United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
P. O. Box 907
Baker City, OR 97814

Reply to: 1920 (2350)

Date: June 7, 1994

Dear Forest Plan Reviewer:

Enclosed is a Decision Notice which announces our thirteenth Forest Plan amendment. This amendment adds additional direction to the plan dealing with the management of the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River.

When Congress designated the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River under the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988, it directed the Secretary of Agriculture to develop a management plan for the river. The Forest Plan provided interim direction for this river until the management plan could be completed.

The Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan and its Environmental Assessment have been completed. This amendment replaces the interim direction with the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. This plan provides for the protection and enhancement of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the river, free-flow, and water quality.

The Environmental Assessment upon which this decision is based is available here at the Forest Supervisor's Office. If you have questions or would like to receive a copy of the Management Plan or Environmental Assessment, please contact Steve Davis at this office or phone (503) 523-1316.

Sincerely,

R. M. RICHMOND
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE JOSEPH CREEK WILD AND SCENIC RIVER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Forest Plan Amendment No. 13

USDA Forest Service
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Wallowa Valley Ranger District

Wallowa County, Oregon

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is available for public review at the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office in Baker City, Oregon. The EA analyzes alternatives to managing the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The selected alternative described below amends the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

DECISION

As Forest Supervisor for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, it is my decision to implement Alternative B of the EA for the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. Alternative B protects and enhances the Outstandingly Remarkable (OR) Values while emphasizing fisheries and water quality and prescribes the following activities:

- Adopts a management plan for the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River to protect the Outstanding Remarkable (OR) values with an emphasis on fisheries and water quality.
- Modifies the Management Area boundary for MA-7 surrounding Joseph Creek.
- Provides a detailed monitoring plan to ensure the intent of the Act and management plan are being met.
- Recommends withdrawal of mineral and mineral related activities within the new proposed corridor boundary (in addition to those already withdrawn in the 1/4 mile wide Congressionally proclaimed boundary.
- Changes the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum in the corridor from Semiprimitive Motorized to Primitive.
- Implements a motorized vehicle closure in the corridor.

It is also my decision to recommend this boundary change to the Regional Forester as the final boundary for the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

My decision also includes the following change to the Forest Plan to further clarify the management of the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River.

On page 4-75, add a new heading: **"#26. Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River."** Followed by: **The Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor within National Forest Lands, will be managed according to the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan on file at Forest Headquarters. The above management direction for Management Area 7 lands as listed in items #1-22**

will be replaced by the Management Area Standards and Guidelines listed in the "Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan."

ALTERNATIVES

I considered two other alternatives before selecting Alternative B.

- Alternative A (No Action) consisted of managing the river corridor under the interim Management Area 7 direction, interim boundary of a quarter mile either side of the river as specified by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Alternative A provided little direction for managing the corridor to protect and enhance the OR Values.

- Alternative C consisted of protecting and enhancing the OR values with an emphasis on improving recreation opportunities. It was not selected due to its cumulative impacts on the primitive recreation experience in the corridor.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

I selected Alternative B because it best achieves project objectives and attains the desired future condition.

Of the three alternatives, Alternative B provides for the best opportunity to emphasize fisheries and water quality and to protect free flow, while still protecting and enhancing the other Outstandingly Remarkable Values. It provides the best protection for fisheries, water quality, natural ecosystems, geology, wildlife, and cultural resources as compared to the other alternatives.

Alternative B best implements my decision to maintain existing recreation uses and experiences to the extent that the river's Outstandingly Remarkable Values are protected. Alternative A fails to eliminate motorized vehicle travel from the river corridor and does not adequately protect OR Values. Alternative C eliminates motorized travel, but it also encourages additional recreation use through facility development and interpretation. Additional use of the river corridor could detract from the primitive experience that many users currently seek in the area; therefore, I selected Alternative B over Alternative C.

Expanding the wild and scenic river boundary to include an additional 250 acres along Swamp Creek, would provide additional protection for riparian habitat and natural ecosystems. Shifting the corridor boundary to the east of Joseph Creek would add more grass-covered tablelands and another 40 acres of the proposed Haystack Rock Research Natural Area to the river corridor, thus helping to protect more acreage of natural ecosystems.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public has been involved throughout the process. Initially, approximately 12 public meetings were held throughout northeastern Oregon to discuss issues and concerns. Letters were also sent to acquire additional information from public and private landowners and to inform the public on the progress of the management plan.

ISSUES

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

- Fish and Water Quality: How to best improve the water quality, water temperature, and fisheries habitat in the river corridor?

- Recreation: What are the appropriate recreational uses for the area and how can they be protected and enhanced? How much recreation use can the area absorb without affecting OR values?

- Natural Ecosystems: How to manage the corridor to protect OR values and the natural ecosystems in the area?

Management of each of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values were also addressed as issues. The Outstandingly Remarkable Values are Scenic, Recreational, Fisheries, Wildlife, Geology, and Cultural (Historic) Resources.

MONITORING

Monitoring will be in accordance with the monitoring plan outlined in the Joseph Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan and with the existing direction specified in the Forest Plan. This includes the monitoring for the protection and enhancement of the OR values, free flow, and water quality.

SPECIFICALLY REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

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

There are no short-term uses proposed in the project. Promoting long-term health and productivity of the Forest's ecosystems is a project objective.

There are no irreversible or irretrievable losses from implementing Alternative B that are not already identified in the Final EIS for the Forest Plan.

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

Wetlands and floodplains do exist within the river corridor. There are no major projects planned within the wetlands or floodplains. Some minor trail reconstruction, relocation, and rehabilitation projects to prevent soil erosion and protect resource values are planned within the Swamp Creek and Joseph Creek floodplains, but a site specific Environmental Analysis would be completed before any of these activities could take place.

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 Plan.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the Wild and Scenic Joseph Creek Management Plan and Forest Plan Amendment #12 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 little intensity. My determination is based on the incorporation of mitigation measures and monitoring requirements associated with Alternative B and the following factors from Title 40 CFR 1508.27:

1. The beneficial and adverse environmental effects described in the EA for Alternative B were considered independently 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 effect 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 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 and Endangered species habitat. Over time, the plan is expected to have positive effect to Threatened and Endangered 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

I have determined that this amendment is not significant in relation to 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 objectives, standards, guidelines, and management direction.

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.

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.

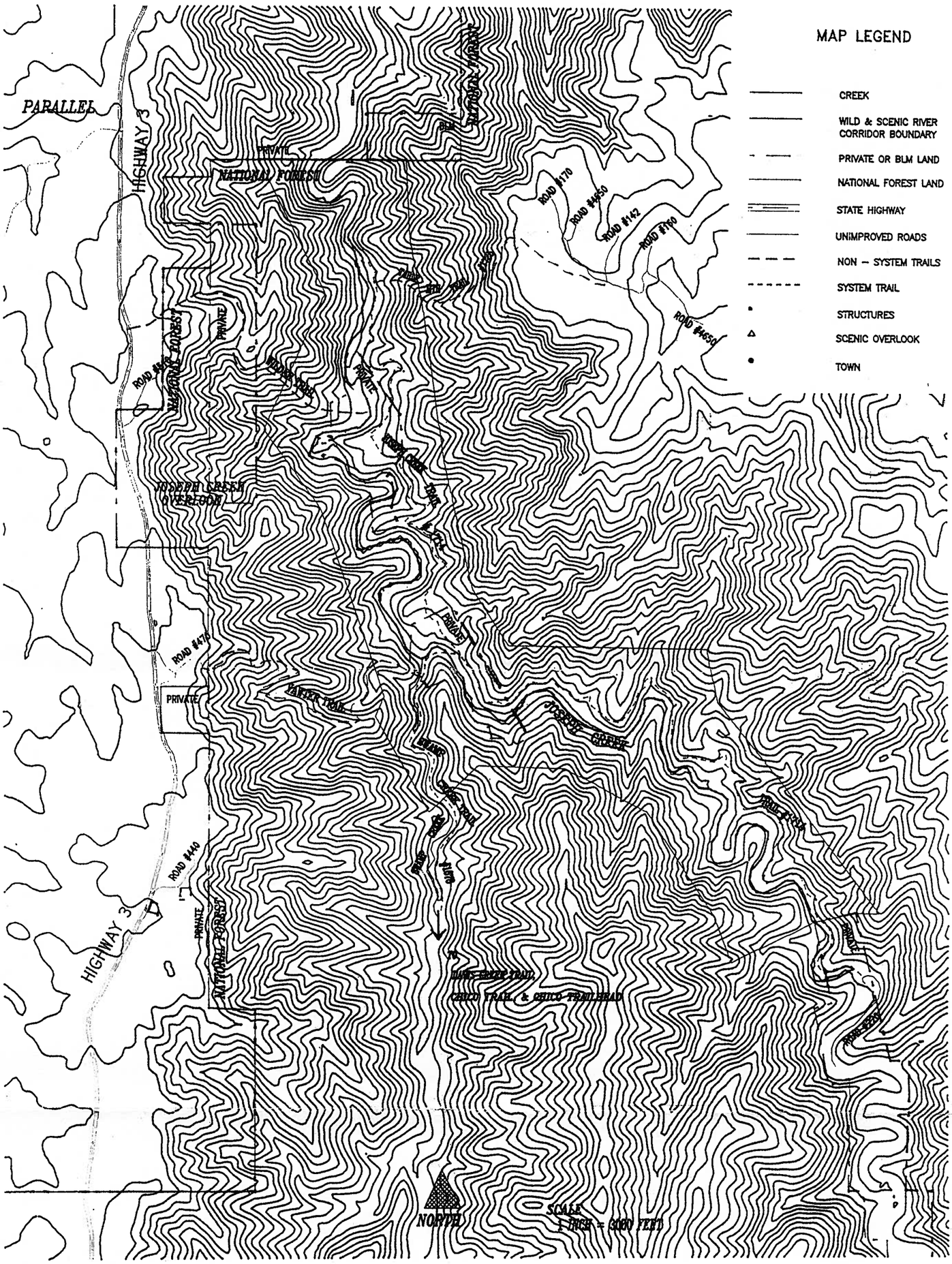
CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information regarding the Wild and Scenic Joseph Creek Management Plan, contact Steve Davis at the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office, P.O. Box 907, Baker City, Oregon 97814 or at (503) 523-1316.

R M Richmond — June 7, 1994

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

JOSEPH CREEK WILD & SCENIC RIVER CORRIDOR



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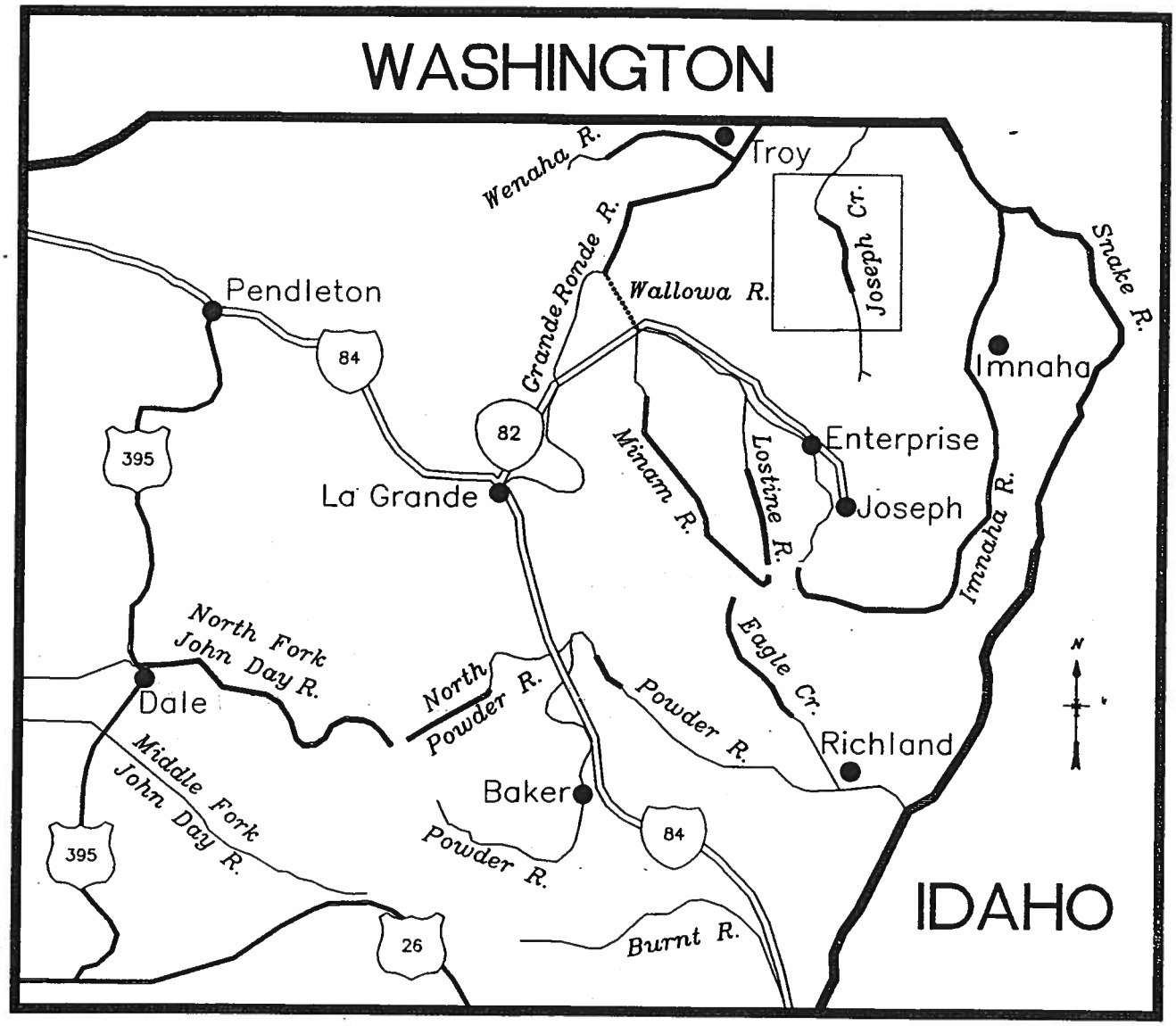
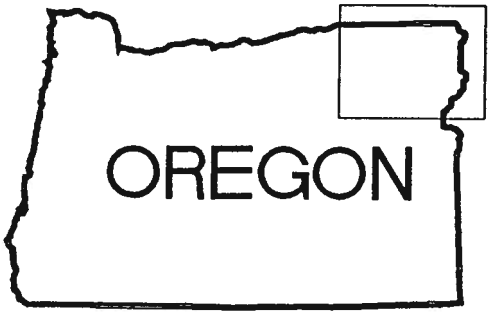
Vicinity Map





National Wild and Scenic Rivers
of Northeast Oregon

Interstate Highway

U.S. Highway

Oregon State Highway

River

Wild and Scenic River Area

Wild and Scenic
Study River Area