



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

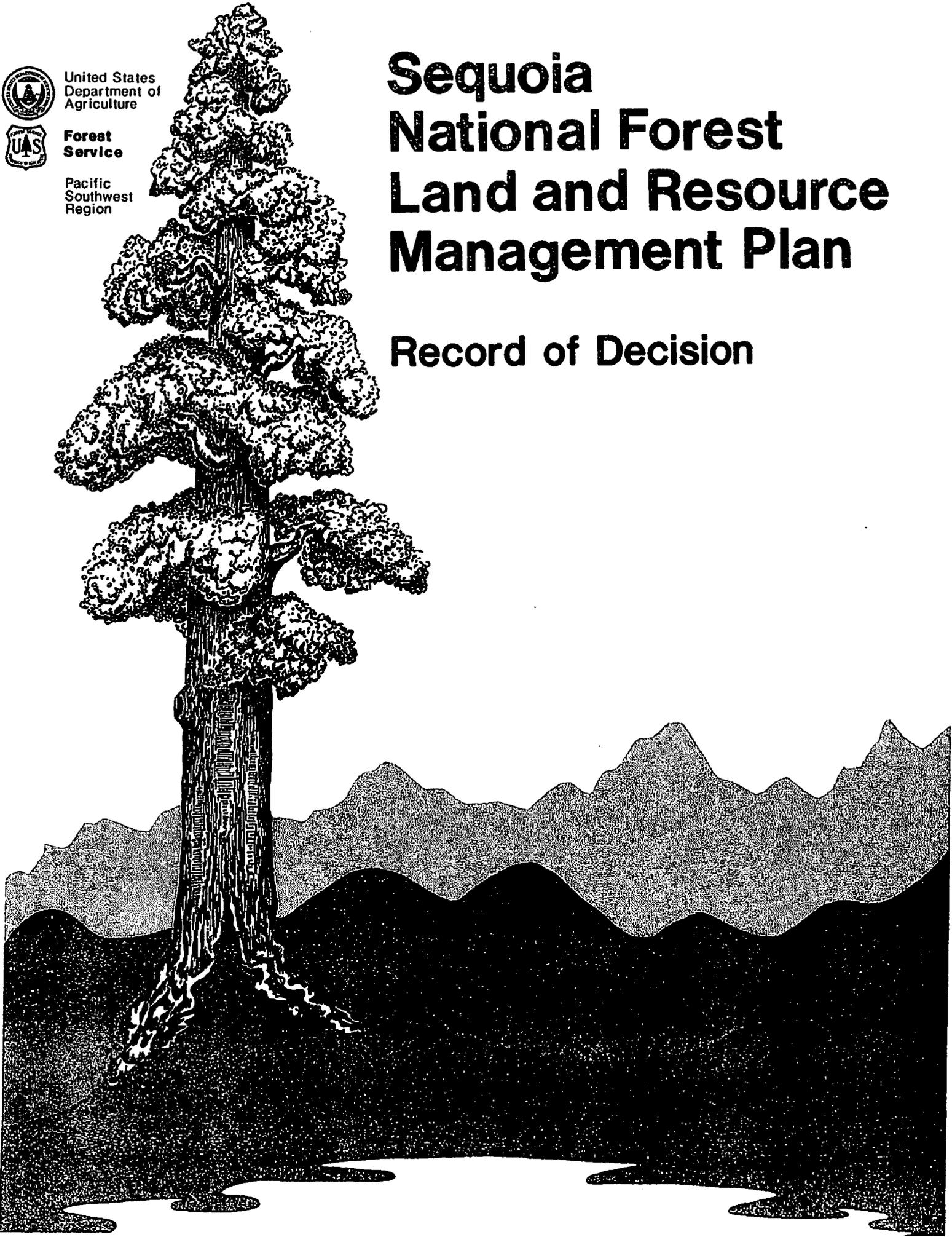


Forest  
Service

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

# Sequoia National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

## Record of Decision



RECORD  
OF  
DECISION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST

LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FRESNO, TULARE, AND KERN COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

THIS DOCUMENT PRESENTS REASONS FOR SELECTING THE ALTERNATIVE TO BE THE FOREST PLAN FOR THE NEXT 10 TO 15 YEARS. LONG-TERM ESTIMATES OF THE ALTERNATIVE'S ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC ATTRIBUTES, CONTAINED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT, WERE CONSIDERED IN THE DECISION.

MARCH 1988

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST  
 RECORD OF DECISION  
 FOREST PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
I. THE DECISION . . . . .	3
II. ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED . . . . .	5
A. ISSUES CONSIDERED. . . . .	5
B. ALTERNATIVES . . . . .	5
C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION . . . . .	7
III. REASONS FOR THE DECISION . . . . .	8
A. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS . . . . .	8
1. BUDGET. . . . .	9
2. GIANT SEQUOIA . . . . .	9
3. CLEARCUTTING. . . . .	10
4. VOLUME OF HARVEST . . . . .	12
5. FISH AND WILDLIFE . . . . .	13
6. OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES. . . . .	14
7. ROADS . . . . .	15
8. PESTICIDES. . . . .	16
9. TRAILS. . . . .	17
10. VISUAL RESOURCES. . . . .	17
11. WILD AND SCENIC RIVER . . . . .	18
12. WILDERNESS, FURTHER PLANNING AND WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS. . . . .	19
B. COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER PUBLIC AGENCY GOALS. . . . .	20
C. CONTRIBUTION TO THE REGIONAL PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES . . . . .	21
D. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY. . . . .	22
E. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE. . . . .	23
1. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS. . . . .	23
2. ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE. . . . .	24
F. ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND ALTERNATIVES WITH HIGHER PNV THAN PRF . . . . .	25
G. SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR SELECTING PLAN. . . . .	25
IV. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION AND MONITORING. . . . .	26
V. PLANNING RECORD, AMENDMENTS, REVISIONS, AND RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW . . . . .	27
A. PLANNING RECORDS . . . . .	27
B. AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS . . . . .	27
C. RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW . . . . .	28

RECORD OF DECISION

USDA - FOREST SERVICE

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST  
LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FRESNO, TULARE AND KERN COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

The Forest Service has completed a detailed planning process for the Sequoia National Forest. Included were thorough studies of the lands, resources, and the socioeconomic interests in this National Forest. Seven planning alternatives were studied and analyzed in detail in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Sequoia National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan. This Record of Decision documents my selection and approval of one of these alternatives for future management of the Sequoia National Forest. The alternative is summarized here, discussed further in Section III below, and documented in detail in the Forest Plan.

I. THE DECISION

It is my decision to select the Preferred Alternative (PRF) to manage the 1,119,045 acres of the Sequoia National Forest. I have reviewed the environmental consequences of the Plan and the alternatives which are analyzed in the FEIS. I gave particular attention to the 3,000 public comments presented in Appendix N of the FEIS. I have concluded that the Plan provides for the coordinated multiple-use management of visuals, recreation, wildlife and fish habitat, watershed, forage, vegetative management, cultural resources, minerals, wilderness, and timber.

As a management strategy the Plan and FEIS are programmatic. The emphasis in the Plan is not on site-specific decisions. Rather, it provides overall systematic guidance and establishes management direction to govern future actions. A summary of the major provisions of this Plan and my decision is as follows:

Recreation

A variety of recreation opportunities are provided. The improved forest trail system will provide a diversity of opportunities with off-highway vehicles (OHV'S), equestrian and hiking emphasized in specific areas of the Forest. Designated roads and trails will be used for OHV. Whitewater floating will continue while downhill and cross-country skiing opportunities will increase.

Special Interest Areas and Research Natural Areas

I am classifying the Baker Point, Bald Mountain, Inspiration Point, Slate Mountain, and Ernest C. Twisselmann Sites as Botanical Areas. Three Research Natural Areas (RNA's) are recommended to the Chief of the Forest Service for his approval. These represent outstanding examples of the giant sequoia, red fir and Jeffrey pine elements and will encourage

research opportunities. A fourth potential RNA, representing a conifer woodland element, is recommended for review by the Regional RNA Committee.

#### Wildlife and Watershed

Wildlife habitat in chaparral will be enhanced. Riparian areas and stream areas will be managed to emphasize improvement of resource values that include, but are not limited to, water quality, fisheries, and wildlife habitat diversity. Habitat for threatened and endangered species will be protected. By the end of the first decade, habitat on the Forest is estimated to be capable of supporting approximately 75 pairs of spotted owls, which are management indicator species for wildlife associated with vegetation in late successional stages. A network of 40 Spotted Owl Habitat Areas will be managed, consisting of 10 in wilderness and 30 on lands suitable and available for timber production (CAS land). The remaining 35 non-network habitat areas include 10 in wilderness, five on other lands managed under prescriptions compatible with spotted owls, and 20 on CAS land.

#### Wilderness

There are 264,000 acres of wilderness on the Forest representing 24 percent of the Sequoia NF. Additional lands on the Sequoia National Forest are not recommended for wilderness classification.

#### Timber

The timber resource will sustain the historic timber yields through a mix of even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural techniques. Timber resources within selected sensitive visual viewsheds will be managed with uneven-aged silvicultural systems. About 30 percent of all timber volume will be harvested from approximately 20 percent of the land suitable for timber management using uneven-aged silvicultural prescriptions. The timber sale program will continue to show a positive cash flow if roads are evaluated as capital assets. Giant sequoia groves will be managed to encourage giant sequoia reproduction, protect specimen trees, and sustain the stands over time. New management activities will not be planned within these groves pending completion of the Giant Sequoia Grove Management Implementation Plan.

#### Grazing

Grazing will remain at current levels on the majority of the forest. Slight increases will occur in annual grass areas when vegetative and climatic conditions produce excess forage.

#### Budget

To fully implement the Plan a budget of \$20 million dollars, per year is needed in the first decade. Actual annual budgets affect the rate of implementation of the Plan and the outputs produced in any given period. Over time, if annual budgets differ significantly from the projected budget needs estimated by the Plan, the overall goals and direction may not be

achievable. In that event, revision or amendment to the Plan may be warranted.

As provided in 36 CFR 219.10, this decision will remain in effect until the Plan is revised, which is expected to be in 10-15 years. There is no assurance, however, that the outputs will be achieved within the time frame of the Plan. Achievement can be influenced by many factors including budget levels, size of workforce, changes in laws and regulations, national and local economic factors, and the dynamic natural processes and physical factors affecting the Forest. In the FEIS the effects of alternative choices are projected for 50 years, well beyond the planning period, for the sake of analyzing long-term effects. Regarding Plan implementation within the 10-15 year time frame, short-term opportunities, new information, problems, or conflicts may arise in managing the Forest that were not anticipated in the Plan. When this occurs, the Plan can be adjusted.

## II. ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

### A. ISSUES CONSIDERED

The scoping process to determine the issues, concerns, and opportunities for the Forest Plans was conducted simultaneously for all Forests in the Pacific Southwest Region between October, 1979, and January, 1980. Public meetings were held throughout the State and comments were received from individuals, organizations, and governmental agencies. These public issues and management concerns helped define the scope of the EIS (40 CFR 1501.7 and 40 CFR 1508.25).

On the Sequoia, 14 issues were addressed as a result of the original scoping process. They include: Wilderness Management, Further Planning Areas, Land Ownership Adjustment, Water, Recreation, Off-highway Vehicles, Timber, Giant Sequoia, Fish and Wildlife, Roads and Trails, Energy, Grazing, Riparian, and Diversity. A more detailed discussion of the Planning Issues can be found in Chapter 2 of the Plan, and Appendix A of the FEIS. Table 2.28 in the FEIS displays a summary of how each issue is addressed in each alternative. As a result of public input for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and draft Plan, twelve major issues surfaced and are addressed in Section III of this Record of Decision.

### B. ALTERNATIVES

The EIS and plan were developed under the implementing regulations of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219 (36 CFR 219) published in 47 CFR 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 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) were also followed. In addition, the Plan preparation was guided by the Regional Guide for the Pacific Southwest Region as well as many other laws and regulations.

In response to planning issues, concerns, legislation, and regulations, a range of alternatives was initially developed and analyzed in the DEIS. Each alternative had a different management emphasis resulting

in different levels of resource management. Forest-wide standards and guidelines served to assure quality land stewardship in all alternatives. The multiple-use nature of the alternatives provided a mix of outputs and insured that no single resource element was emphasized to the extent that another resource was excluded. More information about the alternative formulation process may be found in Chapter 2.B of the FEIS.

In response to public comment on the DEIS, some alternatives have been modified and three have been dropped. A more detailed analysis has also occurred with Spotted Owl Habitat Areas, and the established network of 40 SOHA's provides habitat capable of supporting reproductive spotted owls well-distributed across the Forest within the species range. The Preferred Alternative published in the FEIS is a modification of the PRF in the DEIS. It responds to public input by considering a combination of even-aged and uneven-aged timber management, managing off-highway vehicle (OHV) use on designated roads and trails, and several other changes.

The Amenity (AMN) and Wildlife, Fish and Visual (WV) were modified in response to public comments. The former is managed under uneven-aged principles exclusively; the latter is managed nearly equally between even-aged and uneven-aged principles. The Low Budget (LBU), Current-Economic Dispersed (CED), and Wilderness Capital Investment Emphasis (WLI) Alternatives have been dropped from the set of alternatives considered in detail. Analysis of them is retained in Chapter 2 of the FEIS. These options were dropped because, relatively speaking, they were no longer considered responsive to public issues.

For a complete discussion of the differences among alternatives and their effects, please see Chapters 2 and 4 of the FEIS.

#### PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (PRF)

This alternative is the basis of the Plan. It produces market commodities and nonmarket goods and services near the 1980 Resource Planning Act (RPA) target levels. Timber management will utilize both even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural prescriptions, with emphasis on lessening visual impacts.

#### CURRENT ALTERNATIVE (CUR)

This alternative emphasizes production of timber and cattle over developed recreation and nonmarket resources. Timber management will be accomplished using even-aged management techniques. This alternative is a continuation of present management direction.

#### 1980 RESOURCE PLANNING ACT PROGRAM ALTERNATIVE (RPA)

This alternative meets or exceeds the Sequoia National Forest share of the 1980 Resource Planning Act targets as assigned by the Regional Guide. Timber management will be accomplished using both uneven-aged and even-aged management techniques.

#### AMENITY EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE (AMN)

This alternative emphasizes high levels of nonmarket resources specifically wildlife and fish, dispersed recreation, visual quality and wilderness. Market resources such as timber, forage, and developed recreation are produced at economically efficient levels that support nonmarket resources. Timber management will be accomplished using uneven-aged management techniques.

#### HIGH MARKET EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE (MKT)

This alternative emphasizes high production levels of market resources, specifically timber, range, and developed recreation. Timber is managed primarily under even-aged silvicultural prescriptions. Nonmarket benefits are produced at economically efficient levels.

#### HIGH PRODUCTION EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE (PRO)

This alternative meets the 1980 RPA high timber goals. Nonmarket benefits are produced at economically efficient levels. Timber management is accomplished using even-aged management techniques.

#### WILDLIFE, FISH AND VISUAL EMPHASIS ALTERNATIVE (WFV)

This alternative emphasizes high levels of recreational use associated with wildlife, fish, and visual quality. Management of other resources supports wildlife and fish goals and produces commodities at economically efficient levels. Timber is managed equally between even- and uneven-aged silvicultural prescriptions.

### C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Sequoia National Forest Planning Process incorporated an active public involvement program. Elected officials, Federal, State, and local agencies have been informed and consulted throughout the planning effort. Forest users have had several opportunities to participate. The Forest provided opportunities for all interests to provide input to the Issue Identification Process through making news releases, sending a mailout to over 1,000 people, holding five public meetings in various locations, and six meetings for employees. Nine meetings were held with interested public agencies.

Special attempts to involve and inform minorities were made as an integral part of the broad range of public involvement opportunities. Groups contacted included: The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tule River Tribal Council, Kern Valley Indian Council, and the Native American Heritage Committee. Spanish translations of news releases were provided to nine Spanish language radio, television and newspaper media.

See Chapter 6 FEIS "Consultation and Mailing List" and Appendix A, FEIS "Consultation with Others": for more detailed information on the public involvement process.

A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS for the Plan was published in the Federal Register on November 1, 1979. A Notice of Availability of the DEIS and proposed Plan was published in the Federal Register on November 29, 1985, and announced by area news media. Over 1,050 copies of the DEIS and proposed Plan were distributed to the public.

The Forest scheduled and held five meetings following release of the DEIS to the public. Because of public interest, the Forest added two public hearings, held an additional public meeting and extended the public comment period for review of the Draft Documents. Review copies were placed in 28 libraries in communities adjacent to the Forest. In all, six public meetings and two public hearings were held during the 150-day comment period which ended April 28, 1986. About 3000 individuals, elected officials and federal, state, and local agencies commented on the proposed Plan and Draft EIS. These 3,000 responses generated about 7,000 individual comments which were considered in the preparation of the final documents and selection of the PRF as the basis for the Plan. Appendix N of the FEIS contains a summary of these comments and the Forest Service response.

### III. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This section describes the basis for my selection of PRF as the foundation for the Plan. These considerations were derived from the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified through the initial planning process, as well as from public comments and further analyses by the Forest on the DEIS and Proposed Plan (Appendix N).

No single factor determined my decision. Rather, many factors were considered and weighed in making the selection. Based on consideration of all factors, including our multiple-use mandate, monetary and nonmonetary costs and benefits, land capability, protection of the basic resources, public desire, and advice and suggestions from other agencies, organizations, and the professional judgment of experienced Forest officers, the Plan sets a course of balanced use that results in the greatest overall long-term benefit to the public.

In the following sections, A through F, I discuss in detail the factors influencing my decision. Section G summarizes the reasons for my decision to select Alternative PRF as the basis for the Forest Plan and to approve the Forest Plan.

#### A. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Sequoia National Forest responded to all the input received on the DEIS and Draft Plan. A summary of Public Response and Resolution of Responses may be found in Appendix N of the FEIS. This public review and comment process was most helpful to the planning effort. It showed areas of misunderstanding and disagreement, as well as areas of understanding and agreement. Comments included suggested changes, corrections, oversights and criticism of the public involvement process itself.

The Forest received many, varied comments from many different interests. Comments from different reviewers often expressed conflicting views. How the selected Plan handles the issues that surfaced during this public comment period are discussed below.

## 1. BUDGET

Public comment on this issue was concerned with the discrepancy between current Fiscal Year 1987 budget and the much higher cost of implementing any of the alternatives. The question is: how will substantially lower budgets affect resource programs and their priorities?

In response to public comment, the Forest has added to the FEIS Appendix L - Budgets and Their Relationship to the Forest Plan. This Appendix provides an overview of the Federal Government's budgeting process. It also provides an explanation of how the Forest Plan will be used to formulate budget requests. Should Congress continue to fund individual resource programs as they have in the past, the Forest must adjust output levels and priorities accordingly.

Appendix L also provides information on the importance of cooperative projects and funding and the contributions of volunteers to program accomplishments. Further, implementation of the Administration's policy of having users pay fees which are commensurate with the cost or value of the service provided, is also discussed as a means of making up budget shortfalls.

Regardless of annual budget levels, the intent of management is not to relax management requirements specified in the Minimum Management Requirements, Minimum Implementation Requirements, and Standards and Guidelines established by the Forest Plan. (Please refer to Appendix L of the FEIS.) Under NEPA, an Environmental Analysis is completed for every project that affects natural resources. If the Analysis shows the project cannot be accomplished without violating the management requirements listed above, projects will be dropped, modified, or revised to ensure meeting these Standards and Guidelines.

## 2. GIANT SEQUOIA

Considerable public concern was expressed for the protection of the giant sequoia. Many respondents to the DEIS felt that management activities of any kind would endanger the species and the ecosystems where the giant sequoia is found. Some felt that the large whitewood species associated with the giant sequoia had intrinsic values of their own. A segment of the public supported the need to develop a comprehensive giant sequoia management plan before any further management activities are undertaken which may affect giant sequoia. Some respondents supported the use of fire and timber harvesting activities to protect and perpetuate the species.

It is clear that the apprehension of the respondents concerning the perpetuation of the giant sequoia is very real and must be part of any decision. It is also clear that the perpetuation of the giant sequoia in its natural range is dependent upon management of the associated vegetation.

Based on these considerations, the Draft Plan was revised. Specifically, a Forest-wide Giant Sequoia Grove Management Implementation Plan will be developed and incorporated into the Forest Plan as an amendment. Except for emergency rehabilitation due to catastrophic events, no new management activities affecting giant sequoia groves will be undertaken until the plan is completed. This plan will finalize grove boundaries and the allocation of acres to the management categories described in the Forest Plan for all groves. The allocations are: Preservation, 3,900 acres; Non-intensive management, 9,300 acres; Intensive management, 0 acres. The Plan will be the result of an environmental analysis and will have full public involvement.

It is my hope that the development of the Giant Sequoia Grove Management Implementation Plan will provide the opportunity for communication between the concerned public and the Forest Service which will lead to an understanding of the silvicultural requirements of the species and mutual cooperation to perpetuate the giant sequoia.

### 3. CLEARCUTTING

The general public did not accept the amount of additional clearcutting proposed in the Draft Plan. Support for clearcutting was voiced by professional forestry organizations or was implicit in the support for alternatives other than the AMN. Based on these public responses, the DEIS and Draft Plan were revised. A mix of even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural prescriptions has been incorporated into the Plan.

Under the Forest Plan about 20 percent, or 69,000 acres, of a total of 345,000 acres of the land suitable for timber management will be assigned uneven-aged prescriptions. They will have visual quality or other resource values as a primary objective. Extensive use of uneven-aged management is prescribed in the Standards and Guidelines. For example, some major roads and trails through the forest will have the foreground areas managed under the uneven-aged system with a Visual Quality Objective of either Retention or Partial Retention. Monache Meadows and Sherman Pass viewsheds and the Big Meadow and Salmon Creek areas are also to be managed under uneven-aged management. Timber harvest will be limited to tree selection or group selection in these and other areas described in the Standards and Guidelines.

The remaining 80 percent, or 276,000 acres, of the land where timber will be produced will be managed under even-aged management yields. Allocating a relatively large proportion of acreage to even-aged management allows longer rotations of 110 years (compared

to an average of 80 years in the DEIS) and consequently produces larger trees. This will enhance visual quality when the Forest is regulated as well as produce higher quality wood products. In response to the public, the Forest has been making a special effort to design even-aged silvicultural prescriptions that utilize existing young trees as part of the future timber stand. These procedures have been incorporated into the Standards and Guidelines. Where it is physically and biologically feasible, young trees will be protected during harvest of the merchantable old trees. Also aggregations of mature trees will be left in clearcut areas to provide snags and wildlife habitat. These procedures soften the visual effect to a great degree. Individual areas regenerated in this manner generally will not exceed 25 acres. The current average regeneration unit is 17 acres.

It is important to understand that at the rate of cutting projected in the Plan, only 1.7 percent of the Sequoia National Forest will be regenerated by even-aged prescriptions during the next ten years. This amounts to only 5.4 percent of the land selected for timber management. This is a relatively minor impact on the existing forest condition.

The public expressed concern over the use of clearcutting as a management tool. Other than the adverse affects on aesthetics, they felt that there was a degradation of water quality, unacceptable erosion, and also questioned the ability to regenerate harvested areas or that not enough was known about clearcutting. There is, however, a wealth of research and a long history of the use of the practice. I am confident that the project environmental analyses used by our interdisciplinary teams utilize the knowledge base that is available and that projects will be properly designed. Best Management Practices (BMP's) have been established that have proven effective in protecting water and soil. Appropriate BMP's will be prescribed for all projects.

Even-aged management optimizes the managers' ability to regenerate and maintain control of the Forest site to produce high yields of wood. Larger openings produced by this management system provide conditions for rapid tree growth while providing opportunities for control of Forest pests and economical stand tending and harvest. The new forest is not subject to mechanical damage as would be the case with selection harvest which requires frequent harvests on the same area. While uneven-aged management is more costly and results in some reduction in growth and yield, it does provide the opportunity to manage the timber while reducing the visual effect. In response to public concerns, I believe it is appropriate to modify timber management as shown in the DEIS and the Draft Plan. I am willing to accept the trade-offs associated with the increased use of uneven-aged management as put forth in the FEIS and Plan. I believe that by combining even-aged and uneven-aged management techniques, the Plan balances amenity values and commodity uses.

#### 4. VOLUME OF HARVEST

Public comment was polarized on what the level of timber harvest should be on the Forest. Those advocating a higher level of harvest thought that more of the land base should be committed to timber management and that forest industries would be suppressed unless the harvest were increased. Others stated that the proposed rate of harvest was too high. They identified the budget issues or use of pesticides as reasons to reduce the harvest. Some individuals thought that the timber sale program was an undesirable subsidy to the forest industry. These comments are responded to in detail in Appendix N of the FEIS.

The determination of the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) poses a question of balance among income to the U.S. Treasury, demand for timber and other resource values. To address this balance, we start with analysis of the purely economic solution and compare it with the maximum production solution. In the former case the analysis of timber harvest based only on cash flow to the Treasury indicates a harvest level of approximately 63 MMBF per year when present net value is maximized. Under this scenario, forest roads providing access to forest resources are considered only as a cost associated with specific timber sales, not as a benefit to forest users as well. In the second case, when maximum timber yield is the major objective in the analysis, the indicated harvest level is 130 MMBF. This means that the Sequoia National Forest is currently capable of producing 130 MMBF per year on a sustained yield basis over the life of the Plan. The volume produced above 63 MMBF yields a positive cash flow when roads are considered as a capital asset rather than an expense. The level of harvest may be increased if there is a strengthening of demand for Sequoia National Forest timber.

Having analyzed both the economic and production-based situations, other considerations in establishment of the ASQ are historic demand, the Sequoia National Forest RPA share, and public benefits associated with access to National Forest System Lands. The proposed annual volume of harvest under the plan is 102 MMBF. This volume is comprised of 97 MMBF green timber and 5 MMBF of salvage and other unregulated volume. A harvest level of 102 MMBF is slightly above the historic level of harvest. This level of harvest will maintain the present employment opportunity as well as the public benefits associated with sales of miscellaneous forest products and fuelwood. Regarding historic demand, the actual average annual harvest for Sequoia National Forest has been 92 MMBF for the past 27 years.

It should be noted that the PRF retains all lands suitable for timber production rather than limit the acres to only those acres needed to produce 97 MMBF. This action results in a Long Term Sustained Yield Capacity of approximately 159 MMBF attainable at full regulation over the long term. Therefore, even though the harvest level is set in line with current demand and our 1990 RPA goal, future options are not foreclosed.

## 5. FISH AND WILDLIFE

The public expressed a concern that wildlife was not adequately protected and desired a greater emphasis on wildlife in the Plan. Comments also questioned use of management indicator species for monitoring effects on wildlife, the lack of plans for fish habitat improvement, the adequacy of FORPLAN modeling for spotted owls and the management of Threatened and Endangered (T and E) species.

The Standards and Guidelines in the Plan were rewritten in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game to reflect a greater emphasis on the protection of wildlife and fish habitat. This section also details the Forest's cooperative efforts for the management of T and E species under the guidance of Specific Recovery Plans. Streamside management zone and riparian area guidelines were strengthened to meet public concern for the management of these special habitats. Guidelines in Chapter 4 set aside five percent of old growth outside of riparian area habitat. Aggregations of mature timber, one-fourth to two acres in size, will be included under even-age management systems to maintain habitat for snag dependent species. The volume of dead and down woody material retained for wildlife was increased to 132 cubic feet per acre. Oak management receives greater emphasis through Standards which specify that at least 20 cubic feet of basal area per acre will be retained in managed stands.

Some management indicator species were changed and explanations of these species were greatly expanded to provide a clearer understanding of why they were chosen to represent certain habitat types.

Chapter 5 of the Plan provides for coordinating of the monitoring effort with the Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests, the Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station and the California Department of Fish and Game.

The analysis and management of spotted owls has been updated. The network of spotted owl habitat areas was increased from the 35 areas (described in the draft EIS) to 40 areas to ensure an appropriate distribution of habitat throughout the species range on the Sequoia NF (see the spotted Owl Network map attached to the Plan for a general location of each habitat area). To the extent possible, while still providing habitat capable of supporting reproductive pairs throughout the species geographic range, the network habitat areas have been located on lands not available for timber harvest or on lands already allocated to prescriptions compatible with spotted owl habitat conditions. Each network habitat area will be managed to provide at least 1,000 acres of suitable habitat, plus approximately 650 acres of replacement habitat to ensure that 1,000 acres of suitable habitat will be available throughout and beyond the planning horizon. Specific identification of the replacement acres (e.g., size, boundary, vegetation types) will be included in a Spotted Owl Management Plan

that will be developed for each network habitat area. These plans will be incorporated into the Forest Plan as amendments.

Within each network habitat area, the primary management objective will be to maintain habitat for a reproductive pair of spotted owls. There will be no scheduled timber harvest for any network site on the Sequoia NF. Unscheduled harvest and other vegetation manipulation may occur to achieve habitat objectives described in the Spotted Owl Management Plan. Other resource management activities or uses will be permitted to the extent they are compatible with the management objectives for the habitat area. Based on the habitat and conditions on the Sequoia NF, I believe this decision provides the necessary protection to ensure spotted owl population viability, maintains management flexibility and future options, and at the same time, has essentially no impact on the allowable sale quantity of timber.

The Sequoia NF will continue to participate in the Forest Service Spotted Owl Research Development and Application Program, which was initiated in 1987. This five-year program involves inventories, monitoring, studies, and research efforts throughout the range of the spotted owl to assess the effectiveness of management and identify any changes that may be appropriate.

The fisheries section of the Plan was modified to detail on-going fish habitat improvement. The Forest will continue to protect and improve fish habitat through the use of streamside management zones, riparian guidelines, and adherence to Best Management Practices. Measures to improve fish habitat will include meadow restoration, erosion control, timber sale area enhancement, and cooperative programs with the California Department of Fish and Game.

#### 6. OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLES (OHV'S)

The use of OHV's on Forest land brought many comments. Generally, comments were polarized as being pro-OHV or anti-OHV.

Pro-OHV comments were mostly from users who wished to protect and/or expand their activity. Comments addressed trail rerouting, trail system expansion, signing and user education, and emphasis on loop and connector trails. Desires for all terrain vehicle (ATV) use, camping opportunities outside developed sites, and interest in specific trails were also addressed. Utilization of funding generated under the State of California Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Act of 1982 (Green Sticker) for aiding in management and/or facility development was mentioned frequently. Many expressed concern about losing riding areas within recently designated wilderness and questioned whether the proposed actions would meet user demands.

Anti-OHV responses were generally from non-OHV users. This group mentioned user conflicts and environmental damage as concerns. Factors such as noise, trail damage, watershed damage, disturbance

to wildlife, added law enforcement needs and costs, litter, and vandalism were mentioned. Many questioned the wisdom of having any cross-country travel on the Forest, stating that there was no way to prevent the resource damage. Some proposed a few "sacrifice" areas to accommodate OHV's as opposed to extensive open acreage.

Another group of responses were generally neutral. Their comments concerned ways to improve user compatibility. Restricting OHV use to designated roads and trails was often mentioned.

The position regarding OHV use on the Forest was re-examined and changes were made in the Forest Plan. Instead of opening most lands outside of wilderness to OHV use, OHVs will be confined to designated roads and trails. Approximately 475 miles of trails less than 24" wide will be designated open, along with 70 miles of trails greater than 24" (i.e., jeep trails). OHV emphasis areas will be identified on the Forest.

Management direction has been expanded to include enforcement of noise, use of spark arresters and state Green Sticker requirements. Further, a requirement to develop a comprehensive trail management plan for the entire Forest, recognizing all users (e.g., hikers, equestrian and OHV) has been included in the Plan (See Chapter 4). This trail management plan will be incorporated into the Forest Plan as an amendment. The rationale for these changes are as follows: 1) OHV users want riding opportunities that do not harm resources; 2) OHV users have said they do not want conflict and welcome compromise in the spirit of working together; and 3) there is wide recognition of strong anti-OHV sentiment. Consequently, changes in the FEIS and Plan allow the sport to continue as a part of the National Forest recreation program, while minimizing opportunities for conflict.

## 7. ROADS

Public comment on roads focused on two aspects of road management, the amount of new road construction and road closures.

Regarding road construction, the public generally indicated that sufficient road access existed and favored a slower, more limited approach to future road construction. In response to public comments about road construction, the FEIS emphasizes that roads are reactive to resource management objectives. Chapter 3 of the FEIS provides a better explanation of road construction types and objectives in an effort to promote the understanding that most new roads will be short, low standard spurs, and only a few new collector roads will be required.

Chapter 2 of the FEIS, Alternative Descriptions, and Chapter 4, Management Direction, of the Plan indicate that recreation objectives, specifically OHV's, are considered along with resources and economics as a factor in road design and road management objectives.

Regarding road closures, the respondents were equally divided. Those in favor of leaving roads open indicated that more roads should be left open because taxes pay for roads and, therefore, they should be available for public use. More available roads provide better access to remote areas. Those in favor of road closures expressed a desire for increased road obliteration and restoration to more natural conditions.

In response, FEIS Chapter 2, Alternative Descriptions, and Chapter 4, Management Direction to the Plan, emphasizes a commitment to improved signing at road closures to include the reason for road closure. This will result in a better understanding among Forest users as to the resource protection strategies behind many road closures.

In response to those expressing a desire for increased road obliterations, the Forest Service policy to obliterate temporary roads is expressed in the Plan, Chapter 4, Soil and Water.

## 8. PESTICIDES

The Forest Plan incorporates some use of pesticides in its management prescriptions. Some respondents expressed concern that undesirable effects on human health and/or ecological impacts may result from the use of pesticides.

At the present time, the Pacific Southwest Region has suspended the use of herbicides. This was an administrative decision prompted by a ruling of the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in Oregon. This suspension will stay in effect until a decision is made on herbicide use based on the Regional Vegetation Management for Reforestation EIS. A Draft of this EIS was issued in 1983, supplemented in 1986, and a Final EIS is to be issued in winter/spring 1988. This Vegetation Management EIS addresses the various types of vegetation manipulation, the effects and costs of their use, and the associated health hazards and risks. This includes an analysis of the various herbicides available for use on the National Forests in California.

If no herbicides were available to deal with competing vegetation, the consequence would be some reduction in the timber land base. An example would be the deletion of lands where dense bear clover is present in the understory. Future yields would be lower as a result of slower growth rates of young trees and the reduction of the land base. It is estimated that the long-term sustained yield would be reduced 26 percent if no herbicides were available. If this situation comes to pass, the effects will be assessed and the Plan will be amended.

There is no moratorium on the use of other pesticides, although that use is minor. All pesticide use adheres to EPA label instruction, and is strictly controlled by Best Management Practices (BMP).

## 9. TRAILS

Public comment on trails management centered on whether the PRF Alternative in the DEIS and Draft Plan placed enough emphasis on the total Forest trail system, including both construction and trail maintenance. The trail issue was closely related to the issue of OHV management.

The level of trail construction/reconstruction proposed (21 miles/decade) and the assertion by trail users that this level would be inadequate to meet future demands were the key aspects of the trails issue. Many respondents compared trail construction and road construction mileages and lamented the difference. Regarding trail maintenance, respondents pointed to the poor condition of trails, with many expressing concern about the impact of timber sales and road construction on the trail system (e.g., slash and debris left on trails, and roads overlying trails without replacement mileage). However, no specific areas of the Forest needing additional access were identified, even though the number of miles of trail managed on the Forest has dropped over the past several years. Trails dropped from the system have been those receiving little public use, so in spite of this drop in mileage, analysis indicates the remaining mileage would be adequate to meet demand through the planning period.

In response to public comments on trails, several changes were made. New trail construction in the next ten years will be increased. This is in recognition of a demonstrated need to improve the system of trails connecting to facilities and providing loop opportunities (e.g., decreasing the need for people to backtrack on the same trail), and the fact that demands will vary among trails. Implementation will be governed by the new comprehensive trail system plan (see OHV discussion above and Plan, Chapter 4). Recognizing the need to resolve resource and/or user conflicts, direction calls for about half of the total trail mileage to be rehabilitated and or reconstructed in the next ten years.

The Preferred Alternative (PRF) has several other changes which will help place emphasis on trails and their management. Management direction for protecting trails from unacceptable impacts, primarily from other projects, has been strengthened. The identification of OHV emphasis areas and the ultimate separation of uses will also improve the experience for hikers and equestrians. Loop trail systems will offer a variety of opportunities for all users. The comprehensive trail system plan for the Forest will take hiking, equestrian and OHV users into account and result in development of a long term trail program which is responsive to user demand and protection of resource values.

## 10. VISUAL RESOURCES

Public comment on this issue addressed the pros and cons of Forest management practices as they relate to the trend of visual

quality. The trend is to move from a natural to a managed condition. Many individuals feel this change represents a decline in visual quality. They prefer activities that would enhance and improve current conditions. Some referred to the past emphasis on logging and road construction, saying these activities resulted in long-term visual degradation. Others supported higher timber volumes, reasoning that timber was a renewable resource and harvesting benefited the land. Some said that through proper management, the Forest could continue timber production and still provide multiple uses and maintain aesthetic values.

In response to public input, several important changes are made in the Forest visual management program. In some of the more visually sensitive viewsheds (e.g., Monache Meadows, Sherman Pass Overlook, Big Meadows/Salmon Creek) and road corridors of the Forest (Blackrock and Sherman Pass) the silvicultural system was changed from even-aged to uneven-aged management. Harvest practices were reviewed and it was determined that in regeneration areas young growth and some aggregations of mature trees on tractor loggable ground would be saved for regeneration, wildlife and visual purposes. A guideline was also established stating that the size of regeneration units would generally not exceed 25 acres. The Forest will place emphasis on the development of public understanding of management actions that result in visual changes.

These revisions have been reflected within the FEIS and/or Plan. The Standards and Guidelines in Chapter 4 of the Plan add a discussion of silvicultural systems and harvest practices. The Office of Information section of this same Chapter adds emphasis to inform the public about Resource Management Programs. The Visual Resources section of Chapter 4, FEIS, was rewritten to emphasize visual "change" rather than "decline". The change noted is the result of managing previously unmanaged lands, recognizing that change does not mean a decline in visual quality to all people.

#### 11. WILD and SCENIC RIVER

The majority of public input on Wild and Scenic Rivers evolved around Segment 1 of the Kings River and a proposal known as Rodgers Crossing Dam. Enactment of HR799 in November 1987, resolved the issue which focused on this segment. The legislation establishes a Special Management Area (SMA) which encompasses the Kings River Further Planning Area, and totals approximately 48,000 acres (23,900 acres is on the Sequoia National Forest). It requires Congressional approval for the construction of any dam or diversion within the area. Management of this SMA would be detailed in a management plan to be developed within three years of enactment of the legislation and incorporated into the Forest Plan as an amendment.

Another point of public interest was a desire for the study of the Kern River below Lake Isabella for possible inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River (W&SR) system. This river corridor has been

reviewed. Following evaluation, a determination was made that two of three segments were ineligible for W&SR status. The third segment (Segment 2) is eligible for W&SR status and suitability will be determined in the future (please refer to Appendix E of the FEIS). Specific emphasis toward water-oriented recreation for this important waterway is contained as management direction (see Plan, Chapter 4).

## 12. WILDERNESS, FURTHER PLANNING AND WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

Public response regarding wilderness centered on wilderness classification as opposed to management. Comments ranged from a desire for maximum additional wilderness classification to no additional wilderness classification. Responses from proponents of wilderness varied from adding a single area to classifying all former Inventoried Roadless Areas (RARE II) as wilderness. Reasons cited include preservation for future generations, maintenance of ecological and species diversity, and space for mental/spiritual relaxation. Opponents of wilderness classification often stated that wilderness designation was too restrictive and that costs were high due to reductions in commodity outputs and/or management. Many felt that too much land has already been set aside for too few users and the Sequoia National Forest has enough wilderness.

The appropriate amount of wilderness within National Forests has been a continuing issue for over 20 years. Two roadless area reviews resulted in an environmental impact statement that made nationwide recommendations for wilderness, non-wilderness, and further planning status. In 1984, the California Wilderness Act established new wilderness throughout the State. This Act added approximately 100,000 acres to the National Wilderness Preservation System on the Sequoia National Forest including the Monarch, Jennie Lakes, and South Sierra, which were totally new, while additions were made to the existing Dome Land Wilderness. These four, plus the Golden Trout Wilderness, allocate over 264,000 acres, or about 24 percent, of the Sequoia National Forest land base to preservation under the National System. A total of six areas on the Sequoia National Forest comprising, 117,300 acres, were identified as Further Planning Areas (FPA) in the RARE II Environmental Impact Statement.

The DEIS analyzed four of these Further Planning Areas and one BLM Wilderness Study Area for possible addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Of the two remaining, one (Kings River) was being studied by the Sierra National Forest and the other (Cypress) by BLM. It should be noted that the Kings River FPA is that area included as the Special Management Area in recently enacted Kings River Wild and Scenic River legislation.

Following evaluation in the DEIS, it was determined that none of the Further Planning Areas (Dennison, Moses, Oat Mountain, and Scodies) in the National Forest had any outstanding attributes/characteristics that would warrant adding them to the System. I find no new information that would support a change in

the original recommendation to release these areas for multiple-use management purposes. Therefore, no additional National Forest wilderness will be recommended under this Plan.

Nevertheless, analysis of public comment regarding the wilderness issue did result in a change in management of about 8,000 acres in the Sirretta Peak area. This area was largely included under a timber emphasis management prescription in the DEIS and Draft Plan. It has been reevaluated and placed in the dispersed recreation-wildlife emphasis with a Semi-primitive Non-motorized classification in Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS). This change will complement management of both the adjacent Dome Land Wilderness and the proposed Twisselmann Botanical Area, which is located within this area. Similarly, adjacent to the South Sierra Wilderness, the Sequoia portion of the Monache Meadows viewshed will be managed with uneven-aged timber management practices utilized as a way to maintain a more natural character of the landscape.

#### B. COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER PUBLIC AGENCY GOALS

The Goals of other public agencies that are affected by National Forest management were considered early in the planning process and during the development of the alternatives in the Draft EIS. The FEIS includes these and also considers comments from public agencies that were received during the public review period (see Appendix N). Where possible, the Plan was modified to accommodate those concerns.

Elected officials commenting on the Draft included: Congressman Charles Pashayan Jr.; the late Congresswoman Sala Burton; State Senator Rose Ann Vuich; State Assemblymen Bill Jones, Don Rogers and Phillip D. Wyman; Kern County Supervisor, Roy Ashburn; Barbara Lanksford, Mayor of Dinuba; and Robert Bremmer, Inyo County Supervisor.

Federal Agencies commenting on the Draft included: Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Highway Administration, United States Department of Interior (Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management), and the Department of the Air Force.

State Agencies commenting on the draft included the Resources Agency of California, Departments of Conservation, Fish and Game, Transportation, Forestry, State Board of Forestry, Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, Health Services, Regional Water Board and State Lands Commission.

Local Governments and Agencies commenting on the draft included Fresno County, Tulare County, Kern County, Inyo County, Madera County, Kings County, Kings River Conservation District, City of La Mirada, Tulare Lake Basin Water District, Angiola Water District, Alta Irrigation District, Riverdale Irrigation District, and Tulare County Economic Development Corporation.

Summarized below are the changes to the FEIS and Plan resulting from the primary points brought forth in elected official's and Agency comments.

A number of elected officials and public agencies had concerns about the economic impacts of planned timber harvest levels, and the effects of clearcutting methods on the environment. In response to these concerns, the Plan will maintain timber harvests at 102 MMBF annually, including salvage, and thus maintain the local economic sectors dependent on this harvest. Please see Appendix O of the FEIS for discussion of the Sequoia's role in contributing to the regional supply of timber. To alleviate concerns about harvest methods the Plan now projects uneven-aged management on 20 percent and even-aged management on 80 percent of the acres planned for Timber harvest.

Several elected officials and public agencies had concern about the possible environmental impacts of OHV use. The Plan now restricts OHV use to designated roads and trails and requires the development of a Forest Trail Management Plan (see Plan, Chapter 4).

Numerous changes in the FEIS and Plan resulted from comments by Congressman Pashayan, Assemblyman Jones and California Department of Fish and Game. The approach to monitoring now requires greater coordination with the Department, the Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, and the three National Forests in the Southern Sierra (Sequoia, Sierra and Stanislaus National Forests). Riparian area issues also receive greater emphasis in the FEIS and Plan.

Responding to the United States Air Force comment about visibility within the air space, the Plan now requires notification of the United States Air Force when prescribed burns are planned.

Public involvement with other federal agencies, elected officials, the State of California, local government, and interested publics will not stop with the approval of the Plan. On-going involvement with them is critical to successful implementation of this Plan and all other project and specific resource management plans. As more site-specific planning is done, we will provide additional environmental analysis with public involvement.

#### C. CONTRIBUTION TO THE REGIONAL PRODUCTION OF GOODS AND SERVICES

This Forest Plan will serve to adjust and implement assigned output targets of the RPA (Resources Planning Act) Program.

A consideration in approval of the Plan is that it balances use among all resources while providing for additional opportunities for recreation, wildlife habitat improvement, forage, timber, fuelwood, and water production needed for local economic growth and stability. While several alternatives provide for various increases in these outputs, the Plan provides balanced use of all outputs while protecting the basic soil and water resource (see Output Tables in Chapter 2 of the FEIS).

#### D. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STABILITY

The Sequoia National Forest plays a role in the social and economic life of residents in the contiguous foothill communities and the towns in which the lumber mills are dependent on National Forest timber. The latter include Terra Bella and Dinuba. However, the Forest plays a minor role from the perspective of the Kern, Tulare, and Fresno County area of influence as a whole. As discussed below, social and economic effects - specifically, numbers of jobs, level of revenues, volume of recreational opportunity, availability of fuelwood and road access - and their implications for social and economic stability during the first decade were considered in selecting the Plan.

The major economic effects of the Plan include increased employment, earnings, fuelwood and revenues to the three county governments. With respect to current levels of economic activity attributable to the National Forest the greatest changes will be seen in employment and earnings. In the first decade Forest activity supports, directly and indirectly, about 2,800 person-years of work annually, an increase of about 300 jobs, or 12 percent. Currently, about half of all jobs associated with forest management activities are timber-related. Since timber production remains virtually the same, and since the number of jobs associated with the range management program is unchanged, most of these new jobs are associated with increased recreational use. From the standpoint of the three-county area, both this addition and the total number of jobs are insignificant in comparison to total county employment. However, from the standpoint of the local communities within which these jobs are located, they represent a solid long-term component of the economic base. As such, they contribute to the economic stability of these communities.

Total earnings associated with Forest activity are expected to reach 41.4 million dollars annually in the first decade, an increase of 10 percent over current levels. About half of all earnings are in recreation, slightly less than half in timber and the rest in the livestock industry. Again, since these are expected to be earnings over the long term in basic industries, it is my judgement that they contribute to the economic stability of their communities.

Fuelwood and hence road access to the fuelwood, are economic benefits of the Plan in that they provide an alternative energy source for their users. At 21,000 cords, the Plan calls for production of fuelwood at a level higher than at present, thereby easily maintaining present supplies.

Forest management activities yield a return to the federal treasury. Known as Forest Reserve Funds, this income is increased over present levels. The Sequoia is expected to generate about 6.2 million dollars annually. Of this total, 25 percent or about 1.6 million dollars will be divided among Fresno, Tulare, and Kern Counties according to the acreage of National Forest System land located in each.

The economic characteristics and impacts described above have social implications as well. To the extent that local communities can

maintain or slightly increase their economic base over time, to that extent those communities may remain stable as social systems. In my judgment the management activities called for in the Plan contribute enough economic activity to help maintain local community social stability. By the same token, not so much is provided as to have a marked growth-inducing effect. Please bear in mind that this evaluation deals with all forest management activities except ski areas. While the Plan provides for the study of two ski areas over the long-term, the Plan makes no allocation of land to this use. Instead, it directs that the environmental, social, and economic effects of potential ski areas are to be dealt with in separate project-specific analyses.

#### E. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

##### 1. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS.

The following summarizes some key environmental effects which are expected to occur under each alternative. The magnitude, timing, and location of effects will differ for each alternative. These factors were all considered in arriving at the selected Alternative and Plan.

In all alternatives, visual quality will be changed by natural occurrences and management activities. In PRF, impacts to visual quality would occur from regeneration harvest of 1,700 acres per year. PRO would have the highest impact with up to 4,600 acres of clearcuts annually. The AMN, WFV and CUR have less visual impact in the first decade than PRF. In AMN, all land used for timber production is allocated to uneven-aged management prescriptions; whereas, under WFV, about 50 percent of the volume is harvested using the same prescription. In CUR, there are relatively few acres of uneven-aged management; however, most of the volume is harvested under shelterwood practices. Thus, visual impacts are moderate in the first decade but will increase upon reentry.

Under the PRF, the prescribed fire program will average about 5000 acres annually. Fire will be used to prepare timber harvested areas for reforestation, to reduce concentrations of hazardous forest fuels including those in the urban interface, and to improve wildlife habitat and range forage. The long-term benefits include less damage to soil productivity and water quality than that caused by large, high intensity wildfires. Short-term losses include temporary deterioration of air quality and temporary impacts on visual resources. Prescribed fire acres range from 5,000 - 11,000 acres per year for alternatives considered in detail. The PRO Alternative has the highest use of prescribed fire.

All alternatives protect riparian areas and establish streamside management zones. Clearer, more specific guidelines for the management of these areas have been developed to meet the goals of the Plan. Increased protection from streamside management and habitat improvement activities will enhance fisheries, but as user demand increases, available fish may decline. Coordination with

the California Department of Fish and Game will be necessary to balance the increased user demand with available fish habitat.

Under all of the alternatives, old growth habitat will be protected in wilderness areas and at many non-wilderness locations on the Forest. However, within the commercial forest lands old growth habitat will decrease to some degree under all alternatives. The AMN Alternative would show the least reduction while the PRO Alternative would yield the greatest. The PRF Alternative would result in a moderate decline in populations of old growth species and a corresponding increase in populations of other species associated with earlier successional stages. Approximately 374,000 acres of mature to overmature habitat will remain on the Forest. Approximately one-half of this acreage will be in wilderness. The remaining acres will be distributed over the rest of the conifer zone, especially in streamside management zones, giant sequoia groves, retention and partial retention VQO zones, and the network of spotted owl habitat areas.

I recognize that the PRF, or any of the other alternatives, could produce some short-term adverse environmental consequences such as a slight reduction in air quality; visual quality due to regeneration timber harvesting and road construction; and sediment yields due to vegetation management activities. These consequences will be monitored, as shown in the Monitoring Plan, Chapter 5 of the Plan, to ensure compliance with Forest management direction and applicable law and regulations.

## 2. ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Although some people may judge differently depending on their values, I consider Alternative AMN to be the environmentally preferred alternative. It requires the least disturbance of soil and emphasizes wildlife and fish habitat, visual quality, dispersed recreation and wilderness values.

Nonmarket resources receive first priority. The alternative provides the highest level of wilderness allocation (381,300 acres) of any alternative. Only 43 MMBF of timber are planned for harvest. Grazing is limited to 55,000 AUM's. The AMN provides for about 41 percent of the commercial conifer zone to remain unroaded. Wide streamside management zones protect riparian areas from disturbance. Fire prevention receives heavy emphasis. The trail system is extended. Activities at developed recreation sites are de-emphasized. Off-highway vehicles are limited to reduce conflicts with other users. Winter snow use and equestrian uses are encouraged.

The AMN Alternative was not selected for implementation because, in my judgment, it does not provide for a balanced program that meets the needs of the American people. Also, I believe it doesn't adequately respond to the Forest Service Multiple-Use philosophy and the Forest Service Mission outlined by the Congress of the United States.

F. ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY AND ALTERNATIVES WITH HIGHER PNV THAN PRF

An estimate of Present Net Value (the difference between discounted benefits and discounted costs) was used to determine the most economically efficient alternative. As shown below, PRF which is the foundation of the Plan has the highest Present Net Value (PNV) of the alternatives considered. However, all alternatives except CUR are relatively close and the percent differences are considered insignificant. In my judgement, the PRF provides the best mix of resource activities and schedule of quantifiable and non-quantifiable benefits. It is the most compatible with overall Forest Service goals and objectives.

<u>Alternative</u>	<u>Present Net Value Millions of Dollars</u>	<u>PNV as a % of Preferred Alternative</u>
PRF-Preferred	844	100.0
RPA-1980 RPA Program	843	99.9
WFV-Wildlife Fish and Visuals Emphasis	840	99.5
MKT-High Market Emphasis	831	98.5
PRO-High Production	831	98.5
AMN-Amenity Emphasis	765	90.6
CUR-Current	558	66.1

G. SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR SELECTING PLAN

An important concept in determining the utilization of the Forest's resources in a combination that will best meet the needs of the American people is the Net Public Benefit (NPB). The concept of Net Public Benefit includes both quantifiable and non-quantifiable benefit values. From this overall perspective, PRF presents, in my judgement, the highest Net Public Benefit of all the options analyzed. It responds equally well to the tenets of the Forest Service multiple-use philosophy and to the desire of most members of the public for a balance of uses within the Sequoia National Forest.

The Forest Plan recognizes the diversity of ecosystems on the Sequoia National Forest by recommending three new Research Natural Areas (RNA's) representing the giant sequoia, red fir and Jeffrey pine forest types. A fourth, representing a conifer woodland element, is recommended to committee for review. Pursuant to Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 294.1(a), and the authority vested in me by the Chief, Forest Service, I classified the Baker Point, Bald Mountain, Inspiration Point, Slate Mountain, and Ernest C. Twisselmann sites as Botanical Areas. These give emphasis to sensitive plants and plant communities that are unique to the Sequoia National Forest.

Giant sequoia groves are recognized as a unique resource in the Plan. Planning processes and procedures are established to insure perpetuation of the groves over time. Each grove will be managed under one of two strategies: preservation or non-intensive management. Continued involvement with the public will lead to better understanding and mutual

cooperation toward perpetuating the giant sequoia resource on the Forest.

The Plan acknowledges a desire for trail systems that respond to the different needs of hikers, equestrians and off-highway vehicles (OHV's) by directing that a comprehensive trail management plan be done. Emphasis areas are established for the development of existing and future OHV trails. Semi-primitive nonmotorized areas are provided for hikers and equestrians. Thus, a separation of noncompatible trail uses is provided for, along with a framework for responding to future user demand, and cooperation with user groups.

Recognizing that wildlife habitats encompass lands adjacent to the National Forest as well as on the Forest, wildlife management, as specified in the Plan will be accomplished in concert with the California Department of Fish and Game, the neighboring central Sierra Forests, National Parks, and Bureau of Land Management. The Plan provides the coordinating link among these partners through joint monitoring agreements with the Pacific Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station (PSW).

The Sequoia National Forest's Plan provides for production of 101.6 MMBF of timber annually, including salvage material. The historic level of timber harvest is sustained. The emphasis in silvicultural methods has shifted from the even-aged systems employed within the last ten years to a mix of even-aged and uneven-aged management practices. The Plan provides for uneven-aged timber management within some of the more sensitive viewsheds on the Forest. This change in management, along with the greater sensitivity to visual values when planning timber sales, will decrease the potential for adverse effects of timber management on the aesthetic values of the Forest. A greater emphasis is also given to enhancing wildlife and fish habitats through timber management practices.

The Sequoia National Forest has produced a Plan which strives to provide the "greatest good for the greatest number" of today's Forest users. For this, and all of the above reasons, I judge that compared to other alternatives, the Plan provides the best balance of resource allocations, and will provide the best distribution of long-term public benefits.

#### IV. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION AND MONITORING

The Plan will not be implemented sooner than 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision appears in the Federal Register. However, within Further Planning Areas, implementation will be delayed for 90 calendar days while Congress is in session to allow for Congressional review.

The time needed to bring all activities into compliance with the Plan will vary depending on the type of project. Existing projects, as well as contractual obligations, will continue as originally planned. During implementation, however, the following minimum requirements, subject to valid existing rights, will be met. The Forest Supervisor will assure

that: (1) annual program proposals and projects are consistent with the Plan; (2) program budget proposals and objectives are consistent with management direction specified in the Plan; and (3) implementation is in compliance with the Regional Guide, and 36 CFR 219.10(e), 36 CFR 219.11(d), and 36 CFR 219.27.

Implementation is guided by the management requirements contained in the Forest direction and management area prescriptions which are found in Chapter 4 of the Plan. These management requirements were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse effects. To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted.

Outputs in the Plan may be adjusted as a result of research efforts which produce new information and technologies. Air quality, prescribed fire, riparian trend studies, and other data will enhance and affect plan implementation. Proposals to use National Forest System (NFS) lands will be reviewed for consistency with the Plan. Management Direction contained in Chapter 4 of the Plan will be used to analyze any proposal involving use of NFS lands. All permits, contracts, and other instruments for occupancy and use of the NFS lands must be consistent with the Management Direction in Chapter 4. This is required by 16 USC 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.10(e).

The purpose of the monitoring program is two-fold: (1) to evaluate whether Forest goals and objectives are being realized; and (2) to determine how closely management requirements have been followed. The results of monitoring the evaluation will be used to measure the progress of the Plan implementation. These results will also help to determine when Plan amendments or revisions are needed (see Plan, Chapter 5).

## V. PLANNING RECORD, AMENDMENTS, REVISIONS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW.

### A. PLANNING RECORDS

Planning records contain the detailed information used in developing the Plan and FEIS as required in 36 CFR 219.12.

All of the documentation detailing the Forest planning process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

Forest Supervisor's Office  
Sequoia National Forest  
900 W. Grand Avenue  
Porterville, California 93257-2035  
(209) 784-1500

These records are incorporated by reference into the FEIS and Plan.

### B. AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of the Forest Plan at least every 15 years. The Plan may be revised sooner if physical conditions or demands on the land and resources have changed sufficiently to affect the overall goals or uses for the Sequoia

National Forest. When revising the Forest Plan, all the procedures set forth in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed. This includes scoping, an analysis of the management situation, formulation of alternatives, an estimation of effects, an evaluation of alternatives, identification of a recommended alternative, documentation in an EIS and draft plan, and formal public comment before approval and implementation of the revised plan.

During the implementation of the Forest Plan, various factors may trigger the need to change aspects of the Plan. In this event, based upon the advice and recommendation of the Forest's interdisciplinary team, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether the proposed changes are significant or nonsignificant. The Regional Forester will approve any significant amendments to the Forest Plan. The determination of significance shall be made in accord with the requirements of 16 USC 1604(f), 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), and pertinent sections of the Forest Service Manual and Handbook. The determination of significance or nonsignificance will be documented in a Decision Notice that is available for public review. No changes will be implemented prior to appropriate public notification. In the event of a significant amendment, procedures set forth in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed. Determinations of whether proposed changes are significant or nonsignificant are appealable under 36 CFR 211.18.

#### C. RIGHT TO ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

The decision documented in this record is subject to appeal in accordance with provisions of 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

Paul F. Barker  
Regional Forester  
Pacific Southwest Region  
USDA Forest Service  
630 Sansome Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111

The notice of appeal, a statement of reasons to support the appeal, and any request for oral presentation must be filed within 45 days after the date of this decision. Items not subject to appeal are recommendations regarding Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River, and Research Natural Area Classification.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. A stay of the decision must be requested. A stay may be requested at any time during the appeal period until a decision on the appeal is made by the Chief, USDA-Forest Service.

Although a number of projects are identified, no decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document. Those projects identified in various parts of the Plan or FEIS 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 meeting NEPA requirements.



---

Paul F. Barker  
Regional Forester

---

February 25, 1988  
Date