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United States
Department of
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Record of Decision

Land and Resource Management Plan

Forest
Service

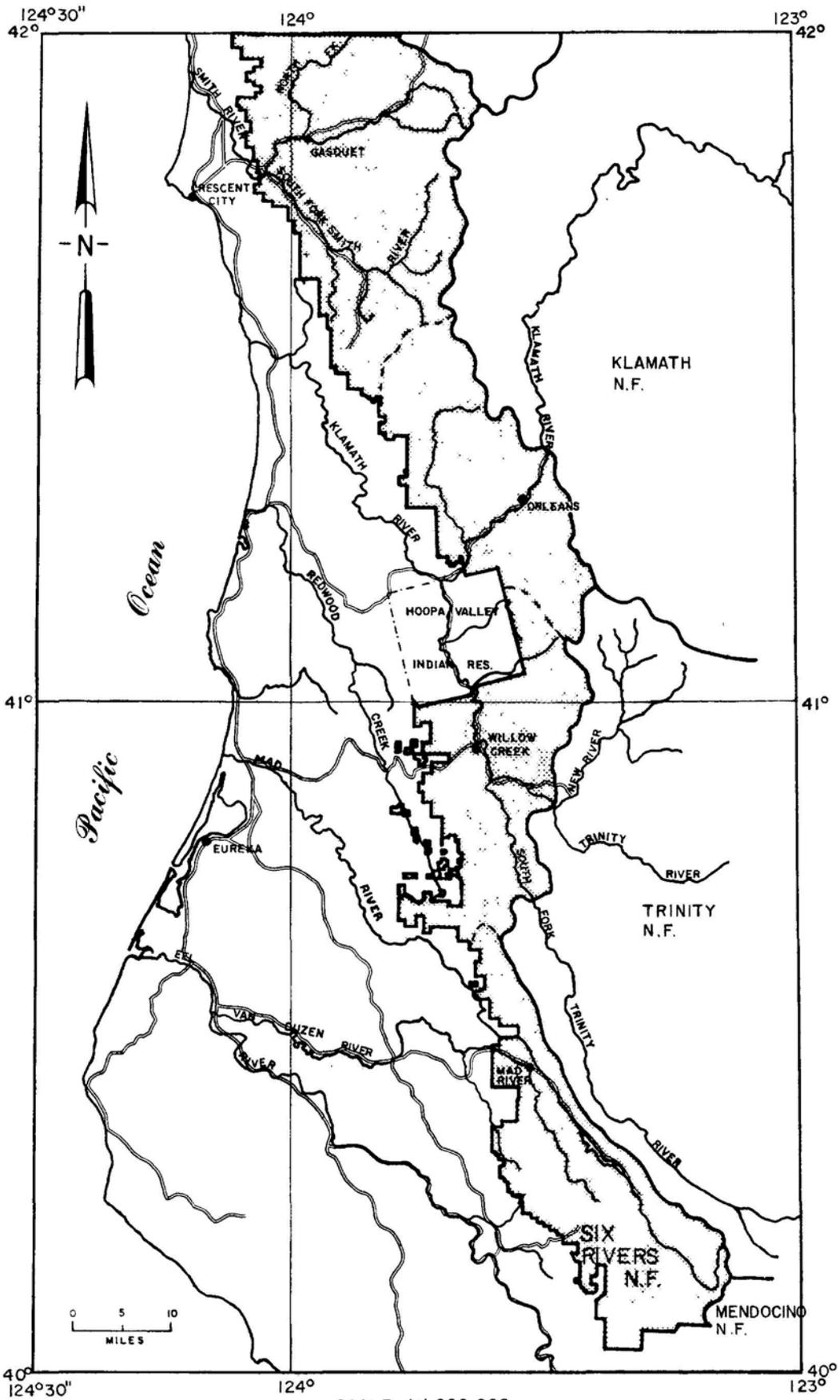
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SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST

RECORD OF DECISION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST 1995

Located within
Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties, California

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This document presents the decision regarding the selection of a land and resource management plan for the Six Rivers National Forest. It summarizes the reasons for choosing the PRF (Preferred) Alternative as the basis for the Forest Plan which will be followed for the next ten to fifteen years, unless amended sooner. Estimates of the longterm environmental, social, and economic consequences contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement were considered in this decision.

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RECORD OF DECISION

Final Environmental Impact Statement and

Land and Resource Management Plan

Six Rivers National Forest

USDA - Forest Service

Located within Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties, California

INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service has completed a detailed planning process including studies of the lands, resources and socio-economic interest in this National Forest as well as a detailed study and analysis of many different alternatives for management. Five of these alternatives were analyzed and displayed in detail in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Six Rivers National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

This Record of Decision documents my selection and approval of one of these alternatives. The alternative is described in detail in the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan provides for coordinated multiple-use with an emphasis on maintaining and restoring ecosystem health. An ecosystem approach is used. It includes an Aquatic Conservation Strategy designed to provide quality habitat for aquatic species. A Late-Successional Reserve system, other land allocations, extensive survey and management requirements, and many other standards and guidelines provide an ecosystem approach to maintaining biological diversity with an emphasis on late-successional and old-growth dependent species. An ecosystem analysis process at the landscape/watershed level will allow forest management to be considered in an integrated, ecological approach.

The Forest contains a portion of the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area (AMA). The purpose of this allocation is to encourage the development and testing of technical and social approaches to achieving desired ecological, economic, and other social objectives.

I. THE DECISION

A. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

My decision is to select the PRF alternative (preferred alternative) to provide direction for managing the 958,480 acres of the Six Rivers National Forest (Forest) for the next 10 to 15 years. The PRF alternative was also the preferred alternative in the Draft EIS issued September 29, 1993. It was modified in the Final EIS in response to public comment and incorporates the direction from the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NW ROD) issued April 13, 1994. This document is also called the "President's Plan" and FSEIS ROD.

B. GOVERNING REGULATIONS

I have reviewed the environmental consequences of the Forest Plan and the alternatives disclosed in the Final EIS. I gave particular attention to public comments on the Draft EIS summarized in Appendix O of the Final EIS. I have also reviewed the public issues and management concerns identified during the scoping process for this Forest Plan (Appendix A, Final EIS).

The Final EIS and Forest Plan were developed under the implementing regulations of the National Forest Management Act, Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219 (36 CFR 219) published in 47 FR 43026 on September 30, 1982. The planning actions described in

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36 CFR 219.12(b) through (k) have been completed and are properly documented. The National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1500-1508 (40 CFR 1500-1508) were followed. Forest Plan preparation was also guided by many other laws and regulations.

3. Ecosystem analysis at the landscape/watershed level, including the watershed analysis described in the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, is used to assess management concerns in an ecosystem approach and will be an integral part of Forest Plan implementation.

An adaptive management approach will be used throughout the Forest. This approach consists of a continuing process of action-based planning, monitoring, researching, evaluating, and adjusting with the objective of improving implementation and achieving Forest Plan goals.

The major provisions of this Forest Plan are summarized below.

C. MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE FOREST PLAN

The major components of the Forest Plan are:

1. Forest Management Goals;
2. The Desired Future Condition of the Forest;
3. Management Area goals, desired conditions, and standard and guidelines;
4. Adaptive Management Area Direction;
5. Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines;
6. Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements;
7. Data Acquisition and Research Needs.

Management direction from the NW ROD has been fully incorporated throughout the above components.

Biological Diversity

Biological diversity is provided for by establishing a large system of reserves, and managing the matrix outside these reserves to maintain a distribution of vegetation types, serai stages, and patch sizes that is within the historical range of variability. Approximately 91 percent of the Forest is within reserves, including Late-Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, Wilderness, portions of the Smith River National Recreation Area, and other Congressional and Administrative Withdrawals; scheduled timber harvest is not permitted in these areas. Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves from the NW ROD comprise about 458,600 acres, or 48 percent of the Forest. The primary management emphasis in these areas is the protection and enhancement of late-successional/old-growth and riparian/aquatic habitat.

D. MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE FOREST PLAN

The Forest Plan requires active stewardship and participative management to provide for environmental health and community stability in a sustainable manner. The Forest Plan takes an ecosystem approach using the adaptive management process.

The ecosystem approach includes, but is not limited to, the following features:

1. Special Habitat and Managed Habitat Management Areas are designed to provide habitat for species dependent on late-successional and old-growth forest conditions, including threatened and endangered species. The Special Habitat Management Area includes the Late-Successional Reserve system from the NW ROD.
2. An Aquatic Conservation Strategy established by the NW ROD includes Riparian Reserves, Key Watersheds, watershed analysis, and watershed restoration, and is designed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and the aquatic ecosystems contained within them.

On Matrix and AMA lands where timber harvest can occur, at least 15 percent of area associated with each cutting unit (stand) will be retained as large green trees, as established by the NW ROD. Down logs will be retained at an average of 80 to 100 percent of the levels currently found in mature and old-growth stands on the Forest. Snags will be retained at levels sufficient to support species of cavity-nesting birds at 40 percent of potential population levels. Hardwoods will be retained relative to their abundance in the stand prior to harvest. These structural components will provide a legacy that bridges past and future forests. Silvicultural prescriptions will minimize fragmentation across the landscape. The use of native species for revegetation will be emphasized.

Port-Orford-cedar (POC) is present and growing well across the landscape on the Smith River NRA and in some areas of the Orleans and Lower Trinity Ranger Districts. The POC root disease, *Phytophthora lateralis*, is currently present in parts of the Smith River drainage in the Smith River NRA. The Klamath and Trinity River drainages to the south remain uninfected with the POC root disease. The Forest Plan provides for the reduction of risk to Port-Orford-cedar from infection by *Phytophthora lateralis*, and prevention of the spread of the POC root disease. The Plan further allows for the use of risk analyses and development of appropriate disease control strategies on a site or drainage-specific basis.

Wildlife

A number of elements from the NW ROD provide for wildlife species. Late-Successional Reserves are included in the Special Habitat Management Area to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional/old-growth forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for late-successional/old-growth related species, including the northern spotted owl. Riparian Reserves provide travel and dispersal corridors for many terrestrial animals and plants. All spotted owl activity centers known as of January 1, 1994, will retain 100 acres of habitat around the activity center. The Forest falls entirely within marbled murrelet zones 1 and 2, and habitat within a 0.5 mile radius of occupied marbled murrelet habitat will be protected. Protection buffers provide habitat for specific rare and locally endemic species of nonvascular plants, amphibians, and birds.

In addition to the management direction in the NW ROD, the Forest Plan has a number of provisions for wildlife species. Forest-wide standards and guidelines provide for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species outside reserved areas. Nesting habitat for the bald eagle and peregrine falcon will be protected as part of the Special Habitat Management Area to meet recovery plan objectives. The Managed Habitat Management Area includes habitat for the American marten and other late-successional/old-growth related species. In the direction for goshawk management includes the establishment of primary nest zones and foraging habitat zones.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy

The Aquatic Conservation Strategy is incorporated from the NW ROD and was developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. The strategy is designed to protect salmon

and steelhead habitat. The components of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy are: Riparian Reserves; Key Watersheds; watershed analysis; and watershed restoration.

Riparian reserves are designated along perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, wetlands, and unstable and potentially unstable areas. There are approximately 103,480 acres of Riparian Reserves within the Matrix and AMA on the Forest. The primary management objectives are to maintain and restore riparian structures and functions on intermittent streams, confer benefits to riparian dependent and associated species other than fish, enhance habitat conservation for organisms that are dependent on the transition zone between riparian and upslope areas, improve travel and dispersal corridors for many terrestrial species and plants, and provide for greater connectivity of the watershed.

Key Watersheds serve as refugia for maintaining and recovering habitat for at-risk stocks of anadromous salmonids and resident fish species. There are nine Key Watersheds on the Forest covering 664,960 acres, or 70 percent of the Forest. Key Watersheds overlay Forest Plan land allocations and management prescriptions.

Watershed analysis is a systematic procedure to characterize the processes and interactions occurring within a watershed. It will serve as a basis for developing project-specific proposals, monitoring, and restoration needs for a watershed, and will be a primary method of landscape analysis on the Forest. Watershed analysis is required in Key Watersheds, roadless areas in non-Key Watersheds, and Riparian Reserves prior to most resource management activities. It is also recommended in non-Key watersheds.

Watershed restoration will be an integral part of a program to aid recovery of fish habitat, riparian habitat, and water quality. Restoration will be based on watershed analysis and planning. The most important components of watershed restoration are the control and prevention of road-related runoff and sediment production, restoration of the condition of riparian vegetation, and restoration of in-stream habitat complexity.

Social and Economic

The Rural Community Assistance Program is emphasized to assist communities dependent on forest-

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related resources and impacted by the federal decisions related to those resources. The program emphasis is to help communities increase their capacity for self-determination by helping to organize local community action planning teams, and to develop and implement community action plans.

Native American Trust Responsibility

Eleven Native American Contemporary Use Areas will be managed to preserve their natural character. Management activities within Cultural Districts eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be closely coordinated with Federally-recognized Tribes through the Tribal Government Program in accordance with the Government-to-Government Agreement.

Research Natural Areas

The Forest Plan establishes the Adorni and Ruth Research Natural Areas, and will allocate approximately 6,980 acres for a total of eight areas to be managed as Research Natural Areas. Additional areas include the Craig's Creek, Hennessey Ridge, L.E. Horton, North Trinity Mountain, Soldier, and Upper Goose Research Natural Areas.

Special Interest Areas

Seven Special Interest Areas are designated under 36 CFR 294.1. Approximately 660 acres of these areas are located outside other designated reserves. The seven areas are the Broken Rib Mountain Ecological Area, the Bluff Creek Geologic Area, the Lassies Botanical/Geologic Area, and the Bear Basin Butte, Myrtle Creek, North Fork Smith River, and Horse Mountain Botanical Areas.

To prevent the introduction of the Port-Orford-cedar root disease into uninfested areas of the North Fork Smith River Botanical Area, FS Road 18N13 will be closed to vehicle access. Vehicle access into remaining areas (FS Road 18N09 and associated spur roads) will be prohibited pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50; the prohibition exempts officials pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50(d)(4) and persons with a permit, special use authorization, or operating plan, as defined in 36 CFR 261.2, issued by the District Ranger or higher ranked authorized official. Access will not be allowed during the wet season and during periods of heavy rain in the summer.

Transportation and Facilities Management

The management direction in the NW ROD provides that there will be no net increase in road miles within Key Watersheds which comprise about 70 percent of the Forest, and there will be no road construction in inventoried roadless areas within Key Watersheds.

The rate of road construction will be significantly reduced from past levels. New construction will average 2.5 miles per year, and road decommissioning will average 25 miles per year during the first decade. The combination of construction and decommissioning will result in a net decrease of 220 miles, or 9 percent of the Forest road network, during the next decade.

Fire and Fuels Management

The Plan recognizes the important role fire plays in the forest ecosystem. Efforts in prevention, suppression, hazard reduction, fire use, and fire rehabilitation will complement one another in support of ecosystem management. Increased emphasis is placed on natural fuels treatment. Approximately 5,390 acres of fuels will be treated annually, emphasizing a combination of mechanical treatments and prescribed fire. Of this, 4,000 acres will be hazard-related fuels treatments to reduce the risk of stand-replacing wildfire; this represents a large increase from past levels.

Range

Utilization guidelines will be used to maintain the health of rangeland ecosystems. These guidelines will be updated as more data is collected. Ecosystem analysis, Annual Operating Instructions, and Rangeland Project Decision documents will be used to determine appropriate stocking and distribution of livestock to achieve optimum utilization and prevent deterioration of the range and other resources. Grazing will remain near the current level of 6,610 animal months (AMs) per year. Range use will be consistent with management area goals, including Riparian Reserve direction from the NWROD.

Recreation

Developed recreation opportunities will be adequate to meet projected demand. Approximately 50 percent of developed sites will be rehabilitated during the first decade to respond to changing user needs and accessibility requirements. Major facility construction

will occur within the Smith River National Recreation Area according to the Smith River National Recreation Area Management Plan; minor site construction will occur elsewhere. Trails will be maintained on the average of every three years and expand to include management for equestrian and mountain bike use. About 16 miles of trail will be constructed or reconstructed during the first decade. Staging areas with facilities to accommodate OHV use will be constructed during the first decade.

Roadless and Wilderness Areas

Four wilderness areas are located partially or wholly on the Forest and comprise 13 percent of the total Forest, approximately 123,150 acres. No new wildernesses are recommended.

There are 10 remaining roadless areas of 117,150 acres on the Forest. As direction in the NW ROD states that there will be no new road construction in roadless areas in Key Watersheds, roadless areas in Key Watersheds will be managed for semi-primitive non-motorized recreational opportunities. This includes the following roadless areas: North Fork Smith, Kalmiopsis, Kelly, Ship Mountain, Siskiyou B, Blue Creek, Slide Creek, Orleans C, and portions of Orleans B. Three released roadless areas that no longer meet the roadless area criteria will also have a semi-primitive non-motorized designation. These are the Underwood, Cow Creek and Board Camp areas. All other released roadless areas will be managed according to the direction of the management area in which they occur. The Forest Plan will maintain approximately 95 percent of the remaining roadless areas in a condition that will retain or only slightly alter their wilderness attributes.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Klamath, Trinity, and North Fork Eel river segments that are included in the Wild and Scenic River System under Secretary of the Interior designation will be recommended for inclusion into the System under Congressional designation. The recreational river corridor widths for the Klamath and Trinity (main fork) rivers will follow the Riparian Reserve Management Area boundary; private lands, known encroached areas, and mineral fractions qualifying for Small Tracts Act (STA conveyance) will be excluded. The wild river segment of the North Fork Eel River will be approximately one quarter mile from each bank, based on watershed considerations, with exceptions for private lands. Appendix J of the Forest Plan and the Resource

Map in the map packet accompanying the Forest Plan contain detailed boundaries for these segments. The Forest Plan allocates 366 miles of river included in the National Wild and Scenic River System, including 95 miles of wild, 42 miles of scenic, and 229 miles of recreational river. In addition, an eligibility study performed during the development of the Final Plan found an additional 20.5 miles of river on Blue Creek, Redwood Creek, and Red Mountain Creek to be eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; these segments will be protected in a condition that will not diminish their potential for wild, scenic, or recreational classification until suitability studies have been performed.

Timber

Approximately 87,700 acres, 9 percent of the Forest, was determined to be capable, available, and suitable for sustained timber production (regulated land) in the Forest Plan. The average annual Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) is estimated at 15.5 million board feet (MMBF) in the first decade. The ASQ in the Final Plan is 4.5 MMBF less than the Draft Plan. The decrease is primarily due to an increase in the size of Riparian Reserves. The adjustment to the ASQ was made as a result of direction provided in the NW ROD as well as other changes made between the Draft and Final EIS.

The ASQ includes programmed volume obtained from regulated land. This does not include volume that could come from salvage or thinning on unregulated land. An estimated 3 MMBF is anticipated each year from unregulated land to help maintain ecosystem health.

The selection of site-specific silvicultural prescriptions at the project level will be based on analysis of current and desired conditions as well as laws and regulations. Clearcutting is not scheduled, but could be considered under restricted conditions when appropriate for meeting land management objectives. Green tree retention will be the primary regeneration method, and involves leaving both individual and clumped live trees on at least 15 percent of the area associated with the cutting unit (stand); snags, down logs, and hardwoods will also be retained based on the vegetation type and serai stage of the stand.

In areas where timber growth and yields are not emphasized, silvicultural prescriptions will be used to create desired forest conditions to enhance other resource objectives.

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E. FOREST PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Forest Plan will be implemented 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS and Record of Decision appear in the Federal Register.

As soon as practicable after approval of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the Forest Plan as provided for in 36 CFR 219.10(e).

As provided in 36 CFR 219.10, this decision will remain in effect until the Forest Plan is revised. This is normally every 10 to 15 years or as conditions demand. A 50-year planning period was used in the Final EIS so effects of alternative choices could be projected beyond the first decade. Short-term opportunities, problems, or conflicts not anticipated in the Forest Plan may arise in managing the Forest. When this occurs, the Forest Plan can be adjusted through rescheduling, amendment, or revision.

As a management strategy for the Six Rivers National Forest, this Forest Plan and Final EIS are programmatic. The emphasis in the Forest Plan is not on site-specific decisions. Rather, it provides overall systematic guidance and establishes management direction to govern future actions.

In order to fully implement the Forest Plan (including activities as scheduled, goods and services, mitigation and monitoring), the Forest Plan projects a budget of \$19.9 million per year in the first decade. After adjustment for inflation, this represents a 12 percent decrease in funding from the 1989 base year. Actual annual budgets affect the rate of implementation of the Forest Plan and directly affect the outputs produced in any given period. Over time, if annual budgets differ from the projected budget needs estimated by the Plan, the rate of achievement of Plan goals and objectives will be slowed. The schedule of implementation is not expected to adversely affect the long term goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.

II. ALTERNATIVES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED

A. ISSUES CONSIDERED

The scoping process to determine the issues, concerns, and opportunities for the Forest Plan has been on-going since 1979. A Draft EIS and Plan were published in 1987. The Regional Forester withdrew the 1987 Draft in 1990 due to the establishment of the Smith River National Recreation Area and the listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. These two actions changed the scope and analysis of the issues developed in the 1987 Draft. In December 1990, a 30 day scoping period was provided to verify issues raised previously and to identify additional issues. Issues brought up during this 30 day period were added to the previously identified issues and all issues were analyzed and summarized.

A new Draft EIS and Plan were issued in September 1993. Two new issues relating to the management of special forest products were analyzed during the 90 day comment period on the Draft EIS and Plan.

A total of 38 issues were grouped into 27 categories. The categories were also grouped. The Physical Environment group contains issues relating to geology, soils, water and air. The Biological Environment group contains issues relating to biological diversity, genetics, sensitive plant species, wildlife, riparian zones, and fisheries. Social and economic issues are contained in the Social and Economic Environment. The Resource Management Program group contains issues relating to the management of research natural areas, special interest areas, the Humboldt Nursery, law enforcement, heritage resources, transportation and facilities, fire and fuels, energy, lands, minerals, range, recreation, roadless and wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, timber, trees with special management consideration, special forest products, pests, and visual quality. A complete list of issues can be found in Chapter 1 of the Final EIS. Discussions of how issues were addressed can be found in Chapters 2 and 4 of the Final EIS and Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan.

B. ALTERNATIVES

Of the range of alternatives developed, five were considered in detail in the Draft and Final EIS. Information about the alternative development process can be found in Chapter 2 and Appendix A of the Final EIS.

Public review of the Draft EIS and Plan helped focus on major public issues and concerns. As a result, the Forest adjusted the PRF alternative in response to public comment and the minor changes in management direction from the NW ROD. The PRF alternative was the only alternative that received substantial comment during the public comment period, and was the only alternative modified in the Final EIS. Other alternatives were modified slightly to update information and provide a broader range of alternatives in terms of range management and fuels management and recreation program management.

Current/RPA Alternative (CUR)

The CUR alternative manages the Forest based on current direction, standards and guidelines, laws, regulations, and policies. The current situation emphasizes timber growth and harvest, anadromous fisheries, maintaining habitat for listed and proposed threatened, endangered, and sensitive species of wildlife, and recreation. All silvicultural treatments would be available under this alternative. This alternative includes northern spotted owl Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-designated critical habitat areas; both of these land allocations would be removed from the timber-suited land base. Timber management complies with the 50-11-40 rule, which states that 50 percent of each quarter township outside HCAs must contain at least 11 inch average diameter stands with at least a 40 percent canopy closure.

The CUR alternative is also consistent with the Resource Planning Act (RPA) direction issued May 1990, aimed at increasing emphasis in recreation, wildlife, soil and water stewardship, and maintaining historical levels of timber outputs. Since that time, the Forest's fish, wildlife, soils, watershed, and recreation programs have all received increased funding, and recreation has been emphasized with the creation of the Smith River National Recreational Area. The result of meeting RPA noncommodity objectives has been a corresponding reduction in timber harvesting as compared to historical levels.

Preferred Alternative (PRF)

The theme of this alternative is to use an ecosystem management approach to maintaining healthy forest ecosystems. Biological diversity will be maintained by establishing a large system of reserved areas and managing the matrix outside reserved areas to maintain a desired distribution of vegetation types, successional

stages, and patch sizes. An Aquatic Conservation Strategy will be implemented to maintain and restore the ecological health of watersheds. The production of goods and services will be determined by ecological capabilities and the desired condition of specific ecosystems, as well as social and economic considerations. This alternative fully incorporates management direction from the FSEIS ROD.

Compared to the current situation, the PRF alternative reduces open road densities, increases total forest cover, significantly reduces clearcutting, and regenerates timber stands with a multi-storied stand prescription retaining large green trees, snags, down logs, and hardwoods. Harvest sequences will be designed to reduce habitat fragmentation, and to mimic natural disturbance regimes such as fire cycles. This alternative uses the system of Late-Successional Reserves established in the NW ROD and relies on Riparian Reserves rather than the 50-11-40 rule to provide connectivity and dispersal habitat outside Late-Successional Reserves and other reserved areas.

Modifications to the PRF alternative between the Draft and Final EIS as a result of incorporating direction from the NW ROD include enlarging the size of Riparian Reserves and removing the requirement for 180-year timber rotations. Modifications in response to public comment include: developing a vegetation management strategy to achieve desired distributions of serai stages within different vegetation types and zones on the Forest; increasing the acres of fuels treatment to recognize the role of fire in forest ecosystems; removing the Special Regeneration Management Area from the timber-suited land base due to the difficulty in regenerating low productivity sites; identifying three additional rivers, Blue Creek, Redwood Creek, and Red Mountain Creek, as eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; and adding management direction for biological diversity, special forest products, Port-Orford-cedar, range, Native American trust responsibility, and recreation. This Record of Decision also recommends Congressional designation for all Secretary of Interior-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Old Growth Reserve (OGR)

The OGR alternative uses a network of "Old Growth Reserves" (OGRs) to provide protection for ecologically significant late-successional/old-growth ecosystems, species, and processes including, but not limited to, the northern spotted owl. This alternative is similar to alternative 12C of the Report of the Scientific Panel on Late-Successional Forest Ecosystems (Johnson et al., 1991).

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The OGR alternative would manage the imber-suited land base at an extended 180-year rotation length, reduce open road densities, significantly reduce clearcutting, reduce habitat fragmentation, and maintain an average green tree retention of six trees per acre at regeneration. This alternative emphasizes silvicultural prescriptions that create multi-stoied stand conditions as in the PRF alternative, but on a slightly larger timber-suited land base. A system of key watersheds would be established to provide habitat essential to the aid in the recovery of anadromous fish stocks, and to maintain aquatic biodiversity of the riparian ecosystem.

Market Products Alternative (MKT)

This alternative emphasizes timber production, commercial salmon fisheries, and developed recreation. Limitations on the timber land base and management intensity are those minimum levels set by current policy and regulation. The purpose of the MKT alternative is to produce outputs with commercial value. Timber outputs are increased relative to other alternatives by making more land available for timber production and by using clearcutting as the primary method of harvest (except in the Smith River National Recreation Area). Fisheries enhancement would focus on capital investments to improve spawning and rearing habitat for chinook salmon with supplementation of production through construction of spawning channels and facilities. The focus of recreation would be on developing sites and facilities. Open road densities would remain approximately what they are currently.

This alternative results in the highest sustainable imber harvest levels, and the highest relative risk to the viability of the northern spotted owl and other old-growth dependent wildlife species.

Ecrotation Alternative (ECR)

This alternative uses a silvicultural prescription designed to mimic natural processes of timber stand replacement and provide a natural range and distribution of habitats. Compared to the current situation, the ECR alternative would result in a large reduction in harvest levels. No more than 3 percent of the timber-suited land base would be treated per decade, and 55 percent of each watershed would be maintained in an old-growth condition. Silvicultural prescriptions would be designed to minimize fragmentation and maintain large contiguous patches of late serai vegetation. Regeneration harvesting would be done in a variety of patch sizes and will maintain a legacy similar to that in the PRF alternative.

The ECR alternative requires a large land base to yield the desired distribution of habitats. Only those management areas which are legally mandated would be reserved from imber management. Implementing this alternative requires a 20 to 30 year adjustment period to allow reduction in existing habitat fragmentation and manage mature stands to maintain old-growth characteristics.

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Forest conducted an active public participation program. It included mailings, meetings, and presentations to the general public, special interest groups, tribal representatives as well as elected officials and agency representatives of state, local, and national governments throughout the planning process. Refer to Appendix A of the Final EIS, Consultation with Others.

A revised notice of intent to prepare an EIS for the Forest Plan was published in the Federal Register on December 12, 1990 when the planning process was re-initiated after the withdrawal of the 1987 Draft EIS and Plan. A notice of availability of the Draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan was published in the Federal Register on October 8, 1993, and announced by area news media. Over 300 copies of the complete set of documents (proposed Forest Plan, Draft EIS, Summary, and map packet) and about 400 copies of the Summary alone were distributed to the public. Open houses and public briefings were held during the comment period which lasted through January 6, 1994. Over 300 individuals, organizations, Federal, State, and local agencies, and Indian Tribes commented on the proposed Forest Plan and Draft EIS. All comments were considered in the preparation of the final document and in the selection of the PRF alternative as the Forest Plan.

III. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This section describes the significant factors forming the basis for my selection of the PRF alternative as the Forest Plan. These factors took into consideration the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified through the planning process, public comments on the Draft EIS, and new information and changing direction.

No single factor determined my decision. Rather, using professional judgment and experience, many factors were considered and weighed, including monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits, land capability, protection of the basic resources, and public desires as well as

advice and suggestions from other agencies, organizations, and experienced Forest officers. Based on consideration of all factors, the Forest Plan sets a course that results in the greatest overall long-term benefit to the public.

A. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC ISSUES/ COMMENTS

This Record of Decision reflects the many helpful comments received from agencies, Indian Tribes, organizations, and the public on the Draft EIS and Forest Plan. The comments on the Draft EIS were primarily focused on the PRF alternative. All comments were considered closely and many were used to help improve the analyses and documentation as well as to modify the PRF alternative. Substantive comments and the Forest's response to them can be found in Appendix O of the Final EIS.

The concerns highlighted below are critical concerns that are not covered elsewhere in this Record of Decision. A complete summary of how issues were resolved can be found in Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan and in Table 11-12 in the Final EIS.

1. Concern: It is difficult to comment on the Draft EIS and Plan when it is not clear how the documents will be affected by the President's Plan. There is no opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS and Plan after finalization of the President's Plan.

Response: How the Draft EIS and Forest Plan were affected by the President's Plan were disclosed by the following methods:

The Draft President's Plan was referenced in the Draft EIS and was made available to the public. The Draft President's Plan (DSEIS) described the relationship to the Draft EIS and Forest Plan. The Draft EIS included an Addendum that described the relationship to the Draft President's Plan.

The relationship between the Forest Plan and the President's Plan was described at public meetings and briefings held on both the Draft EIS and Plan and the Draft President's Plan.

The NW ROD was signed on April 13, 1994. Changes made between the Draft and Final President's Plan were described in the FSEIS and the NW ROD. The changes made between the draft and final versions of the President's Plan were relatively minor and did not

warrant issuance of another supplemental EIS on the President's Plan.

The relationship between the Draft EIS and Forest Plan and the President's Plan was explained further in the FSEIS and NW ROD. The FSEIS supplemented the Draft EIS for the Draft Forest Plan (NW ROD, page 12) and had its own comment period (NW ROD, page 65). The FSEIS provided direction for completion of the Final Forest Plan (NW ROD, Appendix A, page A-2); that direction has been fully incorporated into the Final Forest Plan.

Based on the opportunities to comment, the relatively minor changes made to the Forest Plan as a result of public comment, and finalization of the President's Plan, I felt that an additional opportunity for comment was not warranted.

2. Concern: The Forest Plan should provide stronger protection for riparian areas, as they are critical to the protection of aquatic resources, anadromous fish stocks, and water quality.

Response: Riparian reserves in the PRF alternative were widened between the draft and final plans to provide more protection for riparian and aquatic resources. I feel that the Aquatic Conservation Strategy in the PRF alternative, with its large Riparian Reserves, management of Key Watersheds as refugia for at-risk species, extensive watershed analysis requirements, and watershed restoration program along with the standards and guidelines, will maintain watershed health and minimize cumulative watershed effects better than any other alternative. The watershed restoration programs will also help mitigate past and future activities and restore ecosystem health.

The projected levels of timber harvest and road construction in the PRF alternative are lower than in all other alternatives; this alternative also projects the largest decrease in miles of road. The potential for cumulative watershed effects is the lowest among alternatives due to the low levels of road construction and timber harvest, the decrease in road miles, and the watershed restoration program. The PRF alternative is expected to have the greatest increase in watershed condition class by the fifth decade.

Approximately 70 percent of the Forest is within Key Watersheds. These watersheds have the highest priority for watershed restoration programs. Watershed analysis is required prior to most resource management activities in Key Watersheds, and is recommended in all other

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watersheds. Watershed analysis will provide an interdisciplinary, integrated approach to management and has a critical role in providing for aquatic and riparian habitat protection.

3. Concern: The Draft EIS and Forest Plan did not contain sections specifically addressing biological diversity. The Final EIS and Forest Plan must contain provisions for maintaining adequate biological diversity, particularly late-successional/old-growth habitat, to provide for species viability.

Response: Although the Draft EIS and Forest Plan addressed biological diversity as it relates to various resources in a number of sections, there was no section that summarized the effects on biological diversity. A biological diversity section has been added to both the Final EIS and Forest Plan to provide greater emphasis for this important issue.

I believe that the PRF alternative will best maintain adequate biological diversity to provide for species viability needs. The emphasis on late-successional/old-growth related species described earlier should provide quality habitat to help recover at-risk species and meet the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Land allocations and management direction are designed to maintain species, community, and genetic diversity. Diversity will be provided through a recommended management range of vegetative types and serai stages; this recommended management range is a subset of the historical range of variability that reflects current climatic conditions and the emphasis on maintaining late-successional/old-growth forest conditions. The recommended management range also provides a buffer against unpredictable large-scale wildfires.

Large reserves with restricted management activities provide contiguous blocks of late serai habitat for a number of species; these large reserves comprise approximately 70 percent of the Forest. Reserved areas will be connected through a network of Riparian Reserves that provides travel and dispersal corridors as well as greater connectivity of watersheds. Riparian Reserves and other small reserved areas comprise an additional 21 percent of the Forest. Matrix and Hayfork AMA lands that are timber-suited comprise the remaining 9 percent of the Forest; these areas also play an important role in maintaining biodiversity. Stands will be managed to achieve the recommended management range of vegetation types and serai stages, and regenerated stands will retain late-successional/old-growth structural components, including green trees, snags, and down logs.

The most recent scientific thinking indicates that the ecosystem approach of land allocations such as Late-Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, and the Managed Habitat Management Area will be more effective than the more traditional approaches of the other alternatives.

The survey and manage requirements in the PRF alternative will assure that currently unknown species are identified and adequately provided for during project implementation. Standards and guidelines also provide for special habitat types such as hardwoods, riparian areas, caves, snags, and down logs. Early serai habitat will be provided through regeneration as well as natural disturbances such as fire and windthrow.

The PRF alternative is projected to have the most acreage of old-growth habitat by the end of the fifth decade. I believe that it has the most potential for achieving the recommended management range outlined in the Forest Plan and for maintaining desirable characteristics in Late-Successional Reserves due to permitting fuels and silvicultural treatments in reserves to maintain ecosystem health. These activities can enhance the development of late-successional stand characteristics and reduce the risk of catastrophic stand-replacing fires, insect infestation, and disease.

4. Concern: Remaining roadless areas should either be recommended as wilderness or should remain roadless to provide for sensitive watershed, botanical, wildlife, riparian, and recreation needs.

Response: I believe that the land allocations and management direction in the Forest Plan will better provide for the above needs than the allocation of additional wilderness. The released roadless areas fall within a number of land allocations that provide for wildlife and riparian needs such as Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves. These reserves allow for management to enhance late-successional and riparian habitat which is critical for many threatened and endangered species and could not be provided under a wilderness designation. Due to the emphasis on maintaining and restoring ecosystem health and the low projected demand for wilderness use on the Forest over the next 50 years relative to the current supply, I did not feel that additional wilderness recommendations were warranted.

There are currently 117,150 acres in 10 roadless areas on the Forest. Approximately 95 percent of the remaining roadless areas will remain roadless and will be allocated to areas reserved from timber harvest and other

commodity production activities. The NW ROD directs that inventoried roadless areas within Key Watersheds will not have any roads constructed within them; these areas will have a semi-primitive non-motorized designation in the Forest Plan and can provide varied dispersed recreation opportunities.

5. Concern: The Forest should conduct a comprehensive, Forest-wide assessment of all potential wild and scenic rivers, and should recommend additional rivers for inclusion to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Response: The Forest completed a comprehensive Forest-wide eligibility study during the development of the Final EIS and Forest Plan. The study found three additional segments, Blue Creek, Redwood Creek, and Red Mountain Creek, eligible for inclusion to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (see Final EIS Appendix D). A suitability study will be performed for these segments. Not all river segments identified by the public were found eligible. Some rivers identified by the public did not have truly outstandingly remarkable values when compared with other rivers in the Forest and in the Region.

6. Concern: The low timber harvest level in the Forest Plan will affect local jobs, economies, and lifestyles.

The projected ASQ for the PRF alternative is 15.5 MMBF. The ASQ for Key Watersheds and non-Key Watersheds is disaggregated and displayed separately in the Forest Plan due to the higher level of uncertainty regarding future sale levels within Key Watersheds. In addition, an estimated unscheduled volume of about 3 MMBF per year could be generated from unregulated lands to help achieve objectives of ecosystem health.

The ASQ is significantly lower than historical levels, and will impact employment and unemployment rates, 25 percent receipts of counties, and the lifestyle of people who are dependent on commodity outputs from the Forest. However, the ASQ is expected to be more stable than it has been over the past 15 years when changes in laws and regulations continually reduced the land base available for timber production.

The Rural Community Assistance Program and the Forest Plan emphasis on encouraging the use of non-traditional and of Native American traditional forest products could help diversify and stabilize local communities in the long-term. However, the transition will not be easy for many local residents.

B. CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Changes have been made to the Final EIS and Forest Plan to incorporate the management direction provided in the NW ROD and in response to public comments. The Final Forest Plan is fully consistent with the NW ROD.

C. ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

Each alternative considered in detail is a combination of resource objectives, direction, and outputs that portray a certain management scenario. All alternatives were designed to achieve the greatest net public benefit. Net public benefit is the overall long-term value of all outputs and benefits minus all associated inputs, adverse effects, and costs. Factors which cannot be measured in monetary terms are included as well as those which can.

The primary measure used in determining economic efficiency is present net value (PNV). PNV is an estimate of the market value of resources after all costs have been subtracted. The PNV for the alternatives in the Final EIS is closely tied to the ASQ for each alternative. The MKT alternative has the highest PNV among alternatives because it produces the most timber, and is followed by the CUR, OGR, PRF, and ECR alternatives.

While PNV is a useful comparison of commodity outputs and costs, it is not the only criteria used in selecting an alternative for implementation. Intangible benefits that cannot be measured in dollars, such as providing for species viability and water quality, are also considered. Both priced and non-priced benefits are used to determine net public benefit which is an expression of the overall, long-term value to the nation of all outputs and costs. For the reasons discussed in sections G and I, I find the PRF alternative to be superior to those alternatives with higher PNVs.

D. CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

The PRF alternative serves to adjust the output targets of the 1990 RPA Program as assigned to the Six Rivers National Forest. The Final Forest Plan provides an appropriate level of all outputs while protecting basic soil, water, wildlife, fishery, and riparian resources and responding to public preferences. It provides commodity

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outputs at such a level that amenity values are maintained and enhanced. While some other alternatives provide higher levels of commodity outputs, they present a greater risk to values associated with wildlife, fisheries, riparian areas, roadless areas, and visual quality. The Forest Plan does not allow the Forest to meet its share of 1990 RPA goals for such elements as timber sale quantity, road construction, and livestock grazing, but it exceeds RPA goals for recreation use, trail construction, fisheries, wildlife, watershed improvement, and reduction in clearcut acres.

E. SOCIAL EFFECTS AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

The Forest plays an important role in the social and economic life of those living within or adjacent to the Forest. Residents of Del Norte, Humboldt, and Trinity counties are most directly affected by Forest activities. In addition to environmental considerations, factors such as jobs, local government revenues, recreational opportunities, the needs of future generations, and social and economic stability were considered in my decision.

Activities in the PRF alternative will generate about 1,070 jobs per year in the first decade; this is 46 percent of the jobs generated in the 1989 base year. Lower timber harvest levels are the primary reason for the decline.

County revenues from the PRF alternative are estimated at about \$1.4 million per year from National Forest Fund receipts; this is a large drop from the \$4.0 million in average annual receipts to counties for the years 1981-1990. The majority of these receipts came from timber sales in the past, with minor amounts from range allotment payments, recreational user fees, and special use permit fees. The PRF alternative is estimated to generate about \$200,000 per year in yield taxes to counties. This is lower than all alternatives except the ECR alternative. Yield tax receipts were \$900,000 in the 1989 base year.

The social effects of the PRF alternative are as diverse as the publics who are stakeholders in the management of the Forest. People who are economically linked to the Forest's outputs will benefit significantly less than in the past. Timber industry-related workers will find fewer opportunities for employment and income; making the transition to other types of employment will be difficult and frustrating for many. People who prefer amenity values will benefit from increased protection for non-cash resources. Native Americans will benefit from the

protection of cultural sites and an increased emphasis on coordinated management of traditionally collected special forest products. Recreation opportunities will be slightly higher than historical levels, and the quality of the recreation experience will be higher. This will benefit the recreational users of the Forest as well as the service sector of the local economy.

Although priced economic benefits will be lower than in the past due to lower timber harvest levels, I believe that the harvest level projected in the PRF alternative is sustainable over time based on ecosystem management principles. This should provide stability for local economies, rather than the wide fluctuations experienced in the last 15 years. In addition, the Rural Community Assistance Program described earlier will help local economies diversify and attain economic stability. It is important to note that the Rural Community Assistance Program cannot fully alleviate the economic impacts associated with lower timber harvest levels. It will take commitment and cooperation to effect positive economic change.

Local communities are in an economic transition as forest management shifts towards other multiple use emphases besides timber production. All of the National Forests in California are affected by this change. I am aware of the hurt and frustration that accompanies this transition from those directly or indirectly affected. The reduction in timber supplies from National Forest, State, and even private land is a regional issue.

This Forest Plan will not satisfy everyone. It comes during a time of rapidly changing social values and forest management direction. However, I believe the Forest Plan provides a diverse and sustainable mixture of goods and services that benefit all people. Providing a high level of environmental quality and a variety of recreational opportunities to support tourism will contribute to the long-term economic health of the area.

The Forest Plan is expected to have no disproportional effect on any ethnic, gender, or religious group. The Six Rivers National Forest follows a policy of non-discrimination and will promote active access and participation by all segments of the public. The Forest follows affirmative action principles in all direct hiring and contracting activities.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

This section summarizes the effects that are expected to occur from implementation of each alternative. The magnitude, timing, and location of key environmental effects will differ for each alternative. These factors were considered in choosing the PRF alternative as the Forest Plan.

Biological Diversity

The PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives maintain a distribution of vegetation types that is within the historical range of variability. The acres of late serai stage habitat would be in the middle to upper end of the range. The CUR and MKT alternatives maintain a distribution of Douglas-fir and tanoak serai stages within the historical range of variability, but the acres of late serai stage habitat would be at the lower end of the range; these alternatives fall below the historical range for late serai stage mixed conifer habitat.

The PRF alternative retains the highest levels of structural elements such as green trees, snags, and down logs. The ECR and OGR alternatives retain the second-highest levels, while the levels of snags and down logs retained in the CUR and MKT alternatives would be well below the levels currently found in most late serai stands on the Forest, and could affect soil productivity and population levels of species dependent on these elements.

Wildlife

The PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives use an active adaptive management strategy that relies on both designated wildlife habitat areas and managed lands outside these areas to provide for the viability of wildlife species. These alternatives have a high likelihood of providing sufficient suitable habitat to contribute to the viability of species dependent on late-successional and old-growth forest conditions.

The CUR and MKT alternatives use a passive management strategy that relies solely on designated habitat areas to provide for the viability of certain wildlife species. The managed lands outside these areas would generally not provide suitable habitat for late-successional/old-growth dependent species. The CUR alternative assumes a greater risk than the PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives of not contributing to the viability of a number of wildlife species, while the MKT

alternative may cause a displacement of breeding individuals, which could result over time in populations which are isolated and reduced below threshold levels.

Fisheries, Water, and Riparian Zones

All alternatives protect riparian areas and result in an improvement in watershed condition classes over time. The CUR, MKT, and ECR alternatives have narrower Riparian Reserves than the PRF and OGR alternatives; parts of Riparian Reserves can have scheduled timber harvest under the CUR, MKT, and ECR alternatives, but are reserved from scheduled timber harvest in the PRF and OGR alternatives. The CUR and MKT alternatives have the highest levels of road construction and timber harvest, and the highest relative impact to fisheries, water, and riparian zones through removal of habitat and potential increases in sediment yields. The ECR alternative poses a lower risk than the CUR and MKT alternatives due to the low intensity of timber management. The OGR alternative poses the second lowest risk to these resources. The PRF alternative provides the greatest protection to fisheries, water, and riparian zones due to wider Riparian Reserves as well as the other provisions of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

Transportation and Facilities Management

The CUR, MKT, and ECR alternatives propose a net increase in road miles. The MKT alternative has the largest increase (4.5 percent) in road miles in the first decade. The PRF and OGR alternatives propose a net decrease in road miles. The PRF alternative has the largest decrease (9 percent) in road miles in the first decade.

Fire and Fuels Management

The CUR and MKT alternatives have relatively higher levels of timber-related fuels treatments than the PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives. The PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives have increased risks of catastrophic wildfire due to the emphasis on a multi-storied stand structure that increases ladder fuels. The PRF and OGR alternatives propose a net decrease in road miles; this could result in longer response times, but limited access could also result in fewer human-induced wildfires. The PRF alternative emphasizes the natural role of fire in ecosystems and has the largest acres of fuels treatments to reduce wildfire hazards and enhance other resources.

Roadless and Wilderness Areas

None of the alternatives recommend additional wilderness areas. The PRF and OGR alternatives protect the wilderness attributes in most of all 10 released roadless areas. The PRF alternative designates all roadless areas in Key Watersheds as semi-primitive non-motorized areas, and provides the most dispersed recreation opportunities among alternatives. The CUR alternative protects the wilderness attributes in 8 of the 10 roadless areas. The MKT and ECR alternatives protect the wilderness attributes in 6 of the 10 roadless areas, and provide the fewest dispersed recreation opportunities.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The wild and scenic river boundaries for the Smith and South Fork Tinity rivers are the same in all alternatives. The boundary for the recreational river segments on the Klamath and Tinity rivers are 1/4 mile in the CUR alternative, 300 feet in the MKT and ECR alternatives, and follow the Riparian Reserve boundary in the PRF and OGR alternatives. The boundary for the wild river segment on the North Fork Eel River is 1/4 mile in the CUR alternative, 300 feet in the MKT and ECR alternatives, and approximately 1/4 mile based on watershed considerations in the PRF and OGR alternatives. The PRF alternative finds an additional 20.5 miles of river on Blue, Redwood, and Red Mountain Creeks eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System. The values of these rivers will be protected in a manner that will not diminish their potential for wild, scenic, or recreational classification until suitability studies have been completed.

G. THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferable alternative protects, preserves and enhances historic, heritage, and natural resources; attains the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation; and achieves a balance between population and resource use which permits high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

Based on the analysis in Chapter 4 of the EIS, I judge the PRF alternative to be the environmentally preferable alternative. It emphasizes biological diversity, water, air and visual quality, species viability, ecosystem health

and resilience, recreation, heritage resources, and maintaining the undeveloped condition of wilderness and roadless areas. It attains the widest range of Forest uses without degradation of the environment and best provides for the needs of late-successional/old-growth and aquatic/riparian dependent species.

H. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE GOALS AND PLANS OF OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES AND INDIAN TRIBES.

The goals and plans of other public agencies and Indian Tribes which could be affected by the management of the Forest were considered throughout the planning process. The Final EIS represents these considerations as well as the comments from public agencies that were received during the public comment period.

Federal agencies commenting on the Draft EIS and Forest Plan included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Coastal California Fishery Resource Office), Environmental Protection Agency (Region IX), and Department of the Interior (Office of Environmental Quality and Compliance).

State agencies included the California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Resources Agency of California, California Department of Parks and Recreation (Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation), and California Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Region).

Local governments included Del Norte, Humboldt, and Tinity counties, and the city of Fortuna.

Federally-recognized Indian Tribes included the Karuk and Yurok Tribes; the Tsnungwe Council also commented on the Draft EIS and Forest Plan.

Where possible, the Forest Plan was modified to accommodate the concerns of the above agencies, governments, and Indian Tribes.

The development of the President's Plan, which provides guidance for this Forest Plan, provided extensive coordination of Federal agencies relating to issues affecting late-successional/old-growth and riparian/aquatic species.

Critical habitat and consultation requirements as defined by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for

threatened and endangered species will be followed. Some changes relating to the northern spotted owl are expected in the near future as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service incorporates the provisions of the NW ROD.

Efforts for coordinated planning for fisheries have been on-going for a number of years. The Forest Plan emphasizes continuing these efforts such as the current inter-agency Klamath and Tinity River Basin planning efforts.

I. REASONS FOR SELECTING THE FOREST PLAN

The PRF alternative was chosen because it best meets the needs and concerns of the people of the United States, including concerns for environmental quality. While other alternatives may be more desirable with respect to a single activity, output, or resource, none provides a better mixture of resource benefits and uses while maintaining a healthy and diverse natural environment. The PRF alternative also responds more positively than other alternatives to the issues, concerns, and opportunities raised by the public throughout the planning process.

I believe that the Forest Plan provides the best balance of all alternatives for the Six Rivers National Forest. It incorporates the strongest points of many of the other alternatives considered in detail. The ecosystem approach provides for maintaining a wide variety of habitats that will contribute to maintaining species viability and biological diversity. The PRF alternative has the highest likelihood of all alternatives of providing for the widest array of individual species and groups of species at both the Forest and the regional level.

The PRF alternative provides the most protection for fisheries, water quality, and riparian areas in the long-term through implementation of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, including the use of watershed analysis to provide an ecosystem approach to management.

I believe that the emphasis on using prescribed fire and prescribed natural fire to allow fire to play its regulating role is the best choice for the fire ecology ecosystems of the California Klamath and Coast Range Provinces.

A level of timber production that is supportable and sustainable is identified. Helping communities achieve economic stability through diversification is emphasized

to mitigate some of the adverse effects of a timber program that has been reduced from the historical levels of the last 15 years.

The adaptive management approach in the PRF alternative will allow the Forest the flexibility to respond to rapidly changing needs and desires as well as to incorporate new information as it becomes available.

I selected the PRF alternative because, in my judgement, it maximizes net public benefit. Net public benefit is inherently subjective, as many Forest outputs and effects have a qualitative value that is not easily measured. I have shared the factors I considered before selecting the PRF alternative in this Record of Decision. I believe that the PRF alternative promises the greatest long-term benefit to the public and the natural environment.

J. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

National Forest Management Act

The Plan is consistent with the Pacific Southwest Regional Guide as amended by the NW ROD. Direction from the NW ROD for management of habitat for late-successional and old-growth forest related species was incorporated directly. The Plan implements the requirements of 36 CFR 219.14 through 219.28 (see Plan Chapter 4). As documented in FEIS Appendix A and Appendix O, the coordination and public participation requirements of 36 CFR 219.6 and 219.7 have been met.

National Environmental Policy Act

As required by the National Forest Management Act implementing regulations, the FEIS and Forest Plan were developed using National Environmental Policy Act procedures. These procedures will also be used in reaching decisions on projects developed to implement Plan direction. National Environmental Policy Act procedures are designed to provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of a proposed action prior to its adoption, and to inform the public of, and allow comment on such effects.

The DEIS and proposed Plan were issued for a 90 day public comment period in September 1994 and 325 comment letters were received (FEIS Appendix O). In addition, the final SEIS supplemented the DEIS (NW ROD, page 12). Over 100,000 comments were received on the direction developed in the NW ROD that is

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incorporated directly into the Plan. The DEIS considered seven alternatives and evaluated five in detail.

Cumulative effects of the proposed action and reasonably foreseeable future actions were considered in projecting and displaying most environmental effects out for five decades. The FEIS made use of the best available information. As new information is developed during plan implementation and monitoring, it will be evaluated to determine if amendment or revision following appropriate NEPA procedures is required. The decision here does not authorize timber sales or other project level activities on the Forest Project level decisions that implement Plan direction will also follow appropriate NEPA procedures.

Endangered Species Act

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on direction incorporated from the NW ROD was concluded with the issuance of a biological opinion provided under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act dated February 10, 1994. A second programmatic level biological opinion on implementation of these and other provisions of the Six Rivers National Forest Plan was issued on May 17, 1995. The USFWS determined in its biological opinion that adoption of the Six Rivers Forest Plan is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of any designated critical habitat for those listed species.

Consultation or conferencing as appropriate will also be conducted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on projects that may affect species listed or proposed for listing. Consultation or conferencing as appropriate with the National Marine Fisheries Service will be initiated as anadromous salmonid species and/or critical habitat are proposed for listing or are listed. The steelhead in the Klamath Mountain Province Evolutionarily Significant Unit (which includes the Smith, Klamath, and Trinity river basins) have just been proposed for listing, and conferencing has been initiated with the National Marine Fisheries Service. Steelhead in other areas and the coho salmon are being reviewed for possible listing.

Clean Air Act

The two air basins within the Forest are in compliance with national ambient air quality standards. The Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness is a designated Class I Air Quality Area. The State of California does not have an approved air quality implementation plan, so a conformity determination can not be made at this time.

The Plan includes goals and air quality standards and guidelines. The activities contemplated under the Plan are not expected to degrade air quality.

National Historic Preservation Act

Forest Plans are not undertakings under the National Historic Preservation Act (FSM 2361.24) so consultation pursuant to section 106 of the Act is not required. Consultation on project undertakings that implement Plan direction will be conducted as required by the Act. The Plan includes goals and standards and guidelines for heritage resources, and supports a program for the identification, evaluation, and protection of heritage resources in accordance with section 110 of the Act.

Clean Water Act

The Forest Plan is programmatic and does not authorize dredge and fill activities. Permits are obtained as required for project level activities that implement Plan direction. The Plan includes soil and water goals and standards and guidelines developed in compliance with the Clean Water Act (Plan Chapter 4 and Appendix M). Implementation of the Forest Plan is expected to contribute to protect or restoring the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the waters of the United States in accordance with the Act.

IV. MITIGATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION

Mitigation measures will minimize or eliminate potential conflicts or adverse effects of implementation. Mitigation measures are an integral part of the management requirements contained in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan. These management requirements were developed through an interdisciplinary process and incorporate agency as well as federal, state, and local requirements to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse effects. Additional site-specific mitigation measures will be developed and implemented at the project level.

To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted. Land use allocations also play an important role in mitigation through the separation of incompatible uses.

The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation program is three-fold: (1) to determine if the Forest Plan is being implemented as designed, (2) to determine if

implementation is effectively meeting Forest Plan objectives, and (3) to determine the validity of the initial assumptions used to develop the Forest Plan.

The adaptive management approach and the direction for the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area in the Forest Plan emphasize the use and value of monitoring.

Monitoring can help keep the Forest Plan current and responsive to change. Monitoring and evaluation have distinctly different purposes. Monitoring consists of gathering data. Evaluation analyzes and interprets the information gathered during monitoring. The two processes together allow a determination of whether conditions are within the desired bounds and intent of Forest Plan direction. When there is substantial deviation, Forest Plan amendments or revisions may be required. Evaluation of results of site-specific monitoring will be documented in an annual report available for public review.

in writing and meet the requirements of 36 CFR 217. Two copies must be submitted to the following address:

USDA-Forest Service
National Forest System / Appeals
Attention: Joyce Kelly / 3NW P.O.
Box 96090
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

Appeals must be filed within 90 days from the date this decision is published in the legal notice section of the Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, California.

Recommendations for additions to the National Wild and Scenic River System are not appealable as they will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, and President of the United States. The United States Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. Requests to stay the approval of a Forest Plan shall not be granted (36 CFR 217.10b).

No decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document, although a number of projects are identified. Those projects identified in various parts of the Forest Plan or Final EIS are only included in order to clarify discussions, illustrate a point, or to show that Forest Plan goals and objectives can be achieved. Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Forest Plan implementation after appropriate analysis and documentation meeting NEPA requirements. Parties dissatisfied with a specific project should appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.

I encourage anyone concerned about the Forest Plan or Final EIS to contact the Forest Supervisor at 1330 Bayshore Way, Eureka, California 95501 or at (707) 442-1721 before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve your concern in a less formal way.

**V. PLANNING RECORDS,
AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS, AND
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW**

A. Planning Records

Planning records contain the detailed information used, and records of decisions made, in developing the Forest Plan and Final EIS as required in 36 CFR 219.10. These records are incorporated by reference into the Final EIS and Forest Plan. They are available for review during regular business hours at the following location:

Forest Supervisor's Office
1330 Bayshore Way
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 442-1721

B. Amendments and Revisions

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of the Forest Plan every 10 to 15 years. The Forest Plan may be changed sooner by amendment or revision when needed. The need for change may arise from several sources. The process used regarding amendment or revision is described at 36 CFR 219.10 (f) and (g).

C. Right to Administrative Review

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 217. The notice of appeal must be

VI. SIGNATURE AND DATE

y
/
G. LYNN PRAQUE
Regional Forester

JUN21 1995
Date

PT-13



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Record of Decision

Land and Resource Management Plan

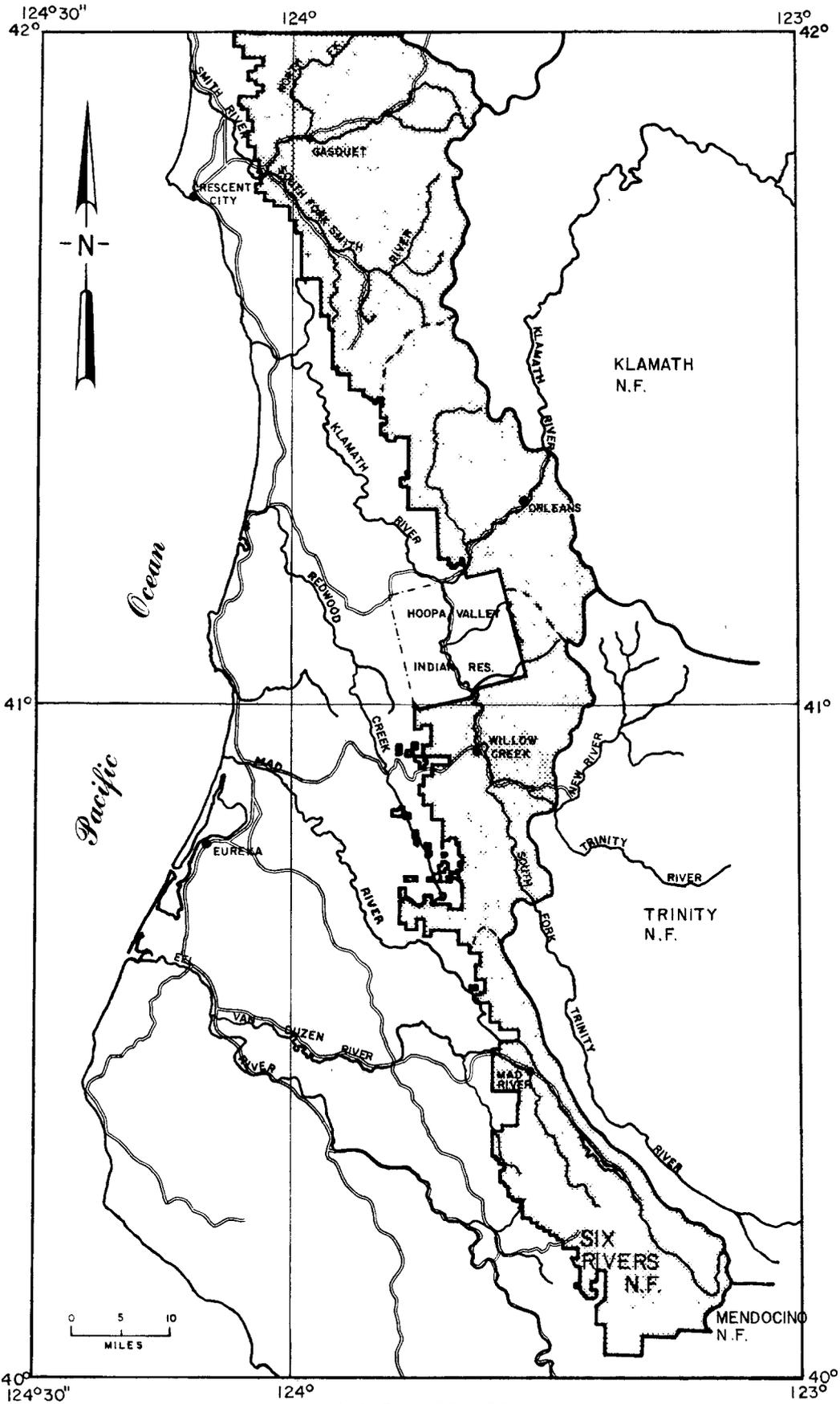
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Southwest
Region

Six Rivers
National Forest



VICINITY MAP



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SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST

RECORD OF DECISION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT AND LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST 1995

*Located within
Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties, California*

Responsible Agency: USDA, Forest Service
Six Rivers National Forest
1330 Bayshore Way
Eureka, CA 95501

Responsible Official: G. Lynn Sprague, Regional Forester
Pacific Southwest Region
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, CA 94111

Recommending Official: Martha J. Kettle, Forest Supervisor
Six Rivers National Forest
1330 Bayshore Way
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This document presents the decision regarding the selection of a land and resource management plan for the Six Rivers National Forest. It summarizes the reasons for choosing the PRF (Preferred) Alternative as the basis for the Forest Plan which will be followed for the next ten to fifteen years, unless amended sooner. Estimates of the long-term environmental, social, and economic consequences contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement were considered in this decision.

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RECORD OF DECISION

Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan

***Six Rivers National Forest
USDA - Forest Service***

***Located within
Del Norte, Humboldt, Siskiyou, and Trinity Counties, California***

INTRODUCTION

The Forest Service has completed a detailed planning process including studies of the lands, resources and socio-economic interest in this National Forest as well as a detailed study and analysis of many different alternatives for management. Five of these alternatives were analyzed and displayed in detail in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Six Rivers National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

This Record of Decision documents my selection and approval of one of these alternatives. The alternative is described in detail in the Forest Plan.

I. THE DECISION

A. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

My decision is to select the PRF alternative (preferred alternative) to provide direction for managing the 958,480 acres of the Six Rivers National Forest (Forest) for the next 10 to 15 years. The PRF alternative was also the preferred alternative in the Draft EIS issued September 29, 1993. It was modified in the Final EIS in response to public comment and incorporates the direction from the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NW ROD) issued April 13, 1994. This document is also called the "President's Plan" and FSEIS ROD.

The Forest Plan provides for coordinated multiple-use with an emphasis on maintaining and restoring ecosystem health. An ecosystem approach is used. It includes an Aquatic Conservation Strategy designed to provide quality habitat for aquatic species. A Late-Successional Reserve system, other land allocations, extensive survey and management requirements, and many other standards and guidelines provide an ecosystem approach to maintaining biological diversity with an emphasis on late-successional and old-growth dependent species. An ecosystem analysis process at the landscape/watershed level will allow forest management to be considered in an integrated, ecological approach.

The Forest contains a portion of the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area (AMA). The purpose of this allocation is to encourage the development and testing of technical and social approaches to achieving desired ecological, economic, and other social objectives.

B. GOVERNING REGULATIONS

I have reviewed the environmental consequences of the Forest Plan and the alternatives disclosed in the Final EIS. I gave particular attention to public comments on the Draft EIS summarized in Appendix O of the Final EIS. I have also reviewed the public issues and management concerns identified during the scoping process for this Forest Plan (Appendix A, Final EIS).

The Final EIS and Forest Plan were developed under the implementing regulations of the National Forest Management Act, Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219 (36 CFR 219) published in 47 FR 43026 on September 30, 1982. The planning actions described in

36 CFR 219.12(b) through (k) have been completed and are properly documented. The National Environmental Policy Act, Council on Environmental Quality Regulations, Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1500-1508 (40 CFR 1500-1508) were followed. Forest Plan preparation was also guided by many other laws and regulations.

C. MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE FOREST PLAN

The major components of the Forest Plan are:

1. Forest Management Goals;
2. The Desired Future Condition of the Forest;
3. Management Area goals, desired conditions, and standard and guidelines;
4. Adaptive Management Area Direction;
5. Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines;
6. Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements;
7. Data Acquisition and Research Needs.

Management direction from the NW ROD has been fully incorporated throughout the above components.

D. MAJOR PROVISIONS OF THE FOREST PLAN

The Forest Plan requires active stewardship and participative management to provide for environmental health and community stability in a sustainable manner. The Forest Plan takes an ecosystem approach using the adaptive management process.

The ecosystem approach includes, but is not limited to, the following features:

1. Special Habitat and Managed Habitat Management Areas are designed to provide habitat for species dependent on late-successional and old-growth forest conditions, including threatened and endangered species. The Special Habitat Management Area includes the Late-Successional Reserve system from the NW ROD.
2. An Aquatic Conservation Strategy established by the NW ROD includes Riparian Reserves, Key Watersheds, watershed analysis, and watershed restoration, and is designed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and the aquatic ecosystems contained within them.

3. Ecosystem analysis at the landscape/watershed level, including the watershed analysis described in the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, is used to assess management concerns in an ecosystem approach and will be an integral part of Forest Plan implementation.

An adaptive management approach will be used throughout the Forest. This approach consists of a continuing process of action-based planning, monitoring, researching, evaluating, and adjusting with the objective of improving implementation and achieving Forest Plan goals.

The major provisions of this Forest Plan are summarized below.

Biological Diversity

Biological diversity is provided for by establishing a large system of reserves, and managing the matrix outside these reserves to maintain a distribution of vegetation types, seral stages, and patch sizes that is within the historical range of variability. Approximately 91 percent of the Forest is within reserves, including Late-Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, Wilderness, portions of the Smith River National Recreation Area, and other Congressional and Administrative Withdrawals; scheduled timber harvest is not permitted in these areas. Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves from the NW ROD comprise about 458,600 acres, or 48 percent of the Forest. The primary management emphasis in these areas is the protection and enhancement of late-successional/old-growth and riparian/aquatic habitat.

On Matrix and AMA lands where timber harvest can occur, at least 15 percent of area associated with each cutting unit (stand) will be retained as large green trees, as established by the NW ROD. Down logs will be retained at an average of 80 to 100 percent of the levels currently found in mature and old-growth stands on the Forest. Snags will be retained at levels sufficient to support species of cavity-nesting birds at 40 percent of potential population levels. Hardwoods will be retained relative to their abundance in the stand prior to harvest. These structural components will provide a legacy that bridges past and future forests. Silvicultural prescriptions will minimize fragmentation across the landscape. The use of native species for revegetation will be emphasized.

Port-Orford-cedar (POC) is present and growing well across the landscape on the Smith River NRA and in some areas of the Orleans and Lower Trinity Ranger Districts. The POC root disease, *Phytophthora lateralis*, is currently present in parts of the Smith river drainage in the Smith River NRA. The Klamath and Trinity river drainages to the south remain uninfected with the POC root disease. The Forest Plan provides for the reduction of risk to Port-Orford-cedar from infection by *Phytophthora lateralis*, and prevention of the spread of the POC root disease. The Plan further allows for the use of risk analyses and development of appropriate disease control strategies on a site or drainage-specific basis.

Wildlife

A number of elements from the NW ROD provide for wildlife species. Late-Successional Reserves are included in the Special Habitat Management Area to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional/old-growth forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for late-successional/old-growth related species, including the northern spotted owl. Riparian Reserves provide travel and dispersal corridors for many terrestrial animals and plants. All spotted owl activity centers known as of January 1, 1994, will retain 100 acres of habitat around the activity center. The Forest falls entirely within marbled murrelet zones 1 and 2, and habitat within a 0.5 mile radius of occupied marbled murrelet habitat will be protected. Protection buffers provide habitat for specific rare and locally endemic species of nonvascular plants, amphibians, and birds.

In addition to the management direction in the NW ROD, the Forest Plan has a number of provisions for wildlife species. Forest-wide standards and guidelines provide for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species outside reserved areas. Nesting habitat for the bald eagle and peregrine falcon will be protected as part of the Special Habitat Management Area to meet recovery plan objectives. The Managed Habitat Management Area includes habitat for the American marten and other late-successional/old-growth related species. Interim direction for goshawk management includes the establishment of primary nest zones and foraging habitat zones.

Aquatic Conservation Strategy

The Aquatic Conservation Strategy is incorporated from the NW ROD and was developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. The strategy is designed to protect salmon

and steelhead habitat. The components of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy are: Riparian Reserves; Key Watersheds; watershed analysis; and watershed restoration.

Riparian reserves are designated along perennial and intermittent streams, lakes, ponds, reservoirs, wetlands, and unstable and potentially unstable areas. There are approximately 103,480 acres of Riparian Reserves within the Matrix and AMA on the Forest. The primary management objectives are to maintain and restore riparian structures and functions on intermittent streams, confer benefits to riparian dependent and associated species other than fish, enhance habitat conservation for organisms that are dependent on the transition zone between riparian and upslope areas, improve travel and dispersal corridors for many terrestrial species and plants, and provide for greater connectivity of the watershed.

Key Watersheds serve as refugia for maintaining and recovering habitat for at-risk stocks of anadromous salmonids and resident fish species. There are nine Key Watersheds on the Forest covering 664,960 acres, or 70 percent of the Forest. Key Watersheds overlay Forest Plan land allocations and management prescriptions.

Watershed analysis is a systematic procedure to characterize the processes and interactions occurring within a watershed. It will serve as a basis for developing project-specific proposals, monitoring, and restoration needs for a watershed, and will be a primary method of landscape analysis on the Forest. Watershed analysis is required in Key Watersheds, roadless areas in non-Key Watersheds, and Riparian Reserves prior to most resource management activities. It is also recommended in non-Key watersheds.

Watershed restoration will be an integral part of a program to aid recovery of fish habitat, riparian habitat, and water quality. Restoration will be based on watershed analysis and planning. The most important components of watershed restoration are the control and prevention of road-related runoff and sediment production, restoration of the condition of riparian vegetation, and restoration of in-stream habitat complexity.

Social and Economic

The Rural Community Assistance Program is emphasized to assist communities dependent on forest-

related resources and impacted by the federal decisions related to those resources. The program emphasis is to help communities increase their capacity for self-determination by helping to organize local community action planning teams, and to develop and implement community action plans.

Native American Trust Responsibility

Eleven Native American Contemporary Use Areas will be managed to preserve their natural character. Management activities within Cultural Districts eligible for the National Register of Historic Places will be closely coordinated with Federally-recognized Tribes through the Tribal Government Program in accordance with the Government-to-Government Agreement.

Research Natural Areas

The Forest Plan establishes the Adorni and Ruth Research Natural Areas, and will allocate approximately 6,980 acres for a total of eight areas to be managed as Research Natural Areas. Additional areas include the Craig's Creek, Hennessey Ridge, L.E. Horton, North Trinity Mountain, Soldier, and Upper Goose Research Natural Areas.

Special Interest Areas

Seven Special Interest Areas are designated under 36 CFR. 294.1. Approximately 660 acres of these areas are located outside other designated reserves. The seven areas are the Broken Rib Mountain Ecological Area, the Bluff Creek Geologic Area, the Lassics Botanical/Geologic Area, and the Bear Basin Butte, Myrtle Creek, North Fork Smith River, and Horse Mountain Botanical Areas.

To prevent the introduction of the Port-Orford-cedar root disease into uninfested areas of the North Fork Smith River Botanical Area, FS Road 18N13 will be closed to vehicle access. Vehicle access into remaining areas (FS Road 18N09 and associated spur roads) will be prohibited pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50; the prohibition exempts officials pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50(d)(4) and persons with a permit, special use authorization, or operating plan, as defined in 36 CFR 261.2, issued by the District Ranger or higher ranked authorized official. Access will not be allowed during the wet season and during periods of heavy rain in the summer.

Transportation and Facilities Management

The management direction in the NW ROD provides that there will be no net increase in road miles within Key Watersheds which comprise about 70 percent of the Forest, and there will be no road construction in inventoried roadless areas within Key Watersheds.

The rate of road construction will be significantly reduced from past levels. New construction will average 2.5 miles per year, and road decommissioning will average 25 miles per year during the first decade. The combination of construction and decommissioning will result in a net decrease of 220 miles, or 9 percent of the Forest road network, during the next decade.

Fire and Fuels Management

The Plan recognizes the important role fire plays in the forest ecosystem. Efforts in prevention, suppression, hazard reduction, fire use, and fire rehabilitation will complement one another in support of ecosystem management. Increased emphasis is placed on natural fuels treatment. Approximately 5,390 acres of fuels will be treated annually, emphasizing a combination of mechanical treatments and prescribed fire. Of this, 4,000 acres will be hazard-related fuels treatments to reduce the risk of stand-replacing wildfire; this represents a large increase from past levels.

Range

Utilization guidelines will be used to maintain the health of rangeland ecosystems. These guidelines will be updated as more data is collected. Ecosystem analysis, Annual Operating Instructions, and Rangeland Project Decision documents will be used to determine appropriate stocking and distribution of livestock to achieve optimum utilization and prevent deterioration of the range and other resources. Grazing will remain near the current level of 6,610 animal months (AMs) per year. Range use will be consistent with management area goals, including Riparian Reserve direction from the NW ROD.

Recreation

Developed recreation opportunities will be adequate to meet projected demand. Approximately 50 percent of developed sites will be rehabilitated during the first decade to respond to changing user needs and accessibility requirements. Major facility construction

will occur within the Smith River National Recreation Area according to the Smith River National Recreation Area Management Plan; minor site construction will occur elsewhere. Trails will be maintained on the average of every three years and expand to include management for equestrian and mountain bike use. About 16 miles of trail will be constructed or reconstructed during the first decade. Staging areas with facilities to accommodate OHV use will be constructed during the first decade.

Roadless and Wilderness Areas

Four wilderness areas are located partially or wholly on the Forest and comprise 13 percent of the total Forest, approximately 123,150 acres. No new wildernesses are recommended.

There are 10 remaining roadless areas of 117,150 acres on the Forest. As direction in the NW ROD states that there will be no new road construction in roadless areas in Key Watersheds, roadless areas in Key Watersheds will be managed for semi-primitive non-motorized recreational opportunities. This includes the following roadless areas: North Fork Smith, Kalmiopsis, Kelly, Ship Mountain, Siskiyou B, Blue Creek, Slide Creek, Orleans C, and portions of Orleans B. Three released roadless areas that no longer meet the roadless area criteria will also have a semi-primitive non-motorized designation. These are the Underwood, Cow Creek and Board Camp areas. All other released roadless areas will be managed according to the direction of the management area in which they occur. The Forest Plan will maintain approximately 95 percent of the remaining roadless areas in a condition that will retain or only slightly alter their wilderness attributes.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The Klamath, Trinity, and North Fork Eel river segments that are included in the Wild and Scenic River System under Secretary of the Interior designation will be recommended for inclusion into the System under Congressional designation. The recreational river corridor widths for the Klamath and Trinity (main fork) rivers will follow the Riparian Reserve Management Area boundary; private lands, known encroached areas, and mineral fractions qualifying for Small Tracts Act (STA conveyance) will be excluded. The wild river segment of the North Fork Eel River will be approximately one quarter mile from each bank, based on viewshed considerations, with exceptions for private lands. Appendix J of the Forest Plan and the Resource

Map in the map packet accompanying the Forest Plan contain detailed boundaries for these segments. The Forest Plan allocates 366 miles of river included in the National Wild and Scenic River System, including 95 miles of wild, 42 miles of scenic, and 229 miles of recreational river. In addition, an eligibility study performed during the development of the final Plan found an additional 20.5 miles of river on Blue Creek, Redwood Creek, and Red Mountain Creek to be eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; these segments will be protected in a condition that will not diminish their potential for wild, scenic, or recreational classification until suitability studies have been performed.

Timber

Approximately 87,700 acres, 9 percent of the Forest, was determined to be capable, available, and suitable for sustained timber production (regulated land) in the Forest Plan. The average annual Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) is estimated at 15.5 million board feet (MMBF) in the first decade. The ASQ in the Final Plan is 4.5 MMBF less than the Draft Plan. The decrease is primarily due to an increase in the size of Riparian Reserves. The adjustment to the ASQ was made as a result of direction provided in the NW ROD as well as other changes made between the Draft and Final EIS.

The ASQ includes programmed volume obtained from regulated land. This does not include volume that could come from salvage or thinning on unregulated land. An estimated 3 MMBF is anticipated each year from unregulated land to help maintain ecosystem health.

The selection of site-specific silvicultural prescriptions at the project level will be based on analysis of current and desired conditions as well as laws and regulations. Clearcutting is not scheduled, but could be considered under restricted conditions when appropriate for meeting land management objectives. Green tree retention will be the primary regeneration method, and involves leaving both individual and clumped live trees on at least 15 percent of the area associated with the cutting unit (stand); snags, down logs, and hardwoods will also be retained based on the vegetation type and seral stage of the stand.

In areas where timber growth and yields are not emphasized, silvicultural prescriptions will be used to create desired forest conditions to enhance other resource objectives.

E. FOREST PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Forest Plan will be implemented 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS and Record of Decision appear in the Federal Register.

As soon as practicable after approval of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the Forest Plan as provided for in 36 CFR 219.10(e).

As provided in 36 CFR 219.10, this decision will remain in effect until the Forest Plan is revised. This is normally every 10 to 15 years or as conditions demand. A 50-year planning period was used in the Final EIS so effects of alternative choices could be projected beyond the first decade. Short-term opportunities, problems, or conflicts not anticipated in the Forest Plan may arise in managing the Forest. When this occurs, the Forest Plan can be adjusted through rescheduling, amendment, or revision.

As a management strategy for the Six Rivers National Forest, this Forest Plan and Final EIS are programmatic. The emphasis in the Forest Plan is not on site-specific decisions. Rather, it provides overall systematic guidance and establishes management direction to govern future actions.

In order to fully implement the Forest Plan (including activities as scheduled, goods and services, mitigation and monitoring), the Forest Plan projects a budget of \$19.9 million per year in the first decade. After adjustment for inflation, this represents a 12 percent decrease in funding from the 1989 base year. Actual annual budgets affect the rate of implementation of the Forest Plan and directly affect the outputs produced in any given period. Over time, if annual budgets differ from the projected budget needs estimated by the Plan, the rate of achievement of Plan goals and objectives will be slowed. The schedule of implementation is not expected to adversely affect the long term goals and objectives of the Forest Plan.

II. ALTERNATIVES AND ISSUES CONSIDERED

A. ISSUES CONSIDERED

The scoping process to determine the issues, concerns, and opportunities for the Forest Plan has been on-going since 1979. A Draft EIS and Plan were published in 1987. The Regional Forester withdrew the 1987 Draft in 1990 due to the establishment of the Smith River National Recreation Area and the listing of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. These two actions changed the scope and analysis of the issues developed in the 1987 Draft. In December 1990, a 30 day scoping period was provided to verify issues raised previously and to identify additional issues. Issues brought up during this 30 day period were added to the previously identified issues and all issues were analyzed and summarized.

A new Draft EIS and Plan were issued in September 1993. Two new issues relating to the management of special forest products were analyzed during the 90 day comment period on the Draft EIS and Plan.

A total of 38 issues were grouped into 27 categories. The categories were also grouped. The Physical Environment group contains issues relating to geology, soils, water and air. The Biological Environment group contains issues relating to biological diversity, genetics, sensitive plant species, wildlife, riparian zones, and fisheries. Social and economic issues are contained in the Social and Economic Environment. The Resource Management Program group contains issues relating to the management of research natural areas, special interest areas, the Humboldt Nursery, law enforcement, heritage resources, transportation and facilities, fire and fuels, energy, lands, minerals, range, recreation, roadless and wilderness areas, wild and scenic rivers, timber, trees with special management consideration, special forest products, pests, and visual quality. A complete list of issues can be found in Chapter 1 of the Final EIS. Discussions of how issues were addressed can be found in Chapters 2 and 4 of the Final EIS and Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan.

B. ALTERNATIVES

Of the range of alternatives developed, five were considered in detail in the Draft and Final EIS. Information about the alternative development process can be found in Chapter 2 and Appendix A of the Final EIS.

Public review of the Draft EIS and Plan helped focus on major public issues and concerns. As a result, the Forest adjusted the PRF alternative in response to public comment and the minor changes in management direction from the NW ROD. The PRF alternative was the only alternative that received substantial comment during the public comment period, and was the only alternative modified in the Final EIS. Other alternatives were modified slightly to update information and provide a broader range of alternatives in terms of range management, fire and fuels management, and recreation program management.

Current/RPA Alternative (CUR)

The CUR alternative manages the Forest based on current direction, standards and guidelines, laws, regulations, and policies. The current situation emphasizes timber growth and harvest, anadromous fisheries, maintaining habitat for listed and proposed threatened, endangered, and sensitive species of wildlife, and recreation. All silvicultural treatments would be available under this alternative. This alternative includes northern spotted owl Habitat Conservation Areas (HCAs) as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)-designated critical habitat areas; both of these land allocations would be removed from the timber-suited land base. Timber management complies with the 50-11-40 rule, which states that 50 percent of each quarter township outside HCAs must contain at least 11 inch average diameter stands with at least a 40 percent canopy closure.

The CUR alternative is also consistent with the Resource Planning Act (RPA) direction issued May 1990, aimed at increasing emphasis in recreation, wildlife, soil and water stewardship, and maintaining historical levels of timber outputs. Since that time, the Forest's fish, wildlife, soils, watershed, and recreation programs have all received increased funding, and recreation has been emphasized with the creation of the Smith River National Recreational Area. The result of meeting RPA noncommodity objectives has been a corresponding reduction in timber harvesting as compared to historical levels.

Preferred Alternative (PRF)

The theme of this alternative is to use an ecosystem management approach to maintaining healthy forest ecosystems. Biological diversity will be maintained by establishing a large system of reserved areas and managing the matrix outside reserved areas to maintain a desired distribution of vegetation types, successional

stages, and patch sizes. An Aquatic Conservation Strategy will be implemented to maintain and restore the ecological health of watersheds. The production of goods and services will be determined by ecological capabilities and the desired condition of specific ecosystems, as well as social and economic considerations. This alternative fully incorporates management direction from the FSEIS ROD.

Compared to the current situation, the PRF alternative reduces open road densities, increases total forest cover, significantly reduces clearcutting, and regenerates timber stands with a multi-storied stand prescription retaining large green trees, snags, down logs, and hardwoods. Harvest sequences will be designed to reduce habitat fragmentation, and to mimic natural disturbance regimes such as fire cycles. This alternative uses the system of Late-Successional Reserves established in the NW ROD and relies on Riparian Reserves rather than the 50-11-40 rule to provide connectivity and dispersal habitat outside Late-Successional Reserves and other reserved areas.

Modifications to the PRF alternative between the Draft and Final EIS as a result of incorporating direction from the NW ROD include enlarging the size of Riparian Reserves and removing the requirement for 180-year timber rotations. Modifications in response to public comment include: developing a vegetation management strategy to achieve desired distributions of seral stages within different vegetation types and zones on the Forest; increasing the acres of fuels treatment to recognize the role of fire in forest ecosystems; removing the Special Regeneration Management Area from the timber-suited land base due to the difficulty in regenerating low productivity sites; identifying three additional rivers, Blue Creek, Redwood Creek, and Red Mountain Creek, as eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System; and adding management direction for biological diversity, special forest products, Port-Orford-cedar, range, Native American trust responsibility, and recreation. This Record of Decision also recommends Congressional designation for all Secretary of Interior-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Old Growth Reserve (OGR)

The OGR alternative uses a network of "Old Growth Reserves" (OGRs) to provide protection for ecologically significant late-successional/old-growth ecosystems, species, and processes including, but not limited to, the northern spotted owl. This alternative is similar to alternative 12C of the Report of the Scientific Panel on Late-Successional Forest Ecosystems (Johnson et al., 1991).

The OGR alternative would manage the timber-suited land base at an extended 180-year rotation length, reduce open road densities, significantly reduce clearcutting, reduce habitat fragmentation, and maintain an average green tree retention of six trees per acre at regeneration. This alternative emphasizes silvicultural prescriptions that create multi-storied stand conditions as in the PRF alternative, but on a slightly larger timber-suited land base. A system of key watersheds would be established to provide habitat essential to the aid in the recovery of anadromous fish stocks, and to maintain aquatic biodiversity of the riparian ecosystem.

Market Products Alternative (MKT)

This alternative emphasizes timber production, commercial salmon fisheries, and developed recreation. Limitations on the timber land base and management intensity are those minimum levels set by current policy and regulation. The purpose of the MKT alternative is to produce outputs with commercial value. Timber outputs are increased relative to other alternatives by making more land available for timber production and by using clearcutting as the primary method of harvest (except in the Smith River National Recreation Area). Fisheries enhancement would focus on capital investments to improve spawning and rearing habitat for chinook salmon with supplementation of production through construction of spawning channels and facilities. The focus of recreation would be on developing sites and facilities. Open road densities would remain approximately what they are currently.

This alternative results in the highest sustainable timber harvest levels, and the highest relative risk to the viability of the northern spotted owl and other old-growth dependent wildlife species.

Ecorotation Alternative (ECR)

This alternative uses a silvicultural prescription designed to mimic natural processes of timber stand replacement and provide a natural range and distribution of habitats. Compared to the current situation, the ECR alternative would result in a large reduction in harvest levels. No more than 3 percent of the timber-suited land base would be treated per decade, and 55 percent of each watershed would be maintained in an old-growth condition. Silvicultural prescriptions would be designed to minimize fragmentation and maintain large contiguous patches of late seral vegetation. Regeneration harvesting would be done in a variety of patch sizes and will maintain a legacy similar to that in the PRF alternative.

The ECR alternative requires a large land base to yield the desired distribution of habitats. Only those management areas which are legally mandated would be reserved from timber management. Implementing this alternative requires a 20 to 30 year adjustment period to allow reduction in existing habitat fragmentation and manage mature stands to maintain old-growth characteristics.

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Forest conducted an active public participation program. It included mailings, meetings, and presentations to the general public, special interest groups, tribal representatives as well as elected officials and agency representatives of state, local, and national governments throughout the planning process. Refer to Appendix A of the Final EIS, Consultation with Others.

A revised notice of intent to prepare an EIS for the Forest Plan was published in the Federal Register on December 12, 1990 when the planning process was re-initiated after the withdrawal of the 1987 Draft EIS and Plan. A notice of availability of the Draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan was published in the Federal Register on October 8, 1993, and announced by area news media. Over 300 copies of the complete set of documents (proposed Forest Plan, Draft EIS, Summary, and map packet) and about 400 copies of the Summary alone were distributed to the public. Open houses and public briefings were held during the comment period which lasted through January 6, 1994. Over 300 individuals, organizations, Federal, State, and local agencies, and Indian Tribes commented on the proposed Forest Plan and Draft EIS. All comments were considered in the preparation of the final document and in the selection of the PRF alternative as the Forest Plan.

III. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This section describes the significant factors forming the basis for my selection of the PRF alternative as the Forest Plan. These factors took into consideration the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified through the planning process, public comments on the Draft EIS, and new information and changing direction.

No single factor determined my decision. Rather, using professional judgment and experience, many factors were considered and weighed, including monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits, land capability, protection of the basic resources, and public desires as well as

advice and suggestions from other agencies, organizations, and experienced Forest officers. Based on consideration of all factors, the Forest Plan sets a course that results in the greatest overall long-term benefit to the public.

A. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC ISSUES/ COMMENTS

This Record of Decision reflects the many helpful comments received from agencies, Indian Tribes, organizations, and the public on the Draft EIS and Forest Plan. The comments on the Draft EIS were primarily focused on the PRF alternative. All comments were considered closely and many were used to help improve the analyses and documentation as well as to modify the PRF alternative. Substantive comments and the Forest's response to them can be found in Appendix O of the Final EIS.

The concerns highlighted below are critical concerns that are not covered elsewhere in this Record of Decision. A complete summary of how issues were resolved can be found in Chapter 2 of the Forest Plan and in Table II-12 in the Final EIS.

1. Concern: It is difficult to comment on the Draft EIS and Plan when it is not clear how the documents will be affected by the President's Plan. There is no opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS and Plan after finalization of the President's Plan.

Response: How the Draft EIS and Forest Plan were affected by the President's Plan were disclosed by the following methods:

The Draft President's Plan was referenced in the Draft EIS and was made available to the public. The Draft President's Plan (DSEIS) described the relationship to the Draft EIS and Forest Plan. The Draft EIS included an Addendum that described the relationship to the Draft President's Plan.

The relationship between the Forest Plan and the President's Plan was described at public meetings and briefings held on both the Draft EIS and Plan and the Draft President's Plan.

The NW ROD was signed on April 13, 1994. Changes made between the Draft and Final President's Plan were described in the FSEIS and the NW ROD. The changes made between the draft and final versions of the President's Plan were relatively minor and did not

warrant issuance of another supplemental EIS on the President's Plan.

The relationship between the Draft EIS and Forest Plan and the President's Plan was explained further in the FSEIS and NW ROD. The FSEIS supplemented the Draft EIS for the Draft Forest Plan (NW ROD, page 12) and had its own comment period (NW ROD, page 65). The FSEIS provided direction for completion of the Final Forest Plan (NW ROD, Appendix A, page A-2); that direction has been fully incorporated into the Final Forest Plan.

Based on the opportunities to comment, the relatively minor changes made to the Forest Plan as a result of public comment, and finalization of the President's Plan, I felt that an additional opportunity for comment was not warranted.

2. Concern: The Forest Plan should provide stronger protection for riparian areas, as they are critical to the protection of aquatic resources, anadromous fish stocks, and water quality.

Response: Riparian reserves in the PRF alternative were widened between the draft and final plans to provide more protection for riparian and aquatic resources. I feel that the Aquatic Conservation Strategy in the PRF alternative, with its large Riparian Reserves, management of Key Watersheds as refugia for at-risk species, extensive watershed analysis requirements, and watershed restoration program along with the standards and guidelines, will maintain watershed health and minimize cumulative watershed effects better than any other alternative. The watershed restoration programs will also help mitigate past and future activities and restore ecosystem health.

The projected levels of timber harvest and road construction in the PRF alternative are lower than in all other alternatives; this alternative also projects the largest decrease in miles of road. The potential for cumulative watershed effects is the lowest among alternatives due to the low levels of road construction and timber harvest, the decrease in road miles, and the watershed restoration program. The PRF alternative is expected to have the greatest increase in watershed condition class by the fifth decade.

Approximately 70 percent of the Forest is within Key Watersheds. These watersheds have the highest priority for watershed restoration programs. Watershed analysis is required prior to most resource management activities in Key Watersheds, and is recommended in all other

watersheds. Watershed analysis will provide an interdisciplinary, integrated approach to management and has a critical role in providing for aquatic and riparian habitat protection.

3. Concern: The Draft EIS and Forest Plan did not contain sections specifically addressing biological diversity. The Final EIS and Forest Plan must contain provisions for maintaining adequate biological diversity, particularly late-successional/old-growth habitat, to provide for species viability.

Response: Although the Draft EIS and Forest Plan addressed biological diversity as it relates to various resources in a number of sections, there was no section that summarized the effects on biological diversity. A biological diversity section has been added to both the Final EIS and Forest Plan to provide greater emphasis for this important issue.

I believe that the PRF alternative will best maintain adequate biological diversity to provide for species viability needs. The emphasis on late-successional/old-growth related species described earlier should provide quality habitat to help recover at-risk species and meet the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. Land allocations and management direction are designed to maintain species, community, and genetic diversity. Diversity will be provided through a recommended management range of vegetative types and seral stages; this recommended management range is a subset of the historical range of variability that reflects current climatic conditions and the emphasis on maintaining late-successional/old-growth forest conditions. The recommended management range also provides a buffer against unpredictable large-scale wildfires.

Large reserves with restricted management activities provide contiguous blocks of late seral habitat for a number of species; these large reserves comprise approximately 70 percent of the Forest. Reserved areas will be connected through a network of Riparian Reserves that provides travel and dispersal corridors as well as greater connectivity of watersheds. Riparian Reserves and other small reserved areas comprise an additional 21 percent of the Forest. Matrix and Hayfork AMA lands that are timber-suited comprise the remaining 9 percent of the Forest; these areas also play an important role in maintaining biodiversity. Stands will be managed to achieve the recommended management range of vegetation types and seral stages, and regenerated stands will retain late-successional/old-growth structural components, including green trees, snags, and down logs.

The most recent scientific thinking indicates that the ecosystem approach of land allocations such as Late-Successional Reserves, Riparian Reserves, and the Managed Habitat Management Area will be more effective than the more traditional approaches of the other alternatives.

The survey and manage requirements in the PRF alternative will assure that currently unknown species are identified and adequately provided for during project implementation. Standards and guidelines also provide for special habitat types such as hardwoods, riparian areas, caves, snags, and down logs. Early seral habitat will be provided through regeneration as well as natural disturbances such as fire and windthrow.

The PRF alternative is projected to have the most acreage of old-growth habitat by the end of the fifth decade. I believe that it has the most potential for achieving the recommended management range outlined in the Forest Plan and for maintaining desirable characteristics in Late-Successional Reserves due to permitting fuels and silvicultural treatments in reserves to maintain ecosystem health. These activities can enhance the development of late-successional stand characteristics and reduce the risk of catastrophic stand-replacing fires, insect infestation, and disease.

4. Concern: Remaining roadless areas should either be recommended as wilderness or should remain roadless to provide for sensitive watershed, botanical, wildlife, riparian, and recreation needs.

Response: I believe that the land allocations and management direction in the Forest Plan will better provide for the above needs than the allocation of additional wilderness. The released roadless areas fall within a number of land allocations that provide for wildlife and riparian needs such as Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves. These reserves allow for management to enhance late-successional and riparian habitat which is critical for many threatened and endangered species and could not be provided under a wilderness designation. Due to the emphasis on maintaining and restoring ecosystem health and the low projected demand for wilderness use on the Forest over the next 50 years relative to the current supply, I did not feel that additional wilderness recommendations were warranted.

There are currently 117,150 acres in 10 roadless areas on the Forest. Approximately 95 percent of the remaining roadless areas will remain roadless and will be allocated to areas reserved from timber harvest and other

commodity production activities. The NW ROD directs that inventoried roadless areas within Key Watersheds will not have any roads constructed within them; these areas will have a semi-primitive non-motorized designation in the Forest Plan and can provide varied dispersed recreation opportunities.

5. Concern: The Forest should conduct a comprehensive, Forest-wide assessment of all potential wild and scenic rivers, and should recommend additional rivers for inclusion to the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Response: The Forest completed a comprehensive Forest-wide eligibility study during the development of the Final EIS and Forest Plan. The study found three additional segments, Blue Creek, Redwood Creek, and Red Mountain Creek, eligible for inclusion to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (see Final EIS Appendix D). A suitability study will be performed for these segments. Not all river segments identified by the public were found eligible. Some rivers identified by the public did not have truly outstandingly remarkable values when compared with other rivers in the Forest and in the Region.

6. Concern: The low timber harvest level in the Forest Plan will affect local jobs, economies, and lifestyles.

The projected ASQ for the PRF alternative is 15.5 MMBF. The ASQ for Key Watersheds and non-Key Watersheds is disaggregated and displayed separately in the Forest Plan due to the higher level of uncertainty regarding future sale levels within Key Watersheds. In addition, an estimated unscheduled volume of about 3 MMBF per year could be generated from unregulated lands to help achieve objectives of ecosystem health.

The ASQ is significantly lower than historical levels, and will impact employment and unemployment rates, 25 percent receipts to counties, and the lifestyle of people who are dependent on commodity outputs from the Forest. However, the ASQ is expected to be more stable than it has been over the past 15 years when changes in laws and regulations continually reduced the land base available for timber production.

The Rural Community Assistance Program and the Forest Plan emphasis on encouraging the use of non-traditional and of Native American traditional forest products could help diversify and stabilize local communities in the long-term. However, the transition will not be easy for many local residents.

B. CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Changes have been made to the Final EIS and Forest Plan to incorporate the management direction provided in the NW ROD and in response to public comments. The Final Forest Plan is fully consistent with the NW ROD.

C. ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

Each alternative considered in detail is a combination of resource objectives, direction, and outputs that portray a certain management scenario. All alternatives were designed to achieve the greatest net public benefit. Net public benefit is the overall long-term value of all outputs and benefits minus all associated inputs, adverse effects, and costs. Factors which cannot be measured in monetary terms are included as well as those which can.

The primary measure used in determining economic efficiency is present net value (PNV). PNV is an estimate of the market value of resources after all costs have been subtracted. The PNV for the alternatives in the Final EIS is closely tied to the ASQ for each alternative. The MKT alternative has the highest PNV among alternatives because it produces the most timber, and is followed by the CUR, OGR, PRF, and ECR alternatives.

While PNV is a useful comparison of commodity outputs and costs, it is not the only criteria used in selecting an alternative for implementation. Intangible benefits that cannot be measured in dollars, such as providing for species viability and water quality, are also considered. Both priced and non-priced benefits are used to determine net public benefit which is an expression of the overall, long-term value to the nation of all outputs and costs. For the reasons discussed in sections G and I, I find the PRF alternative to be superior to those alternatives with higher PNVs.

D. CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

The PRF alternative serves to adjust the output targets of the 1990 RPA Program as assigned to the Six Rivers National Forest. The Final Forest Plan provides an appropriate level of all outputs while protecting basic soil, water, wildlife, fishery, and riparian resources and responding to public preferences. It provides commodity

outputs at such a level that amenity values are maintained and enhanced. While some other alternatives provide higher levels of commodity outputs, they present a greater risk to values associated with wildlife, fisheries, riparian areas, roadless areas, and visual quality. The Forest Plan does not allow the Forest to meet its share of 1990 RPA goals for such elements as timber sale quantity, road construction, and livestock grazing, but it exceeds RPA goals for recreation use, trail construction, fisheries, wildlife, watershed improvement, and reduction in clearcut acres.

E. SOCIAL EFFECTS AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

The Forest plays an important role in the social and economic life of those living within or adjacent to the Forest. Residents of Del Norte, Humboldt, and Trinity counties are most directly affected by Forest activities. In addition to environmental considerations, factors such as jobs, local government revenues, recreational opportunities, the needs of future generations, and social and economic stability were considered in my decision.

Activities in the PRF alternative will generate about 1,070 jobs per year in the first decade; this is 46 percent of the jobs generated in the 1989 base year. Lower timber harvest levels are the primary reason for the decline.

County revenues from the PRF alternative are estimated at about \$1.4 million per year from National Forest Fund receipts; this is a large drop from the \$4.0 million in average annual receipts to counties for the years 1981-1990. The majority of these receipts came from timber sales in the past, with minor amounts from range allotment payments, recreational user fees, and special use permit fees. The PRF alternative is estimated to generate about \$200,000 per year in yield taxes to counties. This is lower than all alternatives except the ECR alternative. Yield tax receipts were \$900,000 in the 1989 base year.

The social effects of the PRF alternative are as diverse as the publics who are stakeholders in the management of the Forest. People who are economically linked to the Forest's outputs will benefit significantly less than in the past. Timber industry-related workers will find fewer opportunities for employment and income; making the transition to other types of employment will be difficult and frustrating for many. People who prefer amenity values will benefit from increased protection for non-cash resources. Native Americans will benefit from the

protection of cultural sites and an increased emphasis on coordinated management of traditionally collected special forest products. Recreation opportunities will be slightly higher than historical levels, and the quality of the recreation experience will be higher. This will benefit the recreational users of the Forest as well as the service sector of the local economy.

Although priced economic benefits will be lower than in the past due to lower timber harvest levels, I believe that the harvest level projected in the PRF alternative is sustainable over time based on ecosystem management principles. This should provide stability for local economies, rather than the wide fluctuations experienced in the last 15 years. In addition, the Rural Community Assistance Program described earlier will help local economies diversify and attain economic stability. It is important to note that the Rural Community Assistance Program cannot fully alleviate the economic impacts associated with lower timber harvest levels. It will take commitment and cooperation to effect positive economic change.

Local communities are in an economic transition as forest management shifts towards other multiple use emphases besides timber production. All of the National Forests in California are affected by this change. I am aware of the hurt and frustration that accompanies this transition from those directly or indirectly affected. The reduction in timber supplies from National Forest, State, and even private land is a regional issue.

This Forest Plan will not satisfy everyone. It comes during a time of rapidly changing social values and forest management direction. However, I believe the Forest Plan provides a diverse and sustainable mixture of goods and services that benefit all people. Providing a high level of environmental quality and a variety of recreational opportunities to support tourism will contribute to the long-term economic health of the area.

The Forest Plan is expected to have no disproportional effect on any ethnic, gender, or religious group. The Six Rivers National Forest follows a policy of non-discrimination and will promote active access and participation by all segments of the public. The Forest follows affirmative action principles in all direct hiring and contracting activities.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

This section summarizes the effects that are expected to occur from implementation of each alternative. The magnitude, timing, and location of key environmental effects will differ for each alternative. These factors were considered in choosing the PRF alternative as the Forest Plan.

Biological Diversity

The PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives maintain a distribution of vegetation types that is within the historical range of variability. The acres of late seral stage habitat would be in the middle to upper end of the range. The CUR and MKT alternatives maintain a distribution of Douglas-fir and tanoak seral stages within the historical range of variability, but the acres of late seral stage habitat would be at the lower end of the range; these alternatives fall below the historical range for late seral stage mixed conifer habitat.

The PRF alternative retains the highest levels of structural elements such as green trees, snags, and down logs. The ECR and OGR alternatives retain the second-highest levels, while the levels of snags and down logs retained in the CUR and MKT alternatives would be well below the levels currently found in most late seral stands on the Forest, and could affect soil productivity and population levels of species dependent on these elements.

Wildlife

The PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives use an active adaptive management strategy that relies on both designated wildlife habitat areas and managed lands outside these areas to provide for the viability of wildlife species. These alternatives have a high likelihood of providing sufficient suitable habitat to contribute to the viability of species dependent on late-successional and old-growth forest conditions.

The CUR and MKT alternatives use a passive management strategy that relies solely on designated habitat areas to provide for the viability of certain wildlife species. The managed lands outside these areas would generally not provide suitable habitat for late-successional/old-growth dependent species. The CUR alternative assumes a greater risk than the PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives of not contributing to the viability of a number of wildlife species, while the MKT

alternative may cause a displacement of breeding individuals, which could result over time in populations which are isolated and reduced below threshold levels.

Fisheries, Water, and Riparian Zones

All alternatives protect riparian areas and result in an improvement in watershed condition classes over time. The CUR, MKT, and ECR alternatives have narrower Riparian Reserves than the PRF and OGR alternatives; parts of Riparian Reserves can have scheduled timber harvest under the CUR, MKT, and ECR alternatives, but are reserved from scheduled timber harvest in the PRF and OGR alternatives. The CUR and MKT alternatives have the highest levels of road construction and timber harvest, and the highest relative impact to fisheries, water, and riparian zones through removal of habitat and potential increases in sediment yields. The ECR alternative poses a lower risk than the CUR and MKT alternatives due to the low intensity of timber management. The OGR alternative poses the second lowest risk to these resources. The PRF alternative provides the greatest protection to fisheries, water, and riparian zones due to wider Riparian Reserves as well as the other provisions of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy.

Transportation and Facilities Management

The CUR, MKT, and ECR alternatives propose a net increase in road miles. The MKT alternative has the largest increase (4.5 percent) in road miles in the first decade. The PRF and OGR alternatives propose a net decrease in road miles. The PRF alternative has the largest decrease (9 percent) in road miles in the first decade.

Fire and Fuels Management

The CUR and MKT alternatives have relatively higher levels of timber-related fuels treatments than the PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives. The PRF, OGR, and ECR alternatives have increased risks of catastrophic wildfire due to the emphasis on a multi-storied stand structure that increases ladder fuels. The PRF and OGR alternatives propose a net decrease in road miles; this could result in longer response times, but limited access could also result in fewer human-induced wildfires. The PRF alternative emphasizes the natural role of fire in ecosystems and has the largest acres of fuels treatments to reduce wildfire hazards and enhance other resources.

Roadless and Wilderness Areas

None of the alternatives recommend additional wilderness areas. The PRF and OGR alternatives protect the wilderness attributes in most of all 10 released roadless areas. The PRF alternative designates all roadless areas in Key Watersheds as semi-primitive non-motorized areas, and provides the most dispersed recreation opportunities among alternatives. The CUR alternative protects the wilderness attributes in 8 of the 10 roadless areas. The MKT and ECR alternatives protect the wilderness attributes in 6 of the 10 roadless areas, and provide the fewest dispersed recreation opportunities.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

The wild and scenic river boundaries for the Smith and South Fork Trinity rivers are the same in all alternatives. The boundary for the recreational river segments on the Klamath and Trinity rivers are 1/4 mile in the CUR alternative, 300 feet in the MKT and ECR alternatives, and follow the Riparian Reserve boundary in the PRF and OGR alternatives. The boundary for the wild river segment on the North Fork Eel River is 1/4 mile in the CUR alternative, 300 feet in the MKT and ECR alternatives, and approximately 1/4 mile based on viewshed considerations in the PRF and OGR alternatives. The PRF alternative finds an additional 20.5 miles of river on Blue, Redwood, and Red Mountain Creeks eligible for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System. The values of these rivers will be protected in a manner that will not diminish their potential for wild, scenic, or recreational classification until suitability studies have been completed.

G. THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferable alternative protects, preserves and enhances historic, heritage, and natural resources; attains the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation; and achieves a balance between population and resource use which permits high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

Based on the analysis in Chapter 4 of the EIS, I judge the PRF alternative to be the environmentally preferable alternative. It emphasizes biological diversity, water, air and visual quality, species viability, ecosystem health

and resilience, recreation, heritage resources, and maintaining the undeveloped condition of wilderness and roadless areas. It attains the widest range of Forest uses without degradation of the environment, and best provides for the needs of late-successional/old-growth and aquatic/riparian dependent species.

H. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE GOALS AND PLANS OF OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES AND INDIAN TRIBES.

The goals and plans of other public agencies and Indian Tribes which could be affected by the management of the Forest were considered throughout the planning process. The Final EIS represents these considerations as well as the comments from public agencies that were received during the public comment period.

Federal agencies commenting on the Draft EIS and Forest Plan included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Coastal California Fishery Resource Office), Environmental Protection Agency (Region IX), and Department of the Interior (Office of Environmental Quality and Compliance).

State agencies included the California Department of Fish and Game, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Resources Agency of California, California Department of Parks and Recreation (Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation), and California Regional Water Quality Control Board (North Coast Region).

Local governments included Del Norte, Humboldt, and Trinity counties, and the city of Fortuna.

Federally-recognized Indian Tribes included the Karuk and Yurok Tribes; the Tsnungwe Council also commented on the Draft EIS and Forest Plan.

Where possible, the Forest Plan was modified to accommodate the concerns of the above agencies, governments, and Indian Tribes.

The development of the President's Plan, which provides guidance for this Forest Plan, provided extensive coordination of Federal agencies relating to issues affecting late-successional/old-growth and riparian/aquatic species.

Critical habitat and consultation requirements as defined by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service for

threatened and endangered species will be followed. Some changes relating to the northern spotted owl are expected in the near future as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service incorporates the provisions of the NW ROD.

Efforts for coordinated planning for fisheries have been on-going for a number of years. The Forest Plan emphasizes continuing these efforts such as the current inter-agency Klamath and Trinity River Basin planning efforts.

I. REASONS FOR SELECTING THE FOREST PLAN

The PRF alternative was chosen because it best meets the needs and concerns of the people of the United States, including concerns for environmental quality. While other alternatives may be more desirable with respect to a single activity, output, or resource, none provides a better mixture of resource benefits and uses while maintaining a healthy and diverse natural environment. The PRF alternative also responds more positively than other alternatives to the issues, concerns, and opportunities raised by the public throughout the planning process.

I believe that the Forest Plan provides the best balance of all alternatives for the Six Rivers National Forest. It incorporates the strongest points of many of the other alternatives considered in detail. The ecosystem approach provides for maintaining a wide variety of habitats that will contribute to maintaining species viability and biological diversity. The PRF alternative has the highest likelihood of all alternatives of providing for the widest array of individual species and groups of species at both the Forest and the regional level.

The PRF alternative provides the most protection for fisheries, water quality, and riparian areas in the long-term through implementation of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy, including the use of watershed analysis to provide an ecosystem approach to management.

I believe that the emphasis on using prescribed fire and prescribed natural fire to allow fire to play its regulating role is the best choice for the fire ecology ecosystems of the California Klamath and Coast Range Provinces.

A level of timber production that is supportable and sustainable is identified. Helping communities achieve economic stability through diversification is emphasized

to mitigate some of the adverse effects of a timber program that has been reduced from the historical levels of the last 15 years.

The adaptive management approach in the PRF alternative will allow the Forest the flexibility to respond to rapidly changing needs and desires as well as to incorporate new information as it becomes available.

I selected the PRF alternative because, in my judgement, it maximizes net public benefit. Net public benefit is inherently subjective, as many Forest outputs and effects have a qualitative value that is not easily measured. I have shared the factors I considered before selecting the PRF alternative in this Record of Decision. I believe that the PRF alternative promises the greatest long-term benefit to the public and the natural environment.

J. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

National Forest Management Act

The Plan is consistent with the Pacific Southwest Regional Guide as amended by the NW ROD. Direction from the NW ROD for management of habitat for late-successional and old-growth forest related species was incorporated directly. The Plan implements the requirements of 36 CFR 219.14 through 219.28 (see Plan Chapter 4). As documented in FEIS Appendix A and Appendix O, the coordination and public participation requirements of 36 CFR 219.6 and 219.7 have been met.

National Environmental Policy Act

As required by the National Forest Management Act implementing regulations, the FEIS and Forest Plan were developed using National Environmental Policy Act procedures. These procedures will also be used in reaching decisions on projects developed to implement Plan direction. National Environmental Policy Act procedures are designed to provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of a proposed action prior to its adoption, and to inform the public of, and allow comment on such effects.

The DEIS and proposed Plan were issued for a 90 day public comment period in September 1994 and 325 comment letters were received (FEIS Appendix O). In addition, the final SEIS supplemented the DEIS (NW ROD, page 12). Over 100,000 comments were received on the direction developed in the NW ROD that is

incorporated directly into the Plan. The DEIS considered seven alternatives and evaluated five in detail. Cumulative effects of the proposed action and reasonably foreseeable future actions were considered in projecting and displaying most environmental effects out for five decades. The FEIS made use of the best available information. As new information is developed during plan implementation and monitoring, it will be evaluated to determine if amendment or revision following appropriate NEPA procedures is required. The decision here does not authorize timber sales or other project level activities on the Forest. Project level decisions that implement Plan direction will also follow appropriate NEPA procedures.

Endangered Species Act

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on direction incorporated from the NW ROD was concluded with the issuance of a biological opinion provided under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act dated February 10, 1994. A second programmatic level biological opinion on implementation of these and other provisions of the Six Rivers National Forest Plan was issued on May 17, 1995. The USFWS determined in its biological opinion that adoption of the Six Rivers Forest Plan is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of any designated critical habitat for those listed species.

Consultation or conferencing as appropriate will also be conducted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on projects that may affect species listed or proposed for listing. Consultation or conferencing as appropriate with the National Marine Fisheries Service will be initiated as anadromous salmonid species and/or critical habitat are proposed for listing or are listed. The steelhead in the Klamath Mountain Province Evolutionarily Significant Unit (which includes the Smith, Klamath, and Trinity river basins) have just been proposed for listing, and conferencing has been initiated with the National Marine Fisheries Service. Steelhead in other areas and the coho salmon are being reviewed for possible listing.

Clean Air Act

The two air basins within the Forest are in compliance with national ambient air quality standards. The Yolla Bolly-Middle Eel Wilderness is a designated Class I Air Quality Area. The State of California does not have an approved air quality implementation plan, so a conformity determination can not be made at this time.

The Plan includes goals and air quality standards and guidelines. The activities contemplated under the Plan are not expected to degrade air quality.

National Historic Preservation Act

Forest Plans are not undertakings under the National Historic Preservation Act (FSM 2361.24) so consultation pursuant to section 106 of the Act is not required. Consultation on project undertakings that implement Plan direction will be conducted as required by the Act. The Plan includes goals and standards and guidelines for heritage resources, and supports a program for the identification, evaluation, and protection of heritage resources in accordance with section 110 of the Act.

Clean Water Act

The Forest Plan is programmatic and does not authorize dredge and fill activities. Permits are obtained as required for project level activities that implement Plan direction. The Plan includes soil and water goals and standards and guidelines developed in compliance with the Clean Water Act (Plan Chapter 4 and Appendix M). Implementation of the Forest Plan is expected to contribute to protect or restoring the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the waters of the United States in accordance with the Act.

IV. MITIGATION, MONITORING, AND EVALUATION

Mitigation measures will minimize or eliminate potential conflicts or adverse effects of implementation. Mitigation measures are an integral part of the management requirements contained in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan. These management requirements were developed through an interdisciplinary process and incorporate agency as well as federal, state, and local requirements to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse effects. Additional site-specific mitigation measures will be developed and implemented at the project level.

To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted. Land use allocations also play an important role in mitigation through the separation of incompatible uses.

The purpose of the monitoring and evaluation program is three-fold: (1) to determine if the Forest Plan is being implemented as designed, (2) to determine if

implementation is effectively meeting Forest Plan objectives, and (3) to determine the validity of the initial assumptions used to develop the Forest Plan.

The adaptive management approach and the direction for the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area in the Forest Plan emphasize the use and value of monitoring. Monitoring can help keep the Forest Plan current and responsive to change. Monitoring and evaluation have distinctly different purposes. Monitoring consists of gathering data. Evaluation analyzes and interprets the information gathered during monitoring. The two processes together allow a determination of whether conditions are within the desired bounds and intent of Forest Plan direction. When there is substantial deviation, Forest Plan amendments or revisions may be required. Evaluation of results of site-specific monitoring will be documented in an annual report available for public review.

V. PLANNING RECORDS, AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

A. Planning Records

Planning records contain the detailed information used, and records of decisions made, in developing the Forest Plan and Final EIS as required in 36 CFR 219.10. These records are incorporated by reference into the Final EIS and Forest Plan. They are available for review during regular business hours at the following location:

Forest Supervisor's Office
1330 Bayshore Way
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 442-1721

B. Amendments and Revisions

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of the Forest Plan every 10 to 15 years. The Forest Plan may be changed sooner by amendment or revision when needed. The need for change may arise from several sources. The process used regarding amendment or revision is described at 36 CFR 219.10 (f) and (g).

C. Right to Administrative Review

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 217. The notice of appeal must be

in writing and meet the requirements of 36 CFR 217. Two copies must be submitted to the following address:

USDA-Forest Service
National Forest System / Appeals
Attention: Joyce Kelly / 3NW
P.O. Box 96090
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

Appeals must be filed within 90 days from the date this decision is published in the legal notice section of the Sacramento Bee, Sacramento, California.

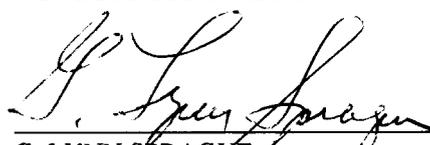
Recommendations for additions to the National Wild and Scenic River System are not appealable as they will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, and President of the United States. The United States Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. Requests to stay the approval of a Forest Plan shall not be granted (36 CFR 217.10b).

No decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document, although a number of projects are identified. Those projects identified in various parts of the Forest Plan or Final EIS are only included in order to clarify discussions, illustrate a point, or to show that Forest Plan goals and objectives can be achieved. Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Forest Plan implementation after appropriate analysis and documentation meeting NEPA requirements. Parties dissatisfied with a specific project should appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.

I encourage anyone concerned about the Forest Plan or Final EIS to contact the Forest Supervisor at 1330 Bayshore Way, Eureka, California 95501 or at (707) 442-1721 before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve your concern in a less formal way.

VI. SIGNATURE AND DATE


G. LYNN SPRAGUE
Regional Forester

JUN 21 1995
Date

OREGON

**Location Map
Six Rivers National Forest
California**



U S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE
PACIFIC SOUTHWEST REGION

SCALE

