plan will have no effect on the mountain plover, western yellow-billed cuckoo, black-footed ferret, Ogden rocky mountain snail, Maguire primrose, Ute ladies'-tresses, and slender moonwort. The BA further states that the Revised Plan may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the June sucker, Colorado pike minnow, razorback sucker, humpback chub, bony tail, bald eagle and Canada lynx.

On March 3, 2003 the USFWS issued a final biological opinion based on their review of the BA. The Service concurred with determinations for all species listed above. Their concurrence for bald eagle was based on monitoring winter roosting at Pine View Reservoir and mitigations for winter recreation there. Their concurrence for the fish species was standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan.

For the Canada lynx, consistent with a December 26, 2002 court order, formal consultation and preparation of a biological opinion in accordance with section 7 of the ESA was completed. This opinion was that the Revised Plan "is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the lynx." This conclusion was reached because the Revised Plan incorporates conservation measures (or their equivalent) from the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS). The opinion further states that no incidental take is expected due to incorporation of these conservation measures and the apparent rarity of the species in Utah. The opinion does not provide additional conservation recommendations, other than to emphasize support of the CA and LCAS and continued application of the best available science for lynx and lynx habitat. (Also see FEIS, Chapter 3, Appendices B2, B3, and B4). Based upon consultation with the USFWS, I have determined that the Revised Plan is in compliance with the ESA.

#### MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT/EXECUTIVE ORDER 13186

The Revised Plan is a programmatic action and as such does not authorize any site-specific activity. It includes direction to improve structure, composition, and pattern of vegetation cover types to move closer to proper functioning condition (Revised Plan, Chapter 3). Potential impacts to habitat from proposed vegetation treatments will be analyzed at the site-specific project level. I have determined that management and monitoring activities are in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186.

#### CLEAN AIR ACT

The Revised Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Some prescribed burning may occur during implementation of the Revised Plan. According to analysis disclosed in the FEIS, all alternatives are expected to meet air quality standards. Compliance with mitigation measures and smoke management plans will result in no adverse long-term effects (FEIS, Chapter 3, Topic 1, Air Quality). Potential impacts will be analyzed at the project level and will comply with Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah regulations. The Revised Plan protects air quality and complies with the rules, regulations, and permit procedures of the Utah Department of Environmental Quality. Forest-wide direction included in Chapter 4 of the Revised Plan will ensure that air quality complies with the Clean Air Act and other state requirements. I have determined that the Revised Plan will comply with the provisions of the Clean Air Act.

#### NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT (NHPA)

The Revised Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Projects undertaken in response to the direction in this Revised Plan will fully comply with the laws and regulations that ensure protection of heritage resources. The Revised Plan contains direction for heritage resource management including direction to more fully integrate heritage resource management with other management activities (Revised Plan, Chapter).

Several other laws apply to preservation of heritage resources on federal land. Since the Revised Plan does not authorize ground-disturbing activities, consultation with the Utah and Wyoming State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) under the NHPA is not required. The Shoshone-Bannock, Skull Valley Band of Goshutes, and Ute Tribes were consulted during development of this Revised Plan.

It is my determination that the Revised Plan complies with the NHPA and other statutes that pertain to the protection of heritage resources.

#### CLEAN WATER ACT

The objective of the Clean Water Act is to “...restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation’s waters.” One of the Act’s goals is to “...provide for the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife” and provide for “...recreation in and on the water” (33 U.S.C. 466 et seq., Title I, Section 101). Based on the analysis disclosed in the FEIS, the Revised Plan satisfies the Clean Water Act.

The Revised Plan contains Forest-wide direction to ensure management activities maintain or improve watershed conditions (Revised Plan, Chapter 4, Desired Future Conditions, Goals and subgoals, standards and guidelines, and objectives). Specific direction pertaining to upland watersheds and aquatic habitats is detailed in management prescriptions 3.1w and 3.1a. These prescriptions are applied to important public supply watersheds as well as streams containing sensitive fish species. Management direction including best management practices is designed to maintain or improve riparian area conditions and functioning. Cumulatively this direction will ensure continued compliance with the Clean Water Act. (FEIS, Chapter 4, Topic 1)

#### ENERGY REQUIREMENT AND CONSERVATION POTENTIAL

The Revised Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Because the scope of the proposed action is limited both in terms of geographic area and extent of activities, the analysis disclosed in the FEIS shows that the Plan will have little or no effect on current local energy use and offers no opportunity for energy conservation.

#### INVASIVE SPECIES (EXECUTIVE ORDER 13112)

The Revised Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Executive Order 13112 on Invasive Species directs that Federal agencies should not authorize any activities which would increase the spread of invasive species. The Revised Plan includes direction designed to limit the spread of invasive species (Revised Plan, Chapter 4, and Appendix III). The Revised Plan does not allow cross-country motorized travel, thereby reducing one of the pathways by which invasive species are spread. The Revised Plan requires that integrated pest management methods be used to contain and control the spread of invasive species, following the R-4 Forest Service Handbook (FSH 2080). Therefore, I have determined the Revised Plan is in compliance with E.O. 13112.

#### PRIME FARMLAND, RANGELAND AND FOREST LAND

The Revised Plan complies with the Secretary of Agriculture's Memorandum #1827, which requires conservation of prime farmland, rangeland, and forestland. This Revised Plan manages the Forest with sensitivity towards adjacent private and public land uses. It includes guidance to cooperate with adjacent and surrounding landowners when conducting management activities on the Forest. The guidance in the Revised Plan emphasizes coordination with other landowners to minimize impacts on their management.

#### EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, EFFECTS ON MINORITIES, WOMEN

The FEIS describes the impacts to social and economic factors in Chapter 3 and Appendix B-11). The Revised Plan will not have a disproportionate impact on any minority or low-income communities (FEIS, Chapter 3, Social and Economic Analysis, Environmental Justice). I have determined that the Revised Plan will not differentially affect the Civil Rights of any citizens, including women and minorities.

#### WETLANDS AND FLOODPLAINS

The Revised Plan contains direction for improvements in riparian areas and ensures compliance with State and Federal water quality standards. The Revised Plan describes desired future conditions, sets goals, and establishes Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas specifically to maintain or improve conditions in these areas (Revised Plan, Chapter 4, Standards and Guidelines).

#### OTHER POLICIES

The existing body of national direction for managing National Forests remains in effect. Standards and guidelines included in the Revised Plan provide direction specific to the Wasatch-Cache NF. The Revised Plan provides direction contributing to the Forest Service Strategic Plan (GPRA, 2001).

## Implementation

### How and when will the Revised Forest Plan be implemented?

Implementation of this ROD may occur 30 calendar days after the Notice of Availability of the Record of Decision and Final EIS is published in the *Federal Register* (36 CFR 219.10 (c)(1)). Implementation of the Revised Plan will be accomplished and tracked through the objectives detailed in Chapter 4 of the Revised Plan. These objectives will be used to help design the Forest's annual program of work. It will also be used to formulate out year budget requests.

Decisions on site-specific projects are not made in the Revised Plan. Those decisions will be made after site-specific analysis and appropriate documentation in compliance with NEPA.

### Transition to the Revised Forest Plan

The NFMA requires that "...permits, contracts, and other instruments for use and occupancy" of National Forest System lands be "consistent" with the Forest Plan (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)). In the context of a Revised Plan, NFMA specifically conditions this requirement in three ways:

1. These documents must be revised only "when necessary;"
2. These documents must be revised as "soon as practicable;"
3. Any revisions are "subject to valid existing rights."

Permits, contracts and other authorizations which are determined by the Responsible Official to be consistent with this decision, or which are adjusted to be consistent, may proceed.

Most timber harvest decisions are implemented through a three-year contract. While a timber sale contract is a valid existing right, the terms of the contract allow modification. Therefore, modification of a timber contract under its terms would not violate the "valid existing right" provision. Nevertheless, I have decided not to modify any existing timber sale contracts solely due to the Revised Plan. It was assumed that these contracts would be executed according to their terms and these effects were disclosed in the FEIS. Finally, existing timber contracts will, in most cases, have been completed within three 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 substantially longer than timber contracts. For example, grazing permits are generally issued for a 10-year term. These permits can be cancelled in whole or in part or otherwise modified, at any time during the term to conform with needed changes brought about by law, regulation, Executive Order, allotment management plans and subsequent Forest Plan amendment or revision. Changes in grazing permits may be made to achieve objectives identified in



Forest Plans, or other decisions. Modifications to grazing permits can be made by a letter, issuance of a new Term Grazing Permit, or use of a standard modification form. In the standard modification form, the authorizing officer may include as terms and conditions of the grazing permit those applicable standards and guidelines contained in the Forest Plan or decisions that specify appropriate management requirements. Allotment Management Plans and Annual Operating Instructions are incorporated as part of the Term Grazing Permit.

It is my intention to bring Term Grazing Permits into compliance with the Revised Plan in a two-step process:

1. Upon approval of the Revised Plan, all grazing permits will be modified either with a Standard Modification form or in the Annual Operating Instructions, as appropriate to include applicable direction. This includes, but may not be limited to, Standards and Guidelines for forage utilization and water and riparian resources.
2. When Allotment Management Plan NEPA documentation is completed per the Rescission Act [Public Law 104-19, section 504; July 27, 1995] schedule, all other applicable Revised Plan direction will be incorporated into the Term Grazing Permit and/or Allotment Management Plan, which is a part of the permit.

I find that applying the Revised Plan's standards and guidelines through this process will meet the "as soon as practicable" NFMA provision.

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 Plan. Some decisions recently made but not yet implemented, will be reviewed, adjusted and implemented to meet the direction found in the Revised Plan. I expect that the decision maker for such projects will review the decisions to determine if adjustments need to be made.

The decision maker has the discretion, on a case-by-case basis, to modify pre-existing authorizations to bring them into compliance with the Revised Plan standards and guidelines. I find that the statutory criteria of "as soon as practicable" and excepting "valid existing rights" useful in exercising that discretion.

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## Administrative Appeals of My Decision

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to the provisions of 36 CFR 217.3. A written notice of appeal must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service within 90 days of the date that legal notice of this decision appears in the Salt Lake Tribune newspaper. Appeals must be sent to:

**Regular Mail:**

USDA Forest Service – Appeals Group  
Attn: EMC Staff  
Stop 1104  
1400 Independence Ave SW  
Washington DC, 20250-1104

**FedEx:**

USDA Forest Service  
Attn: EMC  
201 14<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Central  
Washington DC 20024

A copy of the appeal must simultaneously be sent to the deciding officer:

Regional Forester of the Intermountain Region  
USDA - Forest Service  
324 25<sup>th</sup> Street  
Ogden, UT 84401

Any notice of appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 and include at a minimum:

- A statement that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217.
- The name, address, and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identification of the decision to which the objection is being made.
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Deciding Officer.
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which objection is made.
- The reasons for appeal, including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy and, if applicable, specifically how the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.
- Identification of the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks.

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## Contacts

### Where can I obtain more information on this Forest Plan?

More information on the Final EIS and the Wasatch-Cache NF Revised Plan can be obtained by contacting:

Thomas L. Tidwell, Forest Supervisor  
Wasatch-Cache National Forest  
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(801) 524-3900

Melissa Blackwell, Resources Planning Leader  
Wasatch-Cache National Forest  
(801) 524-3908 email: [mblackwell@fs.fed.us](mailto:mblackwell@fs.fed.us)

Julie Hubbard, Environmental Coordinator  
Wasatch-Cache National Forest  
(801) 524-3907 email: [jhubbard@fs.fed.us](mailto:jhubbard@fs.fed.us)

### Conclusion

For the past several years, Wasatch-Cache NF personnel have worked with members of the public, elected officials and other agencies to produce this Revised Plan. I am pleased to make my decision

based upon solid relationships that have evolved through coordination and cooperation to ensure sustainable conditions for the ecological and human environments on the Wasatch-Cache NF.

The Revised Plan evolved from alternatives formed from the best available science and the work of a dedicated interdisciplinary team of Forest Service employees. However, science does not always provide definitive answers to complex resource management topics nor can any one field of science provide all the answers. Yet science can offer insight into the effects of management decisions and actions. In other words, good science can "clear the fog" and let us see which choice best lets us reach our goals.

The challenge that remains before all of us is to work together to implement the Revised Plan. I fully understand that this particular goal can be difficult to achieve. But at the same time, I am confident that cooperation will unite us, because I believe that the concern we all have for the Forest is our common bond - that these lands remain productive and splendid - not only for the current generation, but for future generations as well.



JACK G. TROYER  
Regional Forester, Intermountain Region

MAR 19 2003

Date

