RECORD OF DECISION

USDA, Forest Service
Salmon National Forest

Final Environmental Impact Statement and Land and Resource Management Plan

Idaho, Lemhi, and Valley Counties, Idaho

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RECORD OF DECISION

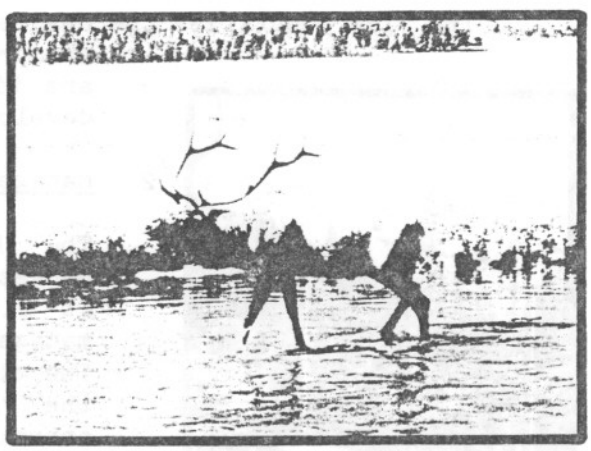
I. Introduction

This Record of Decision documents approval of the Land and Resource Management Plan ("the Plan") for the Salmon National Forest ("the Forest"). The Plan provides for coordinated multiple-use management of outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, minerals, and wilderness resulting in sustained yields of goods and services for the benefit of the American people.

The area covered by the Plan is located in east-central Idaho and contains 1,776,994 acres of National Forest lands. The Forest includes portions of the Beaverhead, Bitterroot, Lemhi, and Salmon River Mountain Ranges and portions or all of the Salmon, Middle Fork Salmon, North Fork Salmon, and Lemhi River watersheds.

The Plan identifies resource management practices; projected levels of production of goods, services; and locations where various types of resource management activities are expected to occur. The Plan also provides broad direction for dealing with applications and permits for occupancy and use of National Forest lands by the public and for management of impacts from mineral activities on the Forest.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) describes a proposed action (the Plan) and alternatives to the proposed action. It also describes the environment to be affected and discloses the potential environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action and alternatives to the proposed action.



This FEIS and Plan were developed under implementing regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1500-1508 (40 CFR 1500-1508); and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 219 (36 CFR 219).

In publishing Land and Resource Management Plans, the Forest Service is seeking to satisfy two somewhat different purposes:

1. Compliance with the statutory mandate of the NFMA to develop and maintain a management system so that an "interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and

other sciences" will be applied to all future decisions, 16 U.S.C. 1604(b), 1604(f), 1604(g), and 1604 (c).

2. Linkage with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act (RPA) Program and Assessment through current modeling techniques to make forecasts of the outputs which could be produced under the Plan and alternatives to the Plan.

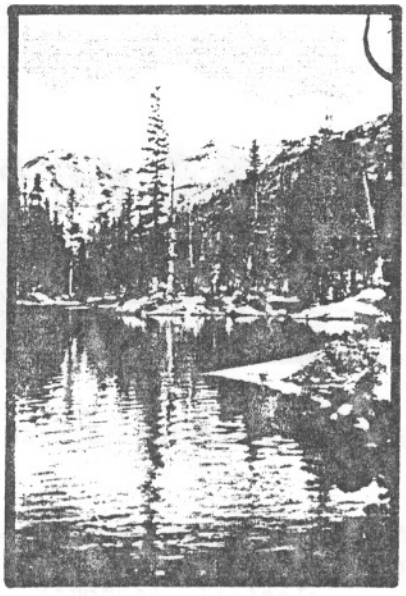
Forecasts of outputs that could be produced under the Plan and alternatives are useful in making comparisons among the alternatives and the Plan. There is no assurance that the outputs will actually occur at the projected number. This is due to limitations of modeling and projections and because on-the-ground conditions, changes in laws and regulations, national and local economic conditions, and appropriate budget levels, all affect actual outputs. As with management direction, the projected outputs can be adjusted through rescheduling of proposed implementation schedules (amendments) or revision. The NFMA has a required revision period of 15 years.

Approval of this Plan marks the turning point from promulgation to implementation of the Plan. This does not mean that all the decisions on issues are final. Public involvement will continue as the Plan is implemented. Specific projects and activities will be examined in light of the Plan's direction, and public involvement will be essential. With participation of other federal agencies, state agencies, interest groups, Forest users, and the public, Plan implementation and administration can realize the systematic integration of resources and their uses.

Features of the Plan:

1. Forest Condition

The Plan identifies the desired future condition of the Forest. Goals are presented in Chapter IV of the Plan. Goals are timeless and form the principal basis for developing objectives (36 CFR 219.3).



2. Management Objectives

The Plan identifies management objectives necessary for the Forest to achieve its goals. It also describes how resources are to be managed in order to attain these objectives. The objectives are presented in Chapter IV of the Plan. These objectives are depicted as annual levels of goods and services that will ideally be achieved during the 10- to 15-year planning period. Achievement of these objectives is contingent upon many factors including appropriated level of funding, national and local economic factors, and the dynamic natural and physical factors at work on the Forest.

3. Management Requirements

The Plan specifies management requirements that control and govern how activities will be implemented on the Forest. The Plan includes Forest-wide standards and guidelines and management area prescriptions and direction (Chapter IV). Forest-wide standards and guidelines detail overall management requirements that apply to the entire Forest during Plan implementation. They are applied in addition to management requirements for each management area prescription and direction. The Plan assigns management area prescriptions to specific land areas within the Forest. Mitigation measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm are incorporated as part of management requirements in Forest direction and management area prescriptions in Chapter IV of the Plan. Mitigation is also discussed in Chapter IV of the FEIS. The Plan Map displays locations where various management area prescriptions apply.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Plan contains monitoring and evaluation criteria to determine how well objectives, and standards and guidelines have been met and how well standards and guidelines have been applied. Monitoring procedures are displayed in Chapter V of the Plan.

5. Amendment or Revision

The Plan establishes management direction for the next 10 to 15 years, when it will be revised. Short-term opportunities, problems, or conflicts may arise in managing the Forest that were not anticipated in the Plan. The Plan provides a framework for responding to unanticipated needs and can be adjusted, if needed, through rescheduling or amendment.

II. The Decision

The decision is to approve the Forest Plan which accompanies the FEIS (referred to as Alternative "12," the preferred alternative, in the FEIS) for management of the Salmon National Forest.

In light of known needs and potential impacts, the Plan sets forth a strategy for managing the Forest; this is not a plan for day-to-day internal operations. It does not address administrative matters such as personnel, fleet equipment, internal organizational changes, and does not emphasize all site-specific design decisions nor all specific resource outputs. Rather, the Plan prescribes general management practices for the Salmon National Forest. The intention is to achieve multiple-use goals and objectives with optimum economic efficiency. Work will be done in an environmentally sound manner to produce goods, services, and amenities providing long-term public benefits.

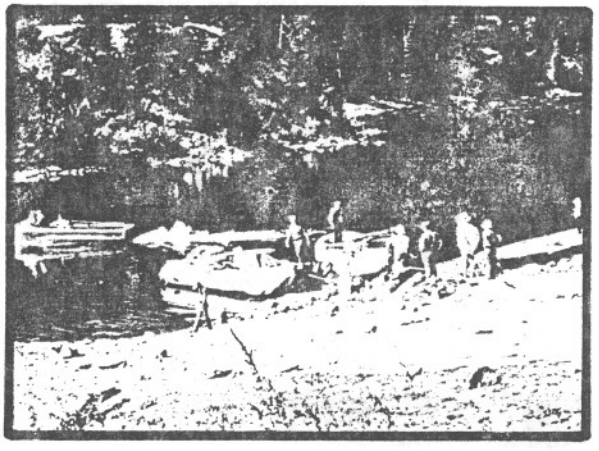
This decision is based upon a review of environmental consequences of alternatives disclosed in the final EIS. Particular attention was given to

responsiveness of alternatives to public issues and management concerns identified through developmental phases of the Forest Plan, and more recently restated through public comment on the draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan. Public comments and Forest Service responses are included in Chapter VI of the FEIS and are discussed in relation to planning questions in the FEIS, Chapter I.

Major aspects of the decision are:

1. Vegetation treatment is an important tool in multiple-use management and will be used to achieve many of the goals and objectives of the Plan. The Forest Plan implementation schedule proposes that an average of approximately 7,550 acres of vegetation will be treated per year. Proposed treatments include range forage improvement projects (230 acres/year), noxious weed control (85 acres/year), wildlife habitat improvement projects (155 acres/year), timber harvest (4,260 acres/year), timber stand improvement (950 acres/year), and reforestation (1870 acres/year). Timber harvest methods to be used include clearcut, shelterwood, group shelterwood, and selection. Average annual acres by harvest method by alternative are displayed in EIS Table IV-T2. Discussion of the methods and their applicability are found on pages IV-32 through 36 and IV-116 through 119 of the Plan.

2. New campgrounds, picnic grounds, and/or boating sites will be constructed along the Salmon River and at Meadow Lake, and trailhead facilities will be constructed at important trailheads throughout the Forest. As a result the developed site capacity will increase by 330 people-at-one-time by the end of the first planning period.



3. Sufficient wildlife habitat will be provided to support the achievement of objective big game population levels based on Idaho Department of Fish and Game big-game population goals as outlined in that Department's big-game 5-year species management plans for 1986-1990. These levels are listed in Table II-7 of the Plan.

4. The annual allowable timber sale quantity will be reduced approximately 43 percent from the annual allowable harvest calculated in the timber management plan under which the Forest's timber resources have been previously managed.

5. Permitted livestock grazing will increase slightly (400 animal unit months/year) by increasing the level of management on selected allotments. However, certain allotments in less than satisfactory condition will be subject to permit reductions if satisfactory progress cannot be obtained through improved management and allotment administration.

6. No additional wilderness is proposed. The existing 426,114-acre portion of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness on the Forest will be managed under the existing approved Wilderness Management Plan. Approximately 338,269 acres of undeveloped land on the Forest will be managed under a management area prescription which emphasizes semiprimitive motorized and nonmotorized recreation experiences and the retention of an undeveloped environment during the planning period.

7. Lands within the Wilderness were withdrawn from mineral leasing and location on January 1, 1984, except for valid rights existing on December 31, 1983. New applications for mineral leasing or location within wilderness will not be accepted.

8. Areas outside of designated wilderness will generally be available for mineral entry and leasing subject to stipulations as outlined in Appendix B of the Plan. Applicable stipulations will be determined on a site-specific and case-by-case basis.

9. Habitat for anadromous (salmon and steelhead) and resident fish species will be provided at a level that will allow the Idaho Department of Fish and Game goals to be reached. Anadromous fisheries habitat will be managed at over 90 percent of its potential.

10. Ten potential Research Natural Areas have been identified for further assessment and possible future formal designation into the national network. The Forest shares another potential area with the Challis and Targhee National Forests, and the Challis National Forest will take the lead in the assessment of that area.
One Research Natural Area currently exists on the Salmon National Forest.

11. The Forest Service will assure that water meeting State quality standards is produced from National Forest lands for both National Forest and downstream uses.

III. Alternatives Considered

Twelve management alternatives were developed in response to the requirements of NEPA, NFMA, public input, and roadless resource analysis. The alternatives are presented in detail in Chapter II of the FEIS. They are:

Alternative 1 - Current Direction ("No Action")
The goal of the alternative is to portray the current level of goods and services other than timber offerings provided by the Forest, and the most likely amount of goods and services expected to be provided in the future if current management direction continues. The allowable sale quantity in this alternative was lowered to accommodate current objectives for other resources.

Alternative 2 - Market Opportunities
The goal of the alternative is to maximize present net value of all outputs that have the potential to produce income for the government.

Alternative 3 - Nonmarket Opportunities
The goal of the alternative is to maximize present net value of non-market outputs and amenities using assigned values.

Alternative 4 - 1980 RPA Program
The goal of the alternative is to respond to the Forest's share of the 1980 National RPA Recommended program as shown in the Intermountain Regional Guide. This alternative also represents a feasible mix of outputs if the allowable sale quantity were to remain at approximately current levels.

Alternative 5 - High Productivity
The goal of the alternative is to respond to the Forest's share of the Draft 1985 RPA Program Update.

Alternative 6 - Constrained Budget
The goal of the alternative is to assess the level of goods and services produced by the Forest with a budget that is 25 percent lower than the current funding levels.

Alternative 7 - Capability Emphasis
The goal of the alternative is to assess the level of goods and services that could be produced by the Forest when resource management investments are emphasized on the most productive lands.

Alternative 8 - Wilderness and Wildlife Emphasis
The goal of the alternative is to portray high big-game producing portions of roadless areas and highest public interest roadless areas as wilderness. Nonwilderness management emphasis is on nonmarket and amenity outputs.

Alternative 9 - High Wildlife and Threatened/Endangered Species Emphasis
The goal of the alternative is to portray high big-game producing portions of roadless areas and roadless areas with suitable threatened and endangered species habitat as wilderness. Nonwilderness management emphasis is on nonmarket and amenity outputs.

Alternative 10 - All Roadless Areas Managed as Wilderness Based on Manageability Lines

The goal of the alternative is to assess the level of goods and services produced when all roadless areas are managed as wilderness (on manageable lines) and other (Nonwilderness) areas are managed intensively for market outputs.

Alternative 11 - All Roadless Areas Managed as Wilderness Based on Roadless Inventory Lines

The goal of the alternative is to assess the level of goods and services produced when roadless areas are managed as wilderness based on roadless inventory lines. Areas not proposed for wilderness are managed for a mix of market and nonmarket outputs similar to the current situation.

Alternative 12 - Modified Current Management Direction (Selected Alternative)

The goal of the alternative is to optimize net public benefits in response to the need for change identified during the analysis of the management situation, public issues, and management concerns.

IV. Rationale For The Selected Alternative

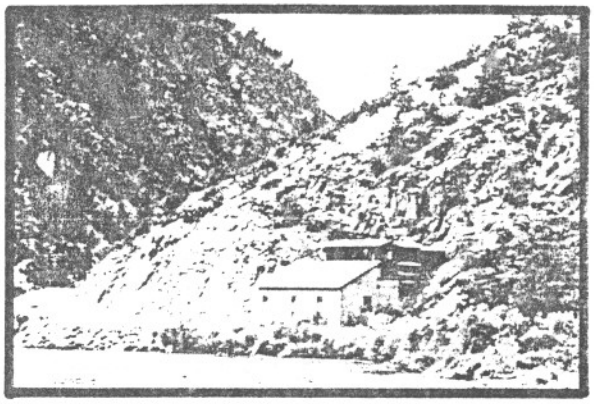
No single factor determined the decision. Rather, all factors were considered and weighed. Based upon the consideration of all environmental, social and economic factors, the approved Plan sets a course of action that maximizes net public benefits and is consistent with the principles of multiple use and sustain yield.

Significant criteria that formed the basis for decisions in the Plan are described in this section. These criteria relate to many laws and regulations and respond directly to public involvement and to the issues, concerns, and opportunities identified for the Forest.

A. Issues, Concerns, and Opportunities, and Areas of Significant Public Interest:

Issues, concerns, and opportunities (ICO) identified during the planning process cover a full range of resources and management subjects. Points of view as to what constitutes ICO resolution also were equally diverse. Because of this, ICOs were formulated into questions which allowed each alternative to address each ICO, positively or negatively; with each alternative having specific benefits and costs. Analysis of each alternative was based on management goals of optimizing net public benefits while providing a continuous flow of goods and services, and maintaining or improving environmental conditions. The proposed action was identified as the management mix that best met these criteria.

Each of the alternatives addressed the ICOs in a slightly different way. The importance and applicability of the ICO's guided the planning process. Chapter II of the FEIS is structured to respond to each of the ICOs by alternative (For a detailed description of the ICO's, see Appendix A of EIS).



Each alternative addressed a different resource base acreage mix available for management consideration. The mix of resource outputs and activities available from that base was determined by the management priorities outlined for the alternative. Each alternative evaluated the roadless area resource for differing mixes of wilderness or nonwilderness uses.

A major reason for selecting an alternative is how well that alternative responds to public issues and management concerns. Since many issues and concerns conflict, it is not possible to address all issues and concerns in a positive manner. Also, resolution of an issue or a concern is perceived differently by different people. The major issues of public concern are included in the discussion below. (For those readers interested in directly reviewing comments on these issues, see the FEIS, Chapter VI).

Some of the issues generated few or no comments during the public review. There could be several reasons which reduced or refocused the importance that was originally placed on a given issue. Among the reasons are:

(1) the length of time since an issue was raised,
(2) changed economic conditions,
(3) new requirements that refocused attention to other issues or,
(4) interim management activities have resolved the concern that originally surfaced the issue.

In some cases the lack of comment appears to have occurred because reviewers were satisfied with the way the issue was addressed in the proposed Plan.

1. Management of Undeveloped Areas

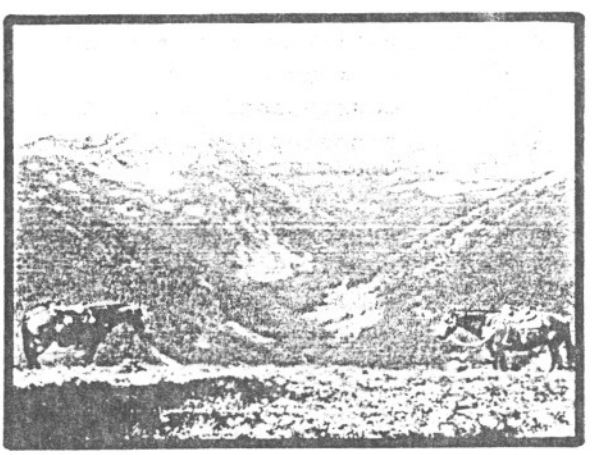
Considerable support exists for designation of wilderness in addition to the 426,114 acres that currently exist on the Salmon National Forest in the Frank Church--River of No Return Wilderness. Reasons cited for support of wilderness include:

- Preservation of places available for solitude and spiritual renewal.
- Preservation of examples of pristine ecosystems.
- Longterm maintenance of water quality.
- Protection of fish and wildlife habitats.
- Increased availability of wilderness based recreation opportunity.

At the same time, there is considerable opposition to any additional designation. Among the reasons for this opposition are:

- potential for mineral values in many undeveloped areas on the Forest,
- interest from motorized users who would be excluded from their preferred activities by wilderness designations,
- concerns about availability of adequate timber supplies,
- concerns about potential future loss of water rights,
- concerns about reductions in livestock grazing.

Although there is strong disagreement on Forest Service recommendations for wilderness designation, there is a high degree of support for a management strategy that would limit development of some portion of the undeveloped lands in order to protect and maintain the recreation, wildlife, fisheries, scenic, and watershed values commonly associated with wilderness. The common ground between those who support and those who oppose new wilderness seems to be a strategy of limited development established for specific management areas on the Forest.



Management area prescriptions 2A, 2A-1, and 2B emphasize semi-primitive opportunities and will provide a high degree of protection for specific undeveloped areas. These prescriptions provide for no timber harvest. No new roads would be constructed unless needed by claimant or leaseholder for minerals or energy development. The likelihood of significant impacts from such roads and activities is considered negligible. Areas assigned these prescriptions will be managed to benefit wildlife and for a mix of motorized and nonmotorized recreation opportunities.

Areas where these prescriptions are to be applied include portions of inventoried roadless areas in the Lemhi, Bitterroot, and Beaverhead Mountain Ranges, and portions of the Long Tom, Blue Joint, Jesse Creek, Duck Peak, Camas Creek, and Taylor Mountain roadless areas. Approximately 338,000 acres are included in the management areas with these prescriptions.

Due to the nature of prescriptions under which these areas will be managed it is anticipated that the wilderness character of the areas will be essentially intact at the end of the first planning period and that their suitability and availability for consideration as wilderness at that time will not be foreclosed.

Current roadless areas not assigned a semi-primitive recreation management area prescription were determined to have greater opportunities for other resource management or to have existing uses or commitments that would not be compatible with a completely semi-primitive type of management. Prescriptions 4A, 4B-1, and 4B-3 are assigned to some of these areas. These prescriptions allow timber harvest only for the purpose of enhancing habitat conditions such as wildlife forage-cover ratio and juxtiposition of cover and forage areas. Other areas are assigned prescriptions that emphasize other multiple use outputs such as anadromous fisheries, grazing, and timber harvest. Site-specific analysis of development activities will occur prior to project implementation.

While an area may have been assigned a prescription that allows development activities to take place, only a portion of the development is scheduled to take place before the end of the first planning period. In fact, the majority of the current roadless areas will have no development activities during the first period. It is anticipated that at the end of the first planning period approximately 73 percent (606,000 acres) of the currently existing roadless areas will still retain wilderness qualifying characteristics due either to the assignment of a semi-primitive recreation management area prescription or the lack of scheduled development in areas where development would be allowed.

2. Wildlife and Fish Habitat Management

Most comments on this subject dealt with a public desire to protect wildlife and fish habitat. Although all species were considered important, the ones that seemed to be given the most attention were elk and anadromous fish. The majority of the public asked that the Plan provide for wildlife and fish outputs that would meet goals established by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

The Plan provides habitat in both quantity and quality sufficient to meet objective big game population levels as listed in Table II-7 of the Plan. These objective levels are based on the Idaho Department of Fish and Game goals as set out in their 1986-1990 Five-Year Big Game Species Management Plans. It also provides sufficient resident and anadromous fisheries habitat to meet State goals.

Anadromous fishery habitat quality will be maintained at no less than 90 percent of habitat potential level in all anadromous fisheries watersheds except Panther Creek. Panther Creek was historically an anadromous fisheries watershed, but fish runs have been destroyed due to mining originated water pollution which enters Panther

Creek at Big Deer and Blackbird Creeks. Remedial efforts are currently underway by the responsible agencies (EPA, BPA, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare) and the landowners and mining claimants to solve the pollution problem and re-establish fish runs. The portion of the watershed upstream from Blackbird Creek has been assigned 3A series prescriptions which emphasize protection of anadromous fish habitat in order to aid in fishery re-establishment.

An area of special concern was the elk migration corridor along the Idaho-Montana border in the Dahlonega Creek-Anderson Mountain area. The public expressed concern that development activities might interfere with and perhaps stop the migration. Prescriptions 2A and 2B emphasizing a semiprimitive recreation experience have been expanded in the area so that the entire border in that area is now included in one of these prescriptions, with the exception of the area from the bottom of Pierce Creek to Lost Trail Pass and a narrow corridor along the existing road in the upper Dahlonega-Thompson Gulch-Big Hole Pass vicinity. These prescriptions, coupled with requirements of the General Forest Direction and specific requirements of adjacent management area prescriptions, will ensure continued availability of this migration route.

3. Timber Economics and "Below Cost" Timber Sales

Many concerns were expressed about "below cost" timber sales and government "subsidized" resource development. These concerns were often the basis for support of wilderness designations or assignment of management area prescriptions that would limit development. Such comments were generally based on the General Accounting Office (GAO) cash flow accounting analysis which compared single year dollar receipts with costs occurring in the same year.

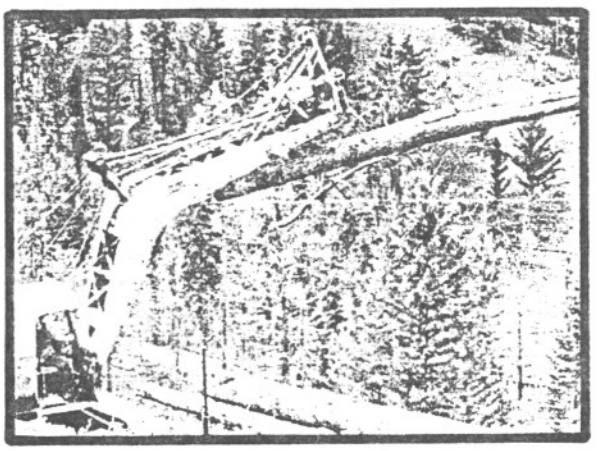
That method is not an economic analysis and so does not completely reflect benefits derived. It does not take into account benefits accruing from long-term capital investments in roads and other facilities nor does it include non-priced benefits that result from the investment. The Forest Service is in the process of implementing an accounting method that will allow a more accurate assessment of costs and benefits directly attributable to timber sales.

When viewed strictly from the viewpoint of the GAO accounting method, the Salmon National Forest has in the past sold and will continue in the future to sell "below cost" sales. Among the benefits resulting from this are:

-- the harvest of timber often has a positive effect on other resource values, such as cutting in lodgepole pine stands to open up big-game forage areas.

-- timber harvest can allow conversion of low value, overmature stands to more vigorous, less insect- and disease-prone stands that will be of higher future value.

-- access is provided for administration, dispersed recreation opportunity, and protection purposes.



On the Salmon National Forest one of the primary concerns dealt with in the decision to continue with negative cash flow timber sales was the effect that very low timber-offer levels would have on local dependent communities. The economy and many aspects of lifestyles of Lemhi County in Idaho and Ravalli County in Montana depend heavily on resource-oriented outputs from the Forest. The economy is based on market commodity resources such as timber, grazing, and minerals and certain non-market commodity resources such as recreation, wildlife, and fish. These communities have been heavily impacted by the economic downturn in the early 1980's. During that period the promise of a large mining venture near Salmon dissolved in the face of falling mineral prices, the sawmill in Salmon was closed for nearly a year, and the housing market slowed to a virtual standstill. As a result of these and other occurences numerous businesses closed, the population began to drop with a corresponding drop in tax receipts, and the unemployment rate rose to well above national and state averages.

The Salmon sawmill was sold to a group of former employees who re-opened it with the hope of reestablishing at least a portion of its previous volume of business. At least two sawmills in the Bitterroot Valley in Montana are also partially dependent on timber from the Salmon National Forest and have been similarly impacted by economic downturns. In view of the recent destabilizing influences that have affected the dependent communities it is considered reasonable to make a volume of timber available that will provide the opportunity to maintain a viable lumber manufacturing base in the community. This will allow the communities the opportunity to maintain an historically important segment of their economies if they choose to do so.

The Forest will still continue to explore and develop methods to reduce costs and improve cash flows. The Forest Service will continue to address this issue within the implementation and budgeting process and through the design and scheduling of timber sales.

4. Timber Management--Allowable Sale Quantity

It is possible to produce the timber volumes proposed while still meeting the goals established for other resource uses. The Forest Service believes that the proposed timber harvest level is the result of the best and most efficient mix of resource activities and results in the greatest net public benefit when all opportunities, benefits, and costs are considered.

The DEIS and proposed Plan called for an average annual allowable sale quantity of 21.1 million board feet. Many commenters felt that this level was an increase in harvest compared to past timber harvest on the Forest. This harvest level is actually a 43 percent reduction from the approximately 37 million board feet of allowable sale quantity called for in the timber management plan under which the Forest has been operating prior to this Plan.

There is a regional mill capacity for timber that is not met by the Plan. It was also not met by the previous timber management plan and it could not be met even under the alternative with the highest timber output prediction. The Plan proposes a maximum allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 21.1 MMBF but under current economic conditions it is doubtful that the total ASQ would be purchased. The average annual timber volume offered during the decade 1976 through 1985 was 32.7 MMBF, primarily from the higher quality timber stands on gentler slopes. Analysis done in the Forest planning process showed that it was not possible to sustain that level of production and meet appropriate output levels for other resources.

Many comments expressed belief that the projected harvest level was too high. Many other comments expressed satisfaction with the harvest level or were in support of the preferred alternative while a small number of comments requested consideration of a higher allowable sale quantity. Those who gave reasons for their belief that the level was too high were concerned with the possible effects on wildlife and/or fish habitat, the advisability of producing "below cost" timber sales, the ability to sell the volume considering existing market conditions, and the impact of development on the roadless areas.

Concerns dealing with wildlife and fish habitat, "below cost" timber sales, and management of the undeveloped areas are discussed in previous sections under those headings.

During preparation of the final EIS and Forest Plan, three events occurred which provided additional information about the timber supply/demand relationships for the Forest in the first decade planning period. These are the import tax on Canadian lumber entering the U.S., release of "A Report on Idaho's Timber Supply," February 1987, and release of "Montana's Timber Supply: An Inquiry Into Possible Futures," March 1987. All three events/reports were reviewed to determine if any changes in the analysis and/or proposed Forest Plan were warranted.

Any increase in domestic timber demand caused by the imposition of the import tax on Canadian lumber entering the U.S., when localized to the marketing zone influenced by timber supplies from the Salmon National Forest, is considered to be negligible.

A review of "A Report on Idaho's Timber Supply" indicates that future statewide timber supplies originating from private lands may be less than in the past. The Salmon National Forest is within the Southeast Marketing Zone identified in the report. Within this zone timber supplies from private, state or other federal land are practically nonexistent. The study did not provide any new information concerning timber supply in the Southeast Zone. Therefore, the timber industry within this Zone must continue to look to National Forest System lands for their raw material needs.

Review of "Montana's Timber Supply: An Inquiry Into Possible Futures" indicates that industrial timberland owners do not appear to have sufficient inventory to maintain their harvest at the levels of the recent past much beyond the year 2000. It does appear, however, that future declines in harvest by industrial owners can be at least partially, if not totally, offset by increased harvests from other ownerships in the state. This is especially true in the subregions of the study which influence or are influenced by the Salmon National Forest.

Assumptions on timber supply and demand used in calculating allowable sale quantity are confirmed by the findings of the Idaho and Montana timber supply studies. The original analysis of each alternative was approached in a manner which calculated the ASQ on the entire suited land base. Considering how the analysis was structured and the results of the two timber supply studies, there is no reasonable opportunity for increasing the ASQ. Any increase in ASQ, beyond what has already been analyzed, would require changing other multiple-use goals and objectives in the Plan.

Based on information gained through analysis of the current situation and other alternatives, approximately 60,000 acres of tentatively suited timber base and 1.35 MMBF/year of first decade volume were identified as being beyond economic practicality for timber harvest. These lands consist of stands of small diameter lodgepole pine and Douglas fir, much of which occurs on steep slopes or highly erosive soils in locations which are far removed from ground transportation systems and from processing facilities. The combination of lack of access, low value species, distance from viable markets, and high-cost logging method results in costs of timber management activities that outweigh potential market value. This difference between costs and benefits is so great that contemplating harvesting timber from these lands is considered beyond economic justification. No scenario could be developed in which these lands would be economically operable in the first decade or in the 50-year planning horizon. Since no economic or other justification could be found for maintaining

these lands in the timber base, now or in the future, they were removed from the base in the preferred alternative.

While the initial determining factor for removal of the above lands from the timber base was economics, the lands were subsequently used to provide other multiple use benefits which are not necessarily compatible with timber harvest. These other benefits include:

- -- maintaining vegetative diversity through old growth retention
- -- maintaining visual quality objectives
- -- providing quality big game habitat
- -- maintaining high water quality for anadromous fisheries
- -- providing semiprimitive recreational opportunities

Thus, these lands contribute significantly to other resource objectives and, therefore, would not be available for timber production even should the economic situation change to such an extent that the lands would become economically operable.

Average annual ASQ will be 21.1 MMBF during the Planning period (first 10 years), and will not change during the first 5 years of the second decade at which time the Plan will be revised.

5. Transportation System Management

The Plan proposes that at full implementation it would be necessary to construct an average of 5 miles of arterial/collector roads, and 45 miles of local roads per year in the first decade. Necessary road construction would reduce to 0 miles of arterial/collector, and 14 miles of local roads per year in the fifth decade if the plan was projected beyond its 10 to 15 years.

Approximately 44 miles of newly constructed low standard, timber purchaser roads will be closed each year unless it is determined portions should remain open for other uses.

Comments concerning the transportation system tended to fall into one of two main groups. One group was generally opposed to new roads since they wished that unroaded areas remain unroaded. The other group, while not necessarily opposed to additional roading, wished any new roads to be built as inexpensively as possible considering the purpose of the road and also wished new roads to be closed after use.

An adequate transportation system is necessary to efficient management, administration, and protection of the Forest. It is neither necessary nor desireable that all of the system be open and available for use at all times. In order to reduce road maintenance costs, increase big game habitat effectiveness, and limit sediment production from roads, it is the intent of the

intended Forest that new local roads will be closed upon completion of use for which the road was built. (Generally, a local road is a road built to serve a single purpose such as a timber sale.) The arterial and collector road systems are nearly all in place and those additional segments to be built would remain open since they are intended for a wide range of uses.

The entire road system is managed under the umbrella of the Forest Travel Management Plan which is updated yearly. This plan indicates travel routes or areas on the Forest closed to travel and/or entry by all or specific modes. Areas or roads may be added or deleted from the Travel Plan as needed for resource protection or other approved reasons. The Travel Management Plan is incorporated by reference into and tiered with the Forest Plan and will be guided by standards and quidelines in the Plan.

6. Watershed Management

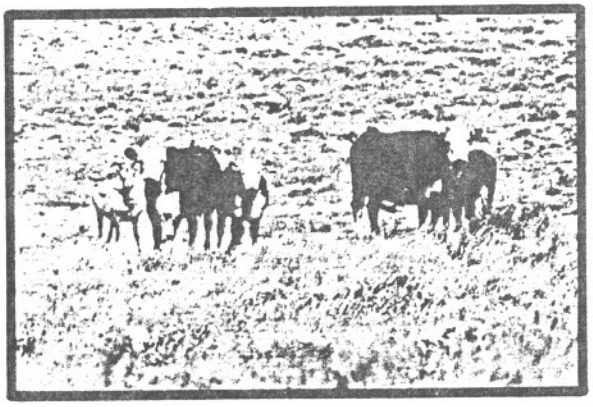
Two main areas of concern were surfaced in relation to this subject. One dealt with a concern that water quality would be degraded by development activities with a corresponding impact on fisheries habitat and domestic water supplies. The other concern dealt with a fear that identification of a need for Federal water rights and, in particular, instream flow needs would have an impact on existing water rights issued by the State of Idaho.

The Forest will comply with State of Idaho Water Quality Standards by complying with approved Best Management Practices. The State of Idaho is presently developing water quality standards for non-point pollution sources. When these standards are final the Plan will be reveiwed to insure all legal requirements are met. Fisheries habitat will be managed to meet the species goals established in the current Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Species Management Plans.

The Forest Plan supports protection of existing State water rights and, through recognition of federal water rights to instream flows, the Forest Service will be able to continue to provide downstream users with good water quality and proper distribution of flows throughout irrigation seasons. The Plan does not alter existing water rights aquired under State law.

7. Range Resource

A commonly expressed concern was that livestock grazing has negative impact on wildlife resources and that any increase in livestock grazing would result in increased conflict between resources. An increase of approximately 400 animal unit months of livestock grazing use is projected for the first decade by the Plan. This increase will generally come from those allotments which respond to a more intensive level of management. Reducing conflicts between livestock grazing and fish and wildlife habitat was a major objective in selecting the level and intensity of livestock management. Grazing standards and guidelines will meet water quality and fisheries management objectives. The level of grazing provided for in the Plan is compatable with maintaining high wildlife outputs on the Forest. The Plan provides the required quality and quantities of habitat required to meet the 5-year (1986-1990) species management objectives that have been set by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for all species of big game.



8. Community Stability

Many varied comments were received which related to the concept of community stability. Among the subjects addressed were questions as to the basis for involvement of the Forest Service in considering community stability, concerns that addressing community stability results in maintenance of uneconomically high levels of timber harvest and livestock use, and concerns that adverse affects on uses such as recreation, wildlife, and fisheries are accepted in the name of community stability. Many commenters also pointed out the importance of National Forest outputs to community stability and asked that needs of dependent communities be considered.

It is Forest Service Policy to provide, so far as feasible, an even flow of National Forest timber in order to facilitate stabilization of communities and of opportunities for employment. Also, there is little doubt that the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the National Forest Management Act of 1976, and subsequent implementing regulations require that this issue be considered when formulating a Forest Plan. It is implicit in those Acts and regulations that the Forest Service is responsible for evaluating alternative courses of action for their potential effects on local economies. In addition, the Forest Service is mandated to ascertain issues and concerns of the public and to evaluate its proposals in light of those issues and concerns. The subject of

community stability was one of the concerns raised during the initial public involvement phase of the planning process.

The Forest Service recognizes that community stability or economic development cannot be ensured by the agency since the means to accomplish such a goal are not available. However, the Forest Service does sometimes have the ability to prevent actions which could destabilize communities or to provide opportunities which could help communities reach their economic goals. The Plan does not assume the responsibility for the direction and health of the local economy, but it does provide opportunities for economic and social stability that are acceptable from a standpoint of maintaining productive capacity of the National Forest.

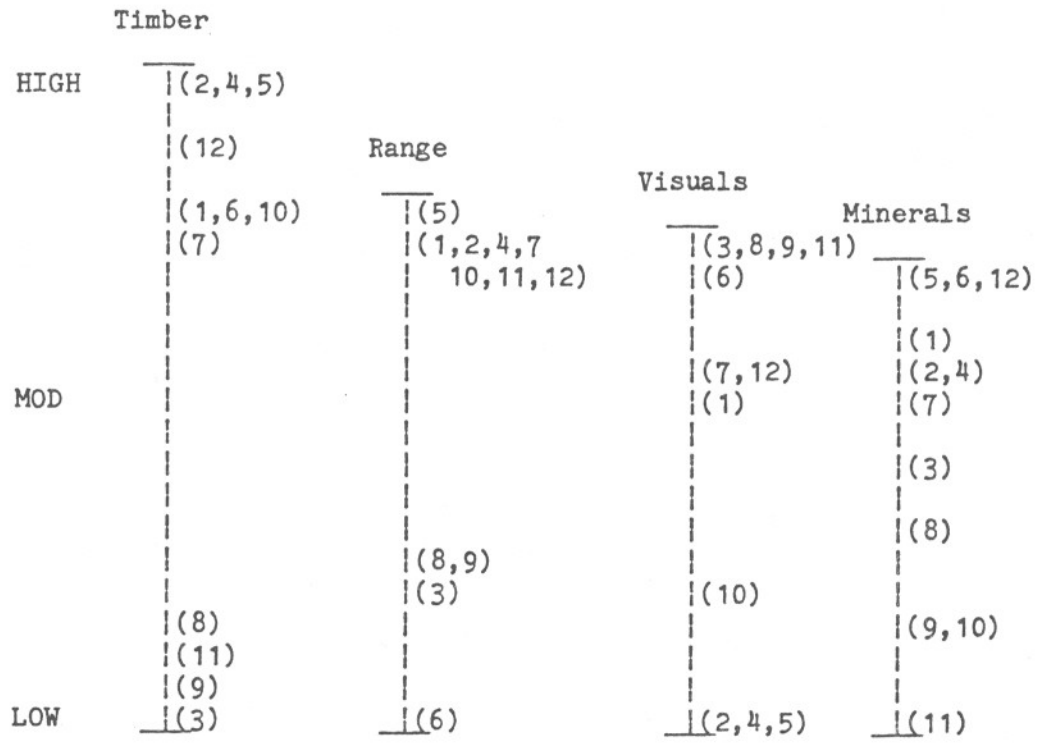
Community stability is more than just a concern with the economy. It also has to do with social, physical, and even spiritual surroundings and how the community interacts, or wishes to interact, with and within that environment. The Plan offers an opportunity for the community to make choices about how it wishes to interact. A range of uses of the Forest is provided without impacting basic productivity of the resources. The Plan will ensure sufficient habitat potential to meet the Idaho Fish and Game Department's big game and fisheries goals. Timber harvest is proposed at a level sufficient to provide an economically viable lumbering operation and also assure a healthy diverse forest resource. Dispersed recreation opportunities will exceed expected demand throughout the planning period. Quality wilderness experiences are provided in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness. Exploration for and extraction of leasable and locatable minerals is encouraged. A level of livestock grazing consistent with the agriculture base and rural lifestyle of Lemhi County is provided. A pleasing visual landscape will be maintained and selected portions of the Forest will be managed for both semiprimitive motorized and non-motorized recreation user experience. If fully implemented the Plan will result in a slight (approximately 1 percent) increase in jobs and income related to Forest outputs and activities.

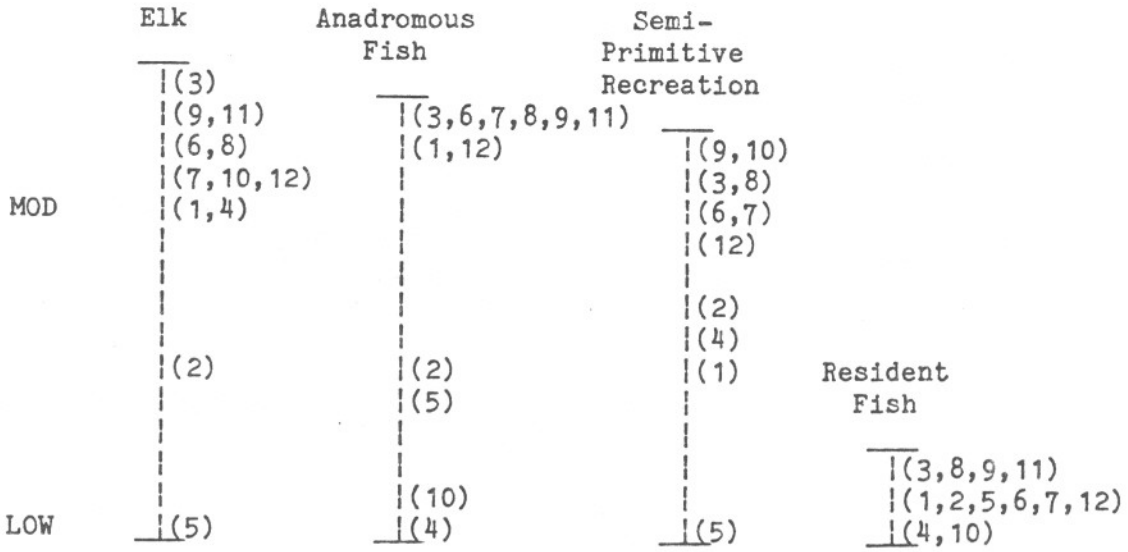
B. Comparing Alternatives and Selecting the Preferred

In addition to considering the issues, planning criteria, and constraints, eight major factors were identified that were considered particularly relevant to the decision on the preferred alternative. The differences in advantages among the alternatives for each of these factors were carefully considered.

The following is a graphic display and discussion of the importance of advantages for each factor. The importance of advantages were ranked for each factor in comparing alternatives (For example, timber -- highest, resident fish -- lowest, and for example, within range, alt. 5--highest, alt. 6--lowest). Alternative numbers (1 -12) are displayed in the parentheses on the chart below.

Graphic Display of Alternatives Compared by Advantages:





Commercial timber available measured in increase in volume offered over 7.7 million board feet per year.

The quantity of timber available in the future and the importance of the timber industry to the local area is a major planning issue. Timber availability is also an indicator of firewood availability. To support a local manufacturing facility it is estimated that 18 to 25 MMBF would have to be available. Preference for timber volume offered is based on contribution to meeting national needs for timber and on this factor's importance to local economy and lifestyles.

Domestic livestock forage measured in increase in AUM's over 45,400 per year.

Range resource outputs, dependency of ranch operations and local economic importance of ranching are major planning issues. Preference is based on maintaining dependent ranch operations and on this factor's importance to local economic stability and lifestyles.

Visual Quality measured in deviation from inventoried visual quality objectives on a scale of 0 to 10 and the advantage being increase over 0.

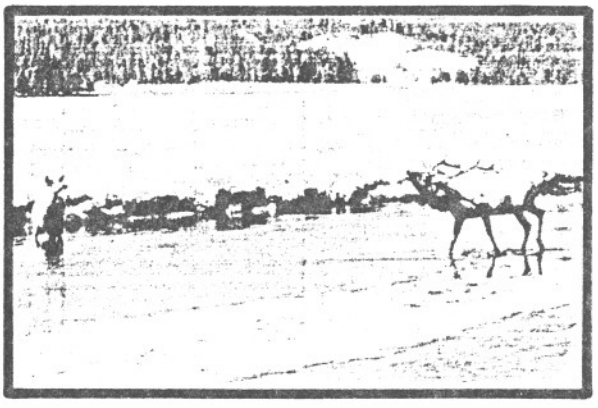
Maintaining a visually pleasing environment is a planning issue that appeared specifically as visual quality concern and was also included in undeveloped area and recreation management issues. Preference is based on expressed esthetic and lifestyle desires and on the importance of this factor to tourism related to natural values.

Minerals and energy availability measured in increase in acres available over 517,000 acres.

Availability of minerals and energy resources is a major issue identified in the planning process. Preference for availability is based on meeting the nation's need for mineral and energy resources and this factor's importance in contributing to community and regional economic stability.

Big-game habitat potential measured in increase in potential elk populations over 3,769.

Maintenance of high quality wildlife habitat in general and big game habitat in particular is a major planning issue. Habitat quality for elk is also an indicator of overall diversity and of capability for other big game species. Preference for elk is based on this factor's importance relative to State management goals, contribution to



community and state economies and to local and state esthetic and lifestyle preferences.

Anadromous fish habitat potential measured in increase in pounds of fish over 321,800 pounds.

Maintenance of fisheries productivity and water quality is a major planning issue. Productivity of aquatic habitats as measured in fish biomass terms is an indicator of water quality and general health of aquatic ecosystems. Preference for anadromous fish is based on this factor's importance relative to State, National and Columbia Basin tribal goals and contributions to local, State and regional economies and expressed esthetic and lifestyle preferences.

Semi-primitive recreation opportunity measured in increase in semi-primitive acres over 425,000.

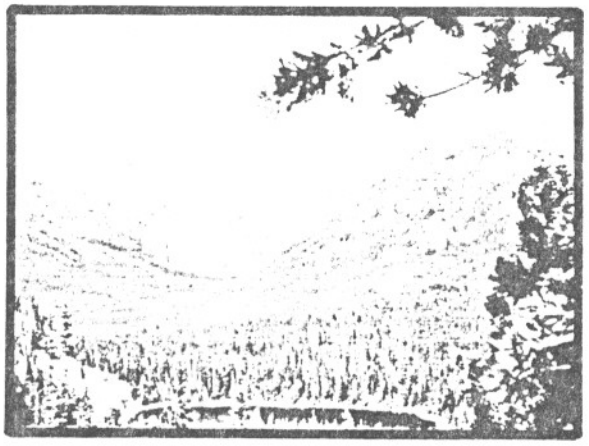
Management of undeveloped areas, providing semi-primitive recreation opportunities and the desire for little or no change in some areas are major planning issues. Preference for undeveloped area is based on meeting expressed interest in retaining areas essentially in their present condition and on this factors importance to local and state lifestyles.

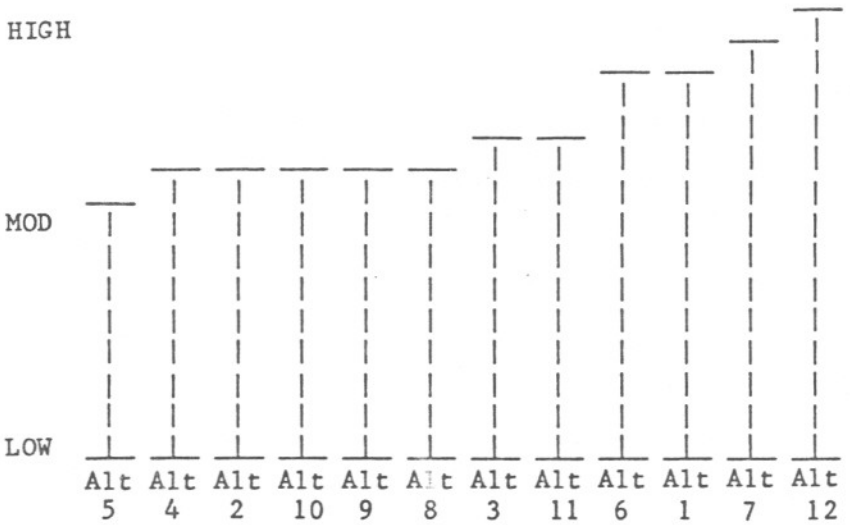
Resident fish habitat potential measured in increase in pounds of resident fish over 92,200 pounds.

This factor recognizes the importance of fisheries and water quality in non-anadromous waters. Preference basis is the same as for anadromous fish except goals and effects are primarily a state and local concern.

Results

As a result of evaluation of each alternative based on the above factors, Alternative 12 was clearly the preferred alternative. Although Alternative 12 is the highest in only one factor, when alternatives are evaluated across all factors (in total) it has the greatest overall total importance of advantages. This is done by ranking by total importance of advantages for each alternative.





Ranking by Total Importance of Advantages

In addition, Alternative 12 is superior in resolving some of the major issues and concerns identified for the Forest from a spatial or geographic aspect. Resolution of these site specific issues and concerns is not reflected in the forest-wide evaluation of advantages of each alternative (displayed above).

Alternative 12 has the greatest overall total importance of advantages, and is judged to have the greatest net public benefit.

C. Environmentally Preferable Alternative and Comparison with the Selected Alternative

All alternatives considered in detail are environmentally acceptable. The selected alternative is Alternative 12. The environmentally preferable alternative is defined as the alternative that would result in the least amount of impact on the physical and biological environment. Alternative 9 has been identified as the environmentally preferable alternative. In that alternative the wildlife, watershed, and vegetative resources, when taken in combination, are disturbed least and are maintained and improved at a higher level than in other alternatives. Factors compared when selecting the environmentally preferable alternative were wilderness management acres, allowable timber sale quantity, road construction required, potential wildlife habitat, livestock grazing use, amount of area with restrictions on minerals related activities, and amount of timber management-related ground-disturbing activities such as timber stand improvement work.

Likewise, Alternatives 3, 8, and 11 are also identified as being environmentally preferable to Alternative 12. Alternatives 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10 are less desirable than Alternative 12 from an environmental standpoint. The following table compares selected outputs of Alternative 12 and alternatives that are environmentally preferable to Alternative 12.

AVERAGE ANNUAL OUTPUTS FOR FIRST DECADE

Activity	Units	Alt. 12	Alt. 3	Alt. 7	Alt. 8	Alt. 9	Alt. 11
Wilderness Management*	MACRES	426	774	663	897	1,005	1,256
Timber Sale Quan.	MMBF	21.1	8.0	17.9	9.5	7.7	9.1
Timber Stand Imp.	ACRES	950	360	806	428	347	410
Livestock Grazing	MAUM	54.8	48.3	57.2	48.3	48.3	54.3
Road Const.	MILES	50	21	39	23	12	23
Big Game Potential							
Elk	ANIMALS	7,365	9,643	7,747	8,668	9,101	9,141
Deer	ANIMALS	18,559	22,271	18,559	22,271	22,271	22,271
Minerals Access Total Restriction							
Locatable	MACRES	453	802	689	924	1,032	1,283
Leasable	MACRES	426	775	662	897	1,005	1,256
Employment attributable to Forest activities	JOBS	605	501	582	510	495	513

* Each alternative includes 426 thousand acres of existing wilderness (Frank Chuch--River of No Return Wilderness). Acreages in excess of 426 thousand were evaluated in the alternative for potential wilderness recommendation to Congress.

In terms of factors used to select the overall preferred alternative (Section IV, B. above), Alternatives 3, 8, and 9 have a greater importance of advantage than Alternative 12 in the following factors: Big game habitat potential, anadromous fish habitat potential, resident fish habitat potential, semiprimitive recreation opportunity and visual quality. Alternative 12 has a greater importance of advantage than Alternatives 3, 8, and 9 in the following factors: Mineral/energy availability, commercial timber availability and domestic livestock forage. Advantages in these latter three factors are of a magnitude that outweighs environmental advantages of Alternatives 3, 8, and 9.

Alternatives 7 and 11 have environmental advantages similar to those of other environmentally preferable alternatives. In the factor of domestic livestock forage, Alternatives 11 and 12 have basically the same importance of advantage and Alternative 7 is only slightly higher than both. Alternative 12 has a greater importance of advantage in the factors of mineral/energy availability and commercial timber availability. The advantage of Alternative 12 in these latter two factors outweigh the importance of the advantage of Alternatives 7 and 11 in the other factors.

Social and economic diversity benefits to local communities of Alternative 12, including maintenance of a higher level of jobs and income and the wider range of options available for resource uses, outweighs the environmental advantages of Alternatives 3, 7, 8, 9, and 11. The preferred alternative (12) offers a mix of commodity and noncommodity uses that best addresses the greatest number of issues, concerns, and opportunities in a positive manner. Graphical comparisons of outputs and activities of all alternatives are displayed in Chapter II of the FEIS.

D. Alternatives with Higher Present Net Value (PNV)

Alternatives in order of descending present net value:

Alternative	PNV (Thousand $)
11	63,911
8	62,489
9	49,875
3	48,529
6	35,416
7	26,138
10	19,358
1	16,563
12	4,010
4	-26,033
2	-26,033
5	-31,638

Eight alternatives have present net values greater than Alternative 12. The rationale for not selecting any of these alternatives is based on the eight selection factors and the importance given to the advantages that a particular alternative may have. A discussion of reasons for not selecting Alternatives 3, 7, 8, 9, and 11 has been explained above in Section IV, C.

Alternative 6 has greater importance of advantage than Alternative 12 in the factors of: Big game habitat potential, anadromous habitat potential, resident fish habitat potential, semiprimitive recreation opportunity and visual quality. Alternatives 6 and 12 have an identical importance of advantage in the factor of minerals/energy availability. Alternative 12 has a greater importance of advantage in the factors of commercial timber availability and domestic livestock forage.

Alternative 10 has a greater importance of advantage than Alternative 12 in the factors of big game habitat potential, domestic livestock forage and semiprimitive recreation opportunity. Alternative 12 has a greater importance of advantage than Alternative 10 in the factors of mineral/energy availability, anadromous fish habitat potential, resident fish habitat potential, commercial timber availability and visual quality.

Alternatives 1 and 12 have an identical importance of advantage in the factor of anadromous habitat potential. Alternative 12 exceeds Alternative 1 in importance of advantage in all of the other selection factors.

Alternatives 2, 4, and 5 had present net values less than that of the preferred alternative and were not selected for reasons stated in Section IV, C. above.

Present net value is the difference between discounted benefits and discounted costs of all priced outputs over the analysis period. The major difference in PNV comparing Alternatives 11 with 12 is due to a decrease in fish/wildlife and wilderness benefits and an increase in timber management costs. Higher timber costs in Alternative 12 represent increased investments in the present or near future. Benefits resulting from these investments would not be realized in most cases until near the end or beyond the 50 year planning horizon (well beyond the 10-year planning period).

In calculating present net value, a dollar value is assigned to various outputs. Some of these, such as timber, are determined by past market experience and produce direct revenues. Others, such as dispersed recreation, use assigned values derived from research to approximate market value if a market were to exist and generally do not produce direct revenues. In addition, some benefits, such as contributions to local lifestyles and economies dependant on the Forest, do not produce revenues and have no basis from which to estimate values.

As discussed in Section D of Chapter IV and Section D, Appendix B of the FEIS, PNV was not the major criterion used to select an alternative because it does not adequately reflect all the benefits derived from an alternative. The criterion used was maximizing net public benefit, which includes both the net value of resources that produce revenue and consideration of those that do not produce revenue.

As a general rule, alternatives with present net values higher than the selected alternative are those alternatives with the lowest levels of investment in commodity outputs. While those alternatives result in higher non-commodity benefits they tend also to result in negative social impacts to local communities. These negative impacts are discussed in the FEIS Social Impact Analysis (Section D, Chapter IV). As a result, alternatives with higher PNV's than the selected alternative are not well balanced in their outputs of multiple resources. They address one or a few of the issues very well but fail to address others adequately. As a result of this imbalance, they fail to maximize net public benefits. The selected alternative favorably addresses more of the issues and produces a more evenly balanced range of outputs in that commodity outputs important to the area of the Forest are provided along with high levels of non-commodity outputs.

V. Mitigation and Monitoring

Management constraints were imposed on alternatives to ensure long-term land productivity and compliance with threshold soil and water requirements. These requirements are standards and guidelines that apply to all management prescriptions within each alternative. Standards and guidelines act as mitigation measures to ensure that sustained yields of renewable resources are maintained.

In the case of the mineral resource, once the resource has been extracted, it is gone except where secondary recovery becomes feasible. Conservation of these resources might be defined as the planned rate of removal. Mitigating measures involved in location, development, and removal of such nonrenewable resources are expressed as occupancy stipulations in mining plans, project level environmental documents, and in management area direction in the Plan.

Maintaining VQO's, viable populations of wildlife management indicator species, cover/forage ratios, nondeclining even-flow of timber resources, and State water quality standards are all examples of standards and guidelines that act as mitigation measures prescribed in Chapter IV of the Plan.

Each resource has a minimum management requirement level that acts as the base upon which alternative management programs were developed. Management commitments below the minimum management level were not considered as options.

Stated as standards and guidelines, mitigating measures are intended to be adopted and enforced in all project level activities. Mitigation measures for

renewable resources are discussed in Chapter IV of the Plan. As long-term effects of planned management prescriptions on the various management areas are assessed and new research results and technology become available, some adjustments may be made to update prescribed standards and guidelines.

An aggressive implementation, monitoring, and evaluation program has been outlined in Chapter V of the Plan. The purpose of the program is to facilitate implementation of the Plan in an orderly manner while maintaining environmental safeguards.

Monitoring will help determine if prescriptions are being properly applied to management areas, provide for an evaluation of the appropriateness of the Plan's management direction, and track condition trends of Forest resources. Evaluation data will be used to update resource inventories, fine-tune mitigation measures, and determine the need for amending or revising the Plan. The monitoring plan outlines data sources and monitoring techniques by resource element, establishes frequency of measurements, and details conditions that would initiate further evaluations.

VI. Implementation

The Plan will be implemented 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision appears in the Federal Register. Time needed to bring activities into compliance with the Plan will vary depending on types of projects.

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 goals and objectives in 36 CFR 219.10(e), 36 CFR 219.11(d), and 36 CFR 219.27.

Implementation is guided by management requirements contained in Forest goals and objectives, direction, standards and guides, and management area prescriptions found in Chapter IV 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. Any unavoidable adverse environmental effects, such as disruptive effects of vegetation manipulation on recreation or livestock grazing, will be temporary and will involve only a small percentage of the Forest at any one time. As can best be determined, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted and are included in Chapter IV of the Plan.

Proposals to use National Forest lands will be reviewed for consistency with the Plan. Management Direction contained in Chapter IV of the Plan will be used to analyze any proposal. Permits, contracts, and other instruments for occupancy and use of the National Forest lands will be consistent with Management Direction in Chapter IV. This is required by 16 USC 1604(i) and 36 CFR 219.10(e).

Activities, many of which are interdependent, may be affected by the funding levels provided by Congress. The Plan will be implemented by way of various site-specific projects; such as building a road, developing a campground, or sale of timber. If funding is changed in any given year, projects scheduled for that year may have to be altered or rescheduled. However, goals, management priorities, and land-activity assignments described in the Plan will not change unless the Plan is revised or amended. If funding changes significantly over several years in a way that would alter basic management objectives, the Plan itself may have to be amended [36 CFR 219.10 (e)(1982)].

During implementation, when various projects are designed, more site-specific analysis may be required. These analyses may take the form of Environmental Assessments [40 CFR 1508.9 (1982)], Environmental Impact Statements [40 CFR 1508.11 (1982)], or categorical exclusions [40 CFR 1508.4 (1982)]. The Forest Supervisor may amend the Plan in accordance with 36 CFR 219.10 (f). Any resulting documents will be tiered to the FEIS, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28 (1982).

VII. Appeal

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

J. S. Tixier, Regional Forester
Intermountain Region
USDA, Forest Service
Federal Building
324 25th Street
Ogden, Utah 84401

An appeal of this decision would 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.

No final decisions on site-specific projects are made on this document, although a number of projects are identified. Those projects identified in various parts of the Plan or Final EIS are included to indicate approximate scheduling, location, and prescribed practice.

Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Forest Plan implementation after appropriate public review and comment, analysis, and documentation meeting National Environmental Policy Act requirements. Anyone dissatisfied with a specific project may appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.

The appeal process for projects is the same as that described above for the Forest Plan, except notice of appeal must be sent to the person making the decision. This will normally be a District Ranger or the Forest Supervisor.

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. The appeal period cannot expire prior to 30 days after publication by the Environmental Protection Agency of the Notice of Availability of the Final EIS in the Federal Register.

J. S. TIXIER
Regional Forester

JAN 11 1988
Date

☆ U.S. Government Printing Office: 1987—573-140/60007