Cultural Resources

INTRODUCTION

Cultural resources, managed under the Heritage Program, represent the physical remains of past human use and activities on the National Forests. Cultural resources include artifacts and sites such as projectile points, rock shelters, stone circles, wagon trails, homesteads, mining sites, Civilian Conservation Corps camps, and Forest Service administrative sites. Cultural resources are non-renewable. Once sites are disturbed or artifacts are removed, information about our heritage is forever lost. Disturbing sites or collecting and removing artifacts from federal lands without a permit is prohibited.

The Forest Service seeks to ensure present and future generations a genuine opportunity to appreciate and experience our nation's rich and diverse heritage. Heritage stewardship and natural resource management must exist in productive harmony to fulfill social, economic, and spiritual needs of the American people.

Issues and Indicators

Issue Statement – Forest Plan management strategies may affect cultural resources.

Background to Issue – No significant issues related directly to cultural resources were identified during public comment periods or the Need For Change analysis process. However, Forest management activities have the potential to directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affect cultural resources. Management activities can influence site disturbance or discovery, improve or restrict access to sites, or provide opportunities and funding for conducting surveys and recording sites. These activities are related to many of the Need For Change topics, and could be implemented under any of the alternatives. Also, compliance with federal laws governing cultural resources is an important management concern. Therefore, potential effects on the cultural resources are analyzed in this section.

Given the numerous laws, regulations, and policies that govern the use and administration of cultural resources on National Forest System lands that would apply under any alternative, significant differences in effects to cultural resources by alternative are not expected. However, some level of risk of effects to cultural resources associated with management activities is present under every alternative. This level of risk varies in proportion to the level of management activities anticipated under each alternative.

Issue Indicator - The following indicator will be used to measure the potential risk to cultural resources from management activities. The indicator is intended to show relative differences between alternatives, rather than to represent the actual acres of treatments that are expected to occur.

- *Acres of vegetation treatments in the first two decades*. This indicator reflects the relative levels of anticipated management activities that pose the predominant risks to cultural resources under each alternative. The first two decades are used to cover the entire potential duration of the revised Forest Plan.

Affected Area

The affected areas for direct and indirect effects to cultural resources are the lands administered by the three National Forests in the Ecogroup. This area represents National Forest System lands where cultural resources could exist, and 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, and lands of other ownership both within and adjacent to these National Forest boundaries. Cumulative effects to resources on other land ownerships are addressed to lend a broader perspective to the importance of resources on the Forests.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Human occupation of the Ecogroup area has been continuous for at least the last 11,000 years, and probably longer. Remains of past human life ways are found throughout the Forests. Table C-1 provides the status of lands inventoried for cultural resources.

Table C-1. Heritage Program Status, as of June 2001

Program Activity or Objective	Boise NF	Payette NF	Sawtooth NF
Acres Surveyed	204,000	234,000	153,400
Percent of Forest Surveyed	9%	10%	7%
Number of Sites Recorded	2,200	1,605	1,600-1,700
Number of NRHP Listings	1	15	5
Number of Eligible NRHP Listings	342	585	510
Number of Unevaluated Sites	340	470	500
Number of Potential Undiscovered Sites	8,000	1,500	10,000
Estimated Number of Potential NRHP Eligible Undiscovered Sites	340	600	3,500

In addition to the properties listed in Table C-1, ten sites across the Ecogroup area have been interpreted for public appreciation and awareness. Numerous brochures and reports are available for the public regarding cultural resources and their management of the Forests, and several research projects have been recently conducted on the Forests under the supervision of Forest Archaeologists. "Passport in Time" and "Windows on the Past" projects are conducted on the three Forests and are increasing in popularity with the public.

In the *Preliminary AMS for the Southwest Idaho Ecogroup Forest Plan Revision* (USDA Forest Service 1997), the Heritage Program is one of a number of program areas needing strengthened management direction in the Forest Plans. Specifically, Heritage Program goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines needed to be revised to meet the intent of legislation and executive orders implemented since the original Plans were approved. The revised Plans also needed to acknowledge the agency's 1992 change from a "Cultural Resources Program" focused primarily on compliance, to a "Heritage Program" that emphasizes a balance between protection of historic properties and public outreach for the enjoyment of American history. The strengthening of management direction and acknowledgement has occurred for the action alternatives (2-7).

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Effects Common to All Alternatives

Resource Protection Methods

Resource protection is integrated into cultural resource management at all levels, from national to site-specific. The cumulative positive effect of the revised Forest Plan management direction coupled with direction comprised by the laws and regulations described below is beneficial protection and mitigation for cultural resources potentially affected by management activities.

Laws, Regulations, and Policies – Numerous laws, regulations, and policies govern the use and administration of cultural resources on National Forest System lands. Some of the more commonly used regulations are described in Appendix H to the Forest Plans. National laws and regulations are also interpreted in Forest Service Manuals, Handbooks, and Regional Guides. Management activities occurring on Forest administered lands comply with these laws, regulations, and policies intended to provide general guidance for the implementation of the Heritage Program and for protection of cultural resources.

Forest Plan Direction – Although Forest Plan management direction for cultural resources would vary somewhat in Alternative 1B, maintenance or improvement of cultural resource conditions on National Forest administered lands is emphasized under all alternatives. This management direction occurs at both Forest-wide and Management Area levels. Cultural resource goals and objectives are designed to achieve desired conditions and implement the Heritage Program over the long term. Standards and guidelines are designed to protect cultural resources.

Forest Plan Implementation - A variety of methods are available to eliminate, minimize, or reduce direct effects on cultural resources at the project level. Archaeological excavation or structural inventory and recording can provide for recovery of heritage data. Activities and projects can be modified to avoid cultural resources. Scheduling projects when the ground is frozen can reduce or eliminate soil compaction and disturbance to avoid damage to resources.

Relocating certain features or structures, increasing monitoring and law enforcement, providing interpretation activities and securing restrictive covenants in land transfer deeds and acquisitions are other protective measures. Developments in archaeological modeling have also improved the Forest Service's ability to identify areas of high risk to cultural resources.

Methods to eliminate, minimize, or reduce indirect effects include initiating public education programs, posting cultural resources with informational signs, monitoring sites, rerouting trails, stabilizing eroding sites, constructing barriers, hiding sites, and properly designing adjacent projects to minimize visual, auditory or atmospheric intrusions, as well as undertaking all the mitigation methods listed above for direct effects.

Methods that can be employed to eliminate or reduce cumulative effects are site recording, data recovery, site interpretation, incorporation of state-of-the-art research techniques, and stabilization or restoration.

General Effects

Because cultural resource management is explicitly defined by law, regulation, and policy, management practices and their effects would not differ substantially between the revision alternatives. In all alternatives, the Heritage Program would provide support to all of the resource projects, as required under Section 106 of the NHPA. The program would include inventory, analysis, protection, stabilization, and public interpretation of cultural resources under all alternatives. The levels of these individual activities and projects would vary to some degree by alternative, but the general neutralizing or positive effects of mitigation, protection, and education would remain the same.

In all alternatives, the potential exists for undiscovered sites, especially those that are buried, to be exposed and/or damaged by surface disturbance or other events. Natural erosion and depositional processes degrade cultural resources. Inadvertent damage during project implementation also occurs. These sites may or may not be noticed in time to allow mitigation. This risk of unavoidable damage is common to all alternatives.

Direct effects also could occur to cultural resources as a result of non-sanctioned activities, such as vandalism or illegal excavation. Efforts to control and monitor these activities are similar in all alternatives, and would result in an extremely low level of cumulative adverse effects to cultural resources.

All alternatives would have some irreversible commitments of cultural resources. Examples are inadvertently damaged or destroyed sites, vandalized or looted sites, and sites that not been inventoried and recorded and are undergoing loss from natural processes. Every alternative seeks to reduce those potential losses through inventory and evaluation, monitoring, and improved project implementation to ensure that these losses are kept to a minimum.

Data collection through excavation, the most common mitigation for unavoidable impacts, also results in some loss of resources. Use of cultural sites and resources for public interpretation, education and service may also result in some level of damage or loss of resources. However, beneficial indirect effects, that counterbalance the negative effects, are usually achieved through public education and increased sensitivity for cultural resources.

Direct and Indirect Effects

Direct effects on cultural resources can result from both natural events and from human activities that damage the resources or alter their settings. Ground disturbance occurs in a wide range of management activities including timber harvest, road and trail construction, reconstruction, relocation, maintenance, and decommissioning, prescribed burning and wildfire control, mineral and energy exploration, development and reclamation, facility construction, utility development, recreational vehicle use, and range, watershed and wildlife improvement construction. Other potentially damaging effects include soil compaction, erosion, flooding, soil slumping, heating and freezing, wildfire, prescribed burning, livestock trampling, recreational vehicle use, setting alterations (including introduction of atmospheric, visual, or audible intrusions), and loss of undiscovered cultural resources if land is transferred from federal to nonfederal ownership.

Vegetation treatments represent a substantial portion of the risk of effects to cultural resources associated with management activities that would occur under every alternative. These treatments include a combination of management-ignited fire and wildland fire use, as well as all scheduled mechanical vegetation treatments such as thinnings, selection harvests, shelterwood harvests, and clearcuts. The level of risk varies in proportion to the combined levels of these management activities anticipated under each alternative. The acres of vegetation treatments in the first two decades are used to assess the relative levels of anticipated management activities under each alternative and are displayed in Table C-2. The first two decades are used to cover the entire potential duration of the revised Forest Plan. These indicators are intended to show relative differences between the alternatives, rather than to represent the actual acres of treatments that are expected to occur.

Table C-2. Acres of Vegetation Treatments in the First Two Decades*

National Forest	Acres						
	Alt 1B	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Alt 6	Alt 7
Boise	345,000	444,000	436,000	406,000	227,000	413,000	401,000
Payette	269,000	276,000	281,000	288,000	207,000	299,000	272,000
Sawtooth	36,000	145,000	127,000	83,000	48,000	100,000	158,000
Ecogroup Totals	**650,000**	**865,000**	**844,000**	**777,000**	**482,000**	**812,000**	**831,000**

* Acreages are rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Alternative 2 probably presents the highest risk to cultural resources on the Boise, since it represents the highest total level of vegetation treatment over the next two decades. However, treatment levels under Alternatives 2, 6, 4, and 7 are also relatively high. Alternative 1B presents a relatively moderate level of risk, while Alternative 5 probably presents the lowest level of risk.

On the Payette, the differences between the alternatives are relatively smaller than they are on the Boise. Alternative 6 likely presents the highest level of risk and Alternative 5 presents the lowest level. All of the other alternatives present risks almost as high as Alternative 6.

Treatment levels are substantially lower on the Sawtooth than either the Boise or Payette. Alternative 7 likely presents the highest level of risk and Alternative 1B presents the lowest level. Alternative 2 presents almost as high a level of risk as Alternative 7. Alternatives 3, 6, and 4 present relatively moderate levels while risks under Alternative 5 would likely be only slightly higher than Alternative 1B.

Conversely, there is also a direct relationship between the number of acres proposed for vegetation treatments and the number of acres surveyed for cultural resource sites, as well as the number of cultural resource sites located and evaluated. Cultural resource surveys are usually financed through project-level funding. As a result, the greater level of treatment projects, the greater the level of survey, location, and evaluation. On an Ecogroup-wide basis, it is likely that Alternatives 2, 3, 7, 6, and 4, respectively, would result in somewhat higher levels of inventory, analysis, and stabilization than Alternatives 1B and 5 due to their higher levels of proposed vegetation treatments. Cultural sites would be avoided or mitigation of effects would occur. Conversely, it could also be assumed that Alternatives 2, 3, 7, 6, and 4, respectively, would pose the highest threats to cultural resources on an Ecogroup-wide basis due to their high vegetation treatment levels. Under all of the alternatives, any known threats to cultural resources would be evaluated and mitigated, as warranted, during project-level planning and implementation.

Recreation use can have significant adverse effects due to the fact that use is mostly unregulated across the three Forests, combined with the fact that some form of recreation use occurs on virtually every acre of National Forest. For planned recreation developments, most of the potential direct effects can be eliminated or mitigated during project planning and implementation. However, indirect effects from dispersed use such as increased vandalism, trampling, loss of integrity, or erosion cannot be mitigated across the remaining expanses of Forest because inventories are generally incomplete outside the limits of developed recreation sites and facilities.

Use of off-road vehicles (ATVs, motorcycles, 4-wheel drive vehicles) can have both direct and indirect effects. Driving over cultural sites can result in direct damage to cultural resources. Indirectly, the use of off-road vehicles can damage or destroy vegetation, inorganic surface crusts, and natural ground litter. Compaction of soils, alteration of soil stratigraphy, and reduced water-infiltration rates can result. This can lead to higher runoff and erosion rates. Increased looting and vandalism may occur. These effects would occur under any alternative, but to a lesser degree under Alternatives 4 and 6, which would prohibit off-road use in more areas of the Forests.

As recreational use of the three Forests continues to rise due to the increased visitation, impacts to cultural resources are expected to increase. Unauthorized collecting, theft, excavations, and vandalism occur now and will continue.

Damage to cultural resources can also occur from livestock grazing and range improvement construction or development. For planned range improvements, most of the potential direct effects can be eliminated or mitigated during project planning and implementation. Cultural resources most likely damaged by livestock grazing and rangeland management activities are those in areas of intensive livestock use such as near water tanks, salt blocks, or along fence lines. The potential for this damage is not expected to vary greatly between alternatives.

Landownership adjustments could potentially result in the loss of federal protection for cultural resources on lands transferred to other ownership. However, prior to landownership transfer, inventories are conducted and mitigation is applied, if needed. In proposed standards and guidelines, heritage values are included among criteria for land acquisition prioritization, making land acquisition another potential method for protecting and preserving valuable cultural resources. Since acquisitions are largely a function of budget, and the lands budgets are not expected to vary much by alternative, landownership adjustments are also unlikely to vary much by alternative.

Indirect effects can include improved access that brings more visitors and a rise in vandalism, removal of materials, inadvertent damage or fires, and visual and auditory disturbances from adjacent or nearby activities. Changes in the extent of access, either lengthening or shortening of roads, can also increase the area of potential effects. All alternatives would reduce the overall transportation system over the short and long terms; however, the most new road construction is expected to occur under Alternative 5, followed in order by Alternatives 2, 1B, 7, 3, 4, and 6.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects over time can include loss of sites or resources prior to development of better research techniques, loss of interpretive values, and incremental loss of the cultural resource base.

Forest management projects may cause surface disturbance, bring additional people in contact with cultural resources, or affect the fabric of historic structures. Differences in cumulative effects to cultural resources under different alternatives as a result of sanctioned management activities should be low because of the protection and mitigation measures that will be implemented.

Alternatives that result in more acres of planned and budgeted management activities could reduce adverse cumulative effects. This is because more inventory and evaluation would be required under these alternatives. The additional inventory and evaluation would lead to more cultural resources being located and a reduction of adverse cumulative effects caused by natural processes after cultural resources are brought under appropriate management.

Cumulatively, cultural resources on federal lands may assume greater importance because such resources on lands of other ownership are not provided the same degree of protection. Construction and development on private lands may destroy cultural sites without providing an opportunity for recovery of data or other mitigation unless the projects are the result of federal licensing, permitting, or funding. Cumulative risks to cultural resources on state and private lands are furthermore thought to be greater than on federally administered areas for several reasons:

- There is a higher likelihood that important cultural resources occur on these lands due to historic settlement patterns and more favorable environmental patterns;
- Little or no inventory or evaluation is being conducted;
- Implementation of protection or mitigation measures is extremely rare; and
- Local governments have few ordinances to protect cultural resources.