# Recreation

## INTRODUCTION

The Sawtooth, Payette, and Boise National Forests are important recreation destination areas in the State of Idaho, as well as the nation. These Forests provide some of the most scenic landscapes in the Intermountain West. Recreation and related tourism are now some of the most important uses of these Forests. In 1997, recreation visits to these three Forests were estimated at more than five and half million visits. Established in 1972 by Congress, the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (SNRA) alone receives around 1,300,000 visits a year and offers "world class" recreation settings and opportunities. Congress has also designated four Wild and Scenic River segments as well as three Wilderness Areas within the Ecogroup area. All or portions of eight downhill ski areas, including the world renowned Sun Valley-Bald Mountain complex, are located within the Ecogroup and, together, provide more than 800,000 skier days of use. Owing largely to its outstanding recreation opportunities, the Sawtooth National Forest ranks within the top third of all National Forests in total recreation use.

National Forests provide a wide variety of settings for recreation experiences. Recreation settings vary from primitive—where there is little evidence of other people, more difficult access, and more opportunities for self-reliance—to more developed areas that offer more facilities, better access, and opportunities to interact with other recreationists. A classification system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is used to help describe different recreation settings and to help guide management activities. Recreation use is often measured in terms of Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs). One recreation visitor day represents one visitor spending 12 hours on the Forest engaged in recreation activities; or 12 visitors spending one hour; or any combination of time and visitors equaling one person for 12 hours. Developed recreation site capacity is usually measured in terms of Persons At One Time (PAOTs), which is simply the number of people that the site was designed to accommodate.

Related issues of wilderness and undeveloped recreation experiences are addressed in the *Wilderness* and *Inventoried Roadless Areas* sections of this chapter.

### Issues and Indicators

**Issue Statement** – Forest Plan management strategies may affect recreation resources, experiences, and opportunities.

**Background to Issue** - During the public comment period, a large number of comments were received relative to recreation management and experiences on the three Ecogroup Forests. Some of these comments suggested:

- Due to increasing levels and new types of recreation use, a recreation alternative should be developed. Increased priority should be placed on recreation supply and management as well. More recreation facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas should be developed in concert with local tourism efforts.

- More analysis needs to be included to disclose which recreation activities will be restricted and which roads will be closed as a result of adopted Forest Plan direction.

- Motorized travel should be more restricted, especially in environmentally sensitive areas and areas recommended for Wilderness designation.

- Motorized uses should have equal emphasis and attention as non-motorized. Increase motorized recreation planning; improve signing; provide more motorized recreation areas. Provide alternatives when closing trails and areas to motorized use to reduce conflicts.

- Improve winter recreation opportunities through expansion of downhill ski areas and the development of winter parking in specific areas across the Ecogroup area.

- Increase summer recreation opportunities through expansion of organization camps and recreation residences and development of new recreation facilities.

- Define acceptable impacts from dispersed/developed recreation in riparian areas. Close MPC 3.0 areas to ATVs. Protect wetlands and streams from motorized recreation use.

- Supplement budget allocations through partnership development and volunteerism to enhance maintenance and service capabilities.

- Improve recreational signing and increase environmental education opportunities.

Some of the comments have been addressed, to varying degrees, by new management direction in the revised Forest Plans. The increasing levels and types of use have been considered and addressed, as appropriate, in the management direction. User conflicts and travel management can only be addressed to a limited extent at the programmatic level. Revising Forest travel maps or defining and allocating use "zones" will be addressed in subsequent planning processes because they require site-specific analysis and more detailed resource information.

Recreation opportunities and experiences can be affected by management direction and activities associated with other resources in a variety of ways. At the programmatic analysis level, it is not possible to identify specific roads or facilities that will be decommissioned or relocated. Nor is it possible to precisely identify the areas in which recreation opportunities and experiences would be affected by other resource management such as vegetation restoration activities. However, in some cases, it may be possible to the use the combination of assigned management prescriptions (MPCs) and current resource conditions that would likely lead managers to take management actions that could potentially affect recreation opportunities and experiences.

Recreation settings can change as a result of management activities, especially those that construct new roads and facilities and visibly alter vegetation patterns. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) provides a framework for analyzing changes to recreation settings as a result of some management activities under each alternative. The ROS can be used to estimate changes to recreation settings and experiences resulting from development activities

such as mechanical vegetation treatments, road construction and changes in motorized travel regulations. Some recreation settings would shift from less developed settings toward more developed settings as a result of either new development or from greatly increasing the standard of existing facilities. Settings could also shift in the opposite direction, toward more primitive, when motorized access becomes more restricted over large areas. The potential effects of all these management actions on recreation settings and experiences potential shifts are represented in the estimated ROS inventory shifts under each alternative.

As noted above, the ROS provides a framework for estimating the effects of some types of management activities. However, it does not reflect each alternative's potential for changed conditions due to fire use because the ROS is not affected by fire. This is largely because the effects of fire on the landscape do not constitute permanent development and are usually temporary or short-term in duration. Fire use activities are employed for vegetation restoration and fuels reduction and are frequently conducted during the spring and fall, depending upon a number of factors including vegetation type and condition. Fall prescribed fires and wildland fire use frequently results in conflicts with fall hunting activities. Fire use activities also result in landscapes with a burned appearance that some recreationists do not find attractive and may result in displacing recreation use to other locations. The relative potential for changed recreation settings and potential conflicts with fall hunting activities resulting from fire use treatments is best represented by comparing the levels of acres of high or extreme uncharacteristic wildfire hazard and high or extreme resistance to control that are assigned to MPCs 5.1 or 6.1 under each alternative.

Management direction for soil, water, riparian, aquatic, and wildlife resources can potentially result in a variety of effects to existing recreation facilities, opportunities, and potential development. Recreation facilities and activities can cause impacts, such as sedimentation and wildlife disturbance, that may need to be mitigated or eliminated. Potential mitigation ranges from facility modifications and seasonal restrictions to facility decommissioning and removal. Some of these mitigations may be mandatory, arising from compliance with the Endangered Species Act, and some would depend on a combination of management emphasis and watershed priority. Although potential mitigation impacts to developed recreation facilities may occur at any location, facilities within subwatersheds identified as high priorities for active restoration, with an assigned MPC of 3.2 are the most likely to be affected. In the case of dispersed recreation, areas where recreation opportunities and experiences are most likely to be affected by soil, water, riparian, aquatic, and wildlife management direction are high priority restoration subwatersheds assigned to MPCs 3.1 or 3.2. Under these MPCs, restoring or maintaining resource conditions would receive a high priority and could potentially result in dispersed use restrictions and/or closures to achieve or maintain desired resource conditions. Criteria used for determining restoration priorities are described in the *Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources* section of this chapter.

One of the major roles of the transportation network on National Forests is to provide access for recreational use of the Forests. Recreation opportunities are greatly influenced by the type and levels of recreation access. As a result, changes to the transportation network can also have substantial effects on recreation opportunities and experiences. New roads frequently expand access options in areas where access was previously much more limited. Road closures and

decommissioning generally result in reducing the types of access that are possible or allowed. As noted above, it is not possible to identify specific roads or facilities that will be relocated or decommissioned in this programmatic analysis. However, it is possible to determine the relative potential for new construction and decommissioning based on management direction fostered by the MPC assignments for each alternative. The overall relative size of the National Forest System road network and levels of unclassified road decommissioning under each alternative can be estimated, compared, and used to predict potential access changes under each alternative.

**Indicators** - The following indicators are used to measure the effects of management activities on recreation resources, experiences, and opportunities on the three Forests by alternative. The sources used to develop this data are programmatic estimations, such as the results of modeling or MPC assignments, and are only meant to be relative comparisons. Actual results would depend on conditions and analyses done at the site-specific level and may be different than those predicted here. The data used by these analyses serves to show relative differences between the alternatives, rather than to represent the actual acres or percentages of treatments that are expected to occur. Treatment areas would not equal MPC acres, but would be a much smaller subset based on management priorities, funding opportunities, and project-level decisions within the planning period.

- *Indicator 1 - Estimated changes in acres of each ROS class from current inventory*. This indicator reflects changes to current recreation settings and experiences due to anticipated developments and management actions associated with each alternative. It will reflect the relative balance between developed and undeveloped recreation settings that can be anticipated under each alternative. It will also measure, to some extent, each alternative's response to providing semi-primitive motorized experiences, a declining opportunity identified in the Idaho State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Assessment and Policy Plan (SCORTP).

- *Indicator 2 - Acres having high or extreme ratings for either uncharacteristic wildfire hazard or resistance to control that are assigned a 5.1 or 6.1 MPC*. This indicator is used to represent the likelihood of changed recreation opportunities and experiences due to potential treatments for the purpose of uncharacteristic wildfire hazard and fuel reduction.

- *Indicator 3 - Number of developed recreation sites located within high priority subwatersheds assigned to MPC 3.2*. This indicator is used to represent the relative differences between alternatives in the magnitude of potential impacts to developed recreation facilities due to watershed, riparian, and aquatic mitigation and restoration activities.

- *Indicator 4 - Total acres of MPCs 3.1 and 3.2 within high priority restoration subwatersheds*. This indicator is used to assess relative differences, between alternatives, in the potential for changes to dispersed recreation opportunities and experiences as a result of aquatic restoration activities.

- *Indicator 5 - Projected total miles of Forest Classified Roads in 2015*. This indicator is used to assess how overall Forest access, by classified roads, may vary by alternative through the next planning period.

- *Indicator 6 - Projected miles of unclassified roads decommissioned by 2015*. This indicator is used to assess relative differences, between alternatives, in the magnitude of potential impacts to recreational access on unclassified roads through the next planning period under each alternative.

For the cumulative effects analysis, the above indicators are again used to display potential effects on an Ecogroup area scale.

## Affected Area

The affected areas for direct and indirect effects to recreation resources are the lands administered by the three National Forests in the Ecogroup. This area represents National Forest System lands where recreation resources exist, and the lands where those resources could receive impacts from both management activities and natural events. The affected area for cumulative effects includes the lands administered by the three National Forests as well as lands of other ownership, both public and private, that provide non-urban recreation opportunities within the southwestern Idaho area. Cumulative effects to recreation resources on other land ownerships are addressed to lend a broader perspective to the importance of recreation resources on the Forests, and to emphasize cooperation among all local providers of recreation resources.

# CURRENT CONDITIONS

## General Recreation

Since the original Forest Plans were written and adopted, a number of forces and influences have occurred that, in combination, played a strong role in characterizing recreation management on the Ecogroup Forests. Some of these include:

- Recreation use has increased at rates considerably more than those predicted in the Forest Plans, due largely to a combination of increasing local populations and income levels;

- Rapid growth in relatively new recreation uses and improvements in technology have occurred;

- Recent listings of fish and wildlife species under the Endangered Species Act have occurred in areas that are also popular or high-use recreation areas;

- Recreation budgets have mostly been "flat" or in some cases, declining. At their best, Forest recreation budgets were still well below the level needed to fully implement the Plans; and

- Agency workforce management actions have resulted in staff reductions on all three Forests.

The implications of these forces has been manifested in a number of ways:

- Some recreation uses are expanding into previously unused areas, changing recreation settings and creating conflicts with other recreationists. Conflicts between recreation and non-recreation users of the Forests are increasing;

- Sensitivity to recreation impacts on other resources is increasing, necessitating increasing levels of management control and restrictions;

- The ability of Ecogroup Forests to respond purely to recreation demand and maintenance needs has been limited. Capital investment and heavy maintenance priorities have, in large part, shifted toward Endangered Species Act compliance situations;

- Maintenance backlogs have increased;

- Operation of many developed recreation facilities has shifted from the Forest Service to private sector companies under concession permits. There is a greater reliance upon partnerships and volunteerism to manage recreation resources; and

- In some cases, cost recovery programs, such as the Fee Demo program, are being used to bridge maintenance fund gaps.

## Developed Recreation

Developed recreation facilities include a variety of distinctly defined areas, such as campgrounds and downhill ski areas, where facilities have been developed either by the Forest Service or by private parties for concentrated public use. Privately developed facilities are approved by the Forest Service and are permitted under special use authorizations issued by the Forest Service. They are usually in rural or roaded natural settings. Table RE-1 displays the type, number, and capacity of developed facilities within the Ecogroup area.

Campground and picnic area use is very popular, especially in the SNRA. Although the Forests have upgraded a number of facilities, outdated facilities with heavy maintenance needs are common. Many parking spurs are too short for modern recreational vehicles and trailers, and doorways to toilets are too narrow for wheelchairs. Unfortunately, any need for additional facilities is overshadowed by a shortfall in maintenance and rehabilitation funds for existing facilities. As funds become available, the trend has been to devote resources to upgrading large campgrounds that receive high levels of use, and to mitigating resource impacts of developed recreation facilities.

In addition to the facilities included in the above table, a number of developed cross-country skiing facilities can be found in numerous locations, largely on the Boise and Sawtooth National Forests. These facilities include trailheads, restrooms, groomed ski trails, and yurt accommodations. Some of these facilities are provided through a partnership with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, while others are privately owned and operated under special use authorizations.

**Table RE-1. Type, Number, and Capacity of Developed Recreation Facilities in the Ecogroup Area**

| Type of Facility | Boise NF | | Payette NF | | Sawtooth NF | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. of Sites | PAOTs* | No. of Sites | PAOTs* | No. of Sites | PAOTs* |
| **Publicly Developed Facilities** | | | | | | |
| Campgrounds | 83 | 5,593 | 37 | 2,219 | 70 | 7,158 |
| Picnic Areas/Day Use Sites | 6 | 375 | 4 | 185 | 15 | 1,057 |
| Interpretive/Information Sites | 3 | 187 | 9 | 105 | 8 | 520 |
| Boating/Fishing Access Sites | 18 | 1,661 | 6 | 205 | 5 | 477 |
| Swimming Areas | 1 | 56 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 221 |
| Trailheads/Transfer Stations | 78 | 2,433 | 38 | 1,504 | 34 | 2,255 |
| Scenic Overlooks | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 4 | 126 |
| Cabin Rentals | 15 | 93 | 2 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Snowparks | 3 | 175 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 185 |
| Subtotal | 207 | 10,573 | 97 | 4,242 | 141 | 11,999 |
| **Privately Developed Facilities** | | | | | | |
| Ski Areas | 1 | 4,400 | 2 | 2,850 | 5 | 12,250 |
| Recreation Residences | 118 | 590 | 1 | 5 | 181 | 905 |
| Lodges/Resorts/Concessions (Operated under Special Use Authorization) | 5 | 550 | 1 | 24 | 4 | 715 |
| Organization Camps | 4 | 600 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 1,475 |
| Subtotal | 128 | 6,140 | 4 | 2,879 | 202 | 15,345 |
| **Totals** | **335** | **16,713** | **101** | **7,121** | **343** | **24,637** |

*PAOT's = Recreation capacity measure meaning Persons At One Time.

## Dispersed Recreation

The three Forests also provide many opportunities for dispersed recreation (Table RE-2). Dispersed recreation occurs on areas of the three Forests outside of developed sites. Popular forms of dispersed activities include hunting, fishing, all terrain vehicle (ATV) riding, river floating, snowmobiling, mountain biking, hiking, sightseeing, backcountry skiing, and camping.

River recreation opportunities within the Ecogroup Forests are especially important. The Salmon, Payette, and Boise River systems provide outstanding whitewater, wilderness, and scenic floating experiences. Due to its popularity and importance on a national scale, use of portions of the Salmon River system is regulated through a permit system. Use of portions of the Salmon River system is also seasonally restricted in an effort to protect threatened and endangered fish species and their habitat. Commercial outfitting and guiding plays a large role in providing river recreation experiences, especially in the Salmon and Payette River systems. Mountain biking is a growing trail use, with numerous trails identified throughout the Ecogroup that offer outstanding riding experiences. Both on- and off-trail use of ATVs has increased dramatically across the Ecogroup, especially on the Mountain Home and Minidoka Ranger

Districts. Interest in recreational dredging for gold is increasing in some locations such as the Idaho City Ranger District. However, potential adverse effects on threatened and endangered fish species have resulted in a combination of seasonal restrictions and complete closures in selected stream sections.

**Table RE-2. Dispersed Recreation Elements on the Ecogroup**

| Dispersed Recreation Element | Boise NF | Payette NF | Sawtooth NF |
|---|---|---|---|
| Miles of motorized **summer** trails | 881 | 622 | 1,088 |
| Miles of non-Motorized **summer** trails | 218 | 1,153 | 899 |
| Miles of groomed snowmobile trails | 771 | 237 | 233 |
| Miles of groomed cross-country ski trails | 34 | 0 | 80 |
| Acres closed to **summer** motorized vehicle uses* | 1,679,000 | 1,790,000 | 1,324,000 |
| Acres open to **summer** motorized vehicle uses* | 524,000 | 509,000 | 787,000 |
| Acres closed to **winter** motorized vehicle uses* | 351,000 | 1,223,000 | 585,000 |
| Acres open to **winter** motorized vehicle uses* | 1,851,000 | 1,076,000 | 1,526,000 |
| Number of outfitter and guide permits | 15 | 18 | 41 |
| Significant caves | 0 | 10 | 0 |

*Includes both on- and off-trail uses and all forms of motorized and non-motorized mechanized use during all or any part of the year. Forest totals may differ slightly due to rounding.

River recreation opportunities within the Ecogroup Forests are especially important. The Salmon, Payette, and Boise River systems provide outstanding whitewater, wilderness, and scenic floating experiences. Due to its popularity and importance on a national scale, use of portions of the Salmon River system is regulated through a permit system, and is seasonally restricted in an effort to protect listed fish species and their habitat. Commercial outfitting and guiding plays a large role in providing river recreation experiences, especially in the Salmon and Payette River systems. Mountain biking is a growing trail use, with numerous trails identified throughout the Ecogroup area that offer outstanding riding experiences. Both on- and off-trail use of ATVs has increased dramatically across the Ecogroup area, especially on the Mountain Home and Minidoka Ranger Districts. Interest in recreational dredging for gold is increasing in some locations such as the Idaho City Ranger District. However, potential adverse effects on listed fish species have resulted in a combination of seasonal restrictions and complete closures in selected stream sections.

In general, winter recreation use also continues to increase across the Ecogroup Forests. Both snowmobiling and cross-country skiing have shown dramatic increases in localized parts of the Ecogroup area. With their relatively high elevations, some areas within the Ecogroup represent the only early season opportunities for snowmobiling and skiing, making the area important on a statewide basis and creating terrain conflicts among user groups. All forms of skiing, downhill, backcountry, heliskiing, and cross-country track skiing, are available within the Ecogroup area. Galena Lodge and an extensive system of groomed cross-country ski trails in the upper reaches of the Wood River valley provide outstanding track skiing experiences, and are managed under a special-use authorization with the Blaine County Recreation Board.

Interest and participation in heritage tourism is increasing through Forest Service programs such as Passport In Time. Important historic properties within the Ecogroup area, including prehistoric and Chinese mining sites, contribute to this growing popularity.

The Idaho State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Assessment and Policy Plan (SCORTP 1998) observes:

> *"Generally, semi-primitive motorized recreation is in shortest supply. The demand for trails in populated areas already exceeds supply. ... There are few opportunities specifically designed for four-wheelers and ATVs in Idaho. ... Land management agencies need to provide more designated four-wheel drive and ATV routes."*

The State of Idaho Parks and Recreation Department provides equipment and funding to county governments to groom a number of snowmobiling and cross-country skiing trails under a growing and very popular co-operative program. This program combines yurt accommodations with groomed trails to provide overnight winter camping opportunities.

Dispersed recreation management presents some of the greatest challenges currently facing recreation managers as they attempt to manage increasing levels and types of recreation use. Current data indicate that resource impacts from dispersed use are also increasing. During the period of 1997 to 1998, a recreation task group on the Boise National Forest conducted a dispersed site condition inventory of known dispersed recreation sites on the Forest (USDA Forest Service 1998). Data gathered from Boise dispersed sites during this inventory included the following:

- The "average" dispersed recreation site has 1,751 square feet of devegetated, barren soil area;
- 90 percent of the sites are located within 300 feet of water, putting many of them typically within sensitive Riparian Conservation Areas;
- 83 percent of the trees within the barren core area exhibit some form of damage from use;
- 26 percent have potential for flooding without extreme water level changes;
- 82 percent have potential for snowmelt erosion from the site;
- 54 percent have potential for trail erosion from the site;
- 10 percent have potential of being historically significant;
- 70 percent have litter larger than a pop-top;
- 61 percent have evidence of human waste; and
- The number of dispersed sites was increasing as much as 9 percent per year in popular locations.

Although recreation managers have been working to address resource impacts from developed sites, this information points to a growing need to focus recreation management and resources on dispersed sites and activities.

## Tourism

Locally, much of the tourism industry is associated with downhill skiing, guided river float trips, guided hunting and fishing trips, and sightseeing excursions to the SNRA. Natural resource values associated with these activities are vital to the local tourism industry. As such, future management of the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests will continue to play an important role for the tourism industry in the region. The tourism industry depends upon a mix of highly developed, easily accessed facilities, as well as remote or semi-primitive experiences within natural settings. The opportunities to view highly scenic landscapes and wildlife, as well as opportunities for exciting recreation experiences, attract quite a number of people to the Ecogroup. Although no current figures are available for the Ecogroup Forests, yearly recreation visits in 1997 to the three Forests were estimated to be almost 5,653,000. According to a tourism study commissioned by the Idaho Department of Commerce, travel-generated spending in the three state planning regions that encompass the Ecogroup was almost $895,000,000 in 1997 (Idaho Department of Commerce 1999). The recreation resources of the Ecogroup Forests are likely responsible for a major portion of this spending.

The Ecogroup Forests also contain all or portions of six state-designated Scenic Byways. Three Scenic Byways on the Sawtooth converge in Stanley, Idaho, and are designated as the Sawtooth, Ponderosa and Salmon River Scenic Byways. A large part of the Ponderosa Scenic Byway also crosses the Boise National Forest. The Payette River Scenic Byway crosses portions of both the Boise and Payette National Forest. The Hells Canyon and Wildlife Canyon Scenic Byways cross portions of the Payette and Boise National Forests, respectively. These six Scenic Byways comprise an estimated 576 miles in total length, and serve as an indicator of the highly attractive scenic features found on the Ecogroup Forests.

## Recreation Setting

The Forest landscapes offer recreation settings that are managed to provide opportunities for a variety of recreation experiences. The settings provide the physical, social, and managerial environments needed to produce recreation opportunities and experiences. Recreationists choose a setting and activity to create a desired experience. Facilities such as campgrounds and trails are supplied to assist users of the setting and to support activities. Settings, activities, and facilities are managed to maintain the conditions necessary to produce the expected experiences.

The various setting components provide the basic elements in determining ROS classes. The ROS system describes different classes of outdoor environments, activities and experience opportunities. The principal classes that relate to Ecogroup settings include Primitive, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Semi-Primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Roaded Modified and Rural. A seventh ROS class, Urban, is not present within the Ecogroup. Table RE-3 describes the recreation setting for each ROS class. Table RE-4 displays the current estimated acres within each ROS class on each Forest for both summer and winter periods. Table RE-5 shows the estimated amounts of different types of recreation use across the Ecogroup Forests in 1997. The

recreation use estimates displayed in Table RE-5 are Forest Service estimates. In some cases, estimates compiled by the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation are much higher. Recreation specialists have mapped both the current ROS inventory and the ROS strategy for recreation management as part of the Forest Plan revision effort. These maps will be used to guide management under the revised Plans and are available upon request.

**Table RE-3. ROS Class Setting Descriptions**

| ROS Class | Description of Recreation Opportunity Setting |
|---|---|
| **Primitive (P)** | Very high probability of solitude, closeness to nature, challenge and risk; essentially unmodified natural environment; minimal evidence of others; few restrictions evident; non-motorized access and travel on trails or cross country; no vegetation alterations. |
| **Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM)** | High probability of solitude, closeness to nature, challenge and risk; natural appearing environment; some evidence of others; minimum of subtle, on-site controls; non-motorized access and travel on trails, some primitive roads or cross-country; vegetation alterations to enhance forest health - few and widely dispersed. |
| **Semi-primitive Motorized (SPM)** | Moderate probability of solitude, closeness to nature, high degree of challenge and risk using motorized equipment; predominantly natural appearing environment; few users but evidence on trails; minimum of subtle, on-site controls; vegetation alterations few, widely dispersed, and visually subordinate. |
| **Roaded Natural (RN)** | Opportunity to be with other users in developed sites, little challenge or risk; predominantly natural appearing environment as viewed from sensitive roads and trails with moderate evidence of human sights and sounds; moderate concentration of users at campsites; some obvious user control; access and travel is standard motorized vehicles; resource modification and utilization practices are evident but harmonize with the natural environment. |
| **Roaded Modified (RM)** | Opportunity to get away from other users, easy access, little challenge or risk; substantially modified environment (roads, timber harvest units, slash, etc.); little evidence of other users except on roads; little regulation of users except on roads; standard motorized use; vegetation alteration to enhance recreation setting. |
| **Rural (R)** | Opportunity to be with others is important as is facility convenience, little challenge or risk except for activities like downhill skiing; natural environment is culturally modified; high interaction among users; obvious on-site controls; access and travel facilities are for intensified motorized use. |
| **Urban (U)** | Opportunity to be with others is very important as is facility and experience convenience, challenge and risk are unimportant except for competitive sports; urbanized environment that may have a natural appearing backdrop; high interaction among large number of users; intensive on-site controls; access and travel facilities are highly intense motorized use often with mass transit supplements; vegetation is planted and maintained. |

**Table RE-4. Estimated Acres of Current ROS Classifications***

| Season | ROS Class | Boise NF | Payette NF | Sawtooth NF |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Summer | Primitive | 0 | 768,000 | 227,000 |
| | Semi-primitive Non-motorized | 487,000 | 458,000 | 368,000 |
| | Semi-primitive Motorized | 392,000 | 415,000 | 741,000 |
| | Roaded Natural | 404,000 | 263,000 | 293,000 |
| | Roaded Modified | 915,000 | 395,000 | 482,000 |
| | Rural | 5,000 | 0 | 0 |
| | Urban | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Winter | Primitive | 0 | 775,000 | 280,000 |
| | Semi-primitive Non-motorized | 206,000 | 440,000 | 56,000 |
| | Semi-primitive Motorized | 1,725,000 | 745,000 | 1,700,000 |
| | Roaded Natural | 167,000 | 39,000 | 73,000 |
| | Roaded Modified | 100,000 | 301,000 | 2,000 |
| | Rural | 5,000 | 0 | 0 |
| | Urban | 0 | 0 | 0 |

* Figures were rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Forest totals may differ slightly due to rounding.

**Table RE-5. Estimated 1997 Ecogroup Use for Major Recreation Activities**

| Type of Use | Boise NF | | Payette NF | | Sawtooth NF | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | RVDs | Percent of Total Use | RVDs | Percent of Total Use | RVDs | Percent of Total Use |
| Camping (all types) | 620,000 | 35 | 211,000 | 16 | 1,037,000 | 50 |
| Picnicking | 18,000 | 1 | 29,000 | 2 | 17,000 | 1 |
| Downhill skiing | 209,000 | 12 | 38,000 | 3 | 224,000 | 11 |
| X-Country skiing/snow-shoeing | 36,000 | 2 | 3,000 | 0.2 | 28,000 | 1 |
| Automobile travel | 182,000 | 10 | 171,000 | 13 | 69,000 | 3 |
| Hunting (all types) | 112,000 | 6 | 73,000 | 6 | 54,000 | 3 |
| ATV and motorcycle use | 37,000 | 2 | 52,000 | 4 | 30,000 | 1 |
| Mountain/Tour bike use | 53,000 | 3 | 10,000 | 1 | 36,000 | 2 |
| Sightseeing activities | 16,000 | 1 | 113,000 | 9 | 51,000 | 2 |
| Power boating/other watercraft | 62,000 | 3 | 28,000 | 2 | 7,000 | 0.3 |
| Hiking and walking | 57,000 | 3 | 62,000 | 5 | 63,000 | 3 |
| Horseback riding | 24,000 | 1 | 65,000 | 5 | 20,000 | 1 |
| Fishing (all types) | 117,000 | 7 | 123,000 | 10 | 39,000 | 2 |
| Recreation cabin use | 13,000 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 40,000 | 2 |
| Snowmobiling | 28,000 | 2 | 13,000 | 1 | 33,000 | 2 |
| Gathering forest products | 63,000 | 4 | 57,000 | 4 | 22,000 | 1 |
| All other recreation uses | 128,000 | 7 | 244,000 | 19 | 301,000 | 15 |

## Recreation Uses

Recreation use varies in type and amount across the Ecogroup area. The last year that recreation use on the three Forests was estimated in terms of Recreation Visitor Days (RVDs) was 1997. Estimated use levels for the major uses are shown in Table RE-5, above.

In 2000, the Forest Service initiated the National Visitor Use Monitoring Project to provide estimates of recreational use on National Forests and gather other important data regarding recreation customer demographic statistics and satisfaction levels. Under this project, initial visitor use surveys were conducted on the Boise and Sawtooth Forests during the summer of 2000. The Payette conducted its initial round of surveys during 2002. Units of measurement differ from previously used units of measurement and, in some cases, Forest use boundaries were also different. Since the methodology and measurement units are different from previous use estimates, results of the survey cannot be integrated with past estimates for trend analysis purposes. The survey results indicate that in 2000, the Boise National Forest received 1,079,800 recreational visits +/- 13.1 percent while the Sawtooth National Forest received 842,151 visits +/- 9.2 percent. The survey results for the 2002 Payette survey have not been completed and are not available at this time.

Camping is still the primary developed recreation activity during summer and accounts for an estimated 36 percent of all recreation use. Observations from recreation staff on the Ecogroup Forests indicate that a number of these uses have been growing at a very rapid rate since 1997. These uses include snowmobiling, ATV use, archery hunting, mountain biking, and year-round yurt camping. Although both motorized and non-motorized recreation use are increasing, motorized use seems to be increasing more rapidly.

Trends in recreation use and tourism indicate continued growth in the past few years. Much of this might be attributable to a combination of rising local populations and per capita income levels. In some areas of the Ecogroup, increasing population age has probably also contributed to the rising recreation use levels.

**Recreation Conflicts**

Forest recreation managers have observed increasing levels of conflict associated with recreation activities and facilities. Some of these include:

- Terrain use conflicts between snowmobilers and skiers;
- Impacts from livestock grazing on recreation experiences;
- Impacts from float boating on threatened and endangered fish species and their habitat;
- Conflicts associated with the balance of river use between commercial float boat use and permitted use by non-commercial boaters;
- Impacts from developed recreation facilities on threatened and endangered fish species and their habitat;

- Increasing impacts to soil and vegetation resources from dispersed camping and vehicle use;
- Impacts from ATV use on non-motorized recreation experiences, vegetation, and water quality; and
- Disturbance to wintering wildlife from snowmobiles and winter recreationists.

**Recreation Demand**

Overall, the demand for both developed and dispersed recreation is expected to continue to increase in future years due to rising populations. The 1997 estimates of dispersed vs. developed recreation use are displayed in Table RE-6. Projections of recreation use levels for 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020 are displayed in Table RE-7. Projections for 2020 recreation use levels represent an average growth of 2.0 percent per year for recreation use on the three Forests.

**Table RE-6. Estimated Recreation Use for Fiscal Year 1997 in RVDs**

| Recreation Use | Boise NF | Payette NF | Sawtooth NF |
|---|---|---|---|
| Developed Recreation Use | 641,000 | 322,000 | 1,036,000 |
| Dispersed Recreation Use | 1,139,000 | 967,000 | 1,036,000 |
| Total Recreation Use | 1,780,000 | 1,289,000 | 2,072,000 |

**Table RE-7. Projected Total Recreation Use in RVDs**

| Year | Boise NF | | Payette NF | | Sawtooth NF | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Developed | Dispersed | Developed | Dispersed | Developed | Dispersed |
| 2005 | 761,000 | 1,302,000 | 380,000 | 1,139,000 | 1,197,000 | 1,197,000 |
| 2010 | 828,000 | 1,471,000 | 412,000 | 1,235,000 | 1,292,000 | 1,292,000 |
| 2015 | 894,000 | 1,589,000 | 443,000 | 1,330,000 | 1,387,000 | 1,387,000 |
| 2020 | 953,000 | 1,694,000 | 472,000 | 1,415,000 | 1,474,000 | 1,474,000 |

**Recreation Supply**

Overall recreation supply is described in terms of "practical maximum capacity". Practical maximum capacity is defined as the level of use that would not degrade the physical capabilities and natural resources of a site. Studies indicate that when use levels are consistently above 40 percent of the theoretical capacity in developed sites, long-term resource damage is likely to occur. The Forests' developed and dispersed recreation practical maximum capacities are displayed in Table RE-8.

**Table RE-8. Estimated Practical Maximum Capacity in RVDs**

| Reasonable Capacity | Boise NF | Payette NF | Sawtooth NF |
|---|---|---|---|
| Developed Practical Maximum Capacity | 2,676,000 | 527,000 | 4,114,000 |
| Dispersed Practical Maximum Capacity | 8,333,000 | 3,556,000 | 5,861,000 |

All three Forests are estimated to be capable of meeting developed and dispersed recreation demand for the next planning period. However, these figures reflect overall demand that allows over-supply of one type of recreation use to compensate for under-supply of other uses. Forest Service recreation managers have observed that demand for developed camping and picnic sites in popular recreation areas and travel corridors is currently at or above capacity during peak summer weekends and summer holidays. At the same time, other recreation facilities are much less than full during the same periods or prior to Memorial Day and after Labor Day. Although dispersed supply may also technically exceed demand, competition for the same terrain, such as that between snowmobilers and cross-country skiers, is increasing. Dispersed campers are also likely to face heavy competition for favored camping spots during peak summer weekends and holidays. The supply and demand analysis indicates that there should be adequate general supply for the planning period except during peak summer weekends and holidays.

## Recreation Strategy

As noted above, recreation resource management within the Ecogroup is characterized by ever-rising recreation demand, increasing awareness of recreation activity impacts, and increasing levels and types of conflict combined with funding levels that simply cannot keep pace. As a result, the Ecogroup Forests are also experiencing decreasing ability to maintain recreation resources and manage conflicts. A strategy to address these apparent challenges is embodied in a number of ways.

The National Recreation Agenda provides national direction that can be focused on local recreation situations and needs. It is also reflected to some extent in the Management Area direction in the revised Forest Plans where Districts are responding to specific demands or uses while factoring in the physical capabilities and characteristics of the area. The strategy is also reflected in the Capital Improvement Program that each Forest has developed.

Specific strategies to address increasing recreation use include:

- Address resource impacts as they occur or are identified.
- Restrict uses to hardened sites in cases where appropriate.
- Increase limitations on dispersed camping and development where and when appropriate.
- The Ecogroup Forests are nearly unique in their concentration of TEPC species and recreation features such as the SNRA. It is recognized that the value of recovery of TEPC species, especially fish, is a benefit to recreation.
- From user contacts, the Payette understands that most users are looking for dispersed recreation experiences rather than developed experiences. This is reflected in their recreation program and planning.

- The Idaho SCORTP provides some general senses of recreation in the state as a whole but is not at a scale that leads directly to a Forest strategy. Resource impacts associated with recreation were not a factor in developing the SCORTP. The Ecogroup Forests cannot supply the recreation need if it degrades, or is beyond the capabilities of, other resources.
- Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum to plan for desired recreation settings and experiences and to meet customer expectations.

## Sawtooth National Recreation Area

The SNRA was established under Public Law 92-400 in 1972 to preserve and protect the area's primary values of natural beauty, fish and wildlife resources, pastoral and historical values, and enhance recreation opportunities associated therewith. The legislation allows for consumptive resources uses, such as grazing, timber harvest, and mineral extraction, as long as the primary values are not impaired.

Outstanding scenic landscapes and recreation opportunities make the SNRA an international destination recreation attraction. Recreation opportunities range from primitive wilderness experiences to highly developed campground and resort experiences. Camping and sightseeing are the primary summer activities, while cross-country and backcountry skiing, and snowmobiling are the primary winter activities. Dispersed motorized uses have been allowed with relatively few controls. Recently, snowmobile and cross-country ski conflicts in the southern portion of the SNRA along the State Highway 75 corridor were addressed through the use of a local task force comprised of members of both user groups.

Developed recreation areas are located largely adjacent to the lakes located along the edges of the Sawtooth range, along the Big Wood River, and in the Salmon River Canyon. Redfish Lake is the most highly used area on the SNRA. The SNRA provides a complex mix of developed recreation facilities that include 37 campgrounds, 10 picnic sites, 5 boating facilities, 3 scenic overlooks, 3 swimming sites, 21 trailheads, 8 information and interpretive sites, 4 resorts, 1 cross-country ski area and day lodge, 8 organization camps, and 7 summer residence tracts.

As a nationally designated recreation area, the SNRA is to be managed as a "showcase" for recreation opportunities. Many renovations and upgrades of developed recreation facilities have been completed within the SNRA in an attempt to meet visitor expectations. However, efforts to meet "showcase" standards have fallen short due to significantly reduced budgets. Users fees were recently instituted under the "Fee Demo" program in an effort to address the budget shortfall and maintenance needs.

## Recreation Budget Needs

Since the original Forest Plans were developed, recreation budget allocations have fluctuated to some extent but most often have been well below the levels needed to fully implement the Plans. At the same time, costs have continued to escalate, requiring greater funds to accomplish the same level of work and service. As a result, services, new development, and maintenance of existing facilities have generally been below the levels stated in the Forest Plans, creating a gap

between Forest Service recreation accomplishments and public expectations. Insufficient budgets and increasing costs have added to the backlog of needed maintenance. Developed facility maintenance backlogs for each Forest have been estimated and are displayed in Table RE-9. Backlog estimates for trail maintenance are still currently being developed.

**Table RE-9. Estimated Developed Recreation Facility Maintenance Backlog**

| | Boise NF | Payette NF | Sawtooth NF |
|---|---|---|---|
| Estimated Developed Facility Maintenance Backlog | $1,949,000 | $405,000 | $5,746,000 |

* Estimates rounded to the nearest $1,000.

With expected increases in use across all alternatives, recreation budget needs would also expand under every alternative to meet the rising demand for recreation facilities, services, and opportunities. Given that none of the alternatives represents a recreation-emphasis alternative, and also the fact that overall recreation use would be largely the same under each of the alternatives, sources of differences between alternatives in recreation program budget needs would likely be subtler. Current estimates for total needs of the recreation programs for each of the Ecogroup Forests appear in Table RE-10. These costs include overhead assessments and other indirect costs that must also be covered by recreation program budgets.

**Table RE-10. Estimated Recreation Annual Budget Needs**

| Boise NF | Payette NF | Sawtooth NF |
|---|---|---|
| $6,624,071 | $3,259,080 | $6,485,439 |

* Estimates were rounded to the nearest $1,000.

Recreation objective accomplishment will always be dependent upon allocated funds to a large extent. Partnership developments and programs such as the Fee Demo that provide local funding opportunities help offset funding shortfalls but have never closed the gap between what was allocated and what is needed. Since budget allocations vary from year to year and are affected by national, political, and agency priorities, it is difficult to predict final recreation budget allocations. Since there is no direct linkage between stated Forest Plan budget needs and what Congress eventually allocates, there is no assurance that final budget levels will even approach those stated in Forest Plans.

# ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

## Effects Common to All Alternatives

**Resource Protection Methods**

**Laws, Regulations, and Policies** – Numerous laws, regulations, and policies govern the management of recreation resources on National Forest System lands. These are listed in *Appendix H*, Legal and Administrative Framework. One of the most important of the laws is Public Law 92-400 of 1972, which created the Sawtooth National Recreation Area and established general management direction for the designated area.

**Forest Plan Direction** - Management prescriptions for three land use allocations (MPC 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3) are specifically designed to provide areas where recreation resources and uses are emphasized. Each prescription is designed to meet the objectives of two ROS classes and contains direction to manage the recreation settings to the standards established for their ROS classifications. Standards and guidelines within the prescriptions, as well as at the Forest-wide and Management Area levels, will be applied to ensure that appropriate recreation settings and opportunities are provided for a wide range of uses and activities.

**Forest Plan Implementation** - Almost all management activities and uses of the Forests have the potential to alter recreation settings, resources, and experiences. As a result, effects on the following recreation elements will be assessed during all project proposal analyses:

- *ROS Classification* – Project proposals will be evaluated relative to their consistency with the ROS strategy for the Forest. In most cases, projects will be designed to maintain or enhance the ROS strategy classification. When a deciding official accepts a project that is not consistent with the ROS strategy, a determination is made as to whether the significance of the project to the ROS strategy warrants a Forest Plan amendment. The full effects of either of these outcomes will be analyzed. (See also *Appendix F* in the revised Forest Plans.)

- *Recreation Improvements and Developments* - New resource projects will be designed to protect developed recreation sites, National Forest System trails, and their associated high quality recreation experiences. Avoidance of developed sites and improvements during site-disturbing activities will be the preferred mitigation technique. Facility and trail re-location, decommissioning, and closure will be last resort options in cases of overriding developments.

- *Dispersed Use* – Potential effects on dispersed recreation experiences will be analyzed during new project design and analysis. When possible, adjustments to proposed activities and uses to protect dispersed recreation experiences will be the preferred mitigation technique.

**General Effects**

Recreation opportunities occur on virtually every acre of National Forest within the Ecogroup. Given this, almost every management activity as well as a wide array of disturbance events can potentially affect recreation opportunities and experiences. Effects on recreation opportunities

and experiences are generally the result of changes to either or both recreation settings and/or the level of access. The relative amount of these effects may, in some cases, vary by alternative. However, they are likely to be present to some extent in all alternatives.

Visual attractiveness is an inherent component of most recreation experiences on National Forests. Potential effects to visual resources are addressed in the *Scenic Environment* section of this chapter.

**Developed Recreation Supply and Demand –** With most of the local population bases increasing and aging, it is likely that the demand for developed recreation facilities will also increase to some extent. However, given uncertain recreation budgets, insufficiently maintained existing facilities, and the prospect of continued or increasing difficulties for recreation facility development and expansion from additional threatened and endangered species listings, there is some level of uncertainty as to the Forests' ability to respond to developed recreation needs.

As a general policy, it can be expected that recreation funds will be spent on improved maintenance in existing facilities rather than developing new facilities. This priority is due in large part to the current backlog of deferred recreation maintenance needs. However, a small level of new facility development may still occur. New development would be likely to be driven either by the need to mitigate resource impacts from recreation developments or uses, or as a result of partnership opportunities with other agencies and organizations. Examples might include conversion of heavily used dispersed areas into minimum-standard developed sites. Generally, the trend will likely be at a minimum development scale and characterized as low cost, low maintenance, and minimum impact.

Although partnership opportunities help to increase recreation opportunities and the quality of recreation experiences, they don't necessarily align with Forest priorities. As a result, what may be constructed may improve some recreation opportunities and experiences, but still may not address the established needs and priorities.

Even with some new development as described above, the net result is that developed facility capacity is likely to be less than what is needed in highly popular areas. This means that during peak use some users cannot use the facilities or the locations that they would prefer. It also suggests a higher potential for resource damage in and around developed facilities due to overuse and overflow use in the immediate vicinity.

**Recreation/Resource Conflicts -** Impacts from recreation facilities and activities on threatened and endangered species and their habitat are analyzed in consultation processes with regulatory agencies, as required by the Endangered Species Act. Mitigations are then developed to either eliminate adverse effects or reduce them to insignificant levels. Since these actions are required by law, they would be the same in any alternative. More detailed information is presented below in the Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed Management and Wildlife Management discussions.

**Recreation/Grazing Conflicts** - Effects related to conflicts between recreation uses and domestic livestock grazing would vary to some extent by alternative. Livestock grazing and range improvements may result in an altered landscape appearance. Signs of livestock grazing,

such as driveways, cropped forage, trampled vegetation, and manure, or odors associated with livestock use may be offensive to some recreationists. Cattle using an area can cause multiple trail paths, creating confusion as to actual location of trails. Cattle can also inadvertently knock down trail and interpretive signs. Conflicts can occur between visitors and livestock during herding or driving operations and occasionally with the dogs used by permittees to control herds. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 reduce or eliminate grazing in two areas highly popular with recreationists (Adams Gulch, a portion of the Big Wood drainage, and Howell Canyon). These changes would improve recreation experiences in these areas for some users. However, judging from past similar situations, overall use of these areas is not expected to increase as a result of this action. Even with the presence of livestock, these areas are highly popular and experience a high level of use. Potential conflicts between recreationists and livestock would be eliminated in these areas under these alternatives. For the vast majority of the Ecogroup, livestock grazing effects on recreation opportunities and experiences are not expected to differ by alternative.

**Timber Harvest** – The effects from timber harvest are potentially the greatest in areas where little or no timber management has occurred. Most of these areas are characterized by an undeveloped landscape with an undisturbed appearance, such as areas classified as Primitive and Semi-Primitive in the ROS inventory. Conversely, additional timber cutting in areas that already incorporate obvious, visible evidence of past timber management activities may result in much lower levels of impacts.

The effects of timber harvest activities on recreation settings and experiences can vary substantially. Timber harvest intensities can range from highly dispersed selection harvests to extremely concentrated, even-aged regeneration harvests. Associated access developments can also range from construction of new classified roads to none at all with helicopter yarding methods. Generally, even-aged regeneration harvests such as clearcuts create long-term changes to the landscape, resulting in changes to the recreational setting. When such changes occur in primitive or semi-primitive settings, they are likely to displace some users who prefer less developed settings and the experiences they offer. This effect is supported by the fact that a shortage of semi-primitive motorized settings was identified by the SCORTP. This indicates that a wide range of recreation users prefers natural-appearing landscapes. At the same time, timber sale development can create additional opportunities, particularly for motorized experiences in semi-developed settings. Examples include improved firewood gathering and conversion of unused skid trails and logging roads to ATV or horse trails. This shift in opportunities and uses is long-term in effect since these types of harvests are evident for a number of decades. Timber harvests that are less intense than regeneration harvests, such as thinnings, partial cuts, and selection cuts, usually have reduced long-term impacts due to the smaller scale of change to recreation settings.

Temporary and short-term effects from all types of timber harvest activities are created during active logging operations. Effects can include increased noise and dust levels, logging truck use of back roads and highways, and snow removal during winter operations, from roads used for snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Generally, little recreation use occurs in active logging areas. Most users will be displaced to other locations during active logging operations because of log truck traffic along access roads, helicopter operations, and setting disturbances such as chainsaw and heavy equipment noises.

Timber salvage activities usually involve harvesting dead, infected, and/or potentially infected trees, which can result in development that alters recreation settings and experiences. In that salvage harvest activities are often linked to disturbance events such as wildfire, weather events, and insect epidemics, it is difficult to accurately predict amounts or locations of salvage activity. In some cases, salvage harvesting occurs in conjunction with other timber harvest activities. In all cases, the potential effects of salvage harvest activities on recreation settings and experiences are the same as other timber harvest activities.

**Roads and Trails** - Maintenance, construction, re-construction, and decommissioning can all affect recreation opportunities and experiences. Road construction and re-construction are usually associated with timber harvest, facility development, utility corridors, telecommunication sites, and mineral and energy development. Roads are also built or improved to meet recreation needs and activities. Current trends indicate increasing recreation-related road maintenance and reconstruction. Trails are constructed primarily for recreation purposes. New or improved access generally increases overall recreation use of the area served by the improved access. New roads and motorized trails into areas that were previously undeveloped can also change the setting by introducing motorized use that may displace some users who prefer less developed settings and the experiences they offer. This shift in opportunities and uses is usually long term because roads and trails are long-lasting features. However, management actions—such as road closures and decommissioning and trail travel restrictions—can mitigate setting shifts to some extent, preserving some semi-primitive opportunities and experiences.

Improving a road's standard—such as from a single-lane native surface road to a two-lane paved road—can also affect recreation use and distribution. Improved access generally improves user comfort as well as speed of access. In some cases, these improvements can result in increased use in areas serviced by the access, and possibly shifting use from other areas where access quality remains the same. Currently, there are ten roads within the Ecogroup that are being considered for improvement under all alternatives. About half of these improvement projects would improve the standard above their current standard for only along 2 or 3-mile segments of these roads. The other half of these projects range from 6 to 14 miles of improvement. These improvement projects are still in very preliminary stages of development and still need to be analyzed on a site-specific basis prior to project approval and implementation. Each road improvement project may change substantially or be dropped from further consideration as further information is gathered and considered. As such, accurate effects from these improvements are difficult to determine at this time. All of the longer group of road improvements are likely to increase levels of recreation traffic, use, and shifts in both dispersed and developed sites that are accessed by these roads to some extent. In the cases where only relatively short lengths of road would be improved, the increased use is likely to be slight and limited to relatively small areas. Accomplishment of these road improvements is very dependent on capital improvement funding within the agency. Priorities can also shift dramatically, for varied reasons, which may cause some projects to rise in priority or drop completely off the capital improvement list.

**Disturbance Events** – Wildland fire, insects, disease, landslides, and other disturbance events can greatly affect recreation opportunities and experiences, especially when the scale of these events is large. Many recreation experiences are highly influenced by the scenic qualities of the setting. The effects of these disturbance events on scenic resources are examined in more detail in the *Scenic Environment* section in this chapter.

Wildland fire, and insect and disease outbreaks can result in large areas of dead trees. For a period of time, large stands of trees killed by insect and disease, can then become fire hazards, indirectly increasing the potential for wildfire effects to recreation experiences. In some cases, salvage logging is used to reduce the risk of fire associated with large areas of tree mortality creating additional or different short-term and long-term impacts from logging activities, new roads and salvage harvest units.

Effects on recreation opportunities from wildland fire vary depending upon the extent, severity and location. High levels of smoke from wildland fires will affect recreation experiences. Clear, fresh air is a user expectation for a number of recreation experiences, especially in primitive and semi-primitive settings. Smoke from fires can also partially or completely obscure scenic attractions desired in many recreation experiences. During active wildfire seasons, recreation plans may be shifted to less smoky locations, shortened in duration, or cancelled entirely. During extreme fire seasons, area closures for fire prevention may be invoked, limiting or eliminating recreation opportunities over extensive areas. Many people find the post-fire appearance of burned vegetation to be unattractive. Burned landscapes resulting from wildland fire may displace some users who find the appearance of burned-over timber stands to be unsatisfactory. These recreationists may use other areas until the burned area recovers to a more vegetated state.

Dead trees also produce less shade than live trees and can change the desirability of some locations as camping and picnicking sites. In developed recreation sites, dead and diseased trees are considered a safety hazard and are removed to make camp and picnic sites safer for human occupation. When tree mortality or disease levels are high in developed sites, the character of these sites can change dramatically with the reduction of hazardous trees. In extreme cases, sites in forest settings can change into sites in completely open settings.

In areas where disturbance events are allowed to dominate the landscape, the potential for effects from some types of disturbance is likely to increase over the long term. It is difficult to predict how or where or when these natural changes might occur due to influential variables such as vegetation patterns, disturbance regimes, climate, and topography.

**Prescribed Fire** – Prescribed fire can also result in many of the same effects noted for wildland fire above. Visibility and air quality impairment as well as burned landscapes usually result from prescribed fire, however the extent and duration of these effects may be less than those of wildfire. Prescribed fire intensities, severity, and scale can be lower and smaller and result in reduced setting impacts of shorter duration than wildland fires. Prescribed fire can also create conflicts in the fall when burning windows occur when big game and bird hunting activities are

at their peak. These effects are generally thought to be small, localized, and short-term in duration. In some cases, prescribed fire may improve recreation opportunities. For instance, fire can be used to achieve timber stand characteristics that allow easier recreation access or that some recreationists find more attractive such as open stands of large trees.

**Non-Native Plants** – Invasion by exotic plants (primarily noxious weeds and non-native grasses) can alter recreation experiences both directly and indirectly. Recreation experiences may be directly affected when invasions become extreme enough to warrant travel restrictions and recreational access becomes limited to only selected routes or forms of travel. Some recreationists find heavy concentrations of some exotic plants, such as star thistle, unpleasant to walk through, changing recreation use patterns and locations. Indirectly, hunting opportunities and hunter success levels may be reduced if winter ranges become ineffective due to non-native plant invasion. Similarly, opportunities for wildlife viewing and photography may also decline in highly infested areas. Fishing opportunities may also decrease somewhat due to increased sedimentation in highly infested areas.

**Mineral and Energy Exploration, Development, and Reclamation** – Exploration and development can potentially result in long-term effects to recreation settings from development in previously undeveloped landscapes. These effects would vary depending largely upon the scale and location of development. Small-scale developments of a few acres, or underground mining, would have a very limited impact, while large-scale mining operations covering hundreds of acres could potentially have major effects on recreation settings. During active operations, recreation uses may be affected by increased noise and dust levels, temporary access closures, and from heavy vehicle use of back roads and highways. Displacement of users into other areas during periods of active operation could occur, but would likely be small in scale, localized, and temporary in duration.

Mining reclamation activities would generally have little effect on recreation settings in that settings would already have been altered by the mining development. Reclamation effects would probably be limited to temporary and short-term impacts associated with active operations. In that the level of mineral exploration and development is largely driven by market forces and regulated by existing mining law, there would be little difference between the alternatives in effects on recreation opportunities and experiences. Reclamation activities may vary depending on differences in alternative restoration emphasis.

**Facilities and Structures** – These include a broad array of physical developments and structures, such as administrative facilities, communications developments, and dams and diversions authorized under special use authorizations. Usually, there are short-term impacts from active construction operations and long-term impacts to recreation settings from structures, vegetation clearing, and ground-disturbance activities. These effects vary depending on the scale and nature of the development, as well as the setting itself. Long-term effects are usually greatest when these developments occur in primitive and semi-primitive areas with little or no previously existing development. In such cases, permanent recreation use displacement may occur among users who prefer less developed settings and the experiences they offer. Some of these structures also may convert recreation opportunities, such as when dams replace whitewater-floating experiences with motorized boating experiences.

**Utility Developments** – These developments include pipelines and overhead powerlines that can result in short-term impacts from active construction operations and long-term effects from associated permanent structures, vegetation clearing, and ground-disturbance activities. Long-term effects are usually greatest when these developments occur in primitive and semi-primitive areas with little or no previously existing development. In such cases, permanent recreation use displacement may occur among users who prefer less developed settings and the experiences they offer. In some areas, utility corridors may improve access by providing a cleared corridor that can be used for hiking, mountain biking, horse riding and other uses, potentially increasing access and recreation opportunities. Corridors for anticipated utility line needs are described in the Management Area sections of the Forest Plan. Site-specific analysis would be required prior to approval or implementation of any utility corridor development.

**Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed Management** – Biological assessments for sockeye salmon, chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout done in the mid-1990s identified a number of recreation sites and activities across the Ecogroup area that, under current management, were likely to adversely affect fish populations. Most of these sites have been modified to mitigate the impacts to these fish species. For example, campsites adjacent to the South Fork of the Salmon River and Johnson Creek were removed from the South Fork Salmon River and Icehole Campgrounds. Portions of these facilities were also "hardened" with paved surfacing to reduce sedimentation as part of the mitigation effort. A number of developed sites within the Salmon River canyon below Stanley have also been modified to protect chinook salmon. Across the Ecogroup area, currently four sites and four recreation activities remain to be addressed with mitigation. The exact extent and nature of the mitigation measures would be determined at the project level and would be common to all alternatives.

Watershed and fisheries improvement actions can include construction of structures for streambank stabilization (rock gabions, rock riprap, etc.), slope stabilization, and fish habitat improvement. Some structural improvements may be visually evident and may detract from the natural landscape. Negative impacts may be mitigated through design and location options, and vegetative cover plantings where possible. Generally, improvement structures are small and localized, and result in little or no effect on recreation settings and facilities.

**Wildlife Management** – Wildlife management actions can directly affect recreation opportunities in a number of ways. In a growing number of cases, protection measures designed to protect diminishing or vulnerable species result in access, development, or activity restrictions. Examples include:

- Seasonal access restrictions at nesting sites for bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and goshawks.
- Seasonal access restrictions within occupied wolverine denning areas.
- Seasonal access restrictions for caves and mines that possess occupied bat hibernaculum.
- Seasonal access restrictions within big-game winter/spring ranges.
- Seasonal access restrictions within selected big-game management units for deer and elk in cooperation with state fish and game agencies.
- Recreational suction dredging access restrictions on stream sections that provide spawning habitat for threatened and endangered fish species.
- No net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes and snowmobile play areas within identified lynx habitat.

Seasonal access restrictions can result in more concentrated use of roads and areas that remain open, reducing opportunities for motorized experiences, while possibly increasing non-motorized opportunities in areas that are not closed to all human intrusion. Winter recreation trail-oriented opportunities will be limited to their current extent in identified lynx habitat. Given the extensive area of identified lynx habitat within the Ecogroup area, this is likely to be a significant limitation to expansion of winter recreation opportunities. In that most of these restrictions arise from biological assessments and opinions and conservation agreements, they apply in every alternative, and their effects would be the same in every alternative.

Wildlife management actions may result in a broad array of physical alterations including vegetation manipulations (stand, structure, and composition cuts, browse species plantings, etc.), prescribed burning, and habitat improvement structures. Some structural improvements may be visually evident and detract from the natural landscape. Others may be designed to improve the scenic environment over the long term. Negative impacts may be mitigated through design and location options, and vegetative cover plantings where possible. Generally, improvement structures are small and localized, and would have a minor effect on the scenic quality of the surrounding area.

Recreational benefits from successful wildlife management could include increased hunter satisfaction and wildlife viewing opportunities.

**Cave Management** – Cave resources are considered non-renewable because of the unique conditions under which they formed, the time it took them to develop, and the sensitivity of microclimates within caves. The Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988 requires the protection of significant caves found on federal lands. New Forest Plan direction may result in limitations on human access to significant caves in an attempt to protect cave resources. However, improved protection of these resources will result in reduced vandalism, theft of geological formations, disturbance to cave plants and wildlife populations, and threats to cave environments from heavy equipment. These effects would contribute to preserving recreational caving experiences into the future. Because protection of cave resources is mandated by law, these effects are common to all alternatives.

**Sawtooth National Recreation Area** – Management of the SNRA is directed by PL 92-400 and regulations set by the Secretary of Agriculture. Because the purpose and goals of the SNRA are largely defined by special legislation, management differences between alternatives would not be dramatic. An exception to this is in the acres of the SNRA that are recommended for wilderness designation. Recommendations for wilderness designation under each alternative are described and analyzed in the *Inventoried Roadless Areas* section of this chapter.

## Direct and Indirect Effects by Alternative

**Analysis Details**

Information presented in the following analyses has been extracted from a more extensive technical report in the interest of brevity of the EIS. Analysis methodology is not detailed in the EIS and actual figures are, in most cases, rounded. The technical report is available upon request if full details regarding methodology and exact figures are desired.

**Indicator 1 - Recreation Settings**

Potential management activities associated with each alternative would have varying effects on recreation opportunities by influencing the settings. Recreation settings could potentially be altered by a number of management activities under each alternative such as timber harvest, road construction, restoration treatments, and fuel reduction treatments. Another source of potential change to recreation settings would stem from management direction that would affect motorized access and uses. One method of estimating changing recreation settings is to compare estimated acreages of ROS class shifts from the current ROS inventory that would be needed to reflect the prescribed management under each alternative. The ROS provides the framework for analyzing changes to recreation settings that may arise as a result of new development, such as timber harvest and road construction, as well as changes resulting from motorized access adjustments. However, the ROS cannot be used to address changes in recreation settings that would arise from fire use activities because ROS classes are unaffected by burned or unburned conditions. Each alternative's potential for changing recreation settings as a result of fire use is included in a separate analysis below for restoration activities.

Acreages for each ROS class under each alternative were estimated based on changes to the ROS inventory that would be needed to reflect estimated levels of mechanical vegetation treatments, new road construction, and new motorized use prohibitions in recommended wilderness. SPECTRUM modeling estimates were used for new road construction and mechanical vegetation treatments. Estimates were calculated for 15 years of management activities (2018) to approximate the net changes at the end of the next planning period. Although changes to ROS classification could occur from a wide variety of management actions and developments, these management actions would comprise the vast majority of ones that would be likely to result in changes to the ROS inventory. Estimates for total ROS class acreages under each alternative are displayed in Tables RE-11 and RE-12.

**Table RE-11. Estimated Acres of Summer ROS Class by Alternative for Each Forest by 2018[1]**

| ROS Class[2] | Summer ROS Acres | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| **Boise National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 66,000 | 0 | 11,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | 457,000 | 454,000 | 448,000 | 531,000 | 447,000 | 490,000 | 457,000 |
| **SPM** | 408,000 | 406,000 | 403,000 | 282,000 | 403,000 | 377,000 | 408,000 |
| **RN** | 404,000 | 404,000 | 404,000 | 404,000 | 404,000 | 404,000 | 404,000 |
| **RM** | 929,000 | 934,000 | 943,000 | 915,000 | 944,000 | 915,000 | 929,000 |
| **R** | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| **Payette National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 768,000 | 768,000 | 768,000 | 847,000 | 768,000 | 785,000 | 768,000 |
| **SPNM** | 454,000 | 458,000 | 453,000 | 598,000 | 452,000 | 469,000 | 458,000 |
| **SPM** | 412,000 | 415,000 | 411,000 | 196,000 | 410,000 | 387,000 | 415,000 |
| **RN** | 263,000 | 262,000 | 263,000 | 263,000 | 263,000 | 263,000 | 263,000 |
| **RM** | 402,000 | 395,000 | 405,000 | 395,000 | 407,000 | 395,000 | 395,000 |
| **R** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| ROS Class[2] | Summer ROS Acres | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| **Sawtooth National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 227,000 | 227,000 | 227,000 | 273,000 | 227,000 | 317,000 | 227,000 |
| **SPNM** | 367,000 | 367,000 | 366,000 | 952,000 | 367,000 | 714,000 | 367,000 |
| **SPM** | 724,000 | 724,000 | 722,000 | 111,000 | 724,000 | 1,005,000 | 724,000 |
| **RN** | 295,000 | 295,000 | 295,000 | 293,000 | 295,000 | 73,000 | 295,000 |
| **RM** | 494,000 | 494,000 | 497,000 | 482,000 | 494,000 | 2,000 | 494,000 |
| **R** | 4,000 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 0 | 4,000 | 0 | 4,000 |

[1]Acreages are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Totals may differ slightly due to rounding.
[2]ROS Class Abbreviations: P = Primitive; SPNM = Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; SPM = Semi-Primitive Motorized; RN = Roaded Natural; RM = Roaded Modified; R = Rural.

**Table RE-12. Estimated Acres of Winter ROS Class by Alternative for Each Forest by 2018[1]**

| ROS Class[2] | Winter ROS Acres | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| **Boise National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 66,000 | 0 | 11,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | 206,000 | 204,000 | 202,000 | 698,000 | 201,000 | 347,000 | 206,000 |
| **SPM** | 1,725,000 | 1,716,000 | 1,702,000 | 1,167,000 | 1,700,000 | 1,573,000 | 1,725,000 |
| **RN** | 167,000 | 167,000 | 167,000 | 167,000 | 167,000 | 167,000 | 167,000 |
| **RM** | 100,000 | 110,000 | 128,000 | 100,000 | 130,000 | 100,000 | 100,000 |
| **R** | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 |
| **Payette National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 768,000 | 768,000 | 768,000 | 845,000 | 768,000 | 788,000 | 768,000 |
| **SPNM** | 446,000 | 447,000 | 445,000 | 755,000 | 444,000 | 605,000 | 447,000 |
| **SPM** | 737,000 | 745,000 | 733,000 | 359,000 | 730,000 | 567,000 | 745,000 |
| **RN** | 39,000 | 39,000 | 39,000 | 39,000 | 39,000 | 39,000 | 39,000 |
| **RM** | 310,000 | 301,000 | 315,000 | 301,000 | 318,000 | 301,000 | 301,000 |
| **R** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sawtooth National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 219,000 | 219,000 | 219,000 | 240,000 | 219,000 | 304,000 | 219,000 |
| **SPNM** | 123,000 | 123,000 | 122,000 | 410,000 | 123,000 | 243,000 | 123,000 |
| **SPM** | 1,696,000 | 1,696,000 | 1,690,000 | 686,000 | 1,696,000 | 1,489,000 | 1,696,000 |
| **RN** | 71,000 | 71,000 | 71,000 | 293,000 | 71,000 | 73,000 | 71,000 |
| **RM** | 0 | 0 | 6,000 | 482,000 | 0 | 2,000 | 0 |
| **R** | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 0 | 2,000 | 0 | 2,000 |

[1]Acreages are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Totals may differ slightly due to rounding.
[2]ROS Class Abbreviations: P = Primitive; SPNM = Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; SPM = Semi-Primitive Motorized; RN = Roaded Natural; RM = Roaded Modified; R = Rural.

ROS class shifts can be estimated for each alternative by comparing resultant acreages with the current ROS inventory acreages. In that these ROS shift estimates are based on modeling outputs, they are not absolute measures of acres of ROS shift but are relative measures of potential shifts between the alternatives. They serve to compare relative differences in outcomes

between the alternatives. The potential for changes to existing recreation settings is reflected in the changes in the ROS class levels associated with each alternative, and is displayed in Tables RE-13 and RE-14.

**Table RE-13. Estimated Acres of Summer ROS Class Change by Alternative for Each Forest by 2018[1]**

| ROS Class[2] | Summer ROS Acres | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| **Boise National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | +66,000 | 0 | +11,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | -29,000 | -33,000 | -39,000 | +44,000 | -40,000 | +4,000 | -29,000 |
| **SPM** | +16,000 | +14,000 | +11,000 | -110,000 | +11,000 | -15,000 | +16,000 |
| **RN** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | +14,000 | +19,000 | +28,000 | 0 | +29,000 | 0 | +14,000 |
| **R** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Payette National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | +79,000 | 0 | +17,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | -3,000 | 0 | -5,000 | +140,000 | -6,000 | +11,000 | 0 |
| **SPM** | -3,000 | 0 | -4,000 | -219,000 | -5,000 | -28,000 | 0 |
| **RN** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | +6,000 | 0 | +10,000 | 0 | +12,000 | 0 | 0 |
| **R** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sawtooth National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | +46,000 | 0 | +13,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | -1,000 | 0 | -2,000 | +584,000 | 0 | +42,000 | 0 |
| **SPM** | -17,000 | 0 | -19,000 | -630,000 | 0 | -55,000 | 0 |
| **RN** | +2,000 | 0 | +2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | +12,000 | 0 | +15,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **R** | +4,000 | 0 | +4,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

[1]Acreages are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Positive values represent increases in acreages; negative values represent decreases. Forest changes totals may not equal 0 due to rounding.
[2]ROS Class Abbreviations: P = Primitive; SPNM = Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; SPM = Semi-Primitive Motorized; RN = Roaded Natural; RM = Roaded Modified; R = Rural.

**Table RE-14. Estimated Acres of Winter ROS Class Change by Alternative for Each Forest by 2018[1]**

| ROS Class[2] | Winter ROS Acres | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| **Boise National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | +66,000 | 0 | +11,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | 0 | -2,000 | -4,000 | +492,000 | -5,000 | +141,000 | 0 |
| **SPM** | 0 | -9,000 | -24,000 | -558,000 | -26,000 | -152,000 | 0 |
| **RN** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | 0 | +10,000 | +28,000 | 0 | +30,000 | 0 | 0 |
| **R** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Payette National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | -8,000 | -8,000 | -8,000 | +70,000 | -8,000 | +13,000 | -8,000 |
| **SPNM** | +6,000 | +8,000 | +5,000 | +316,000 | +5,000 | +165,000 | +8,000 |
| **SPM** | -7,000 | 0 | -12,000 | -386,000 | -14,000 | -178,000 | 0 |
| **RN** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | +9,000 | 0 | +14,000 | 0 | +17,000 | 0 | 0 |
| **R** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Sawtooth National Forest** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | -61,000 | 0 | -61,000 | +37,000 | 0 | +24,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | +67,000 | 0 | +66,000 | +658,000 | 0 | +187,000 | 0 |
| **SPM** | -5,000 | 0 | -10,000 | -695,000 | 0 | -211,000 | 0 |
| **RN** | -2,000 | 0 | -2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | -2,000 | 0 | +4,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **R** | +2,000 | 0 | +2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

[1]Acreages are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Positive values represent increases in acreages; negative values represent decreases. Forest changes totals may not equal 0 due to rounding.
[2]ROS Class Abbreviations: P = Primitive; SPNM = Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; SPM = Semi-Primitive Motorized; RN = Roaded Natural; RM = Roaded Modified; R = Rural.

The most dramatic shifts in summer ROS classes would occur in Alternative 4 for all three Forests. The shift in Alternative 4 would go from the Semi-Primitive Motorized class toward the Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Primitive classes, with little or no shifts in other classes, due to the general low level of development activities. These shifts are due to a combination of the prohibition of motorized use in recommended wilderness areas and the high level of recommended wilderness in that alternative. The effects under Alternative 6 would be in a similar direction but on a lower scale due to the lower level of recommended wilderness.

Summer ROS shifts under the remaining alternatives would largely be in favor of the more developed and motorized classes where lower levels of challenge and risk are generally found, with more evidence of humans, and a higher level of user interaction. The scale of ROS differences varies by Forest due to differing levels of potential development. ROS shifts toward more developed classes are likely to be the highest under Alternative 5 for both the Boise and Payette Forests. On the Boise, Alternatives 1B, 2, 3, and 7 present somewhat smaller shifts toward more developed recreation settings, with shifts under Alternative 3 being almost as large as those under Alternative 5. On the Payette, Alternatives 1B and 3 present shifts toward the

more developed classes, while Alternative 7 would largely result in little or no ROS shifts to the more developed classes. On the Sawtooth, Alternatives 1B and 3 present shifts toward the more developed classes, while Alternatives 2, 5, and 7 would largely result in little or no ROS shifts to the more developed classes.

The levels of both Roaded Natural and Rural do not shift dramatically under any alternative. This is because the development and use that generates these ROS classifications would not be likely to disappear under any alternative. Changes to these two classes would likely be limited to additions resulting from additional development.

Many of the effects for the winter ROS inventories are similar to those of the summer. There would be sizeable shifts to the less developed classes and undeveloped classes under Alternative 4, with a somewhat smaller shift under Alternative 6. On the Boise, Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 result in modest shifts toward developed classes, while Alternatives 1B and 7 result in little or no shifts. On the Payette, Alternatives 1B, 3, and 5 result in somewhat smaller shifts toward developed classes, while Alternatives 2 and 7 result in little or no shifts. On the Sawtooth, Alternatives 1B and 3 result in moderate shifts toward developed classes, while Alternatives 2, 5, and 7 result in little or no shifts.

During both summer and winter periods, areas classified as Semi-Primitive Motorized would be likely to shrink under Alternatives 4 and 6 for all three Forests. This stems from the prohibition on motorized use within recommended wilderness under those alternatives. The scale of the reduction is considerably larger in Alternative 4 than Alternative 6 due to the far greater recommended wilderness area in Alternative 4.

On the Boise, summer Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would expand moderately under all the remaining alternatives, with Alternatives 1B and 7 showing the largest gains. Winter Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would also shrink somewhat under Alternatives 2, 3, and 5, although not near as much as Alternatives 4 and 6. This change under Alternatives 2, 3, and 5 would be due to development of recreation settings from mechanical treatments and road construction rather than motorized use prohibitions. Winter Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would stay about the same as the current level under Alternatives 1B and 7.

On the Payette, both summer and winter Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would shrink slightly under Alternatives 1B, 3, and 5, although to a much lower extent than under Alternatives 4 and 6. This would occur as a result of development activities rather than increasing motorized use prohibitions. Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would stay about the same as the current level under Alternatives 2 and 7.

On the Sawtooth, both summer and winter Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would shrink slightly under Alternatives 1B and 3, although to a much lower extent than under Alternatives 4 and 6. This would occur as a result of development activities rather than increasing motorized use prohibitions. Semi-Primitive Motorized areas would stay about the same as the current level under Alternatives 2, 5, and 7.

On a Forest-wide basis, changes in the ROS class proportions due to development would occur gradually over time because implementation of projects would not happen all at once. While some areas are likely to have significant alterations over the next decade, others may not be affected, or affected only minimally for a much longer period of time. The duration of the effects would generally be long term but could also vary depending upon the nature of the development or management activity. The estimated ROS class changes displayed in Tables RE-12 and RE-13 represent the sum total effect of anticipated development over the 15 years following the revised Forest Plan decision.

**Indicator 2 - Uncharacteristic Wildfire Hazard and Fuel Reduction Activities**

Treatments to reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire or to reduce fuel loadings could include mechanical harvest and thinning, fire use, or some combination of the above. Recreation opportunities and experiences would likely be temporarily unavailable within and adjacent to the treatment areas during mechanical or prescribed fire treatments. Some recreationists may not find the recreation settings changed by new harvest units or blackened landscapes to be appealing and may seek other locations for their recreational activities. This effect would generally be temporary or short term; during which time the recreation opportunities or experiences would be displaced or shifted to other areas. These shifts might be as close as the next drainage or in a totally different portion of the Forest. The treatments would most likely occur in areas assigned to MPC 5.1 or 6.1 that currently have either high or extreme ratings for uncharacteristic wildfire hazard or resistance to control. (Uncharacteristic wildfire hazard and resistance to control ratings are further explained in the *Vegetation Hazard* section in this chapter.) The acreages for these areas on each Forest under each alternative are displayed in Table RE-15.

For all three Forests, Alternative 3 would likely result in the highest potential levels of recreation use disturbance and displacement due to vegetation restoration and fuels reduction activities. On the Boise, Alternative 2 also presents a high level of potential displacement, while all the other alternatives present relatively moderate levels. Alternative 6 results in the lowest level on the Boise. On the Payette, Alternative 4 presents no areas assigned to MPC 5.1 or 6.1 that currently have either high or extreme ratings for uncharacteristic wildfire hazard or resistance to control, giving it the lowest potential for recreation use disturbance and displacement. All of the remaining alternatives result in moderate levels between Alternatives 3 and 4. On the Sawtooth, Alternative 1B results in the lowest level while Alternative 6 is higher but still relatively low. All the remaining alternatives on the Sawtooth result in moderate levels of potential disturbance and displacement between Alternative 6 and Alternative 3.

**Table RE-15. Approximate Acres Having High or Extreme Ratings for Uncharacteristic Wildfire Hazard or Resistance to Control Assigned with MPCs 5.1 or 6.1***

| National Forest | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boise | 559,000 | 769,000 | 931,000 | 380,000 | 473,000 | 329,000 | 434,000 |
| Payette | 118,000 | 227,000 | 391,000 | 0 | 232,000 | 135,000 | 177,000 |
| Sawtooth | 17,000 | 343,000 | 489,000 | 190,000 | 253,000 | 70,000 | 314,000 |

* Acreages have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres.

Predicting the spatial locations and durations of these short-term recreation use displacements is difficult because of the many variables that affect these shifts. Combinations of vegetation types, recreation uses affected, burn intensity, severity, extent and timing could all produce an array of potential outcomes that could range from slight to high levels of disturbance to current recreation uses. However, subwatersheds having high or extreme ratings for uncharacteristic wildfire hazard and resistance to control can provide a spatial sense of where hazard and fuel reduction activities are most likely to occur. These areas are displayed in Figures RE-1, RE-2, and RE-3. Areas where either of these conditions exist that also happen to be adjacent to populated areas or areas with substantial capital investment would be likely to be the highest treatment priorities.

**Indicator 3 - Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed Restoration Activity Effects on Developed Recreation**

Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed management direction in the Forest Plans could have potential effects on developed recreation facilities. This direction would be used to guide the development of new facilities and to mitigate impacts originating from existing facilities. New construction of recreation developments within areas assigned MPCs of 3.1 or 3.2 would not be precluded. However, required mitigation measures would likely increase the costs for these facilities substantially. Resource protection considerations would also far outweigh user convenience or other recreation-driven considerations in determining the locations of new facilities.

Existing developed recreation facilities within subwatersheds identified as high priorities for active restoration and also assigned an MPC of 3.2 would be the most likely affected. (Criteria used for determining restoration strategies and watershed and aquatic prioritization are displayed in the *Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources* section of this chapter.) The number of these facilities is shown by Forest and by alternative in Table RE-16.

**Figure RE-1 Subwatersheds Having Ratings of High or Extreme for Uncharacteristic Fire or Resistance to Control Boise National Forest**

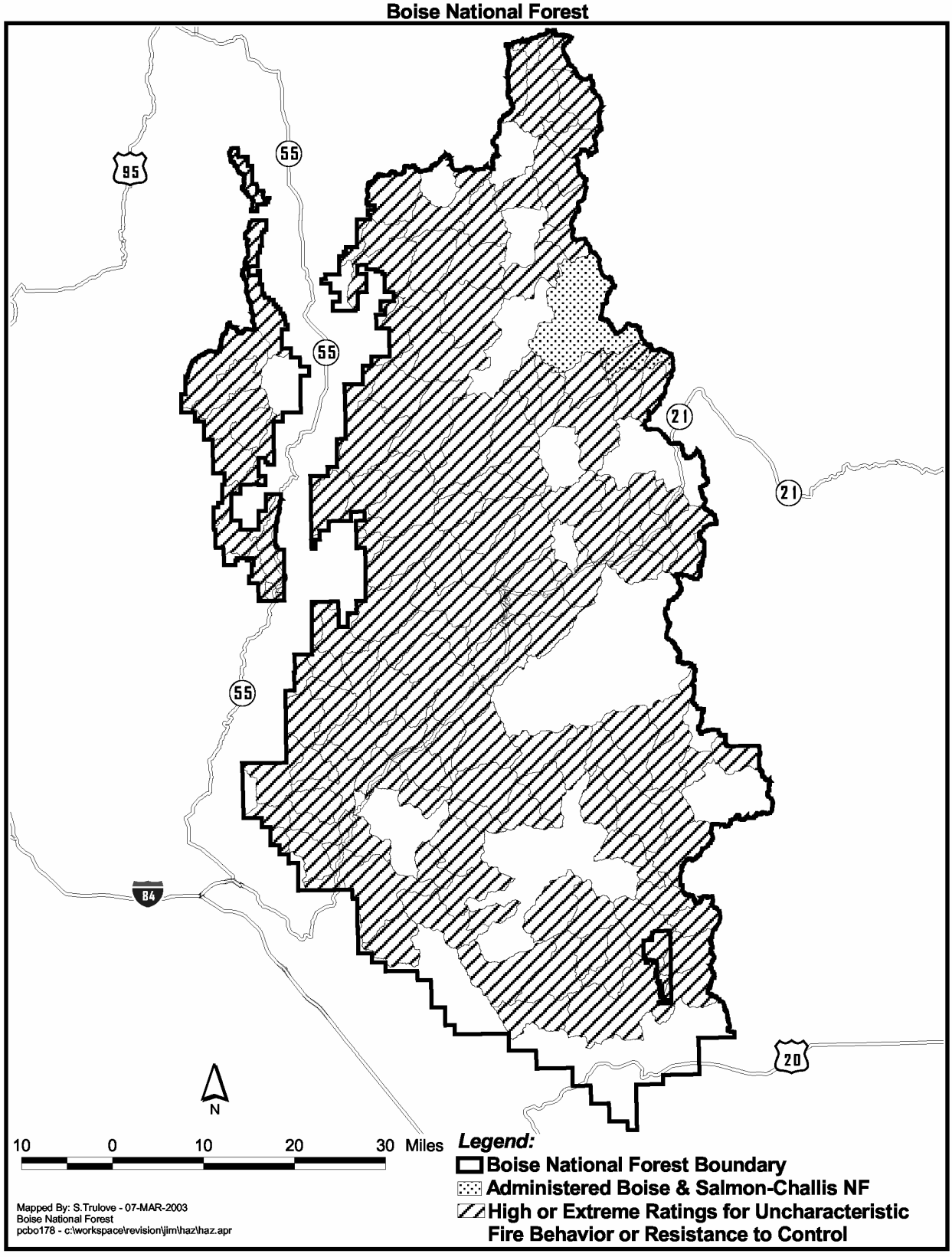


**Figure RE-2 Subwatersheds Having Ratings of High or Extreme for Uncharacteristic Fire or Resistnace to Control Payette National Forest**

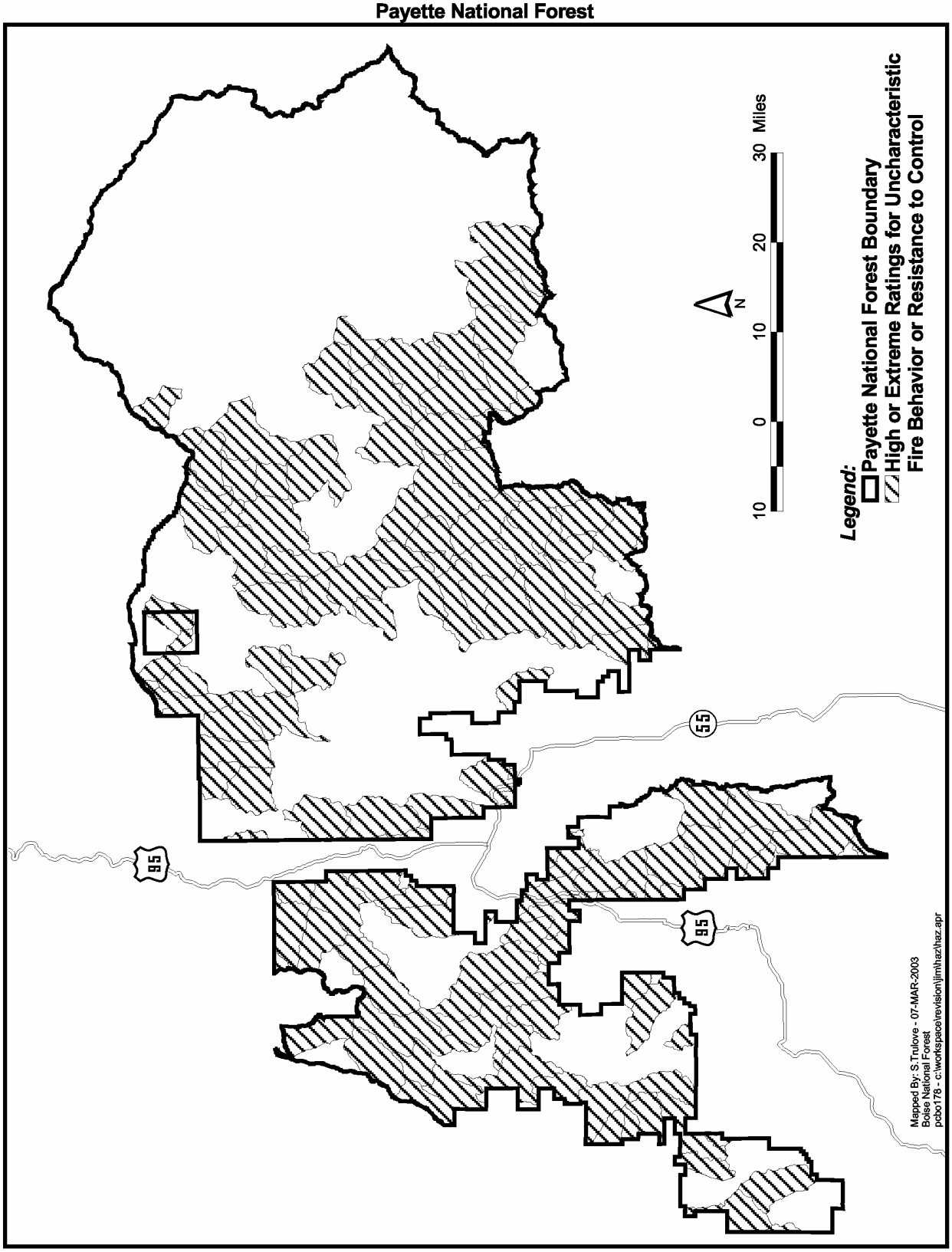


**Figure RE-3 Subwatersheds Having Ratings of High or Extreme for Uncharacteristic Fire or Resistance to Control**
**Sawtooth National Forest**

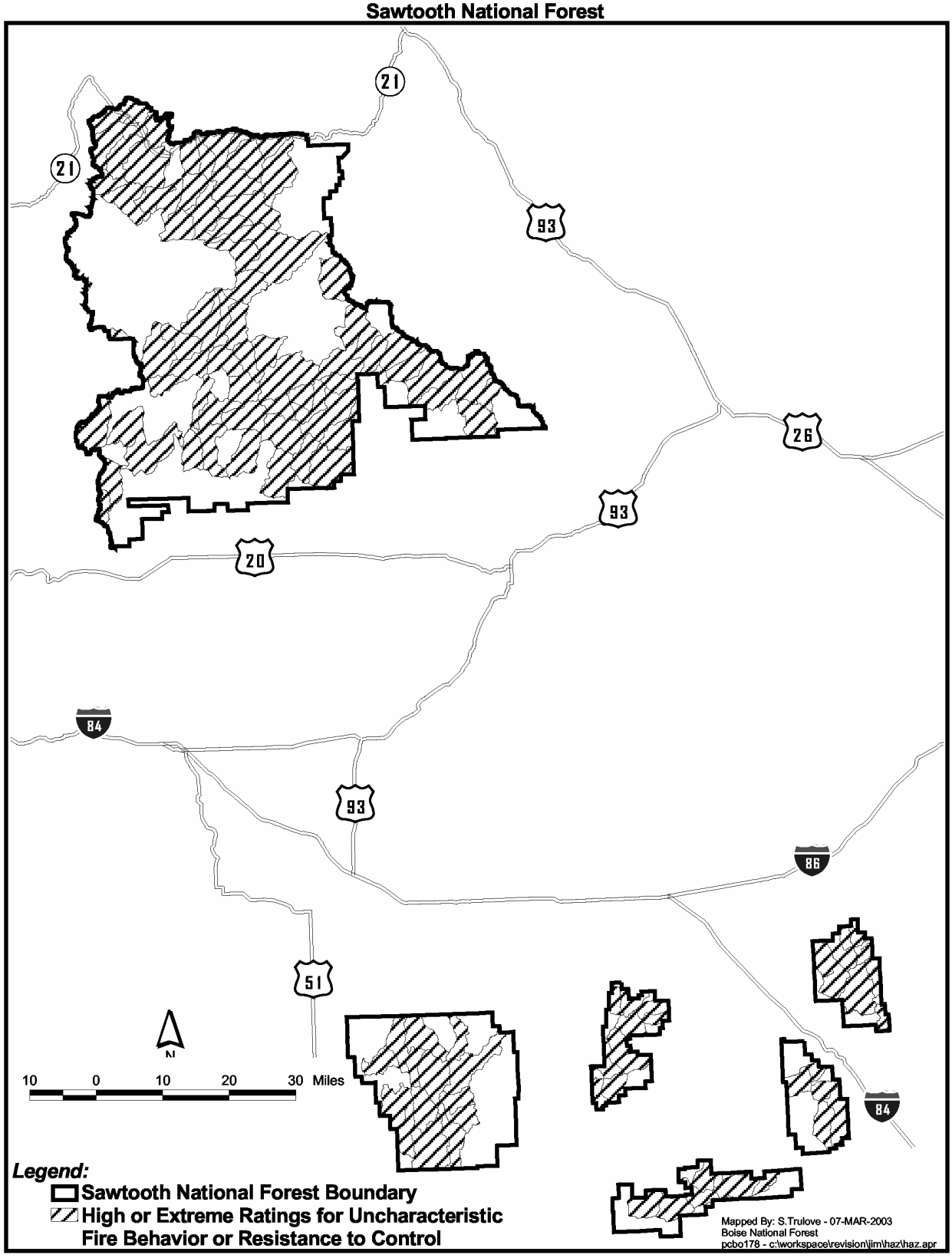


**Table RE-16. Developed Recreation Sites within Subwatersheds Having High Priority for Active Restoration and Assigned to MPC 3.2**

| National Forest | Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1B | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Boise | 0 | 25 | 39 | 19 | 2 | 21 | 22 |
| Payette | 0 | 11 | 15 | 5 | 2 | 11 | 14 |
| Sawtooth | 0 | 59 | 59 | 7 | 0 | 52 | 58 |

It should be noted that the figures included in Table RE-12 are not meant to represent the actual number of sites in need of restoration activities. Each developed recreation site represents a unique situation, which would be considered on a case-by-case basis prior to determining if any restoration treatments were warranted. Determinations would be based on actual recreation impacts, management priorities, funding opportunities, and project-level planning decisions within the planning period. As a result, the indicators are intended to show relative differences between the alternatives, rather than to represent the actual number of developed recreation sites that would receive restoration treatments. It should be noted that restoration activities at existing recreation facilities to mitigate known, direct adverse effects from recreation facilities on listed fish species are likely to occur to some extent under *any* MPC assignment in any alternative.

There would be no developed sites assigned to MPC 3.2 for any of the three Forests under Alternative 1B since there is no management prescription similar to 3.2 in the current Forest Plans. As a result, Alternative 1B presents the lowest potential for effects on developed sites on the Boise and Payette. Alternative 5 on the Sawtooth presents a similar situation and extremely low level of potential impact. In some respect these results are somewhat misleading in that some level of impacts could result from site-specific analysis under any alternative. However, it is still likely that the levels of impacts would be the least under Alternative 1B on the Boise and Payette and under Alternatives 1B and 5 on the Sawtooth.

Alternative 3 results in the highest level of developed sites assigned to MPC 3.2, on the Boise, with a total of 39. Results under Alternatives 2, 7, 6, and 4 are similar, ranging from 25 to 19 sites. Alternative 5 results in a very low level of 2 sites, which is consistent with the commodity production theme of the alternative.

The range of results for the Payette is the lowest of the three Forests because it has much fewer developed recreation sites than either the Boise or Sawtooth. This also reflects the fact that the Payette places greater emphasis on providing dispersed recreation opportunities and experiences than developed recreation. Alternative 3 also results in the highest level of developed sites assigned to MPC 3.2 on the Payette, with a total of 15. Results under Alternatives 2, 6, and 7 are similar, ranging from 11 to 14 sites. Alternative 5 results in a very low level of 2 sites, which is consistent with the commodity production theme of the alternative.

Figures for the Sawtooth are substantially higher than those for the Boise and Payette due largely to the high level of recreation development within the Salmon River corridor on the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Alternatives 3, 2, 6, and 7 all produce similar results on the Sawtooth, ranging from a high of 59 sites in Alternatives 3 and 2, to 52 sites in Alternative 6. Alternative 4 results in only 7 sites, while Alternative 5 results in none.

Potential effects vary from facility to facility due to individual site characteristics and the nature of the resource impacts. Generally, mitigation of impacts is achieved by modifications to the sites that may include removal of some of the facility components or paving critical driving surfaces and paths. In some relatively rare and extreme cases, entire developed facilities are decommissioned and removed or relocated when suitable alternative sites exist. However, a number of the facilities included in the figures in Table RE-12 are small-scale developments, such as minor trailheads, that would probably require little or no modification. In some cases, there would be temporary service interruptions to every facility during mitigation work due to construction activities. Timing of construction work would be scheduled for minimum use periods to the extent possible, but some interruption of service during summer seasons would be likely. Accurate determinations of the effects on each recreation site that could be potentially affected would be determined in site-specific analyses done in subsequent planning processes.

**Indicator 4 - Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed Restoration Activity Effects on Dispersed Recreation**

Management direction for soil, watershed, riparian, aquatic, and wildlife resources can potentially result in a variety of effects to dispersed recreation opportunities and experiences. Dispersed recreation activities can cause impacts, such as sedimentation and wildlife disturbance, that may need to be mitigated or eliminated. Potential mitigation ranges from seasonal restrictions to total discontinuance of specific uses. Some mitigation might be mandatory, arising from compliance with the Endangered Species Act, and some would depend on a combination of management emphasis and watershed priority. Although potential mitigation impacts to dispersed recreation activities may occur at any location, subwatersheds identified as high priorities for restoration, with an assigned MPC of 3.1 or 3.2 are the most likely to be affected. Under these MPCs, restoring or maintaining resource conditions would receive high priority and could potentially result in dispersed use restrictions and/or closures to achieve or maintain desired resource conditions. Criteria used for determining restoration priorities are displayed in the *Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resources* section of this chapter. Comparing the total acres of MPCs 3.1 and 3.2 within high priority restoration subwatersheds can be used to show relative differences between alternatives in the potential for changes to dispersed recreation opportunities and experiences as a result of aquatic restoration activities. These acreages are displayed in Table RE-17.

**Table RE-17. Total Acres of High Priority Restoration Subwatersheds Assigned To MPCs 3.1 or 3.2***

| Forest | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boise | 0 | 243,000 | 316,000 | 224,000 | 22,000 | 72,000 | 271,000 |
| Payette | 0 | 174,000 | 448,000 | 191,000 | 32,000 | 71,000 | 483,000 |
| Sawtooth | 0 | 252,000 | 314,000 | 146,000 | 0 | 85,000 | 333,000 |

* Acreages have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres.

The results of this analysis could be somewhat misleading in the case of Alternative 1B on all three Forests and Alternative 5 on the Sawtooth. These alternatives result in no acres within high priority restoration subwatersheds assigned to MPCs 3.1 or 3.2. This does not mean that recreation activities would never be restricted or altered under these alternatives. Use restrictions might result from a number of circumstances such as when required by Biological Opinions issued during site-specific project analyses to address local recreational impacts. The results under Alternatives 1B and 5 simply reflect the fact that there are no MPC 3.1 or 3.2 assignments under those alternatives. However, this analysis is still valid in that the potential level of restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses is likely to be the lowest under Alternative 1B on the Boise and Payette and under both Alternative 1B and 5 on the Sawtooth.

On the Boise, Alternative 3 would probably present the greatest potential for restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses. Alternatives 7, 2, and 4 would have relatively similar results and would be somewhat lower than Alternative 3. Alternatives 6 and 5 would both have relatively smaller potentials for restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses

On the Payette and Sawtooth, Alternative 7 would probably present the greatest potential for restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses. Alternative 3 would have relatively similar results but would be somewhat lower than Alternative 7. Alternatives 2, and 4 would likely result in moderate levels. Alternatives 6 and 5 on the Payette, and Alternative 6 on the Sawtooth would have relatively smaller potentials for restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses.

Predicting the spatial locations where restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses would result from Forest Plan management direction is not possible in a purely programmatic analysis. Changes and restrictions on dispersed recreation activities would require site-specific analyses that are not a part of this planning process. However, a sense of where restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses are most likely to be considered may be best represented spatially by subwatersheds that are rated as high priorities for aquatic restoration. These subwatersheds are displayed in Figures RE-4, RE-5, and RE-6.

**Indicators 5 and 6 - Potential Changes in Recreational Access**

One of the major roles of the transportation network on National Forests is to provide access for recreational use of the Forests. Recreation opportunities are greatly influenced by the type and levels of recreation access. As a result, changes to the transportation network can also have substantial effects on recreation opportunities and experiences. New roads frequently expand access options in areas where access was previously much more limited, while road closures and decommissioning generally result in reducing the types of access that are possible or allowed. Both classified and unclassified roads can be closed or decommissioned for a number of reasons. In most cases, the primary purpose is to reduce road-related impacts to other resources. Roads may also be decommissioned when the access they provide is no longer needed, or to improve management efficiencies.

**Figure RE-4 Subwatersheds Having High Priority for Active or Passive Restoration**
**Boise National Forest**

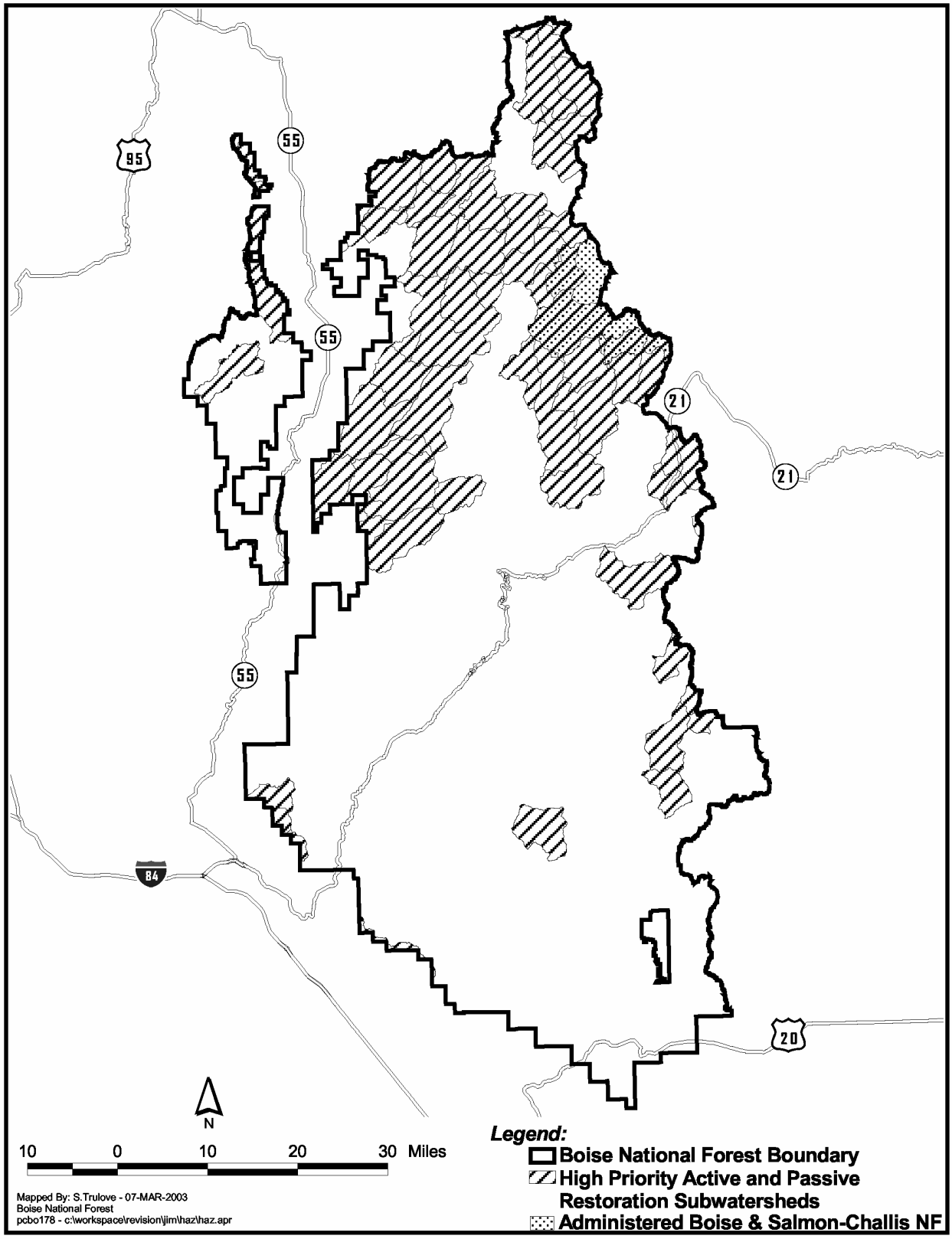


**Figure RE-5 Subwatersheds Having High Priority for Active or Passive Restoration**
**Payette National Forest**

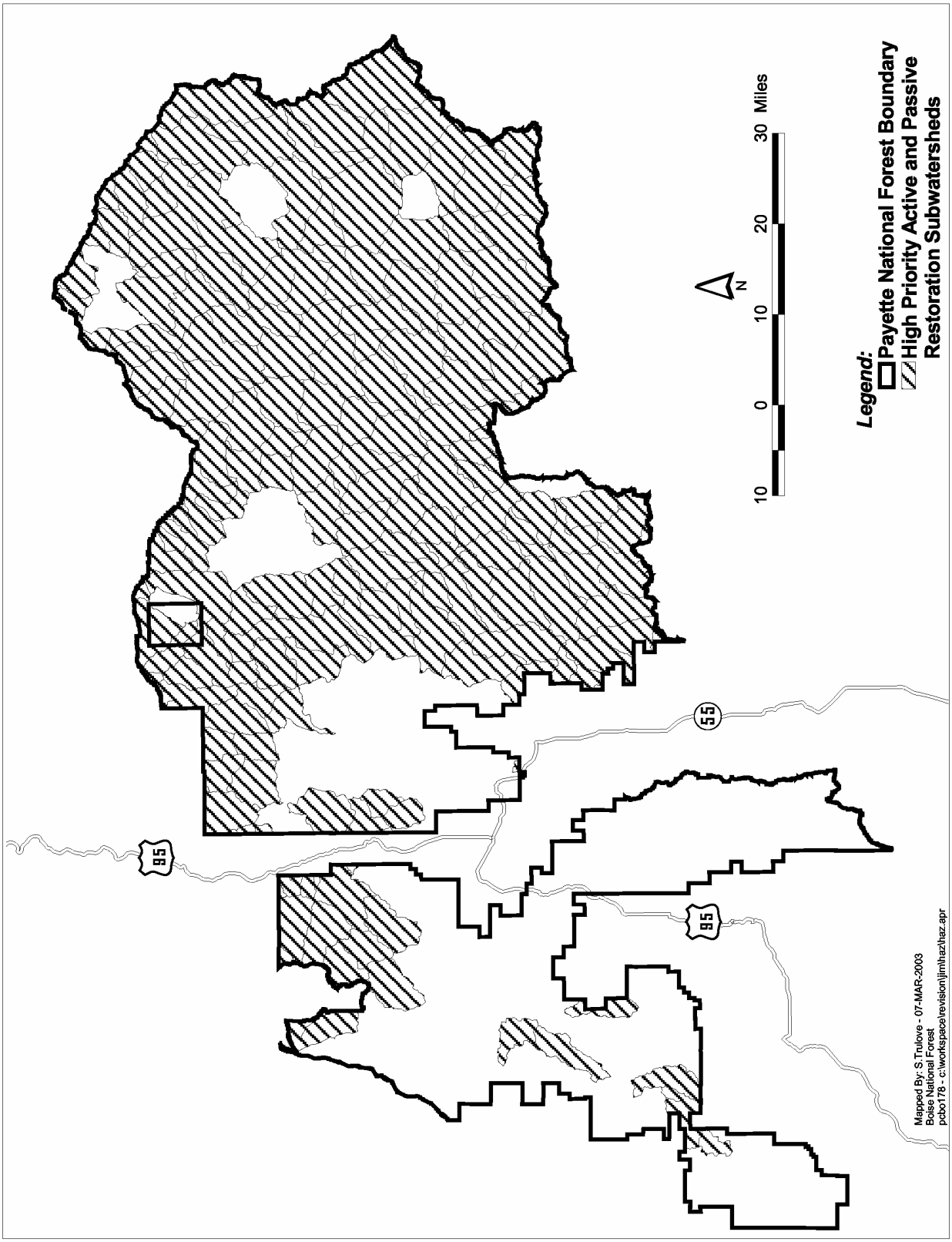
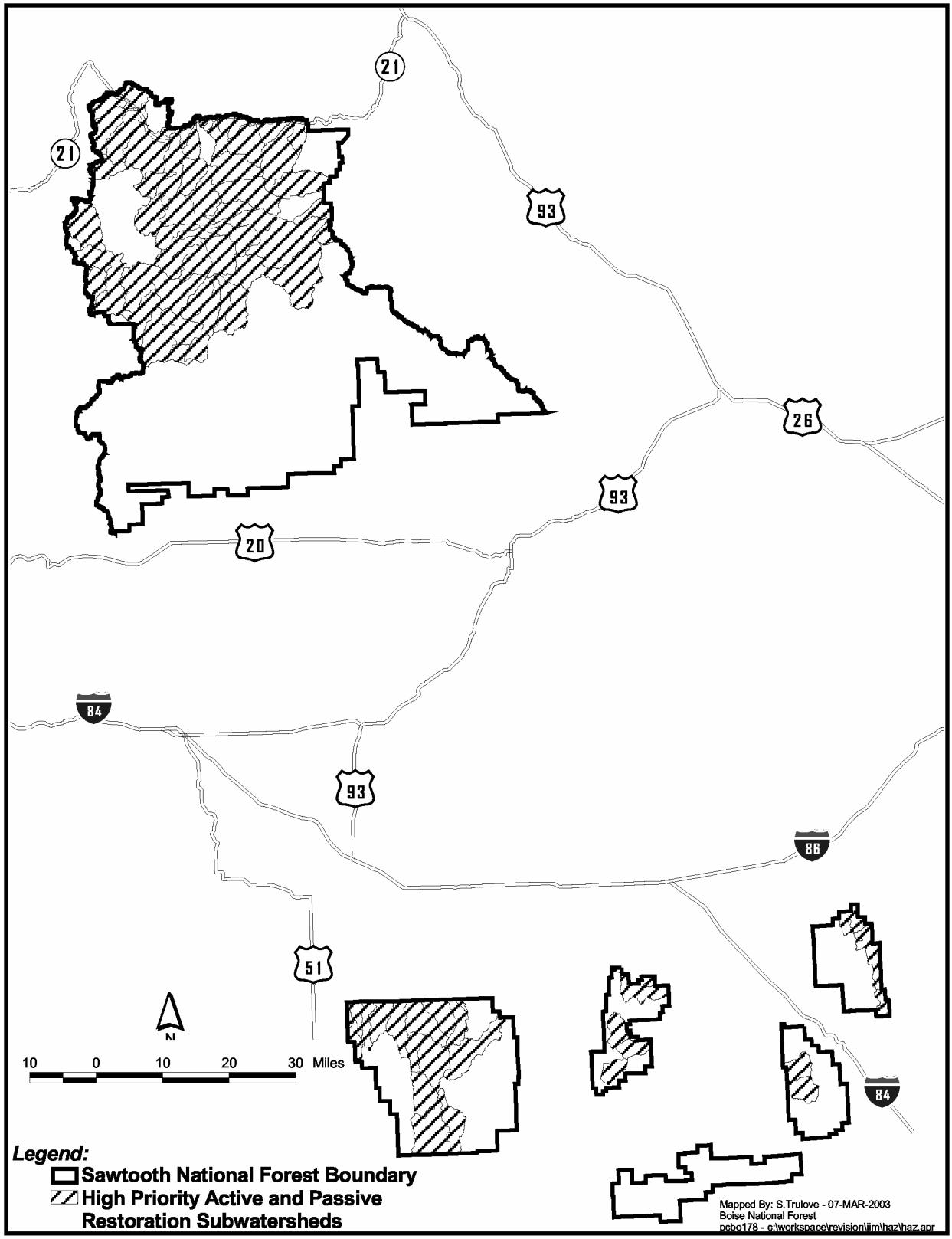


**Figure RE-6 Subwatersheds Having High Priority for Active or Passive Restoration Sawtooth National Forest**



A sense of the overall relative size of the road networks under each alternative can be gained from the estimates in Tables RE-18 and RE-19. These tables display the projected miles of classified roads in 2015 and the estimated miles of unclassified roads decommissioned by 2015 respectively. However, management direction and biological conditions that may lead to road closures and decommissioning can further refine that estimate. Anticipated levels of associated recreation road access would be difficult to accurately predict for each alternative because levels of open roads could also vary due to management emphasis. For example, although there might be more classified roads under Alternative 4, management emphasis associated with minimizing human disturbance may result in a lower level of open roads, with a higher level of classified road closure (maintenance level 1) and a higher level of unclassified road decommissioning.

**Table RE-18. Projected Miles of Classified Roads in 2015**

| National Forest | Current Miles | Estimated Road Miles by Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| Boise | 5,496 | 5,285 | 5,144 | 4,928 | 5,197 | 5,252 | 5,364 | 5,206 |
| Payette | 3,197 | 3,326 | 3,271 | 3,328 | 3,195 | 3,339 | 3,182 | 3,294 |
| Sawtooth | 2,019 | 2,024 | 2,013 | 2,008 | 2,018 | 2,030 | 2,019 | 2,016 |

**Table RE-19. Estimated Miles of Unclassified Roads Decommissioned by 2015**

| National Forest | Decommissioned Unclassified Road Miles by Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| Boise | 62 | 104 | 122 | 60 | 74 | 29 | 74 |
| Payette | 194 | 224 | 370 | 117 | 220 | 83 | 200 |
| Sawtooth | 37 | 80 | 118 | 21 | 47 | 13 | 68 |

Because the level of anticipated decommissioning exceeds the level of anticipated new road construction on the Boise, the total miles of classified roads on the Forest would decrease under all alternatives. Alternative 3 would be likely to result in the highest level of reductions of classified road access, and Alternative 6 would result in the least amount of change from the current classified road access levels. All the other alternatives would vary slightly in their classified road access reductions between those two alternatives.

On the Payette, classified road access would likely be the greatest under Alternative 5, although Alternatives 1B, 2, 3, and 7 would also be likely to expand access to varied extents. Alternatives 4 and 6 would be likely to result in relatively low levels of change in overall miles from the current system with relatively slight reductions in classified road access.

The scale of change is somewhat less for the Sawtooth than for the Boise and Payette due to its smaller road system and lower level of timber sale (i.e., new road construction) opportunities. Relatively little change to the classified road system would be expected for the Sawtooth under any alternative. The classified road system would be expected to expand slightly under

Alternatives 5 and 1B, with 5 showing the greatest increase. Conversely, it would be reduced the most under Alternative 3. Smaller reductions would be likely to occur under Alternatives 2, 4, and 7. Levels of new construction and decommissioning are expected to be about the same under Alternative 6, keeping the projected road system about the same as its current level.

Alternatives that present relatively high levels of new road construction—5, 2, and 1B—also present higher levels of potential indirect effects. Under these alternatives, the potential for new recreation access in areas that were previously less accessible could cause displacement of some users and greater levels of travel violations in areas where travel methods are restricted.

Alternative 3 would likely have the greatest effect on recreational access on unclassified roads on all three Forests. Unclassified road decommissioning is expected to be highest under that alternative. On the Boise and Payette, Alternatives 1B, 2, 4, 5, and 7 all would have moderate levels of decommissioning. On the Sawtooth, Alternatives 1B, 2, 5, and 7 all would likely result in moderate levels of decommissioning, while Alternatives 4 and 6 result in relatively low levels of decommissioning. Alternative 6 would likely result in the lowest level of unclassified road decommissioning on all three Forests and would therefore be likely to have the lowest impacts on recreational access on unclassified roads.

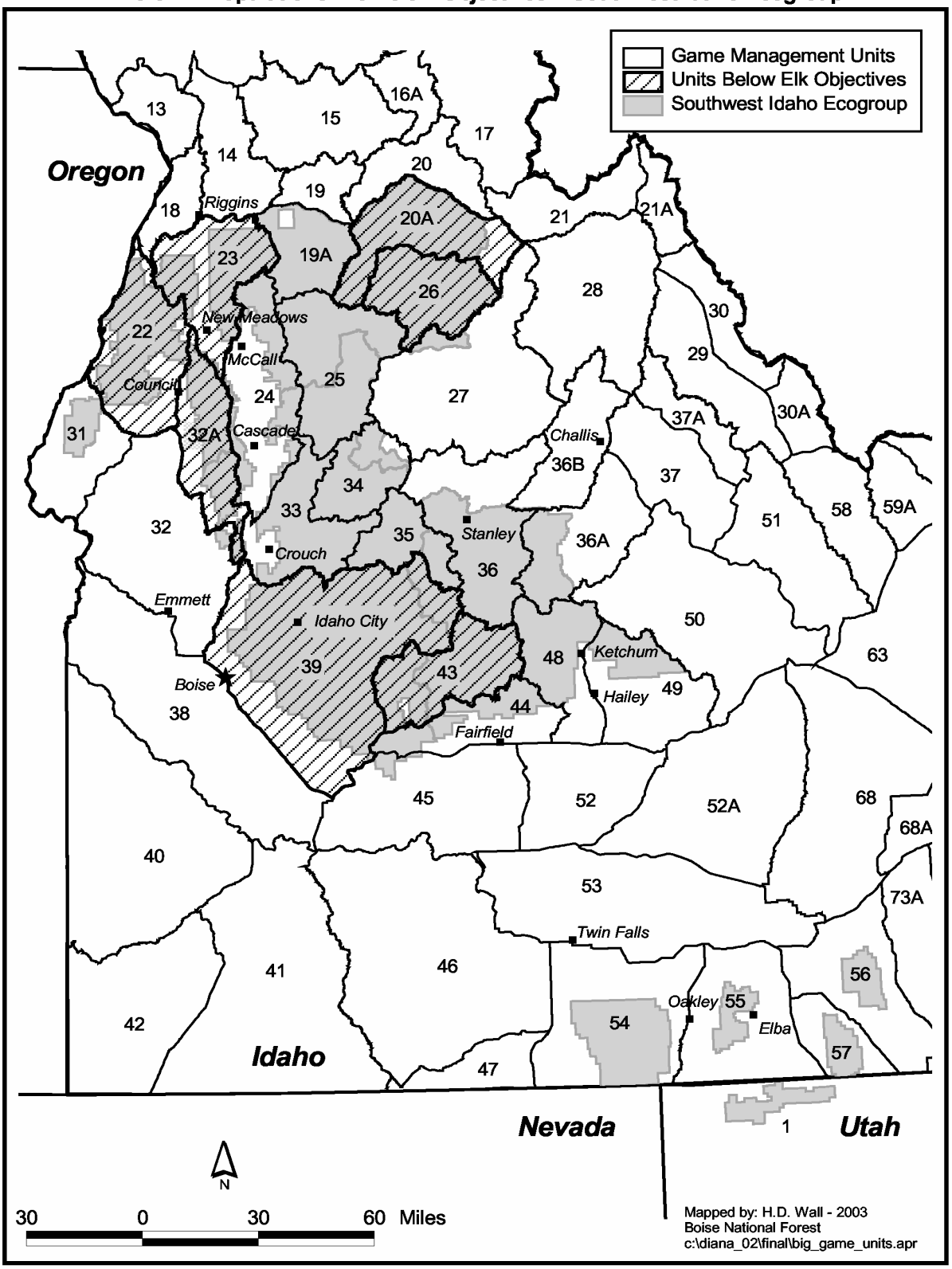
Subwatersheds that are rated as high priorities for watershed or aquatic restoration can provide a spatial sense of where road closure and decommissioning are most likely to be considered to restore aquatic conditions. These subwatersheds are displayed in Figures RE-4, RE-5, and RE-6. In other cases, road closures and decommissioning may be focused in areas that are assigned to MPC 3.2 that are also State hunting units where elk populations are below the desired objective level. A spatial sense of where road closure and decommissioning are most likely to be considered to protect elk populations may best be represented spatially by State hunting units where elk populations are below the desired objective level. These hunting units are displayed in Figure RE-7.

**Motorized/Non-Motorized Recreation Conflicts**

Motorized and non-motorized use determinations are made at two separate levels in Forest planning. Forest Plan management direction establishes the basis for analysis and decisions made at the site-specific level. For example, if motorized use were to be prohibited within all recommended wilderness areas, this would be done at the Forest Plan level. Decisions regarding specific trails, roads, and areas across each Forest are tiered to Forest Plan direction, but are typically made in site-specific planning processes that are conducted separately from Forest Plan revisions. Ultimately, motorized/non-motorized conflicts must be addressed at the site-specific level through review and revision of the Travel Map in a separate planning process. The revision planning process does not change the current Forest Travel Maps in and of itself. For example, if prohibiting motorized use within recommended wilderness becomes a feature in the selected Forest Plan alternative, subsequent travel management planning processes will need to analyze that action on a site-specific basis. The decisions from the travel planning processes will either implement the Forest Plan direction or amend it. As such, it is highly unlikely that most motorized/non-motorized use conflicts can be resolved in this Forest Plan revision process.

**Figure RE-7.**

**State Hunting Units**
**Where Elk Populations Are Below Objectives - Southwest Idaho Ecogroup**



The current travel regulations serve as the base for public access under Alternatives 1B, 2, 3, 5, and 7. In order to address an issue of non-conforming uses in recommended wilderness areas, mechanical transport uses within recommended wilderness would be prohibited under Alternatives 4 and 6. This would mean that both motorized and mechanized forms of recreational access would be categorically prohibited in large areas of each of the Forests under these two alternatives. As a result, the proportion of each National Forest's lands and trails that are closed to both on- and off-trail motorized use varies by alternative. Comparing these figures for each alternative provides a sense of the relative proportions that would exist between the levels of motorized and non-motorized opportunities under each alternative. These figures are displayed in Table RE-20. This analysis only reflects the effects of programmatic decisions made in the Forest Plan revision process. It does not preclude or reflect potential site-specific travel management decisions that may be made in subsequent travel planning processes.

**Table RE-20. Percent of Ecogroup Forest Areas and Trails Closed to Motorized Uses***

| Type of Closure | Alternatives | Boise NF[1] | Payette NF [1] | Sawtooth NF [1] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Percent of Forest Closed to **Summer** Cross-Country Motorized Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 76 | 78 | 63 |
| | 4 | 81 | 82 | 70 |
| | 6 | 76 | 78 | 63 |
| Percent of Forest Closed to **Winter** Cross-Country Motorized Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 16 | 53 | 28 |
| | 4 | 47 | 77 | 60 |
| | 6 | 24 | 57 | 38 |
| Percent of **Summer** Trail Miles Closed to **Motorized** Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 20 | 65 | 45 |
| | 4 | 52 | 92 | 69 |
| | 6 | 25 | 70 | 49 |
| Percent of **Winter** Groomed Trail Miles Closed to **Motorized** Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 4 | 0 | 26 |
| | 4 | 4 | 0 | 23 |
| | 6 | 4 | 0 | 26 |

* Includes any form of motorized use during all or any part of the year.

Values for Alternatives 1B, 2, 3, 5, and 7 in Table RE-20 all reflect the current travel regulations since none of those alternatives would contain programmatic management direction that would lead to changing travel regulations. The values for Alternatives 4 and 6 reflect the prohibition on all forms of mechanical transport, including motorized uses, within recommended wilderness areas. As a result, opportunities for both summer and winter motorized uses are decreased to varied extents under Alternatives 4 and 6.

Motorized cross-country travel opportunities are substantially lower in the summer than the winter. This is largely due to the fact that over-snow motorized use has a much lower level of ground disturbance than summer motorized vehicle use. As a result, winter motorized travel is generally less restricted.

During summer periods, cross-country motorized travel opportunities would be reduced by about 4 percent on the Boise and Payette and by about 7 percent on the Sawtooth under Alternative 4. Non-motorized opportunities would increase correspondingly by those same levels under Alternative 4. There would be little change in summer cross-country motorized travel opportunities under Alternative 6 because most of the area within recommended wilderness in Alternative 6 is also closed to cross-country motorized travel under the current travel regulations.

During winter periods, cross-country motorized travel opportunities would shrink under Alternative 4 by 24 to 32 percent of each Forest. These reductions reflect the fact that substantial portions of the recommended wilderness in Alternative 4 are currently open to snowmobile use. The areas offering non-motorized winter experiences would grow correspondingly under Alternative 4. Winter cross-country motorized travel opportunities would also be reduced under Alternative 6, although to a much lesser extent than Alternative 4. Under Alternative 6, winter cross-country motorized opportunity reductions would range from 4 to 10 percent of each Forest, with reductions being the greatest on the Sawtooth and the least on the Payette.

The same pattern prevails among the Alternatives for summer trail opportunities. Motorized opportunities would be reduced in levels ranging from 24 to 33 percent under Alternative 4 and from 4 to 6 percent under Alternative 6. Conversely, non-motorized opportunities would increase correspondingly under Alternatives 4 and 6.

Although the proportion of winter groomed trails that are open to motorized use seems substantially higher than non-motorized use, it must be considered that there are many more miles of groomed snowmobile trail than groomed cross-country ski trails and that the snowmobile trails are also open to skiing. It should also be considered that groomed cross-country ski trails could potentially be affected by further restrictions on motorized uses since motorized equipment is used to groom cross-country ski trails.

There would be relatively little effect on groomed snowmobile and cross-country ski trails under any of the alternatives. This is largely due to the fact that there are only a few cases where these winter trails are located within recommended wilderness and they all occur on the Sawtooth. .

In reality, there would likely be little or no effect on the cross-country ski trails that are within recommended wilderness under Alternative 4. Trails are located barely inside of recommended wilderness boundaries, running along their peripheries. Minor adjustments to recommended wilderness boundaries could be made to exclude the trails or the trails could be relocated where possible. There would likely be no loss of groomed cross-country ski trails under any alternative.

The effects on opportunities for all forms of recreational mechanized transport use under each alternative are examined in greater detail in the *Inventoried Roadless Areas* section of this chapter.

## Cumulative Effects

**Indicator 1 - Recreation Settings**

Anticipated changes in the levels of summer and winter ROS classes were aggregated for the entire Ecogroup to provide a larger context for the potential changes to recreation settings and experiences from mechanical vegetation treatments, road construction, and changes in motorized travel regulations under each alternative. Ecogroup-scale values are displayed in Table RE-21.

Changes to recreation settings over the Ecogroup area would vary in type and degree by alternative. In the case of summer recreation settings, Alternatives 4 and 6 represent shifts from the Semi-Primitive Motorized settings to the Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings, with the overall shift being about nine times larger under Alternative 4. Both of these alternatives would increase opportunities for primitive and semi-primitive recreation experiences in non-motorized settings. In so doing, they would likely contribute to the shortage of semi-primitive motorized experiences that was identified in the SCORTP. Alternative 4 would contribute to the identified shortage substantially more than Alternative 6.

Alternatives 1B, 2, 3, 5, and 7 would all be likely to reduce summer Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings by a range of 39,000 to 47,000 acres. Increases would likely occur predominantly in Roaded Modified settings under Alternatives 1B, 3, and 5. Under Alternatives 2 and 7, the increases would be split almost evenly between Semi-Primitive Motorized and Roaded Modified settings. Semi-Primitive Motorized settings would likely increase under Alternatives 2, 5, and 7, with the greatest increases coming with Alternative 7, making it the alternative that most responds to the SCORTP for summer recreation settings.

**Table RE-21. Estimated Acres of Summer and Winter ROS Class Change by Alternative for the Ecogroup by 2018[1]**

| ROS Class[2] | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Summer ROS Acres** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 191,000 | 0 | 41,000 | 0 |
| **SPNM** | -34,000 | -33,000 | -47,000 | 768,000 | -46,000 | 57,000 | -29,000 |
| **SPM** | -4,000 | 14,000 | -13,000 | -959,000 | 5,000 | -98,000 | 16,000 |
| **RN** | 2,000 | 0 | 2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | 32,000 | 19,000 | 53,000 | 0 | 41,000 | 0 | 14,000 |
| **R** | 4,000 | 0 | 4,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Winter ROS Acres** | | | | | | | |
| **P** | -68,000 | -8,000 | -68,000 | 173,000 | -8,000 | 48,000 | -8,000 |
| **SPNM** | 73,000 | 6,000 | 67,000 | 1,465,000 | 0 | 494,000 | 8,000 |
| **SPM** | -12,000 | -9,000 | -45,000 | -1,639,000 | -40,000 | -541,000 | 0 |
| **RN** | -2,000 | 0 | -2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **RM** | 7,000 | 10,000 | 46,000 | 0 | 47,000 | 0 | 0 |
| **R** | 2,000 | 0 | 2,000 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

[1]Acreages are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Totals may differ slightly due to rounding.
[2]ROS Class Abbreviations: P = Primitive; SPNM = Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized; SPM = Semi-Primitive Motorized; RN = Roaded Natural; RM = Roaded Modified; R = Rural.

The pattern for expected setting shifts for summer recreation under Alternatives 4 and 6 is repeated in winter recreation settings. Both of these alternatives present shifts from the Semi-Primitive Motorized settings to the Primitive and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings, with the overall shift being about three times larger under Alternative 4. Both of these alternatives would contribute to the shortage of semi-primitive motorized experiences that was identified in the SCORTP.

Alternatives 1B, 3, and 5 would all present relatively moderate levels of change to winter recreation settings but in somewhat different ways. Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized, Roaded Modified, and Rural settings would likely increase, under Alternatives 1B and 3, while Primitive, Semi-Primitive Motorized, and Roaded Natural settings decrease. Under Alternative 5, roaded Modified settings would likely increase while Primitive and Semi-Primitive Motorized settings decrease. With their reductions in Semi-Primitive Motorized settings, these alternatives would all likely contribute to the identified shortage of semi-primitive motorized experiences that were identified in the SCORTP. However, this effect would be substantially less than the extent under Alternatives 4 and 6.

Alternatives 2, and 7 are similar in that the levels of change to winter recreation settings under these alternatives is likely to be relatively small with the net changes ranging only from 8,000 to 17,000 acres. Alternative 2 would likely present shifts from Primitive and Semi-Primitive Motorized settings to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized and Roaded Modified settings. Alternative 7 presents a relatively small shift from Primitive to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized settings. In that Alternative 7 is the only alternative that does not decrease Semi-Primitive Motorized settings, it represents the alternative that most responds to the SCORTP for winter recreation settings.

**Indicator 2 - Uncharacteristic Wildfire Hazard and Fuel Reduction Activities**

Anticipated levels of areas having high or extreme ratings for uncharacteristic wildfire hazard or resistance to control assigned with MPCs 5.1 or 6.1 were aggregated for the entire Ecogroup. These values, shown in Table RE-22, provide a larger context for the potential changes to recreation settings from vegetation restoration and fuel reduction treatments by alternative.

**Table RE-22. Approximate Ecogroup Acres Having High or Extreme Ratings for Uncharacteristic Wildfire Hazard or Resistance to Control Assigned with MPCs 5.1 or 6.1***

| Area | Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1B | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Ecogroup | 694,000 | 1,339,000 | 1,811,000 | 570,000 | 958,000 | 534,000 | 925,000 |

* Acreages have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres.

For the Ecogroup as a whole, Alternative 3 would likely result in the highest potential levels of recreation use disturbance and displacement due to vegetation restoration and fuels reduction activities. This is what would be expected with this alternative's aggressive restoration emphasis. Alternative 2 also presents a relatively high level of potential displacement, although its effects would likely be somewhat less than Alternative 3. Alternatives 7 and 5 present the

next highest potential effects, with both having relatively similar levels of potential impacts. Alternative 1B also presents a relatively moderate level of potential disturbance, but somewhat less than that of Alternatives 7 and 5. Alternatives 6 and 4 result in roughly similar levels of potential restoration activities and also comprise the lowest levels of potential disturbance to recreation uses, with Alternative 6 being the lowest overall.

**Indicator 3 - Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed Restoration Activity Effects on Developed Recreation**

Anticipated levels of developed recreation sites within subwatersheds having high priority for active restoration and assigned to MPC 3.2 were aggregated for the entire Ecogroup. These values provide a larger context for the relative potential effects from for aquatic, riparian, and watershed restoration activities on developed recreation facilities under each alternative. These values are displayed in Table RE-23.

Across the Ecogroup, Alternative 3 presents the greatest potential for impacts from active aquatic restoration efforts on developed recreation sites. This is what would be expected with this alternative's aggressive restoration emphasis. However, even despite its high level of potential impact, Alternative 3 represents potential effects to only about 15 percent of the total developed recreation sites within the Ecogroup. Alternatives 2, 7, and 6 also present potentials for similar, relatively high levels of impacts to developed sites. Potential impacts would likely be low under Alternative 4 and virtually none under Alternative 5. The Alternative 1B results indicate a level of no impacts, however, this may be somewhat misleading. Some level of impacts could result from site-specific analysis under any alternative. The results under Alternative 1B can be attributed to the fact that there is no management prescription similar to MPC 3.2 in the current Forest Plans. Alternative 5 presents a similar situation with its relatively low level of MPC 3.2.

**Table RE-23. Ecogroup Developed Recreation Sites within Subwatersheds Having High Priority for Active Restoration and Assigned to MPC 3.2**

| Area | Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1B | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Ecogroup | 0 | 95 | 113 | 31 | 4 | 84 | 94 |

**Indicator 4 - Aquatic, Riparian, and Watershed Restoration Activity Effects on Dispersed Recreation**

Anticipated levels of high priority restoration subwatersheds assigned to MPCs 3.1 or 3.2 were aggregated for the entire Ecogroup to provide a larger context for the relative potential effects from for aquatic, riparian, and watershed restoration activities on dispersed recreation activities under each alternative. These values are displayed in Table RE-24.

**Table RE-24. Total Acres of High Priority Restoration Subwatersheds Assigned To MPCs 3.1 or 3.2***

| Area | Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1B | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Ecogroup | 0 | 669,000 | 1,078,000 | 561,000 | 54,000 | 228,000 | 1,087,000 |

* Acreages have been rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres.

Across the Ecogroup, Alternative 7 would probably present the greatest potential for restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses. Alternative 3 would have relatively similar results but would be slightly lower than Alternative 7. Alternatives 2, and 4 would likely result in moderate levels. Alternative 6 would have relatively smaller potential for restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses.

Again, the results of this analysis could be somewhat misleading in the case of Alternative 1B. This alternative results in no acres within high priority restoration sub watersheds assigned to MPCs 3.1 or 3.2. This does not mean that recreation activities would never be restricted or altered under this alternative; this situation might result from a number of circumstances during site-specific project analyses to address local recreational impacts. The results under Alternative 1B simply reflect the fact that there are no MPC 3.1 or 3.2 assignments under that alternative. However, this analysis is still valid in that the potential level of restrictions or changes to dispersed recreation uses is likely to be the lowest under Alternative 1B.

**Indicators 5 and 6 - Potential Changes in Recreational Access**

Anticipated levels of both projected miles of classified roads and miles of unclassified roads decommissioned by 2015 were aggregated for the entire Ecogroup. These values provide a larger context for the relative potential for effects to recreational access under each alternative. These Ecogroup-scale values are displayed in Tables RE-25 and RE-26.

**Table RE-25. Projected Miles of Classified Roads in 2015**

| Area | Current Miles | Estimated Road Miles by Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| Ecogroup | 10,712 | 10,635 | 10,428 | 10,264 | 10,410 | 10,621 | 10,565 | 10,516 |

**Table RE-26. Estimated Miles of Unclassified Roads Decommissioned by 2015**

| Area | Decommissioned Unclassified Road Miles by Alternative | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Alt. 1B | Alt. 2 | Alt. 3 | Alt. 4 | Alt. 5 | Alt. 6 | Alt. 7 |
| Ecogroup | 293 | 408 | 610 | 198 | 341 | 125 | 342 |

From an Ecogroup perspective, the lowest level of a classified road system would be expected under Alternative 3. This is consistent with the aggressive restoration emphasis associated with Alternative 3. Alternatives 4 and 2 would be the next lowest alternatives with relatively similar total access levels. Alternatives 6 and 7 present moderate levels of potential recreation access by classified roads. Alternatives 1B and 5 would likely provide the highest levels of classified roads, with Alternative 1B providing the most of all alternatives. Results under Alternative 5 would be similar in scale but slightly lower.

Recreational access opportunities by unclassified roads are also expected to be the lowest under Alternative 3 because it presents the highest level of unclassified road decommissioning. Alternatives 2, 7, 5, 1B, and 4 all present more moderate levels of potential reductions in access. Alternative 6 is likely to provide the lowest level of reductions in recreational access opportunities by unclassified roads. Alternative 6 would be likely to result in the lowest level of unclassified road decommissioning across the Ecogroup, and would therefore be likely to have the lowest impacts on recreational access on unclassified roads.

**Motorized/Non-Motorized Recreation Conflicts**

Anticipated levels of both cross-country and trail experiences were aggregated for the entire Ecogroup to provide a larger context for the relative proportion of motorized and non-motorized opportunities under each alternative. These Ecogroup-scale values are displayed in Table RE-27.

**Table RE-27. Percent of National Forest System Land and Trails Within the Ecogroup Closed to Motorized Uses***

| Type of Closure | Alternatives | Ecogroup Totals[1] |
|---|---|---|
| Percent of Ecogroup Closed to **Summer** Cross-Country Motorized Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 72% |
| | 4 | 78% |
| | 6 | 73% |
| Percent of Ecogroup Closed to **Winter** Cross-Country Motorized Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 33% |
| | 4 | 61% |
| | 6 | 40% |
| Percent of **Summer** Trail Miles Closed to **Motorized** Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 47% |
| | 4 | 74% |
| | 6 | 51% |
| Percent of **Winter** Groomed Trail Miles Closed to **Motorized** Uses | 1B, 2, 3, 5, & 7 | 8% |
| | 4 | 8% |
| | 6 | 8% |

* Includes any form of motorized use during all or any part of the year.

At the Ecogroup scale, there would be relatively little differences between the Alternatives regarding summer cross-country motorized opportunities, with open areas ranging from 22 to 28 percent of the Forests. Alternatives 4 and 6 represent reductions of only 6 and 1 percent of Forest areas respectively. Nonetheless, Alternatives 1B, 2, 3, 5, and 7 present current levels of summer cross-country motorized opportunities, while Alternatives 4 and 6 present slightly higher levels of non-motorized opportunities.

During winter periods, the reductions in cross-country motorized opportunities are somewhat greater than summer, especially under Alternative 4. Alternatives 4 and 6 represent reductions of 28 and 7 percent of Forest areas, respectively, in cross-country motorized opportunities.

Alternative 4 is likely to present the highest level in reductions to cross-country motorized travel opportunities during both summer and winter travel periods. As such, Alternative 4 would also present the highest levels of cross-country non-motorized travel opportunities.

Summer motorized trail opportunities shrink slightly under Alternative 6 and to a greater extent under Alternative 4. Reductions would be 27 and 4 percent of Forest areas under Alternatives 4 and 6 respectively. Alternative 4 is likely to present the highest level in reductions to summer motorized trail opportunities. Alternative 4 would present the highest levels of summer non-motorized trail opportunities.

Winter groomed trail opportunities would not vary substantially under any of the alternatives and would be likely to remain much as they exist under current travel regulations.

**Other Cumulative Effects on Recreation Opportunities and Experiences**

Other suppliers of non-urban recreation experiences include lands and developed facilities provided by other National Forests, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, county government agencies, and adjacent lands of private ownership. The BLM is another major provider of non-urban recreation opportunities. BLM lands in southwest Idaho provide high quality, largely dispersed recreation opportunities associated with rivers, reservoirs, mountain bike and ATV trails, and desert canyons. Recreation managers in the BLM are currently addressing many of the same challenges as the Ecogroup, including facility maintenance backlogs, increasing recreation use, and recreation impacts to threatened and endangered species and their habitat.

State and local planners and members of the private sector recognize the importance of recreational opportunities to both the tourist industry and to the local economy. In southwest Idaho, the wood and wood products industry is entering a period of decline, with sawmill closures in Boise, Council, and Horseshoe Bend in recent years. Some local communities are turning more toward recreation tourism and are beginning to promote year-round tourism as a means of diversifying their economic base. As a result, some communities may become increasingly dependent on the recreation resources of the Ecogroup Forests to attract visitors.

Regardless of the alternative selected in this process, recreation use of the Ecogroup Forests, as well as other recreation opportunity providers in southwest Idaho, is likely to increase in the years to come. Projections for the Rocky Mountain RPA region, which contains the Ecogroup Forests, predict well above national average participation rates for camping, fishing, hunting, outdoor adventure sports, and snow and ice sports (Bowker et al. 1999). At the same time, at a national scale, access to recreation opportunities on private lands is decreasing (Bowker et al. 1999) creating greater demand on public lands to supply recreation opportunities, especially in areas in close proximity to urban areas. Both undeveloped areas and developed sites will be pushed closer toward their capacity limits. Conflict levels and resource impacts from recreation use are likely to continue to rise. Use restrictions resulting from attempts to resolve conflicts and efforts to mitigate resource impacts are also likely to increase. These effects are also likely to occur on the non-National Forest recreation providers to some extent as well.

As tourism grows and the country's population ages, there is also likely to be added demand to increase recreation on the developed side of the ROS. Demand could increase sharply for:

- Interpretive sites,
- Campgrounds of a higher development scale,
- Additional boat ramps,
- Expanded downhill and cross-country skiing facilities and trails, and
- More trails and trailhead facilities.

If more developed facilities are provided, the resultant change to the natural landscape would increase road-associated opportunities and decrease opportunities for those recreationists seeking a more primitive setting and experiences.