

## **Appendix 5— Resources Not Evaluated in Detail**

# 1. Resources Not Evaluated in Detail

The purpose of the proposed Forest Plan amendment is to complete a comprehensive WCS for the Forest and amend the 2003 Forest Plan as needed to integrate the WCS recommendations. This EA is “of a lesser scope” than that developed for the 2003 Forest Plan, because the purpose of the 2003 Forest Plan was to guide all natural resource management activities on the Forest (USDA Forest Service 2003a, p. 1-4) to support a variety multiple use objectives. There are a number of resources the interdisciplinary team has determined would not be measurably affected by either of the action alternatives developed for this proposed Forest Plan amendment. Therefore, the analysis of the effects of the proposed Forest Plan amendment on these resources is tiered to that disclosed in the FEIS for the Southwest Idaho Ecogroup Land and Resource Management Plans (USDA Forest Service 2003b). The resources not discussed in detail in the EA include:

- Air Quality and Smoke Management
- Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic (SWRA) Resources
- Botanical Resources
- Nonnative Plants
- Rangeland Resources
- Recreation
- Scenic Environment
- Cultural Resources
- Roads and Facilities
- Inventoried Roadless Areas
- Wilderness and Recommended Wilderness
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Socio-economic Resources

This approach is consistent with the CEQ NEPA regulations , which endorse “tiering” to incorporate by reference the coverage of general matters in broader environmental impact statements, such as national program or policy statements, with subsequent narrower statements or environmental analyses, such as regional or basinwide program statements or site-specific statements (40 CFR 1508.28). The CEQ regulations also provide that tiering may be appropriate from a program, plan, or policy EIS to a program, plan, or policy statement or analysis of lesser scope or to a site-specific statement or analysis (40 CFR 1508.28).

A summary of the interdisciplinary team’s findings as to why these resources would not be measurably affected by either of the action alternatives developed for this Forest Plan amendment is provided below.

## 1.1 AIR QUALITY AND SMOKE MANAGEMENT

The 2003 analysis of air quality and smoke management is disclosed on pages 3-13 through 3-90 of the Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003b). As noted on pages 3-66 and 3-67, numerous laws, regulations, and policies govern the use of fire or other sources of air pollutants on National Forest System lands. Forest Plan management direction was developed to reduce potential impacts to air quality from land management activities on National Forest System lands, to consider emissions from other sources, and to achieve desired air quality and smoke management conditions. The same laws, regulations, and policies would be in effect under the proposed Forest Plan

amendment, and the proposed Forest Plan amendment does not alter any management direction designed to address air quality and smoke management. Moreover, the proposed amendment would not result in a measurable increase in the number of acres treated using fire for the remainder of this planning period. Therefore there is no measurable change in the effects to air quality and smoke management which were disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan EIS.

## **1.2 SOIL, WATER, RIPARIAN, AND AQUATIC (SWRA) RESOURCES**

The 2003 analysis for SWRA resources is found on pages 3-91 through 3-254 of the Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003b). On page 3-136, the FEIS notes that “resource protection has been integrated into soil, water, riparian, and aquatic management direction at various scales, from broad scale (laws, regulations, policies) to Forest-wide (Forest Plan direction) to site-specific (Forest Plan implementation). This protection and direction has been designed to maintain or improve these resources and associated beneficial uses, depending on their current conditions.”

Under the proposed action alternative, forest-wide and management area SWRA direction does not change. Because the proposed Forest Plan amendment would not alter any management direction designed to protect, maintain or improve SWRA resources, no measurable change from the effects to these resources disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan are anticipated.

## **1.3 BOTANICAL RESOURCES**

The 2003 analysis of botanical resources (including threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate [TEPC], and Regionally sensitive plants) is disclosed on pages 3-330 through 3-413 of the Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003b). On page 3-367, the FEIS notes that TEPC species have special management requirements for all Forest Service management activities, and that management efforts to ensure sensitive species’ population sustainability and preservation are already in place. On page 3-368, the FEIS notes that Forest-wide management direction would be implemented for all TEPC and Regionally sensitive plant species under any of the action alternatives. Because the proposed Forest Plan amendment would not alter any management direction designed to protect TEPC and Regionally sensitive plant species, no measurable change from the effects to these species disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan are anticipated.

## **1.4 NONNATIVE PLANTS**

The 2003 analysis of nonnative plants is disclosed in the Forest Plan FEIS on pages 3-579 through 3-635 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). Pages 3-624 and 3-625 states that there are numerous Federal and state laws, regulations, executive orders, and policies that govern Integrated Weed Management on National Forest System land. Under all action alternatives considered in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS, management direction at both the Forest-wide and management area levels specifies the eradication, prevention, control, and containment of noxious weed populations on National Forest System land. Because the proposed Forest Plan amendment does not alter any management direction designed to address nonnative plants, no measurable change from the effects to nonnative species disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan is anticipated.

## 1.5 RANGELAND RESOURCES

The 2003 analysis of rangeland resources in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-666 through 3-683 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). The effects analysis focused on two issues: 1) the number of acres considered suitable rangeland, and 2) rangeland vegetative response to grazing and potential effect to authorized use. The proposed Forest Plan amendment would not result in any change to the number of acres identified as suitable rangeland.

The proposed Forest Plan amendment does not change existing Forest Plan management direction for rangeland resources and therefore no measurable change to the effects to the rangeland resource disclosed in the 2003 FEIS are anticipated.

Additionally, in January 2008 a supplement to the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS for the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests was prepared to disclose the determination of rangeland capability and suitability to provide habitat for terrestrial MIS pursuant to 36 CFR 219.20 (1982). In the supplement to the 2003 Forest Plan Records of Decision, the Responsible Official determined that for forestland MIS species, pileated woodpecker for the Sawtooth NF, livestock grazing is not a risk or threat to the capability and suitability to provide habitat for these species. The proposed amendment does not change conclusions concerning this forestland MIS. Furthermore, the proposed Forest Plan amendment calls for adding the northern goshawk as an additional forestland MIS. The risk potential of livestock grazing to the sustainability of northern goshawks is identified as *low*<sup>1</sup> in this forested environments assessment (Suring 2009). Livestock grazing may be a source of habitat deterioration for some goshawk prey species, depending on grazing intensity in goshawk foraging habitat; when concentrated and long-term, grazing can effectively eliminate habitat for prey species. As long as forest-wide standards and guidelines for grazing *frequency*, *intensity*, and *opportunity* are met, current livestock grazing practices within forest habitats is not affecting progress toward desired conditions. Furthermore, because the proposed Forest Plan amendment does not result in any change to the determination of capability and suitability for rangelands to provide habitat for existing or proposed terrestrial forestland MIS, no further disclosure about the effects is necessary.

## 1.6 RECREATION

The 2003 analysis of recreation resources in the Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-711 through 3-763 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). As stated in the 2003 FEIS, recreation settings and related opportunities and experiences can change as a result of management activities, especially those that construct new roads and facilities and visibly alter vegetation patterns. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provided the framework for analyzing changes to recreation settings that may result from management activities under each alternative addressed in the 2003 FEIS. The ROS was used to estimate changes to recreation settings and experiences resulting from development activities such as mechanical vegetation treatments, road construction, and changes in motorized travel regulations (USDA Forest Service 2003b, p. 3-736). As disclosed in the 2003 FEIS, recreation settings shifted from less-developed settings toward more-developed settings as a result of new development or improvements to existing facilities. Settings shifted in the opposite direction, toward more primitive settings, when motorized access was restricted over large areas.

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<sup>1</sup> A risk factor of *Low* means that empirical evidence was reported in the published literature indicating limited susceptibility of the species to an element or only anecdotal evidence was reported in the published literature indicating limited susceptibility of the species to an element.

As a result of the proposed action alternative, no change in the existing ROS inventory would occur. The modification to guideline REGU07 to include sensitive wildlife species habitat in the list of resources to be assessed when determining if recreation facilities and practices may be contributing to resource degradation corrects a 2003 omission of what is typically included in these assessments. As stated in the guideline, this change would simply identify the need to look at alternatives during Forest Plan implementation to reduce impacts, rather than compel a direct change to this resource. Should these assessments determine that recreation facilities or practices are degrading sensitive wildlife habitat resources, a separate site-specific NEPA analysis and decision would be required to permanently authorize a change from the existing situation.

## **1.7 SCENIC ENVIRONMENT**

The 2003 analysis of the scenic environment in the Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-764 through 3-791 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). As noted on pages 3-776 and 3-777, even-aged regeneration harvest and new road construction have the greatest potential to create noticeable long-term changes in the forest scenic environment. Intermediate treatments such as commercial thinning and fire use including prescribed and wildland fire have shorter-duration, more subtle effects. The proposed Forest Plan amendment would not alter any Forest-wide management direction developed to protect the visual resource and would favor vegetation treatment in areas where a road network is already in place. Noticeable visual impacts will not measurably increase or decrease compared to the effects predicted in the 2003 Forest Plan analysis.

## **1.8 CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The 2003 analysis of cultural resources in the Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-792 through 3-799 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). This analysis notes that because cultural resource management is explicitly defined by law, regulation, and policy, management practices will not differ substantially between the alternatives analyzed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003b, p. 3-795). Because these same laws, regulations, and policies will be in effect under the proposed Forest Plan amendment, and because the proposed Forest Plan amendment does not alter any Forest-wide management direction for cultural resources, there will be no change in the effects to cultural resources disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS.

## **1.9 ROADS AND FACILITIES**

The 2003 analysis of roads in the Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-807 through 3-820 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). In the 2003 FEIS, alternatives were assessed based on how MPC allocations and/or management direction may result in changes in the extent and use of the existing classified (i.e., authorized) and unclassified (i.e., unauthorized) road system. Since September of 2003, travel management decisions on the Forest have been completed under the agency's Travel Management Rule (36 CFR 261.13). As a result of these decisions, motorized cross country travel and use on unauthorized routes are no longer allowed. The proposed management direction does not alter motorized cross country travel or use on authorized or unauthorized routes.

The proposed new guideline to be added to MPCs 5.1 and 6.1 related to road management (Table A5-1) would be consistent with current Forest Service policy and Forest Plan direction concerning travel management. This proposed new guideline appropriately identifies that on any new roads built to support Forest Service vegetation management activities, public motorized use should be restricted

and, when the project is over, decommissioned unless needed to support future management objectives. Where these roads are left to support future management objectives, allowances for public motorized use on such roads would be contingent on future assessments and updates to the Forest’s Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM).

Proposed additions or modifications to Forest Plan direction concerning the need to assess road related impacts on wildlife habitat and where needed, reduce road-related effects, would not result in any direct change on the ground. Proposed changes include:

TEOB03 Modified Objective	Identify and reduce road-related effects on TEPC species and their habitats using the Watershed and Aquatic Recovery Strategy (WARS), <i>the Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Strategy</i> and <i>Source Environment Restoration Strategy</i> , and other appropriate methodologies.
WIOB16 New Objective	Reduce road related effects on sensitive wildlife species and their habitats. Refer to the conservation principles in Appendix E and the <i>Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Strategy</i> and <i>Source Environment Restoration Strategy Maps</i> to assist in fine and site/project scale restoration prioritization planning.
FROB12 Modified Objective	During fine scale analyses in areas where roads and facilities are identified as a potential concern or problem contributing to degradation of water quality, aquatic and wildlife habitats or occupied sensitive or Watch plant species habitat, evaluate and document where contributing facilities are and prioritize opportunities to mitigate.

Although the modification to objective TEOB03 would refer to spatial prioritization strategies developed through this amendment and provides greater focus for activities, it would not change treatment levels or intensities from those described in 2003. The modification to objective FROB12 to include sensitive wildlife species habitat in the list of resources to be assessed when determining if roads and facilities may be contributing to resource degradation corrects a 2003 omission from of what is typically included in these assessments. As stated in the objective, this modification would not result in a direct change to roads or facilities, but would simply identify the need to look at possible mitigation to reduce impacts. The addition of objective WIOB16 recognizes that roads may be impacting wildlife habitat, but specific conflicts in specific locations cannot be identified at the Forest Plan scale. Thus, while this objective calls for reduction in road-related effects during Forest Plan implementation, any change of existing road access would require subsequent, site-specific, NEPA assessments and decisions.

In addition, road management objectives proposed to reduce road densities within specific wildlife habitat priority watersheds are also consistent with current Forest Service policy and Forest Plan direction concerning travel management. This proposed direction builds upon existing 2003 Forest-wide direction that calls for evaluating roads and managing the transportation system to protect other resources (e.g., FROB04, FROB06, FRST03, FROB12 (as amended), and FRGU09). An example of a management area objective is provided below. The proposed management area direction would more specifically apply this Forest-wide direction to spatial priorities identified in the WCS, but does not change the intent or purpose of such direction forest-wide.

Objective: Reduce impacts of roads through re-location, reconstruction and obliteration in low elevation pine habitats.

Remaining Forest-wide management direction for roads and facilities, as displayed on pages III-58 through III-60 of the 2003 Forest Plan, would not be changed through the proposed Forest Plan

amendment (USDA Forest Service 2003a). As noted above, the proposed road-related management area direction would add specificity to the existing Forest-wide direction but would not measurably change the effects to the authorized road system, as disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS. Consequently, the effects of the proposed Forest Plan amendment on roads and facilities would not measurably change from those disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS and roads and facilities will not be discussed in detail in this EA.

### **1.10 INVENTORIED ROADLESS AREAS**

On October 16, 2008, the U.S. Department of Agriculture adopted a state-specific rule for designated roadless areas in Idaho, including those areas located within the administrative boundary of the Boise National Forest. This final rule established five management themes that provide prohibitions with exceptions or conditioned permissions governing road construction, timber cutting, and discretionary mineral development. As stated at 36 CFR 294.28(d), Scope and Applicability:

*“The provisions set forth in this subpart shall take precedence over any inconsistent land management plan component. Land management plan components that are not inconsistent with this subpart will continue to provide guidance for projects and activities within Idaho Roadless Areas; as shall those related to protection of threatened and endangered species.”*

At 36 CFR 294.28(e), the rule further states that *“The prohibitions and permissions set forth in the subpart are not subject to reconsideration, revision, or rescission in subsequent project decisions or land and resource management plan amendments or revisions undertaken pursuant to 36 CFR part 219.”*

The proposed forest plan amendment focuses habitat restoration activities in areas of conservation concern; requires retention of large tree size class stands and old forest habitat; and promotes use of conservation principles in project design and implementation and would not be inconsistent with provisions of the Idaho Roadless Rule. In addition, forest plan direction concerning management of roadless areas would not be changed in this amendment process. Therefore, because this proposed Forest Plan amendment would not affect the management of Idaho Roadless Areas in a manner inconsistent with the rule, the effects to roadless areas would remain consistent with management as envisioned under this rule and as disclosed in the FEIS associated with this rule (USDA Forest Service 2008c). For these reasons, Inventoried Roadless Areas will not be discussed further in this EA.

### **1.11 WILDERNESS AND RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS**

The analysis of Wilderness and recommended Wilderness in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-862 through 3-869 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). The action alternative analyzed for the proposed Forest Plan amendment would not change the MPC assignment for existing or recommended Wilderness areas (MPCs 1.1 and 1.2, respectively). Forest-wide and management area standards and guidelines concerning Wilderness and recommended Wilderness would likewise not change. Consequently, the effects of the proposed Forest Plan amendment on existing and recommended Wilderness would be the same as those disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS.

## **1.12 WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS**

The analysis of Wild and Scenic Rivers in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-870 through 3-886 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). As noted on page 3-876, all alternatives included Forest-wide direction to address interim and long-term management of eligible, suitable, and designated Wild and Scenic Rivers because this direction represents and refers to direction in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and FSH 1909.12. On the same page, the Forest Plan FEIS also states that any Forest projects or activities proposed in an eligible, suitable, or designated Wild and Scenic River corridor would be implemented under this Forest-wide direction. Because the proposed Forest Plan amendment would not change this Forest-wide direction to protect eligible, suitable or designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, the effects on Wild and Scenic Rivers would be the same as those disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS.

## **1.13 SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESOURCES**

The analysis of Socio-Economic Resources in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS is disclosed on pages 3-887 through 3-976 (USDA Forest Service 2003b). The economic effects disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS used, in part, the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) and Total Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ) values generated by alternative using the SPECTRUM model (USDA Forest Service 2003b, page 3-702). Because of its added ability to represent stochastic disturbances such as wildfire and insects, the analysis completed for the WCS proposed forest plan amendment used the Vegetation Dynamics Development Tool (VDDT) model to determine ASQ and TSPQ values. As a result of the different modeling platforms used for the proposed Forest Plan amendment analysis, the ASQ and TSPQ values for the No Action Alternative, as well as the Proposed Action alternative, are slightly lower than values shown for the Forest Plan in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS. Although the ASQ and TSPQ values for both the no action alternative and the proposed Forest Plan amendment alternative are slightly lower than the values used in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS, both values are considerably greater than the average level of harvest the Forest has experienced over the past 8 years. Actual annual outputs for ASQ have averaged less than 10% of the ASQ ceiling identified in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS and the actual TSPQ harvest level has averaged at about 52% of the TSPQ ceiling. Because the harvest levels allowed under the proposed Forest Plan amendment are still well above the actual average harvest levels experienced by the Forest, and because of the only slight decrease in the values, the effects to socio-economic resources would remain the same as those disclosed in the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS.

## Literature Cited

**Suring, Lowell.** 2009a. Development and documentation of the process to assess sustainability of focal species and the Wildlife Conservation Strategy. Task 1 of Contract #AG-0261-P-09-0084, Northern Ecologic, LLC, Suring, WI

**USDA Forest Service.** 2003a. Land and Resource Management Plan for the Sawtooth National Forest, Volumes 1-2. Sawtooth National Forest, Twin Falls, ID

**USDA Forest Service.** 2003b. Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Boise, Payette and Sawtooth National Forest Plans, FEIS Vol. 1-3, and Appendices Vol. 1-3. Sawtooth National Forest, Sawtooth, ID

**USDA Forest Service.** 2008c. Special Areas; Roadless Area Conservation; Applicability to the National Forests in Idaho; Final Rule, 36 CFR Part 294, Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 201, pp 61456-61496