

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE
NORTH FORK JOHN DAY WILD AND SCENIC RIVER
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Forest Plan Amendment

USDA Forest Service
Umatilla and
Wallowa-Whitman National Forests
North Fork John Day Ranger District and
Baker Ranger District

Wallowa, Union, and Grant Counties, Oregon

This Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents the Forest Service decision to implement a management plan for the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River on the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests. The process and analysis for arriving at the decision is described in the Environmental Assessment (EA) supporting the management plan development.

The EA analyzes alternatives for managing the River in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) and the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1988). The information in the Decision Notice summarizes the decision, analysis results disclosed in the EA, and documents rationale for the decision. The selected alternative amends the Umatilla National Forest Plan and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Plan.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River Management Plan is available for public review at the Umatilla National Forest Supervisor's Office in Pendleton, Oregon, and the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office in Baker City, Oregon.

DECISION

As Forest Supervisors for the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests, our decision is to implement Alternative D of the EA with modifications for the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. The alternative and adjustments provides a management plan for the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River that is consistent with the basic requirements of protecting the free flowing conditions and water quality and protecting and enhancing the identified outstandingly remarkable (OR) values.

Alternative D with modifications gives special emphasis to manage, at a high level, the Water Quality/Fisheries "outstandingly remarkable" (OR) value without adversely impacting other OR values. As modified, this alternative provides for continuation of existing recreation opportunities and experiences coordinated with the Fish/Water values. Alternative D provides the following:

- A management plan for managing the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River that addresses resource protection, development of lands and facilities, user capacities, and other management practices necessary or desirable to achieve the purpose of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- Coordination requirements with appropriate state and Federal agencies, Indian tribes, and affected landowners.
- Modifies the Management Area (MA) boundary for Umatilla's MA-A7 and Wallowa-Whitman's MA-7 surrounding the North Fork John Day River.

EA MODIFICATION

Our decision includes the following modifications to the EA (and corresponding changes to the Management Plan):

- * EA p. III-23, Alternative D - Goal, second paragraph -

Substitute the following for existing wording -

The traditional recreation opportunities will be maintained. Only a few selected recreation sites will have substantial facilities. Maximum development levels are identified for each river classification under Recreation.

- * EA p. III-28, Alternative D - Descriptions by Key Issues - Recreation, item a.

Add a new a-1

Management actions for limiting and/or distributing use will be based on scientific principles such as those described in the Limits of Acceptable Change concept described by Stankey, et al., in "The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) System for Wilderness Planning" (General Technical Report INT-176).

- * EA p. III-28, Recreation b-1

Clarify the intent by adding "and evaluate" after the word monitor (edit out word "and" between inventory and monitor) and substitute the following for the second sentence:

In instances of conflict between OR values, management actions will emphasize indirect actions, mitigation, and corrective measures prior to resorting to site closure or displacement of users.

- * EA p. III-28, Recreation b-2

Add Dredge camp to listed campgrounds to be upgraded.

Revise wording in the third sentence to read:

"With exception of listed sites, campgrounds would not generally be developed . . ." Variance from these standards are made for the North Fork John Day River, Dredge Camp, and Woods Camp to allow development at one level higher than the standard.

- * EA p. III-35, Management Requirements, Constraints and Mitigation Measures - Item 12 - Conflict Resolution

Move Recreation to priority 2 and slide Wildlife, Historic, and Scenic down to 3 through 5.

FOREST PLAN AMENDMENTS

Our decision is to recommend the new boundary to the Regional Forester as the final boundary for the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River corridor in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Changes were made including the following changes to the Umatilla Forest Plan (Forest Plan Amendment #6) to further clarify the management objectives for the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River.

On page 4-121 under the heading "Description", delete the words:

2. North Fork John Day River: Approximately 38.7 river miles and a one-quarter mile corridor on each side. Total area amounts to 10,514 acres of National Forest System lands, 712 acres in private ownership, and 77 acres of state lands.

Segment 1	Trail Creek to Big Creek. Designation - Wild
Segment 2	Big Creek to Texas Bar Creek. Designation - Scenic
Segment 3	Texas Bar Creek to Umatilla National Forest Boundary. Designation - Recreational

and replace with the following:

2. **North Fork John Day River: Approximately 38.7 river miles** within the Umatilla National Forest boundary and 4.4 miles outside the boundary will be administered under the Umatilla Forest Plan. Total area of designated Wild and Scenic River administered by the Forest amounts to approximately 6,780 acres. The Wild and Scenic River totals 54.1 miles; the remaining river miles and area would be administered under the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan.

Segment A. Administered entirely by the Wallowa-Whitman - from its headwaters in the North Fork John Day Wilderness at section 13, township 8 south, range 36 east, to the North Fork John Day Wilderness boundary, approximately 3.5 miles. Designated - Wild.

Segment B. 0.6 river miles administered by the Umatilla and remainder by the Wallowa-Whitman NF. From the North Fork John Day Wilderness boundary to Trail Creek, approximately 7.5 miles. Designated - Recreational.

Segment C. All Umatilla NF - from Trail Creek to Big Creek, approximately 24.3 miles. Designated - Wild.

Segment D. All Umatilla NF - from Big Creek to Texas Bar, approximately 10.5 miles, Designated - Scenic.

Segment E. All Umatilla NF - from Texas Bar to its confluence with Camas Creek, approximately 8.3 miles. Designated - Recreational. (Umatilla NF 3.9 miles, Forest boundary to Camas Creek 4.4 miles non-National Forest)

On page 4-122 in the heading "GENERAL" and after the paragraph "Upon completion and approval of Wild and Scenic Rivers management plans, the Forest Plan will be amended to incorporate them." add a new heading: **North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River.** Followed by **"The North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River, within National Forest Lands, will be managed according to the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (July 1993) on file at Forest Headquarters."**

Our decision also includes the following changes to the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan, Forest Plan Amendment 8, to further clarify the management of the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River.

On page 4-75 after item "24." add a new heading: **"25. North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River."** Followed by **"The North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River, within National Forest Lands, will be managed according to the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River Management Plan (July 1993) on file at the Forest Headquarters."**

MONITORING

The management plan includes monitoring in accordance with the existing monitoring plan outlined in the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan. This includes the monitoring for standards and guidelines which were developed to protect and enhance the OR values of free flow and water quality. Since the Umatilla Forest Plan does not have a specific monitoring element for Wild and Scenic rivers, the Umatilla will incorporate the monitoring direction from the Region 6 Monitoring and Evaluation Guide for Wild and Scenic Rivers (Monitoring Items II-A1&2, pg. 66-69).

Emphasis will be placed on monitoring compliance and changes in free flowing conditions, OR values, and water quality and compliance with direction in the application of the management activities. A monitoring program for water quality was identified within the management plan.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public has been involved throughout the process. Initially, 12 public meetings were held to discuss issues and concerns. Later, additional meetings were held to review the alternatives, draft EA, and discuss concerns with interested publics. Letters were also sent to acquire additional information from public and private landowners and to inform the public on the development and progress of the management plan.

ISSUES

Several issues were identified during the scoping process. Two key issues were identified by the interdisciplinary team for analysis in the EA:

- Recreation - Determination of appropriate type and level of recreational opportunities within the corridor.
- Water Quality/Fisheries - Protection and enhancement of population and habitat of the wild runs of chinook salmon, steelhead, and resident redband/rainbow trout, and bull trout.

Management of each of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values were also addressed as issues. The Outstandingly Remarkable Values are Scenic, Recreation, Wildlife, Fisheries, and Historic/Prehistoric.

ALTERNATIVES

Three other alternatives were considered before selecting Alternative D.

- Alternative A (No Action) consisted of managing the river corridor under interim direction described in the Forest Plan and included a boundary of a quarter mile either side of the river. Alternative A provided limited direction for managing the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (OR values) and coordination with private landowners.
- Alternative B gave special emphasis to the management of the Recreation and Scenic OR values. This alternative addressed opportunities to increase developed recreation and included strategies to encourage visitor use over time. The recreation setting would move towards the more developed end of the Roded Natural scale; primitive and semi-primitive opportunities would be maintained in wilderness.
- Alternative C gave special emphasis to the management of the Fisheries, Wildlife, Scenic, and Historic/Prehistoric OR values, with the primary focus on water quality and fish. This alternative would emphasize management for the highest level of water quality and fish OR values, without adversely impacting other OR values. The recreational setting would continue to be at the more rustic end of the Roded Natural scale and primitive opportunities in wilderness. While user capacity would not be exceeded in any alternative, it would be more limited for this alternative than for Alternatives B or D.

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

In our view, the identified issues and OR values of fish habitat/water quality and recreation opportunities and experiences are key to management of the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River. Both values have weighed heavily in the current and future management of National Forest lands within the North Fork John Day basin. We are sensitive to use of the river by native anadromous fisheries, concerns related to their management and potential listing of bull trout. Fish habitat may be influenced by activities and projects proposed in the river corridor. We are also sensitive to public concerns about maintaining/providing the variety of recreation opportunities along the river.

Alternative D as modified, in our judgement, provides the best mix of management emphasis, resource (values) and appropriate levels of activities to effectively manage each key value while maintaining the other

OR values. The alternative supports our objectives for improving anadromous fish habitat and increasing fish production from the river. Activities are designed to protect water quality. The alternative and modifications also provides the flexibility to keep recreation opportunities "in the picture." Dispersed sites are modified and retained or replacements identified if there are "problems" and recreational mining opportunities are provided under appropriate controls. While recreation use is currently less than capacity, Alternative D, with modifications provides opportunity for some current developed site upgrades and hardening. We prefer the approach in Alternative D with modifications for managing the site specific situations rather than eliminating recreation opportunities (as described in other alternatives).

The other alternatives place an emphasis on one OR value, but have a higher risk of not protecting and enhancing others. Alternative D with modifications provides for the protection of the Fisheries OR value and recreation, while protecting other OR values.

Several modifications were made to Alternative D (shown in the EA) to strengthen the overall management and provide additional clarification and consistency. The recreation direction was modified to clarify our management intent, provide additional management direction where needed, and add specific direction for site development and closure.

Action alternatives were developed which changed the timber designation to non-scheduled harvest. This was deemed appropriate to reduce potential conflicts with identified OR values. For river segments D and E, a limited amount of harvestable timber exists. This area contributes less than 600 mbf toward Umatilla NF annual sale quantity (Forest Plan FEIS - Appendix G). Since, most of this timber is south of the river, limited existing road access makes it marginally economical to harvest. The standards and guidelines allow timber harvest if appropriate to enhance scenic values or assure ecosystem health while providing protection of water quality.

Achieving agreed upon approaches to management of the values on the entire river is a concern of ours. The Plan provides adequate direction in working with private landowners to achieve the intent of the laws. Coordination with state agencies, Indian Tribes, and other interests is stressed in the Plan. We prefer to use these approaches in management of the corridor and values to resolve problems in a mutually satisfactory manner.

Implementation of Alternative D with modifications enables the Umatilla and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests to progress toward our goals of restoring and protecting forest ecosystem health while responding to societies desires for continued recreational enjoyment of the river.

SPECIFICALLY REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

There are no unavoidable, adverse effects associated with implementing Alternative D that are not already identified in the Final EIS for the Forest Plans.

Short-term uses are not proposed in the project. Promoting long-term health and productivity of the Forest's ecosystems is an objective of the river management plan.

No irreversible or irretrievable losses from implementing Alternative D have been identified that are not already described in the Final EIS for each of the Forest Plans.

There are no unusual energy requirements associated with implementing Alternative D.

There are no specific projects planned within wetlands or floodplains that can be implemented under this decision without further analysis and a separate Decision Notice issued addressing wetland or floodplains.

The management plan will cause no adverse effects on any Threatened or Endangered species or critical habitat; prime farmland, rangeland, or forest land; cultural resources; or civil rights, women, and minorities not already identified in the Final EIS for the Forest Plans.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, we have determined that the Wild and Scenic North Fork John Day River Management Plan and Forest Plan Amendments are not major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed within the appropriate context and will have limited intensity. Our determination is based on the incorporation of mitigation measures and monitoring requirements associated with Alternative D and the following factors from Title 40 CFR 1508.27:

1. The beneficial and adverse environmental effects described in the EA for Alternative D were considered independently and cumulatively to determine if the project would significantly affect the human environment. No significant impacts were identified.
2. Public response to the project has indicated that the project is not likely to cause effects that are highly controversial. Refer to Chapter I of the EA for a description of the public scoping process.
3. The project causes no highly uncertain effects and no effects that involve unique or unknown risks.
4. There will be no significant cumulative effects from implementing the plan in conjunction with past, present, and foreseeable future actions.
5. The plan will not adversely affect any sites or features listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or any significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
6. The effects of the plan on threatened and endangered species as well as sensitive species were analyzed in a biological evaluation (BE). There will be no risk of adversely affecting these species with the plan as described in the EA. The plan will have no adverse effect on threatened, endangered, or sensitive species habitat. Over time, the plan is expected to have positive effects on threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.
7. The plan is consistent with all known Federal, State, and local laws. Regulations related to the National Forest Management Act and the Endangered Species Act have been incorporated into the project. Environmental Protection Agency herbicide application requirements will be followed.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS, TREATIES, AGREEMENTS

We have determined that this amendment is not significant under the National Forest Management Act of 1976. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly alter Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, or management direction. Indeed, this amendment will enable managers to better meet the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and existing Forest Plan goals, objectives, and management direction.

The lower portion of segment F along Highway 395 is mostly within the Bridge Creek Wildlife area, managed by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W). Management of this recreation portion of the river will be conducted by the state under guidance of the Oregon Scenic Waterway Act (OSWA). ODF&W has reviewed the recreation portion of this proposed Wild and Scenic River Plan and found it compatible with management direction of the OSWA.

Implementation of this Wild and Scenic River Management Plan for the North Fork John Day River is consistent with the Forest Service trust responsibilities for protection of treaty rights of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla and Warm Springs Reservations. Specifically, the emphasis of selected Alternative D will provide the best opportunity for protection and enhancement of fish habitat in and along the river. This decision further supports the Forest Service commitments to the tribes to improve fish populations as agreed to in the Columbia River Basin Anadromous Fish Habitat Management Policy and Implementation Guide, 1991.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

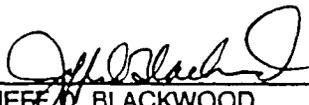
Implementation of this decision shall not occur within 30 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Baker City Herald and East Oregonian.

APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must be filed with John Lowe, Regional Forester, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208 within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Baker City Herald or the East Oregonian.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

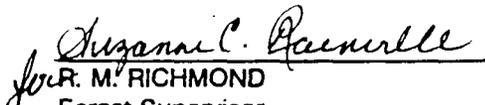
For further information regarding the North Fork John Day Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, contact Marty Gardner at the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office, P.O. Box 907, Baker City, Oregon 97814 or at (503) 523-6391.



JEFF D. BLACKWOOD
Forest Supervisor
Umatilla National Forest

9/7/93

Date



R. M. RICHMOND
Forest Supervisor
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

9/13/93

Date