

United States  
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Forest Service

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Region

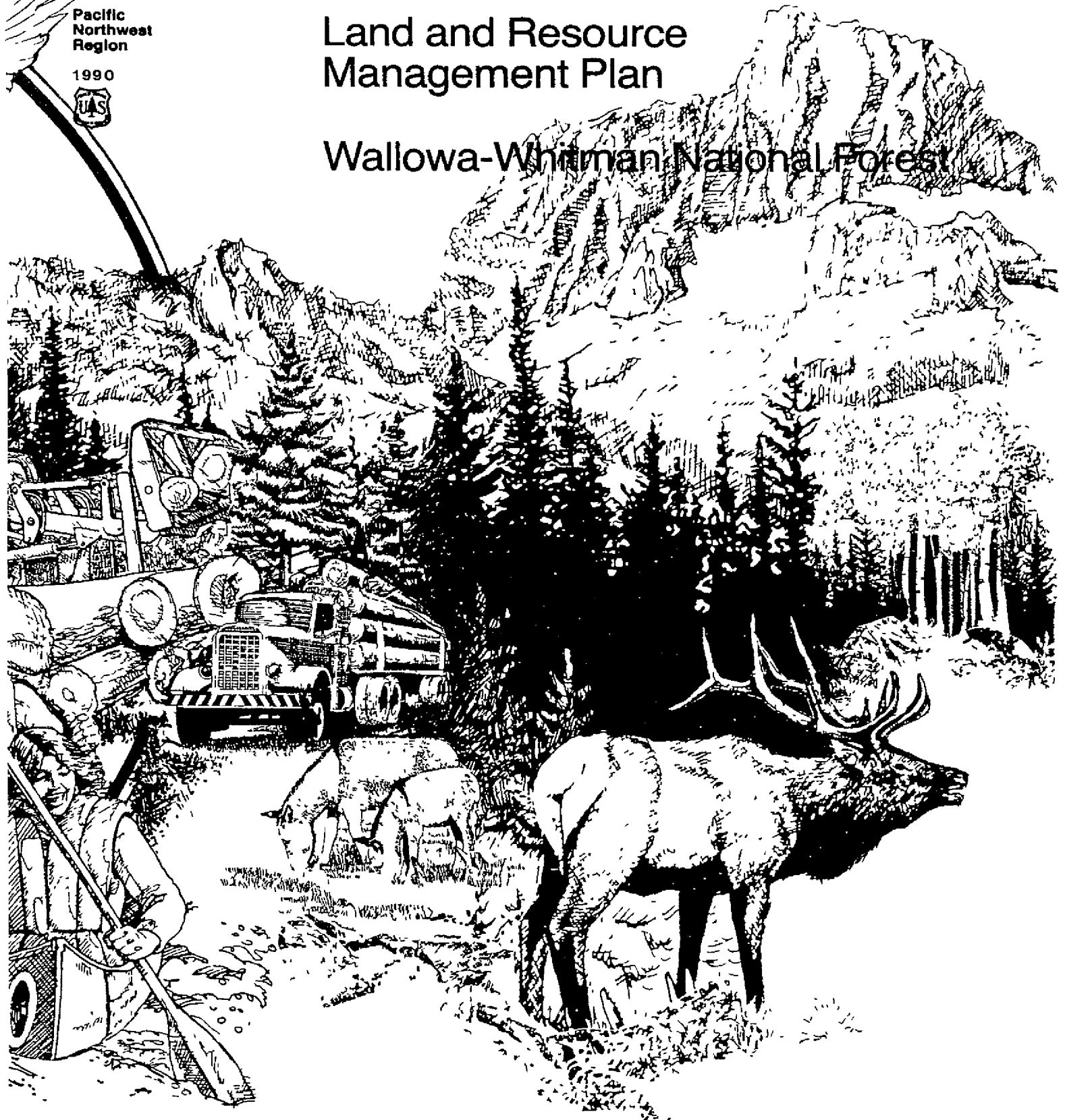
1990



# Record of Decision

## Land and Resource Management Plan

### Wallowa-Whitman National Forest



# **RECORD OF DECISION**

## **USDA FOREST SERVICE**

### **Final Environmental Impact Statement Wallowa-Whitman National Forest**

#### **Land and Resource Management Plan**

Baker, Union, Wallowa, Grant, Malheur,  
and Umatilla Counties in Oregon;  
Adams, Nez Perce, and Idaho Counties in Idaho

April 1990

# CONTENTS

	Page
I INTRODUCTION	1
Basis and Need for Decision	1
Authority	1
Affected Area	1
Public Involvement	1
Issues	1
Alternatives	2
What the Forest Plan Is and Is Not	2
Implementation and Budgets	2
Amendments	3
II DECISIONS	4
Elements of the Decision	4
Intended Activities	4
Recommendations	4
III RATIONALE FOR DECISIONS	5
- Issue Resolution	5
1 Timber Production	5
2 Local Economy	8
3 Wildlife Habitat - Deer and Elk	10
4 Transportation System	12
5. Recreation Diversity	13
6 Nonwilderness Roadless Areas	14
7 Old-Growth Forests	16
8. Minerals	17
9. Livestock Grazing	17
10 Fish Habitat/Water Quality	18
- Other Decision Factors	20
Air Quality	20
Threatened and Endangered Species	20
Fuelwood	20
Landscape Management	20
Domestic Supply Watersheds	21
Research Natural Areas	21
Silvicultural Systems	21
Dead Tree Habitat	21
Developed Recreation	22
Wilderness	22
Timber Losses Due to Fire and Insects	22
Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Planning	23

IV	ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED	24
	Alternative Comparisons	25
	Environmentally Preferred Alternatives	25
	Alternatives With Higher Present Net Values	26
V	IMPLEMENTATION	28
	Mitigation and Monitoring	29
VI	APPEAL RIGHTS AND APPROVAL	30

## I. INTRODUCTION

### BASIS AND NEED FOR DECISION

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents approval of the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the administrative area of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest for the next ten to fifteen years. This area includes the Wallowa and Whitman National Forests in Oregon and portions of the Nez Perce and Payette National Forests (those portions within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area) in Idaho. This Record of Decision also presents reasons for selecting the alternative to be the Forest Plan for the 2.3 million acre area. In making this decision, I considered the estimated environmental, social, and economic consequences of the alternatives described in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS).

### AUTHORITY

The EIS and Forest Plan were developed under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 219). The EIS meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1500).

The Forest Plan is part of the framework for long-range resources planning established by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA). The Forest Plan establishes general direction for 10 to 15 years, and must be revised at least every 15 years [36 CFR 219.10(g)]. It replaces all previous resource management plans with the exception of the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Comprehensive Management Plan which it incorporates. Subject to valid existing rights, all permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of National Forest system lands will be in conformance with the Forest Plan at the earliest possible date.

### AFFECTED AREA

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is located in Northeastern Oregon. The administrative area includes portions of the Payette and Nez Perce National Forests (see Basis and Need For Decision) in Idaho.

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Pursuant to the intent of the National Forest Management Act, the Wallowa-Whitman implemented a comprehensive public involvement program that began in July of 1979. This included publishing in the Federal Register a Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement, holding public meetings to gather input, working with a citizen's panel, and issuing news releases. For further details regarding the public involvement efforts, see the Final EIS, CHAPTER I, APPENDIX A, APPENDIX N, and the FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER 3.

### ISSUES

Land and resource management planning began with the identification of issues and concerns through public contacts with local civic and community organizations, individuals; local, state, and federal agencies; private industries, adjacent landowners, various interest groups; and Forest Service employees. After public comments and management concerns were gathered and analyzed, ten major issues were identified. These issues were considered throughout the planning process. These issues, which are described in detail in Chapter I of the FEIS, and are specifically addressed in Part IV of this ROD, centered around the following topics:

- Transportation system
- Timber production
- Local economy
- Management of nonwilderness roadless areas
- Old-growth forest
- Wildlife habitat
- Recreation diversity
- Livestock grazing

Minerals  
Fish habitat/water quality

## ALTERNATIVES

Alternative management approaches, that is, possible Forest Plans, were then formulated to provide different ways to respond to the major issues. The issues were considered throughout the planning process. These alternatives are discussed in Part IV of this *Record of Decision*.

## WHAT THE FOREST PLAN IS, AND IS NOT

As a long-range strategy for the Forest, this plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement are programmatic. The Forest Plan provides management direction to produce goods, services, and uses in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits. It is not a plan for the day-to-day administrative activities of the Forest; it does not address such matters as vehicle and equipment management or organizational structure, although there are guidelines in the Forest Plan which will affect these activities.

The Forest Plan emphasizes the application of various management practices to achieve multiple use goals and objectives in an economically efficient and environmentally sound manner. It does not emphasize site-specific decisions, but through standards and guidelines and management area direction, significantly influences site-specific activities. Standards and guidelines, the rules that govern our resource management practices, are the key to successful implementation of the plan. They will not be violated to achieve annual targets or projected outputs.

If, through monitoring and evaluation, it is determined that management objectives cannot be achieved without violating the standards and guidelines, we will evaluate the need for amending the plan. If an amendment is needed, one or more of the following could be changed: projected outputs, land allocations, management prescriptions, or standards and guidelines.

In general, the decisions made by this plan resemble those of a zoning ordinance. For example, a zoning ordinance may permit residential development in a certain area and prescribe the rules that residential development must follow if it ever occurs in that area. The zoning ordinance will normally not require that anyone actually begin construction. Similarly, the Forest Plan establishes management goals, management direction, and rules for making further decisions, but does not contain decisions to proceed with specific projects.

It is equally important to state what the Plan does not do; it does not

- Maximize any single resource use or public service
- Propose the use of any resource beyond the biological capability of the land to support that use
- Propose management of any resource based solely on values in the market place.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND BUDGETS

Decisions to proceed with projects are left to the implementation phase of planning. When projects are designed, site-specific analyses are performed. These analyses may result in environmental assessments, environmental impact statements, or decision memos and, possibly, an amendment or revision of the Plan. Any resulting documents are to be tiered to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for this Plan, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28.

All proposals in the Plan can be accomplished from a physical, biological, economic, social, and legal perspective. It is not certain that these proposals will all be accomplished. First, the outputs proposed by the Plan are objectives. They are estimates and projections based on available inventory data and assumptions. An example is the allowable sale quantity of timber. That is the maximum chargeable volume of timber that may be sold over the planning period, not necessarily the volume that will be sold.

Second, all activities, many of which are interdependent, will be affected by annual budgets. If the budget changes for any given year covered by the Plan, the projects scheduled for that year may have to be rescheduled. However, the goals and management area assignments described in the Plan would not change unless the plan itself were changed. If budgets change significantly over a period of several years, the Plan itself may have to be amended and, consequently, would reflect different outputs and environmental conditions. The significance of budget-related or other changes is determined in the context of the particular circumstances.

As a long-range strategy for the Forest, this Plan and accompanying Environmental Impact Statement are Programmatic. During implementation, when the various projects are designed, more site-specific analysis is performed. These analyses may result in en-

vironmental assessments, environmental impact statements or decision memos, and, possibly, an amendment to the Plan. Any resulting documents are to be tiered to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for this Plan, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28.

## **AMENDMENTS**

The Forest Plan may be amended or revised to respond to changing needs and opportunities including resource management innovations and information developed during the monitoring of the Forest Plan. If a proposed amendment is significant, the Forest Plan will be revised through the same procedure used in the development and approval of the original Forest Plan. If an amendment is not significant, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment following appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures. See CHAPTER 5 of the Forest Plan.

## II DECISIONS

It is my decision to select the Preferred Alternative (Alternative C) from the FEIS, for the management of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. The Selected Alternative is a modification of the Preferred Alternative identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan (Proposed Forest Plan). The alternative was altered to respond to concerns raised through public review of the DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan.

These changes included modification of the land management allocation to increase potential timber harvest levels. This was accomplished by decreasing the landscape management emphasis along several travel routes, decreasing the area of special wildlife habitat emphasis, and by other measures as described in Chapter II of the FEIS.

Modification also involved expansion of several dispersed recreation, nonmotorized areas, including a major portion of the popular Lake Fork Roadless Area. Also in response to public comments, many of the standards and guidelines were strengthened or were otherwise modified for clarity of intent.

I have made this decision after careful review of the public concerns about the DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan and consideration of the physical, biological, economic, and social consequences of the alternatives disclosed in the EIS.

### ELEMENTS OF THE DECISION

The program decisions I make here are accompanied by the necessary supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. Additional NEPA analysis for these decisions is not expected to be done and is not required. A final decision *may* be revisited or reassessed during implementation, but it does not have to be. These decisions are as follows.

1. Forest-wide goals and objectives.
2. Forest-wide desired future condition.
3. Forest-wide standards and guidelines.
4. Management area goals and location.
5. Management area descriptions.
6. Management area standards and guidelines.
7. Monitoring plan and evaluation process.
8. Incorporation of specific extant plans or projects (For example, the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Comprehensive Management Plan.)
9. Identification (location) of lands considered suitable and selected for timber harvesting.
10. Establishment of the Forest-wide allowable sale quantity (ASQ).

### INTENDED ACTIVITIES

I also intend to accomplish certain scheduled activities. Unlike the programmatic decisions listed above, these are *not* accompanied by all supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. Additional NEPA analysis will be done during the implementation of the Plan. These proposed and probable activities are discussed in the activity schedules appendix of the Plan.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

I also am recommending the addition of 18 Research Natural Areas. The authority to make final decisions on the recommendations lies with the Chief of the Forest Service. Like my final decisions, recommendations are accompanied by all supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. If the Chief accepts the recommendation, the resulting final decision *will not* ordinarily be revisited or reassessed by the Forest Service during implementation.



### III RATIONALE FOR DECISION

#### ISSUE RESOLUTION:

I approached my decisions by first reviewing the major issues, the public's comments on those issues and then how the various alternatives responded to these issues. I present my rationale for these decisions in the same manner below. My decision to select the Preferred Alternative (Alternative C in the FEIS) as the Forest Plan is based on its high level of diverse benefits and its response to the public issues. Numerous considerations have had a bearing on my decision regarding multiple use of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. No single factor or individual consideration has predominated in my decision. I also reviewed the environmental consequences of the Forest Plan and the alternatives.

The following discussions summarize the many important factors which I considered. They explain why I believe Alternative C, as modified and described in the FEIS, will maximize net public benefits when compared to the other alternatives, including those offered by non-Forest Service groups.

- (1) *Laws, Federal Regulations, Executive Orders* The Forest Plan, to the best of my knowledge, complies with all legal requirements applicable to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.
- (2) *Issues Concerning Management of the National Forests* The early identification of issues affecting the National Forests is consistent with well-reasoned management of public lands. Regulations to implement NFMA require that one or more alternatives in the EIS for the Forest Plan address each of the major issues. The response of each alternative to the ten

major issues was a major consideration in the selection of the Preferred Alternative (FEIS, Chapter II). The reasons for choosing this Preferred Alternative as related to each issue are discussed below.

#### ISSUE 1: TIMBER PRODUCTION

This, without question, was the most controversial issue on the Wallowa-Whitman throughout the planning process. It was the primary subject of many meetings and was the most frequently mentioned issue in the thousands of public responses to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Forest Plan. The basis for the controversy was (1) the total sawtimber volume proposed to be offered for sale was to be about 10 percent less than during the past ten years (board foot volume)\*, (2) but perhaps more importantly, the proposed offerings would contain less than half of the amount of ponderosa pine that had been offered for sale on an annual basis during the recent past (30 MMBF as compared to 60 MMBF).

In many ways, this issue was inseparable from the issue that we termed "local economy." Responses to the draft documents indicated a great deal of concern for the effect the proposed plan would have on the local economies at a time when northeast Oregon communities were suffering serious economic hardship. Many writers feared that their means of livelihood would be lost if the proposed plan were implemented. County receipts were also often mentioned as a concern. But there were also expressions of support for the proposed plan, as well as

\* The volume of sawtimber to be offered was to be only slightly less, approximately 1 percent, in terms of actual cubic wood volume (28.6 versus 28.3 million cubic feet). Because the board foot volume per cubic foot measures higher in larger trees, and we proposed to harvest a higher percentage of small trees, the board foot volume showed a decrease.

support for a reduced level of timber harvest. I carefully considered all points of view, including several new alternatives that were suggested.

The allowable sale quantity, ASQ, is the upper limit of chargeable wood to be sold from suitable Forest land during the first decade of the planning period. Although it is a decadal figure, it is most often expressed on an annual basis as the "average annual allowable sale quantity". It is important to note the ASQ is not an actual proposal for timber sale offerings. The annual timber sale offerings include nonchargeable material as well as chargeable and depend on budget appropriations, multiple-use objectives, and market conditions.

Chargeable volume, or the ASQ, is comprised of categories of timber which were used in making growth and yield predictions during development of the plan. On the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, this included mortality salvage. Other (nonchargeable) volume was not used in yield calculations because it did not meet Regional utilization standards or standards for soundness or because it is to be harvested from lands not suitable for timber production. Standards and guidelines specify when volume may be removed from lands not suitable for timber production (e.g., salvage from a special interest area). Generally, this is done only when removal of the timber would not conflict with the goals and desired future condition of the management area.

The average annual ASQ will be approximately 27.5 million cubic feet (MMCF) of timber under this plan. It will be monitored and controlled on a cubic foot measure. The board foot volume associated with the cubic foot volume (i.e., the board foot/cubic foot conversion ratio) varies from stand to stand depending on the size and form of trees. Both board foot and cubic foot measure are displayed here since board-foot measure continues to be a customary unit of measure. The stands expected to be harvested by the plan will yield approximately 141 MMBF (27.5 MMCF) per year in the first decade. However, an additional 1 MMCF will be made available for sale if the economic conditions are satis-

factory. The last two paragraphs of this section provide a more thorough explanation for this additional volume.

The chargeable volume sold plus the nonchargeable volume (such things as posts, poles, and chippable material) sold are referred to as the annual Timber Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ). To achieve the TSPQ, yearly targets are developed. These yearly timber targets can be higher or lower than the average annual ASQ, provided the chargeable volume does not cumulatively exceed the ASQ over the first decade.

In the first decade of Plan implementation, the TSPQ is expected to average 40.6 MMCF annually. This includes the average annual ASQ of 27.5 MMCF plus an expected average annual 13.1 MMCF of nonchargeable volume. However, the nonchargeable component is just an estimate. Actual nonchargeable volume sold will depend on a number of factors including market conditions.

Approximately 20 MMCF, or 73 percent of the ASQ, depends on the application of even-aged and 7 MMCF, or 27 percent of the ASQ, depends on the application of uneven-aged silvicultural practices. Approximately 5 MMCF, or 18 percent of the average annual ASQ established in this plan, depends on the application of intensive timber management practices, including thinning, which may occur as part of even-aged or uneven-aged management. Which practices can or should be used depends on budget appropriations and site-specific analyses. If these intensive management practices are not carried out, the ASQ will be reduced and the plan will be amended.

The ASQ includes volume scheduled from inventoried roadless areas and volume scheduled elsewhere on the Forest. If the volume scheduled from inventoried roadless areas cannot be sold, that volume will not be replaced by volume scheduled elsewhere. Volume scheduled from inventoried roadless areas is estimated to be 14 MMBF (2.7 MMCF) or 10 percent of the ASQ.

During implementation, the specific volume from roadless areas will be determined.

through site-specific analysis. If the volume cannot be sold, the plan may be amended.

The ASQ proposed in the draft documents was 143 MMBF per year, (28.3 MMCF) including 30 MMBF per year of ponderosa pine. By placing greater emphasis on species groups which contain ponderosa pine, we will attempt to offer for sale an average of 34 MMBF of ponderosa pine on an annual basis rather than the 30.0 MMBF proposed in the Draft Plan. While the total ASQ level (in cubic feet) is sustainable through time, the ponderosa pine portion of the ASQ is not. In later decades, the ponderosa pine offerings will need to be reduced to compensate for accelerated harvest in the first 10 years. The lodgepole pine volume will be about 3 MMBF (1.4 MMCF) in the first decade. The remainder of the ASQ is comprised of a variety of coniferous species, the more important ones being Douglas-fir, grand fir, western larch, and Englemann spruce.

The Wallowa-Whitman has a more than 50-year history of timber harvesting and throughout most of this period, ponderosa pine has been the species most in demand. It also tends to be more dominant at lower elevations where stands are often more accessible. Consequently, ponderosa pine has been harvested at a higher rate than other species.

Whereas ponderosa pine once constituted half of the standing inventory, it now makes up only about 20 percent. Therefore, there is little doubt that the annual harvest of this species must be reduced. There is the question of how abruptly a shift away from ponderosa pine should occur. Representatives of timber industry, the Governor of Oregon, and others have suggested the desirability of "tapering" into a reduced level of ponderosa pine harvest, thereby allowing the timber industry time to adjust.

Recognizing the desirability of avoiding an abrupt shift away from ponderosa pine, we reanalyzed the data to determine possibilities. In doing so it became apparent that tapering could best be accomplished in combination with changes in land allocation. At the

direction of the Regional Forester, the Forest Supervisor made a series of reasonable adjustments to the plan to see whether the ponderosa pine level could be increased in the first decade without unreasonable impacts to other resources or economic efficiency as measured in present net value (PNV). In doing so, he was asked to explore ways to respond to other issues raised by the public in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including ways of increasing total timber sale offerings of 143 MMBF (28.3 MMCF); but initially, the review resulted in a decrease in timber volume. See footnote, this page.\*

After reviewing the analyses, I selected a revised land allocation for Alternative C that would provide 34 MMBF annually of ponderosa pine in the first decade of plan implementation. This was accomplished by increasing the amount of area to be managed for timber emphasis—especially lower elevations. This means certain less-critical winter game ranges will be managed with a timber production emphasis. I also reduced the visual quality objective for several Forest roads and trails. We will begin the decade near the 40 MMBF per year level, and gradually decrease to 30 MMBF by the end of the decade, averaging 34 MMBF per year.

Achieving the higher level of ponderosa pine also meant a reduction in efficiency amounting to over \$2 million in present net value.

\* While the Draft documents were being reviewed, members of the public pointed out that there was an inconsistency between Forests within the Region with respect to the interpretation of the direction for meeting the management requirements (MRs) for primary cavity excavators. The Wallowa-Whitman and several other Forest Planning Teams were interpreting the direction to mean that it was not necessary to maintain MR levels of snags on harvest units until the newly established trees were large enough to provide adequate size snags. Other Forests were assuming that snags must be present at all times, and were planning to leave enough trees from the preceding harvests to provide for them. The Regional Forester issued clarifying direction which required all Forests to meet the MR level for small snags (10-20 inches diameter) at all times. This resulted in a reduction in projected timber volume from all alternatives, including a 3.5 MMBF reduction in the preferred alternative. As a result the DEIS volume of 143 MMBF was reduced to 139 MMBF (27.1 MMCF).

I believe these adjustments are reasonable considering the other resource values involved and the importance of ponderosa pine to the local economies. I also recognize that most timber interests, local community leaders and others would prefer that we retain ponderosa pine at a somewhat higher level. However, since 1983 when the Forest first released the results of the 1979 inventory, and probably before that time, the timber industry has been aware that the level of ponderosa pine was likely to decline. In fact it had declined from an average of 64 MMBF sold in 1979-1983 to an average of 44 MMBF sold in 1984-1988 period. Therefore, the real period of adjustment has been in effect for several years.

In light of the other resource tradeoffs, and the sacrifice of PNV, I do not feel I can justify raising the level higher than 34 MMBF. Even that level depends on our ability to make logical sales "fit" on the ground, which becomes more and more difficult as the standing volume is reduced. Ponderosa pine often occurs in association with other species and it normally is not practical or desirable to remove only one species.

Over the past decade, there have been serious insect epidemics and several large forest fires on the Wallowa-Whitman. In view of these events, there are many people who suspect that the timber inventory for the Forest has been significantly reduced, thereby casting doubt on the ASQ calculation. However, the ASQ cannot be recalculated until 1996, when the new Forest-wide inventory is complete. In the interim, preliminary data from that inventory will be available in 1992. This preliminary information will be used to determine whether the Forest has sufficient volume to meet its assigned yearly harvest levels.

In the selected alternative, there are 62,000 acres of forested land which are not scheduled for harvest due to economic considerations. Approximately 35,000 acres of these lands (60 percent of which are in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area) have substantial standing timber volumes. These are lands on which the costs of accessing and

harvesting the timber far outweigh the value of the timber if they were to be harvested in today's economic market. If it were economically feasible to manage these lands, they could contribute as much as 11 MMBF per year to the allowable sale quantity.

Although managing these lands for timber production is not economically feasible today, it may be possible to manage them in the future if timber prices increase substantially. For this reason, I have decided to establish a process which may result in reconsideration of these lands for timber production during the life of the Forest Plan. If, during the life of the Plan, the rolling two-year average stumpage value increases to at least 25 percent above the projected level used in developing the Forest Plan, approximately 1 MMCF (or about 5 MMBF) will be offered for sale annually. This volume will be offered for sale as a noninterchangeable component of the ASQ. If the timber from these lands fails to sell, the volume will not be replaced with volume from other more economically viable lands. Lands within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area will not be considered for providing this additional timber volume.

## ISSUE 2: LOCAL ECONOMY

There is no doubt about the economic influence of the Wallowa-Whitman on Baker, Union, and Wallowa Counties in northeastern Oregon. Our analysis indicates that the Forest is responsible for some 18 percent of the jobs in the three-county area. Timber production alone generates some \$23 million dollars\* in local salaries and wages. While other resource uses also contribute significantly, especially recreation, changes in the amount of timber offered for sale from the Forest has a greater effect on the economic well-being of local citizens than any other factor of National Forest management.

\* From direct, indirect, and induced jobs

This reality has been foremost in our thoughts as Forest Supervisor Richmond and I pondered a decision for the Wallowa-Whitman Plan. Elected officials and the majority of respondents to the draft documents expressed similar concerns as shown in letters, the Governor of Oregon's alternative, the "Community Stability" alternative and other forms of public contact throughout the long planning process.

Many reviewers of the draft plan were critical of the preferred alternative because they perceived it as adversely impacting their way of life. They correctly pointed out that timber industry provides many higher-paid, family income level jobs, and comparable jobs may not be available elsewhere. Impacts on schools, roads, and taxes were often mentioned. The remedy usually offered was to keep the timber harvest level as high as it has been, and to keep the ponderosa pine level as high or nearly as high as it has been historically.

A question often asked is, since the allowable timber harvest from the National Forest is so important to the local economy as well as the livelihood of many people, why is it necessary to change it? The answer is that it is not absolutely necessary to reduce the total volumes sold annually. Several Forest Plan alternatives would have provided as much or more timber volume (though less ponderosa pine). But the local economy is not the only issue. There are conflicts between maintaining high timber harvest levels and providing or protecting some of the values that many people in the nation hold dear. Elsewhere in this section the other issues and the rationale for their resolution is described. As discussed under the timber issue, the proportion of ponderosa pine offered for sale must be reduced. It simply is no longer available in the amounts necessary to sustain annual harvest at past rates.

There were also many respondents who, I believe, tended to overstate the consequences of any change in harvest levels. I disagree, for example, that small reductions in timber offered from the National Forest would have "devastating" effects on the local economy, as was often suggested. There

have been many factors in recent years, including the retooling of mills for improved efficiency, labor strikes, and general economic slow-downs that have had greater economic effects than the changes being proposed in the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Plan.

The Wallowa-Whitman provides approximately half of the locally-processed timber. Much is also provided by private forest-land owners with lesser amounts provided by the Malheur and Umatilla National Forests. In the future, much will depend on management activities on private lands and on the harvests from the other National Forests. Although I have not yet made decisions on the Forest Plans for the Umatilla and Malheur National Forests, current projections are that they will not be able to make up for timber reductions from the Wallowa-Whitman. It is also likely that ponderosa pine harvests from the Malheur and Umatilla will decline for reasons similar to those on the Wallowa-Whitman.

Returns to counties for schools and roads depend on the price of timber as much as on the amount sold because payments are based on receipts rather than harvest volume. Timber prices are projected to increase over time at a rate higher than inflation. This could offset, at least to some extent, the effect of reduced timber volume.

It is also evident that local counties are attempting to provide a more diverse economic base, including an emphasis on tourism. This will depend to considerable extent on encouraging visitors to enjoy the natural scenic and recreational attractions of the area as well as its historical features. The National Forest will figure prominently in any such plans. These efforts to create a more diverse economic base can only help the overall economy in the long run.

Regardless of other opportunities, the timber industry will continue to be a strong part of the economic structure of Northeast Oregon. By selecting Alternative C, I have recognized the important role of timber and have ensured that the Wallowa-Whitman will contin-

ue to provide a reasonably high level of raw wood material.

There are those who have asserted that supporting the local economies to this extent amounts to a subsidy at the expense of the national economy. They point out that maintaining the timber harvest levels of Alternative C may mean that approximately one fourth of the timber volume offered will cost the government more to prepare and harvest than the revenues it will bring in. Support of rural economies has long been an important purpose of National Forest management. There is no requirement that all product sales be profitable. In this case, I have determined that maintaining the level of raw wood material in the selected alternative is important enough to justify selling a portion of Wallowa-Whitman timber sales at less than cost if that proves to be necessary.

In my judgment, the Forest Plan provides a balance between commodity outputs and amenity resources that will contribute to economic stability of dependent communities, while maintaining the natural character and recreational settings desired by many of our publics. Decisions contained in the Forest Plan will affect communities. The Forest Service will work with communities to address these effects within the framework of the Pacific Northwest Strategy.

### **ISSUE 3 : WILDLIFE HABITAT - DEER AND ELK**

My decision is to emphasize elk habitat on most winter ranges and certain summer ranges, in a manner similar to that shown in the Draft Plan. The exception is that approximately 10 percent of the winter ranges will be managed as Management Area 1, as a means of providing an increase in timber production \*. In general, these are lower priority winter ranges for big game.

Although we term this issue "wildlife habitat for deer and elk," it is obvious, from the responses we received to the draft documents, that the issue revolves around elk. There seems to be general agreement that deer are more adaptable than elk.

The Wallowa-Whitman has a reputation for its big-game hunting and provides recreation for large numbers of hunters during the fall months. The State of Oregon looks to the Forest to provide a major portion of the Rocky Mountain elk hunting. This is evidenced by the game management objectives that have been set for the management units which include National Forest lands.

The issue evoked strong feelings from many proposed Plan reviewers. Our analysis showed conflict between maintaining high quality elk habitat and timber production. This premise was roundly challenged for a variety of reasons. Writers offered many personal testimonials that they believed disproved our contention that there was a significant relationship between timber management activities and elk habitat, or if there was a relationship, they contended that aggressive timber management was to the elk's advantage. Improved forage conditions were often cited, as were the increases in elk herd levels in recent decades.

There were also many reviewers who were critical of the amount of area being included in Management Area 1. Their feelings were that this form of land management provides too little cover for game and created too much harassment. There was also the contention that management according to the Management Area 1 will result in many elk moving onto private lands sooner in the fall than might otherwise occur. There was concern expressed that harassment will result in fewer harvestable animals due to lower calf production.

My decision is based on a series of considerations.

- Most winter ranges for elk, with the exception of Hells Canyon National Recreation Area and the north end of the Wallowa Valley Ranger District, are not on National Forest lands. During severe winters, most elk leave the National Forest due to snow depths.

\* For descriptions of management areas, see Chapter 4 of the Forest Land and Resources Management Plan. Briefly, Management Area 1 emphasizes timber production.

- Management practices on the National Forest, by reducing cover and providing easier access for vehicular or foot travelers, can increase the rate at which harvestable animals are taken. *Therefore, the hunting experience is different than when hunting occurs in less-accessible areas, where there is an abundance of cover, as is currently the case in several unroaded areas.*
- It is possible that National Forest management can cause elk to move more readily onto adjoining private lands. But there are a variety of factors that contribute to such movement and some are beyond the control of National Forest managers
- Over time, there will not necessarily be less security cover on Forest land managed for timber production. There may be more. There will likely be less high quality thermal cover. There will always be ample opportunity for animals to find shade during the summer, and some degree of protection from the elements during winter
- Although it is recognized that elk will tend to avoid travelled roads when given a choice, the effects of open roads on the biological needs of elk are not fully understood
- The conditions that many people believe to be necessary for the biological needs of elk may actually be an expression of their desire for certain conditions in which they like to hunt the animals. (This is discussed under the recreation diversity issue.)
- We don't know as much as we would like to about the biological needs of elk. For example, is thermal cover a need or a preference? Do elk simply prefer to "shade up" in tree stands with certain characteristics, or will they do as well biologically if other forms of cover are available?
- There is no danger of elk being threatened as a species by management of

the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Elk do not depend on roadless areas for survival, as some reviewers have suggested. Regardless, there will continue to be large parts of the Wallowa-Whitman that will remain roadless due to wilderness, other land management direction, or because there is no reason to construct roads within the area.

During the next ten years, we anticipate that studies at the Starkey Experimental Forest and Range will yield new insights into the relationships between management of forest land and elk. The decisions we are making in this plan are, for the most part, reversible. New information that becomes available as part of the Starkey studies can be incorporated into the next land management plans, or by amendment to this plan if considered necessary.

Our analysis shows that Alternative F would be the best alternative for elk as well as other forms of wildlife. (See Chapter IV of the FEIS.) However, I do not believe the gains in index values for elk justify the reduction in timber harvest that would result. Similarly, I do not believe the gains in timber production from Alternatives B, B-departure, or other commodity-oriented alternatives are worth the potential risk to elk habitat or hunting recreation experiences on a Forest such as the Wallowa-Whitman -- a Forest valued by many Pacific Northwest residents for its wildlife and recreational values. I believe Alternative C, as revised, is a reasonable compromise -- a balance between competing uses as required by the NFMA and the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act.

In addition to the direction provided in the draft Forest Plan for Management Area 1, I am directing that a standard and guideline be added which requires at least 30 percent of the forested area within a project, such as a timber sale, be retained in satisfactory or marginal cover at all times. Also, in timber sale planning an attempt will be made to achieve a Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI) of 0.5.

Management Area 1 has a variety of objectives. The primary objective is timber production, but elk habitat is an important objective also. Through the silvicultural components of the prescription and the suitable lands to which they apply, a certain contribution to the Forest-wide ASQ is anticipated. The HEI of 0.5 is normally expected to be achieved on these lands as well.

Although results from our plan analysis suggest that both objectives are achievable, the particular site conditions, effects of fire, insects, disease, or other natural events may make this achievement difficult despite our best efforts. In those instances where both objectives cannot be met, as determined through monitoring, the plan direction will be amended. Until that is done, the timber objective will be met in a manner as consistent as possible with the HEI objective. The use of HEI and, in particular, the integration of this technique with silvicultural techniques, is still being tested and evaluated. If this index or a higher level cannot be achieved without reducing timber volume from the proposed sale, the sale planning documents will document why it was not possible. I do not intend that timber sale volumes be reduced to achieve the HEI objective, but that the timber sale planners make a strong effort to incorporate meeting the HEI objective. This documentation at the project level will provide important monitoring information. Further testing and evaluation will occur during plan implementation and monitoring. *Sales planned for fiscal year 1990, to be sold this summer, will be exempt from this HEI requirement. See Section V, Implementation*

In February of this year, I introduced "The Elk Initiative for the Managed Forests of the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington" which is also referred to as "The Blue Mountain Initiative". The primary goal of the proposal is to work in partnership with the Oregon and Washington State Wildlife Agencies, communities, private landowners, and interested groups and individuals for the benefit of elk management in the Blue Mountains.

In the State of Oregon Final Alternative for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, 13 recom-

mendations for big game management are provided to help ameliorate what the State believes will be a decline in elk habitat. I am directing the Forest Supervisor to ensure that these recommendations are carefully considered during Forest Plan implementation, and to work closely with the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and other agencies to mitigate effects on habitat within the context of the standards and guidelines of the Plan. This will be an important part of implementing the Blue Mountain Initiative.

To determine the effectiveness of elk habitat management prescriptions, standards, and guidelines during plan implementation, the three Blue Mountain National Forests will develop and implement a coordinated monitoring program. Elk habitat condition, including road density, cover quality (satisfactory and marginal), cover size and spacing, forage quality and quantity, and any other appropriate factors, will be inventoried and monitored on an appropriate geographic unit. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife will be invited to cooperate in the development and execution of this monitoring program. This program will be initiated within one year of implementation of the last of the Blue Mountain Forest Plans. The results will be evaluated yearly. Appropriate adjustments to the three Forest Plans will be initiated within three to five years if warranted.

#### ISSUE 4: TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Transportation concerns raised had to do with how many miles of road will be open to motorized use, providing resource protection, and assuring adequate road maintenance. My decision is to retain the direction from the Draft Plan with the following exceptions. Within Management Area 18, anadromous fish habitat emphasis, the open density road target will be 1.5 miles per square mile rather than 2.5 miles per square mile. Within the inventoried big game winter range, where we intend to emphasize timber management according to Management Area 1 (see Timber Harvest Level Issue), we will retain the 1.5 miles per square mile open road density target. I believe these changes



are important considering the sensitivity of these areas for wildlife and fish.

In general, public response to the Draft documents supported maintaining only roads that are necessary to serve management requirements and public access needs. Many suggestions were made for achieving the minimum necessary road mileage including seasonal closures.

There were those who thought 2.5 miles of open road per square mile were still excessive. Such a guideline has been in use on the Forest for several years, however, and the Forest Leadership Team believes this has proven to be a reasonable maximum for areas where resource production is emphasized. Likewise, 1.5 miles per square mile in Management Areas 3 and 18 will be difficult to achieve, but is possible and desirable in order to maintain a variety of recreational opportunities and maintain wildlife habitat values.

Many reviewers were concerned the road density targets would seriously impair their use of the Forest, particularly for fuelwood gathering, driving for pleasure and minerals prospecting. There is flexibility to allow roads to remain open for a period after timber sale closures so wood gathering can be achieved. The plan also allows for an open road density that is higher than the stated guidelines for special cases when an environmental analysis supports a higher density, but I agree that there will be some decrease in area available for wood gathering. This is a tradeoff that I believe is necessary and one that will help us to maintain the dead tree levels needed to meet wildlife and other needs.

I believe that the proper transportation system is one that adequately serves the needs of most of the people as well as management needs. Road maintenance is expensive, and we cannot afford to maintain roads that are seldom used by the public and/or are not needed for management. Roads are a sensitive issue and some Forest users will disagree with my decision. Like many other Forest Plan decisions, we will monitor to

determine whether the density targets are meeting needs over time.

As a part of Forest Plan implementation, I am directing the Forest Supervisor to continue to use an annual travel management planning process to determine, on a more specific basis, which roads will be closed and which will be left open. Development of the travel management plan will be an open process, with public involvement encouraged.

## **ISSUE 5: RECREATION DIVERSITY**

The Wallowa-Whitman provides a variety of forested and nonforested conditions over a wide range of elevations. There are many attractive streams, high mountain lakes, areas which are easily accessible by motor vehicle, and many unroaded lands. The Forest contains the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, two large wildernesses, and portions of two more. These combinations of factors create the opportunity for a wide variety of outdoor recreational experiences. We believe it is important for the Forest to continue to provide this variety to benefit recreational users, and to retain the economic benefits for the local economies.

Our analyses showed that adequate amounts of nearly all recreational opportunities would continue to be available for the foreseeable future with the preferred alternative as described in the Forest Plan. The exception was the opportunity for "backcountry" activity which is provided primarily by nonwilderness, generally unroaded areas. Therefore, in considering a decision, the Regional Forester asked the Forest Supervisor and his planning team to take a look at several roadless areas in which the public has shown interest, to see if more acreage could be retained in an undeveloped state with relatively few tradeoffs of other resource values. By making the changes described under the issue entitled Nonwilderness Roadless Areas, we were at least partially successful.

The Plan recognizes existing small dispersed recreation sites and others that may be identified during implementation, and provides direction for their management. Any resulting

impact on the ASQ will be monitored. If appropriate, the Plan will be amended accordingly.

The Wallowa-Whitman is known for its elk and deer hunting which comprises a large part of the recreational activity during the late summer and fall months. It is currently possible to hunt for elk and deer in a variety of conditions. We believe it important to retain this variety of conditions, and the hunting opportunities it provides.

At present, there are relatively large non-wilderness areas where there is an abundance of security cover for elk. These areas provide a challenging recreational hunt that is dependent on this cover. As the timber from these areas is brought under management, cover is reduced. By requiring that newly established tree stands average ten feet in height before adjacent stands are harvested, we will attempt to retain this type of recreational experience even in areas where timber management is emphasized. For these reasons, several areas on summer ranges have been designated as Management Area 3 (Wildlife - Timber). These areas along with winter game ranges, many of which are also in Management Area 3, Anadromous Fish Emphasis, Backcountry, and Wilderness, will continue to provide this type of recreational experience.

In summary, while there will be more evidence of management activities, the inherent variety of the Forest and the management actions described in Alternative C will insure that the current variety of recreational opportunities will remain available.

#### **ISSUE 6: NONWILDERNESS ROADLESS AREAS**

Because the Forest has a large roadless area acreage (484,000), this has been a sensitive issue on the Wallowa-Whitman for a long time. Response to the draft planning documents showed the same wide range of opinion about roadless areas that has prevailed since the first national Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE). Of the 232,000 roadless acres not within the HCNRA, some

101,000 were to be managed to remain essentially in an undeveloped state (Management Area 6) in the draft Plan. These areas are the more scenic and recreationally attractive portions of the roadless areas including the Elkhorn Range and areas adjacent to the Eagle Cap Wilderness. They also contain a low proportion of tentatively suitable timber producing lands. My decision is to retain the 101,000 roadless acres as described in the Draft EIS, and add another 14,000 acres, bringing the total to 115,000 acres in Management Area 6.

To those who believe this is not a sufficient amount of roadless area to retain, I want to point out that many more nonwilderness acres will remain roadless for many years. Considering the several roadless areas in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area without prescribed timber management, and portions of several roadless areas which are not forested or for economic reasons will not be developed, there will be a total of 390,000 nonwilderness acres remaining unroaded when it is time to revise the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan.

Many respondents believe 115,000 acres is too much to manage specifically as backcountry. Our analyses shows, however, that semiprimitive recreation is the only form of recreational opportunity that is likely to be in short supply on the Wallowa-Whitman within 20 years. I believe it is desirable on an important recreational Forest such as the Wallowa-Whitman, to retain the variety of experiences that are available. This is important to the recreational public as well as the tourism industry that continues to grow in northeast Oregon. In selecting the areas to leave undeveloped, we have carefully avoided the better timber-producing sites. The entire 115,000 acres planned to remain roadless have a potential to contribute approximately 6 million board feet to the annual allowable harvest for the Forest.

As shown in Table 1, there are 4 roadless area allocations that were changed between the DEIS and the FEIS. I have revised the allocations of these four roadless areas as follows:

**Boulder Park and Little Eagle Meadows -**

These two areas include the slopes on either side of the East Fork of Eagle Creek and form the attractive glaciated valley extending south from the Eagle Cap Wilderness. The area is visually sensitive, being visible from the East Eagle Creek Trail and Road and from several private holdings. These slopes contain numerous springs and bogs and portions of the area are subject to mass soil movement if disturbed. Timber values are currently not high, the species being primarily grand fir and Englemann spruce. Many residents of Eagle Valley expressed concern about harvest in the area due to the potential for disruption of water flows from the subwatersheds and concern about the landscape appearance. Though the risk would increase, I do not believe timber management activities we would undertake in the East Eagle drainage would necessarily disrupt water quality or quantity. I do recognize that there is an opportunity to retain an area for unroaded recreation and preserve landscape qualities without a high cost in timber production foregone. By placing portions of the roadless areas in Management Area 6 (Backcountry), these values will be preserved for this planning period.

**Lake Fork** - The popularity of this roadless area was borne out by the many letters the Forest Supervisor received, especially from

the residents of Pine Valley. Many suggested retaining the area in an undeveloped state for a variety of reasons. I am convinced that Lake Fork is a special area for many people and I want to be responsive to them. However, complicating the decision to reallocate the area is recognition of its timber-growing potential and high standing timber volumes. After considering a variety of alternatives, I have decided to reallocate the more scenic portions of the area to Management Area 6 (Backcountry) and also reallocate portions of the more productive areas to Management Area 1 (Timber Emphasis). This will retain some of the productive potential of the area and will keep a significant portion of the roadless, semiprimitive recreation opportunity that is now provided.

**Twin Mountain** - Several respondents to the Draft EIS suggested that we should reconfigure the Management Area 6 (Backcountry) near Mt. Ireland to include Downie Lake and Erin Meadows. After review on-the-ground, we agree that these areas will add important recreational values to the management area and that the change will create more logical management area boundaries. Other suggestions for additions to Management Area 6 near Dutch Flat Creek and Lake Creek were not accepted due to potentially high timber producing values.

**TABLE 1**

**Comparison of Four Roadless Areas for Which Management Direction  
Changed Between Draft and Final Forest Plans**

Roadless Area	Acres	Direction	Draft	Final
Boulder Park	12,311	MA1 Timber Emphasis MA3 Wildlife - Timber MA6 Backcountry MA15 Old Growth	881 4,980 5,836 614	0 1,100 11,211 0
Little Eagle Meadows	7,140	MA1 Timber Emphasis MA3 Wildlife - Timber MA6 Backcountry MA15 Old Growth	875 2,985 2,792 488	0 0 6,652 488
Lake Fork	14,898	MA1 Timber Emphasis MA3 Wildlife - Timber MA6 Backcountry MA15 Old Growth	0 13,764 0 1,134	747 6,714 6,084 1,353
Twin Mountain	60,903	MA1 Timber Emphasis MA3 Wildlife - Timber MA6 Backcountry MA15 Wild, Scenic River MA15 Old Growth MA18 Anadromous Fish	5,555 2,663 47,916 91 2,329 2,349	3,958 2,663 49,710 91 2,132 2,349

#### **ISSUE 7: OLD-GROWTH FOREST**

As described in the FEIS, there are several reasons why responsible management should include retaining old-growth forest areas. At issue, of course, is how much

Meeting management requirements for wildlife on the Wallowa-Whitman meant retaining 28,000 acres of old-growth forest (outside of wilderness and the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area), dispersed throughout the forested land. I believe there are several reasons why somewhat more than that amount should be retained.

- 1 The management requirement is based on current knowledge and estimates of what is necessary to retain wildlife populations of wildlife that rely on old-growth.

I believe we need to think beyond maintaining only those minimum populations that are necessary to keep a species "viable." That is, there should be some room for error, and there should be more than only minimum viable populations for public enjoyment.

- 2 In order to achieve adequate distribution of old-growth stands, it was necessary to select several

that only marginally meet the definition of old-growth or will need to grow into old-growth. It can be argued that some of the stands we have designated don't meet the accepted definition at present. (For definition of old growth, see EIS glossary.)

3. The wildfires of 1986 illustrated how easily old-growth stands can be lost. Some 9,000 acres were burned to the point of losing all old-growth value. Some 3,000 acres were lost in fires in 1989.

For these reasons, we have prescribed that an additional 9,000 acres, or a total of 37,000 acres, be managed as old-growth. This is the same amount that was shown in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement if we adjust for old growth forest in the additional roadless area placed in Management Area 6.

There are those who have suggested that the allocation of old-growth acres should be higher. There are some 124,000 additional acres in wilderness or other management areas, bringing the actual old-growth forest total to 161,000 acres. Considering the significant timber production foregone in the old-growth allocation, I believe this amount is sufficient.

Preliminary information from the new timber inventory, currently underway, will provide an opportunity to re-evaluate the old-growth situation within two years. At that time, I will consider whether or not changes in old-growth forest management measures are necessary.

#### **ISSUE 8: MINERALS**

This issue arose early in the planning process due to concerns about the possibility of placing mineralized land in wilderness. In 1984, the wilderness issue was settled, at least for the time being, by the Oregon Wilderness Act. Those areas that were placed in wilderness are now

withdrawn from mining. The Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan does not propose any new areas for wilderness.

There were respondents to the draft documents that were concerned about non-wilderness land allocations such as Management Area 6 (Backcountry) which, by not permitting new road construction, would make prospecting for minerals more difficult than if the areas were roaded. We recognize that this concern is real, but it does not mean that mineral entry is prohibited or even discouraged. It does mean that a few areas will not be readily accessible by automobiles and prospecting will have to be accomplished by other means. If valid claims are filed, and mineral removal requires roads, such road construction will probably be permitted. I believe this is a reasonable approach in view of the recreational and other values that coexist with minerals on the Wallowa-Whitman.

#### **ISSUE 9: LIVESTOCK GRAZING**

This issue centered around the management of vegetation, including riparian, for permitted livestock, wildlife, and other resource values such as recreation.

In the draft planning documents we indicated that, with sufficient investment, it would be possible to increase permitted livestock levels from the present 186,000 AUM's to an estimated 207,000 AUM's. We pointed out, however, that any increases would come about through the development and implementation of individual allotment management plans and would necessitate intensification of management and substantial investment.

A number of negative feelings about livestock grazing were reflected in the public responses. We recognize that some of the criticisms were accurate, especially those which concerned management conflicts within some of the Forest's riparian areas. A number of forest users desired complete removal of permitted livestock while many others asked for im-

proved management. Concerns were especially common with regard to conflicts in riparian areas, wilderness, and areas of high recreation use.

We recognize and share many of these concerns. We have attempted in the Forest Plan to ensure a balance between harvest of renewable forage resources for livestock production and the maintenance and enhancement of those same resources for such values as wildlife forage and cover, soil protection, aesthetics, fisheries habitat, and species and habitat diversity.

Harvest of forage resources by permitted livestock has always been and should continue to be a valid part of the management of range resources on the Forest. These products contribute to community stability, utilize a renewable natural resource and can provide a viable tool for managing range vegetation to meet desired objectives.

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest currently has 84 grazing allotments with no Allotment Management Plans (AMP's). AMP's will be developed for these allotments as soon as practicable, with priority being placed on those allotments with riparian or watershed related problems. AMP's will be developed based on measurable objectives designed to achieve desired future conditions of the resources. These plans will be developed with public review and participation.

We will also implement standards and guidelines for forage utilization on all allotments. These standards were developed on a Region-wide basis to ensure consistency and increased responsiveness to resource concerns. When combined with intensive management, these standards will assist in meeting the desired future condition objectives.

In our evaluation of the public responses to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as well as continued evaluation of

the range resources, forage and browse utilization standards, and potentials for intensification of management, we determined that the predicted potential for an increase in permitted livestock outputs to 207,000 AUM's was neither realistic nor responsive to public concerns.

In addition, our analysis indicated that implementation of the Forest Plan standards and guides will make it increasingly unlikely that current permitted livestock numbers will be maintained. In the Final Plan, I am recognizing a maximum output level of 186,000 AUM's, which is no change from the current level. I also recognize that as individual Allotment Management Plans are implemented to Forest Plan standards, it is likely that a number of allotments will see reduced permitted livestock numbers in response to the goals of reaching the desired future condition objectives.

In the long run, I believe that our increasing emphasis on management of range vegetation resources for the wide variety of values that they produce, including forage for wildlife and permitted livestock, visual quality, riparian habitat, etc., will result in a well-integrated and balanced program.

## **ISSUE 10: FISH HABITAT/WATER QUALITY**

Although not recognized as a "major issue" early in the planning process, it became apparent during the decade of the 80's that water quality, fish habitat and riparian area protection and management had become matters of public concern -- particularly on Forests with anadromous fish habitat such as the Wallowa-Whitman. I well recognize the importance of those lands which are directly influenced by water as well as the streams and lakes themselves. These are usually our most productive areas, are some of our most important recreation areas, and are often relatively fragile.

Public response to the draft documents included many comments that were critical of our riparian area management. Many concerns were expressed about the effects of livestock grazing. I believe many of these criticisms have merit and that changes in management standards are necessary, not only for the Wallowa-Whitman, but for other Forests as well. For this reason, we have developed and issued new grazing utilization standards in 1988 and have made them a part of final Forest Plans. In general, these standards will have the effect of reducing the level of forage utilization by livestock in riparian areas. This will be helpful in our efforts to restore and maintain stream shade and stream bank stability where necessary.

During the past couple of years, Forests and Regional Offices in Regions 1, 4, and 6 have been working closely with Columbia Basin Indian tribes and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission on the issue of anadromous fish habitat management. At this time, a Forest Service draft policy and policy implementation guide have been developed, and are expected to be approved in the near future. Upon approval of the policy and implementation guide, the Forest Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary as soon as it's practicable to do so. I believe this policy will be an important factor in helping to achieve a mutual goal of the Tribes and the Forest Service to provide strategies for habitat management and anadromous fish production consistent with fish restoration goals of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

I will make it a point that the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) be contacted early in the scoping phase of analysis for any projects located in anadromous fish drainages on the Forest. In addition, when the Inter-regional agreements with the Forest Service and CRITFC, now being studied, are finalized, this plan will be amended

within such time as is practical to incorporate those policies.

The preferred alternative from the FEIS permits scheduled timber harvest in the riparian areas adjacent to streamside management unit (SMU) Class I and II streams. These comprise essentially all fish-bearing streams on the Forest. I have decided to exclude a strip of land, 100 feet on each side of each Class I and II stream, from scheduled timber harvest. (This change is reflected in the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.) I have several reasons for taking this approach.

1. These areas are critical in the protection of water quality and fish habitat. Management activities, such as timber harvest, present much greater risk to water quality and fish habitat if they occur close to these important streams.
2. Many streams on the Forest have been damaged by past activities, including timber harvest, road construction, recreation use, and livestock grazing.
3. Trees within riparian areas provide shade and stream bank stability while they are alive. When they die, they provide habitat for snag-dependent species and later, those which fall into or across the stream, provide channel stability and improved fish habitat. Quality of these habitats will be greatest if these areas are excluded from scheduled harvest.

In making this decision, I have considered the economic consequences of removing these areas from scheduled harvest. Analysis indicates that removing these lands (approximately 17,000 acres) from the suitable base results in a drop in the annual ASQ of approximately 0.6 MMCF (3 MMBF). I believe that this trade-off is worth the benefits received from the added stream protection.

## **OTHER DECISION FACTORS**

The following discussion highlights my rationale for dealing with other selected items of interest. I encourage readers to also review Appendix N of the Forest Plan FEIS. It provides detailed answers to many questions posed by the reviewers of the draft documents on a variety of Forest management topics.

### **Air Quality**

Air quality is becoming more of a problem statewide as our population increases. Besides the health problems associated with unclean air, the enjoyment of wilderness and other recreation activities on the National Forest depend on good visibility. We are aware that activities that take place on the Forest, particularly the burning of woody debris as part of cleanup after timber harvest, or other prescribed fire activities, can be significant factors in contributing to air quality problems, on and off the Forest.

While we cannot avoid all impacts on air quality with the selected alternative, I believe that by adhering to the standards and guidelines we have established for the Wallowa-Whitman, we will do our part to maintain federal and state standards for air quality.

### **Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive Species**

Biological diversity and the protection and management of threatened, endangered and sensitive plant and animal species are becoming increasingly important in the management of National Forests. The Forest Plan includes standards and guidelines for management of wildlife habitat and vegetation, including steps necessary for maintenance and recovery of species currently listed. I am confident that the standards and guidelines established in the Forest Plan will assure the perpetuation and recovery of threatened, endangered and sensitive plant and animal species and will prevent

other species from becoming threatened or endangered.

### **Fuelwood**

In response to the draft documents, many writers suggested that as fuelwood declines, commercial woodcutting should be eliminated. They indicated that this would help to preserve the way of life for the many people in northeast Oregon who cut their own wood from the National Forest. Commercial woodcutters provide a service for those who are physically unable to gather their own wood. Rather than eliminating commercial woodcutters, our challenge will be to continue to treat each user equitably.

Complicating the matter is the need to preserve an adequate number of dead trees for wildlife habitat. When dead trees were seemingly unlimited, there was little concern for retaining snags for wildlife nesting and feeding. We now realize that if viable populations of many species are to be maintained and distributed throughout the Forest, as required by law, we will need to carefully manage the fuelwood program.

The days when a person can purchase wood for \$20 per cord, or cut his/her own fuelwood free of charge, from high-quality trees a few miles from home, are behind us and I don't see anything practical that can be done about it. As the quality of wood declines and wood becomes more difficult to obtain, or more expensive to purchase, other energy sources will become more attractive. But for those who are willing to pay more, or willing to drive farther and perhaps use logging slash, fuelwood will continue to be available from the Forest.

### **Landscape Management**

The views of the Forest from important travel routes were not recognized by the public as an important issue during development of the Forest Plan. In the past few years, however, there has been concern expressed by local residents about



the shape of timber harvest units on the east-facing slopes of the Forest as seen from the North Powder area. It is likely that any created openings along the heavily-forested "Elkhorn face" would have been disliked by some people; but we recognize that these particular openings are objectionable. Although this was a lesson learned the hard way, it is a lesson learned.

If the Forest is to maintain the predicted harvest levels and the associated community benefits from such harvests, it will be necessary to harvest some of the trees from sensitive landscapes such as the slopes of the Elkhorn range; but it must be accomplished while preserving the scenic qualities these areas have to offer. We have the skills and technical ability to achieve desirable results. As with many of our decisions, it will be important for concerned citizens to participate at the project planning level. By working together I believe we can have the attractive landscapes we all want, and provide a reasonable measure of wood fiber production from the same lands.

### **Domestic Supply Watersheds**

Between draft and final documents, we carefully reworked the standards and guidelines for management of domestic supply watersheds incorporating many suggestions from reviewers including the City of La Grande, who devoted a great deal of attention to direction for management of the La Grande watershed. I am confident that the direction for managing those watersheds for which there are formal Secretary of Agriculture agreements (Baker City and La Grande), as well as the watersheds from which the towns of Sumpter and Wallowa obtain water, will prevent any Forest Service management activities from degrading water supplies. The Forest will continue to involve the city governments in any decisions affecting their municipal water supplies.

### **Research Natural Areas**

During the period between the release of the draft planning documents and now, the inventory of ecologic cells necessary to complete the research natural area (RNA) needs continued throughout the National Forests of Northeast Oregon. Several more cells were identified that were not identified at the time the Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published. Through this decision, I am recommending the establishment of 18 new research natural areas. Since most of these are within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area, and also within wilderness, the potential conflicts are primarily with grazing and recreation. Our examination of the areas indicates that these conflicts can be mitigated to considerable extent through careful RNA boundary establishment. In a few instances, some grazing use may have to be curtailed, or a recreational trail may need to be relocated.

### **Silvicultural Systems**

Timber harvest systems will be determined during project-level analysis, and will not be limited to even-aged methods as may have been implied by the DEIS. We do expect that even-aged methods will often be used because of the tree species, soil conditions, topography, and other factors found on the Wallowa-Whitman. But there will be many instances where selection cutting will better meet resource management needs or is required by law, as in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. (See Chapter IV of the FEIS and Appendix B).

### **Dead Tree Habitat**

In the Forest Plan, Wildlife Standard and Guideline No. 7 provides that small snags be maintained at the 20 percent level on timber harvest units. I believe, however, that our goal should be to maintain the 40 percent level by sub-drainage. By averaging in lands within each sub-drainage which are not man-

aged for timber production, and in consideration of other requirements of the plan, it is likely that this level will be achieved. I do not intend that the ASQ be reduced at this time to allow for possible changes in dead tree management direction. However, I am directing the Forest Supervisor to monitor the dead tree levels, and to recommend plan changes if necessary, to achieve the 40 percent level

### **Developed Recreation**

Many reviewers of the Proposed Plan were critical of National Forest management for not providing more recreational facilities on the Wallowa-Whitman. They cited examples of not being able to find room to launch a boat or find a place to park an automobile. The times they referred to are almost always those of high recreation use, such as the Fourth of July or Labor Day weekends.

Funds for the construction of recreational facilities, as well as their maintenance, are limited and the Wallowa-Whitman must compete with 18 other Forests in the Region for these funds. Forests that are closer to the population centers show higher levels of use at developed recreation sites than do the more distant Forests, such as the Wallowa-Whitman. Records show that most recreation sites on the Wallowa-Whitman are used to capacity only on major summer holidays, occasionally on weekends, and sometimes during hunting season.

The Wallowa-Whitman will continue to receive a share of the recreation funds, but major construction of new facilities is likely to be limited to the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area for the next few years.

### **Wilderness**

The Dunns Bluff Roadless Area was not considered by Congress in the Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 since it was not included in the inventory at that time. Therefore, it was appropriate to consider

it in this Forest planning effort. By selecting Alternative C, I am not recommending the Dunns Bluff Area for wilderness. As described in the FEIS, Appendix C, this area would not add significant features of interest to the Eagle Cap Wilderness. I believe it serves a better public need if managed for semiprimitive recreation activities.

Public response to the draft documents indicated that some readers understood that the plan would recommend increased wilderness on the Wallowa-Whitman. I am not recommending any changes in the current wilderness acreage unless the study of the Homestead area, in which the Bureau of Land Management is taking the lead, results in information that indicates that particular area should be recommended for wilderness.

### **Timber Losses Due to Fire and Insects**

During the past decade the Wallowa-Whitman has experienced serious insect epidemics and forest fires. Many people are concerned about the effects these events will have on the ability of the Forest to achieve predicted timber harvest levels.

Through reprogramming, the Forest has been able to substitute insect and fire-damaged timber for other proposed timber sales. Therefore, a major portion of the damaged merchantable volume has been captured. The effects on the smaller trees, the growing stock, may be more serious and will undoubtedly have an effect on future harvest levels. The only means we have of accurately accounting for catastrophic losses, as well as normal harvest that has taken place since the last inventory, is to reinventory or update the current inventory and recalculate the harvest levels. An update is currently underway and preliminary results are expected to be available by 1992. A major reinventory of the Forest is planned for completion in 1996. Either or both of these actions may result in amendment or revision of the Forest Plan.

## Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Planning

Many respondents to the draft documents suggested that the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA) Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) should have been fully reconsidered in this round of planning rather than being adopted without change. Nearly all the writers who made this suggestion were dissatisfied with the land management direction provided by the CMP and concluded that a revision would result in a more commodity-oriented alternative -- one that would allow a higher level of timber harvest.

The original decision to adopt the CMP without change was based on its recency. Due to the length of the time it took to develop the Forest Plan, the CMP is not as current as we had assumed.

However, it has been only six years since the last appeals were settled and we have only recently been receiving the funds to develop the recreation and transportation facilities the plan calls for.

The Act which established the HCNRA directed the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate rules as he deemed necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Act. These rules were published in the Federal Register in 1989.

When a major revision in the CMP does become necessary, there is no sound reason to believe that it will result in a more commodity-oriented land management allocation. For example, there has been a Congressional proposal to greatly increase the amount of wilderness in the HCNRA. There is currently a proposal by the Hells Canyon Preservation Council to designate the area as a National Park and/or a National Park Preserve. The basis for this proposal is largely due to dissatisfaction with what the proponents believe is over-emphasis

on timber management by the Forest Service.

My response to either side of this issue is that the area is being managed according to the Comprehensive Management Plan which, as directed by PL 94-199 (the Act which established the HCNRA), was developed through the National Environmental Policy Act process and is designed to meet the intent of Congress when they wrote the law.

In 1984, then Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, John Crowell, in a decision on appeals of the CMP decision, stated that

"the plan should be revised or amended whenever (1) the Forest Supervisor determines the conditions or demands of the public in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly, or (2) when any Forest Plans adopted for the Wallowa-Whitman, Nez Perce, or Payette National Forests sets a timber harvest level or any other output level which alone or in combination with the Forest Plan for one or more of those Forests might have a significant adverse effect on the economy of Wallowa County or Baker County, Oregon, or Adams County, Idaho County, or Nez Perce County in Idaho. If revision or amendment occurs because of the second of the above-described conditions, every reasonable effort will be made to eliminate or mitigate the significantly adverse effect on the economy of the affected county or counties by revising or amending the Comprehensive Management Plan."

Now that the three Forest Plans have been adopted, the Forest Supervisor is in a position to make the determination.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

A series of eleven multiple use Forest Plan Alternatives were developed and analyzed. Each provided a unique means of resolving the issues that were identified in the planning process. One or more of the issues are emphasized in each alternative. For example, some alternatives emphasize maintaining roadless areas while others emphasize timber production. The issues are listed in Section I of this document and are described in detail in Chapter I of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

A variety of additional alternatives were suggested by the public prior to the DEIS and during the DEIS review period. These included detailed proposals such as provided by the Committee for a Stable Community, Powder River Sportsmen's Club, Oregon Natural Resources Council, Wallowa Alliance, Friends of Lake Fork, and Oregon Governor Goldschmidt. But many other alternatives were also recommended by reviewers who referred to one or more of the displayed alternatives and suggested changes in them or that features of two or more alternatives be adopted. Each of the alternatives that are described in detail, and the basis for each, are detailed in Chapter II of the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Chapters II and IV of the EIS disclose the environmental effects of all alternatives considered in detail. The alternatives are briefly described here as follows.

**Alternative NC (No Change):** Would attempt to maintain the level of goods and services directed by the current timber management plan.

**Alternative A (Current Direction):** Would continue management according to the current land management plans (Unit Plans and Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Plan).

**Alternative B (RPA):** Would emphasize meeting the Forest's Resources Planning Act targets.

**Alternative B-Departure:** Would maintain high levels of timber harvest for 50 years by departing from nondeclining flow of timber. Timber harvest would be substantially reduced in later decades.

**Alternative C (Selected):** Was proposed in the DEIS and revised between the DEIS and FEIS in response to public as well as management concerns. While emphasizing timber and forage production, it also emphasizes maintaining big game habitat and semiprimitive recreation opportunities in certain areas.

**Alternative C-Departure:** Using the same land allocation as DEIS Alternative C, this alternative would provide a higher timber allowable sale quantity than proposed in Alternative C in the first decade. It would accomplish this by departing from nondeclining flow.

**Alternative D:** A commodity-oriented alternative ranking midway between Alternative B and C in timber and forage production emphasis.

**Alternative E:** Developed to emphasize timber production while maintaining all inventoried roadless areas in an undeveloped state.

**Alternative F:** Would emphasize fish, wildlife, and semiprimitive recreation values while maintaining a relatively low timber harvest level.

**Alternative G:** Designed to emphasize timber production only from areas which are likely to result in a profit to the federal government. Below-cost timber sales would be rare. The land allocation would be similar to that of Alternative B but would provide 20 percent less timber than Alternative B.

**Alternative H:** Utilizing the same land allocation as DEIS Alternative C, there would be a greater emphasis on economic efficiency by not requiring timber harvest on as many lands where costs of management exceed returns from sale of the timber.

## ALTERNATIVE COMPARISONS

### Environmentally Preferred Alternatives

The environmentally preferable alternative is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality as the alternative causing the least impact to the biological and physical environment. It also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources.

Alternative F, with its emphasis on fish and wildlife, backcountry recreation and aesthetic values represents the most environmentally-oriented alternative. In this context, Alternative NC represents the least environmentally-oriented alternative. Between these two choices, the relative ranking of alternatives is arguable but is approximately as shown in Table 2.

Table 2  
Ranking of Alternatives  
by Environmental Preference

Rank	Alternative
1	F
2	H
3	A
4	C
5	G
6	E
7	D
8	C-departure
9	B
10	B-departure
11	NC

Although the ranking of several alternatives can be debated, I doubt that many would disagree that Alternative C is near the midpoint; and I believe that most would agree that Alternatives A, H, and F rank higher in terms of environmental preference. Some would include Alternative E in that group, due to its emphasis on preserving roadless recreation values, or G because of its relatively low timber harvest.

I did not select one of the more environmentally preferred alternatives because I do not believe they provide the balance between economic benefits and environmental concerns provided by the selected alternative. Selecting Alternatives A, G, H, or F would not adequately respond to my concern for the needs of the local economies in northeast Oregon.

Alternative E would retain all roadless areas in an undeveloped state while intensively managing timber on nearly all other suitable lands. This alternative responds well to several important issues. However, I believe there are several disadvantages to this "all or nothing" approach. It would require intensive timber management over a relatively small land base, increasing the opportunity for environmental error. It would not permit the special management that I believe is needed for many big-game winter ranges or allow for maintaining the appearance of many sensitive landscapes. It would reduce old growth to minimum legal levels over much of the Forest. It would not permit timber management on many suitable timber-producing sites which I believe are more important for timber production than for the roadless recreation opportunity they provide.

## ALTERNATIVES WITH HIGHER PRESENT NET VALUES

In determining the most economically efficient alternative, the Forest Service uses an estimate of present net value (PNV), which is the difference between discounted benefits and discounted costs. In calculating present net value, a dollar value is assigned to various outputs. Some of these output values are market-determined, such as timber. Other outputs are assigned values derived from studies, such as in the case of wildlife nature viewing.

Present net value does not include all costs and benefits. Some of the more important nonpriced benefits include local community stability, ecosystem diversity, and habitat for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species. Dollar values were not assigned to these benefits, but the costs of providing community stability, ecosystem diversity, and wildlife habitat are reflected in the analysis.

Therefore, present net value is not the only criterion used in selecting the alternative. The criterion used was the maximization of net public benefits, which includes both the net value of the priced output and consideration of the nonpriced outputs.

The controversy over below-cost sales is related to concerns about economic effi-

ciency. Over a recent six-year period, the annual timber sale program had

- costs greater than benefits for two years;
- costs less than benefits for two years; and
- costs about the same as benefits for two years

This has been a management concern and emphasis is being placed on increasing the efficiency of our operations. Because of our desire to provide community stability by maintaining a high level of timber sale offerings, below-cost timber sales are expected to continue. In my judgement, these sales are the least-cost method of accomplishing Forest Plan goals and objectives.

In making my decision, I felt it was necessary to evaluate how opportunities would change by selecting alternatives with varying combinations of present net value and nonpriced outputs. This helped me understand the interactions occurring among resources in determining net public benefits.

Table 3 displays the selected alternative and those alternatives that have higher PNV's. The table shows estimated outputs for selected priced and nonpriced resources.

Table 3  
COMPARISON OF THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE TO ALTERNATIVES WITH HIGHER PNV'S  
Ranking by Present Net Value

Alternative	PNV 1/ (Million \$)	Jobs Annual (Decade 1)	Livestock Grazing (Decade 1)	Sawtimber (Annual MMBF) (Decade 1)	Old-Growth 2/ (Thousand Acres)	Roadless Areas With Nonroaded Prescriptions (Acres)	Payments to Local Governments (Million \$ Decade 1)	Personal Income (Million \$ Decade 1)
G	624	2800	207	117	157	313.1	4.0	40.4
H	593	2800	186	118	163	336.8	3.8	40.6
B	583	3100	207	151	150	298.2	4.7	45.3
E	575	2900	163	136	169	484.4	4.2	42.8
D	562	3000	191	143	158	333.3	4.4	44.0
C	551	3000	186	141	161	353.9	4.3	43.9

1/ Present Net Value calculated using a 4 percent real discount rate over a 150-year period of analysis

2/ At the end of the first decade of Forest Plan Implementation

No issues were more important than timber production and the local economy in selecting the Forest Plan alternative. Because of the structure of the local economy and the Forest's position in that marketplace, the two issues can be addressed together here. The selected alternative outdistanced all the alternatives with higher PNV's in responding to both these issues except for Alternatives B and D.

Alternative D was only slightly better (approximately 3%) in responding to the local economy issue. There was virtually no difference in total timber production from Alternative C and D; however, Alternative C was restructured to harvest ponderosa pine more aggressively. (See discussion under Timber Harvest Level Issue.) Alternative D was also not as responsive to other issues such as providing big game habitat.

Alternative B outdistanced Alternative C in every measure related to timber production

and the local economy. However, it underperformed Alternative C in every measure related to amenities. Many of us would like to have the harvest levels of Alternative B, but few people want to see marked changes in the visual character of landscapes they routinely view, and many people would resent the roading of nearly all remaining roadless areas.

Alternatives G and H simply were too low in timber production and in related local economic benefits to be selected. Alternative E is an attractive alternative—especially in its handling of the roadless issue. (See discussion under Environmentally Preferable Alternatives.) Like Alternative D, it was relatively close to Alternative C in its response to the timber production and local economy issues. In the final assessment, however, I believe that Alternative C, as modified, is more responsive to the issues raised during the analysis process, and in the long run will result in the highest net public benefits.

## V. IMPLEMENTATION

The Forest Plan will be implemented through identification, analysis, selection, and scheduling of projects to meet the management goals and objectives provided by the Plan. It will begin no earlier than thirty days after the Notice of Availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement appears in the *Federal Register* (36 CFR 219.10(c)(1)).

The schedule of proposed and possible projects for the first decade is contained in the appendices of the Forest Plan. Projects scheduled will be available for review at Ranger District Offices and the Forest Supervisor's Office. Schedules of possible projects will routinely change as projects are implemented or are removed from the listing for other reasons, and as new projects take their place. Adjustments to the schedule may be made based on results of monitoring, budgets, and unforeseen events.

The Forest Plan provides direction in the form of Goals, and Objectives, Standards and Guidelines, Monitoring Requirements, and the probable scheduling of management practices. It describes a desired future condition. It does not evaluate projects on a site-specific basis. Each proposed project will be subject to site-specific analysis and documentation in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Considerations revealed through this process may result in a decision not to proceed with the proposed project, even though the project may be permissible under the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan incorporates the Pacific Northwest Region's FEIS for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation. In implementing the Forest Plan project activities, the Forest will comply with the Record of Decision issued by the Regional Forester December 8, 1988, and the mediated agreement of August 1989. Use of all vegetation management techniques is allowed, but the use of herbicides is allowed only when other methods are ineffective or will unreasonably increase project costs. Emphasis must be placed on prevention and early treatment of unwanted vegetation and public involvement

in all aspects of project planning and implementation. Information about the vegetation management EIS, its Record of Decision, and the mediated agreement is available for review at Forest Service offices throughout Washington and Oregon.

The Plan's scheduled projects are translated into multi-year program budget proposals. The schedule is used for requesting and allocating the funds needed to carry out the planned management direction. The Forest's current year tentative annual program of work will be derived from this process. Upon approval of a final budget for the Forest, the annual work program will be updated and carried out.

The Forest work program will implement the management direction from the Forest Plan. Outputs and activities in individual years may be significantly different from those shown in the Forest Plan, depending on final budgets, new information derived from updated inventories, analysis, and monitoring, and any future amendments or revisions of the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan supersedes or incorporates all previous land and resource management plans prepared for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest. Upon implementation of the Forest Plan, Forest management activities must comply with the Forest Plan. Appropriated budgets may alter this schedule of activities; in addition, all permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of National Forest system land and resource uses must be in conformance with the Forest Plan. Such documents will be revised as needed as soon as practicable, subject to valid existing rights. This updating will generally be done within three years.

*Since a number of the decisions described herein reflect differences from the preferred alternative in the FEIS, some planned timber sale projects for fiscal year 1990 are at variance with the specific requirements dealing with timber management adjacent to Class I and II streams and big-game cover in Management Area 1. I have decided not to ask the Forest Supervisor to revise these fiscal year 1990 projects. All requirements will be met for*



*projects planned for 1991 and succeeding years.*

As discussed under Issue No. 10, Fish Habitat/Water Quality, changes in the Standards and Guidelines for riparian habitat protection resulted in a reduction of ASQ by some 0.6 MMCF (3 MMBF), or about 2 percent. The Standards and Guidelines in the Forest Plan have been updated to reflect these changes, but other figures have not been updated. This change in ASQ will mean a corresponding reduction in tree planting acres and tree thinning acres and a slightly different mix of harvest methods (less selective harvest). I am directing that these changes be incorporated into the Plan when the first amendment to the Plan is issued.

Timber sales now under contract will be administered under provisions of the existing contracts. Changes to existing timber sale contracts may be proposed on a case-by-case basis where overriding resource considerations are present.

#### **MITIGATION AND MONITORING**

Mitigation means to make less harsh or severe. In Forest management, it means to soften or mollify the effects of a management activity on other resources, e.g., the effects of timber harvest on soils or wildlife.

Mitigation measures are an integral part of the Standards and Guidelines and Manage-

ment Area direction described in Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan. They include Best Management Practices (BMP's) which are measures that have been proven over time to be effective in protecting water quality. A discussion of BMP's may also be found in Appendix O of the EIS.

I believe all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Program provides, as the title implies, management control of Forest Plan implementation. It is found in Chapter 5 of the Forest Plan. The results of monitoring will be used to verify or disprove the assumptions that were used in developing the Plan, and will be the basis for revising or amending the Plan.

Monitoring will also include:

- Ensuring that Standards and Guidelines and Management Area direction are being correctly applied and that they are producing the desired results.
- Determining whether predicted resource output levels are correct.
- Determining whether further research is needed.
- Verifying that Forest Service work forces, resources and budgets are adequate.

## VI. APPEAL RIGHTS AND APPROVAL

*This decision may be appealed in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal within 90 days of the date specified in the published legal notice. The appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer:*

F. Dale Robertson, Chief  
USDA Forest Service  
P. O. Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

A copy must be sent simultaneously to the Deciding Officer:

John F. Butruille  
Pacific Northwest Region  
USDA Forest Service  
319 S. W. Pine  
P. O. Box 3623  
Portland, OR 97208-3623

The Notice of Appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9).

Requests to stay the approval of this Land and Resource Management Plan shall not be granted (36 CFR 217.10(a)).

For a period not to exceed 20 days following the filing of a first level Notice of Appeal, the Reviewing Officer shall accept requests to intervene in the appeal from any interested or potentially affected person or organization (36 CFR 217.14(a)).

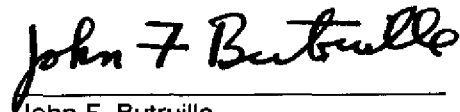
Decisions on site-specific projects are not made in this document.

The schedule of proposed and probable projects for the first decade is included in the appendices to the Plan. Final decisions on these proposed projects will be made after site-specific analysis and documentation in compliance with NEPA.

I encourage anyone concerned about the plan or environmental impact statement to contact the Forest Supervisor in Baker City, Oregon, (503) 523-6391 before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve the concern or misunderstanding in a less formal manner.

If you would like more information about the Forest Plan or EIS, or would like to review planning records, please contact:

R. M. Richmond, Forest Supervisor  
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
P. O. Box 907  
Federal Building  
Baker City, OR 97814  
(503) 523-6391



John F. Butruille  
Regional Forester  
Pacific Northwest Region  
USDA Forest Service

**APRIL 23, 1990**

Date

*projects planned for 1991 and succeeding years.*

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Monitoring will also include:

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- Determining whether predicted resource output levels are correct.
- Determining whether further research is needed
- Verifying that Forest Service work forces, resources and budgets are adequate.

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F. Dale Robertson, Chief  
USDA Forest Service  
P. O. Box 96090  
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

A copy must be sent simultaneously to the Deciding Officer:

John F. Butruille  
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Decisions on site-specific projects are not made in this document.

The schedule of proposed and probable projects for the first decade is included in the appendices to the Plan. Final decisions on these proposed projects will be made after site-specific analysis and documentation in compliance with NEPA.

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(503) 523-6391



John F. Butruille  
Regional Forester  
Pacific Northwest Region  
USDA Forest Service

**APRIL 23, 1990**

Date

**DECISION MEMO**  
**Forest Plan Amendment No. 5**

USDA Forest Service  
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Baker, Grant, Malheur, Umatilla, Union,  
and Wallowa Counties in Oregon

Adams, Idaho, and Nez Perce Counties in Idaho

**PROPOSED ACTION**

Amendment No. 5 to the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the Hells Canyon National Recreational Area (NRA), as incorporated by reference into the Forest Plan, documents my decision to implement the following recommendations from the **"Recommended Limits of Acceptable Change Recreation Management Plan for the Snake River"** developed by the Hells Canyon Limits of Acceptable Change Planning Task Force:

- Provide a definition of valid motorized and non-motorized river craft;
- Provide a definition for non-valid types of motorized and non-motorized river craft, and;
- Provide a review process for validity of new and different types of water craft.

This amendment further documents my decision to allocate the Cache Creek area, purchased by the USDA Forest Service in June 1991, to Management Area 9 - HCNRA Dispersed Recreation/Natural Vegetation, and Management Area 16 - Administrative and Recreation Sites.

**SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The **"Recommended Limits of Acceptable Change Recreation Management Plan for the Snake River,"** from which the proposed action is derived, was developed by a public Task Force. Through a cooperative agreement, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest worked with the University of Idaho's Department of Resource Recreation and Tourism to utilize the "Limits of Acceptable Change" (LAC) planning process. The LAC process is designed to specifically assist managers in defining what desired future resource and social conditions are acceptable and a strategy to prevent unacceptable conditions from occurring.

Input was gathered from a public task force consisting of 23 individuals, selected to represent a wide range of perspectives (reference Appendix A).

The development of the **"Recommended Limits of Acceptable Change Recreation Management Plan for the Snake River"** occurred over a 21 month period with 19 Task Force meetings. In addition, there were numerous press releases and news articles related to the ongoing LAC process, letters and meetings with interested publics and special interest groups, and one newsletter providing an update on the LAC process.

**REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THIS ACTION**

The proposed programmatic guidance for management of the Snake Wild and Scenic River Corridor can be excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as speci-

fied in the Forest Service Handbook, 1909.15-91-1, Section 26.1b, which lists categories established by the Chief of the Forest Service. The relevant section is:

*"The following categories of routine administrative and maintenance actions normally do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect (40 CFR 1508.22) on the quality of the human environment and, therefore, may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or environmental assessment (EA):"*

1. Administrative actions, such as road and area closures; restrictions on travel or use, such as camping, boating, or hunting; and posting signs and markers.

The allocation of the Cache Creek area can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment under Forest Service Handbook 1909.15-19-1, Section 26.1b and Forest Service Manual 1952.2, which states that "proposed actions considered for categorical exclusion which are not clearly within a typical class must have no more environmental impact than those that are."

During the development of the CMP, it was anticipated that the Cache Creek area would be acquired, thus the National Forest inholdings were designated Management Area 9 - Dispersed Recreation/Native Vegetation with the intent of allocating the Cache Creek area upon acquisition.

The administrative site allocation is directed by Management Area 16 - Administrative and Recreation Site Direction #22 (page 4-93 of the Forest Plan), which states: "If, through an environmental analysis, it is determined that additional administrative or recreational sites are needed, additional areas may be added to Management Area 16 sufficient to meet the identified need. This change in land allocation will normally be considered a non-significant amendment to this Forest Plan because of the relatively small areas involved."

#### **CONSISTENCY WITH THE FOREST PLAN**

Adoption of this amendment will not significantly alter Forest Plan or CMP goals, objectives, standards, or guidelines for the Snake Wild and Scenic River Corridor and NRA. Indeed, this amendment should enable managers to better meet the intent of the enabling NRA legislation, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and existing Forest Plan and CMP goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines.

Therefore, I have determined that this amendment is not significant in relation to the National Forest Management Act.

#### **DECISION**

As Forest Supervisor for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, it is my decision to implement the following programmatic changes to the Wallowa-Whitman Forest Plan and CMP:

On page 2 of the revised Snake River Recreation Management section of the CMP (December 1983), add the following prior to the section on Floatboat Use:

##### **Valid Motorized, Non-Motorized Craft.**

**Valid motorized and non-motorized river craft shall be allowed within the Wild, Scenic, and Study Corridor sections as defined below. Non-valid motorized and non-motorized water craft shall be restricted from use within the Wild and Scenic Corridor sections and in the Study River Corridor from the north Scenic River boundary downstream to Snake River mile 177.0 at Cache Creek Ranch, as defined below.**

**Valid Motorized Craft:** Valid motorized river craft will be defined as rigid hull water craft with water cooled exhaust (Inboard engines shall have through the hull exhaust) that are driven by propeller(s) or jet pump(s), that are equipped with mufflers and/or other noise reduction devices.

**Valid Non-Motorized Craft:** Valid non-motorized river craft shall be defined as sweep boats, pontoons, cat-a-rafts, inflatable rafts, rigid hull and inflatable kayaks, canoes, dories, and drift boats. Craft must be controllable by paddles, oars, sweep, or outboard motors limited to 15 hp (if motors are used, they (boats) must meet State and Coast Guard licensing specifications). Motors are restricted to downstream propulsion and maneuverability. Crafts are not capable of being mechanically propelled upstream through rapids.

**Non-Valid (motorized and non-motorized) Craft:** Non-valid non-motorized river craft shall include wind surf boards/sail boards, sailboats, or crafts that are not under maneuverable control. Non-valid motorized river craft shall include water-skis, air boats, motorized surf boards, hover craft, winged watercraft, any power boats not equipped with a watercooled exhaust, amphibious craft, mini-submarines, power boats under 12 feet in length, and water craft that must be straddled when ridden by the operator/passenger. Personal water vehicles such as jetskis are defined as non-valid in the Wild River Corridor and in the Scenic River Corridor upstream from the Pittsburg Landing Launch Ramp to the Wild River Boundary.

New and different water craft not included in the previous definitions will be reviewed by the Forest through an interactive public involvement process, to determine the suitability of the craft as valid or non-valid. New and different water craft defined as valid, shall be included within the current use allocations of motorized or non-motorized river craft.

The above definition for Non-Valid (motorized and non-motorized) Craft does not include "personal water vehicles such as jetskis" for the Scenic section of the river corridor downstream from the Pittsburg Landing Launch Ramp as proposed in the LAC Task Force recommendation. I have chosen to study the issue of personal water vehicles use in the Scenic River Corridor downstream from the Pittsburg Landing Launch Ramp and in the Study River Corridor downstream to Snake River mile 177.0 as part of a separate environmental analysis. Until that analysis is complete and its recommendations forwarded to the State of Oregon's Marine Board, the Scenic and Study River Corridor (from Pittsburg Landing Launch to Snake River mile 177.0) will remain closed to personal water vehicles such as jetskis, pursuant to 36 CFR 250.50, Order 208, dated January 2, 1992.

Specific changes within the Forest Plan will include assigning the 6,556 acre Cache Creek area to land allocations that meet the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan and CMP. The Cache Creek area will be managed under the intent and direction of each of the appropriate land allocations. The land allocation assignments are as follows:

**Management Area 9 - HCNRA Dispersed Recreation/Native Vegetation:** 6,549 acres as intended in the CMP, if and when the Cache Creek property became federal land.

**Management Area 16 - Administrative and Recreation Site:** 7 acres encompassing the Ranch headquarters, pursuant to Management Area Direction #22, page 4-93 of the Forest Plan.

As part of the Final Settlement Agreement for the American Rivers/Oregon Rivers Council Appeal of the Forest Plan, the eligibility and suitability of the Snake River Study Corridor that parallels the Cache Creek area will be studied for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers system through a separate environmental analysis.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this decision shall not occur within seven days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Baker City Herald.

## ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND APPEAL

Forest Plan amendments are decisions subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9, "Content of a Notice of Appeal," including the reasons for appeal. Two copies must be filed with the Regional Forester, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208 within 45 days of the date the legal notice of this decision appears in the Baker City Herald.

## CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information regarding this amendment, contact Mike Cole at the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Office, P.O. Box 699, Clarkston, Washington 99403, or at (509)-758-0616.



R. M. RICHMOND  
Forest Supervisor  
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

Aug. 6, 1992  
Date



## **APPENDIX A**

### **HELLS CANYON LIMITS OF ACCEPTABLE CHANGE TASK FORCE**

#### **AGENCIES**

Ed Cole	United States Forest Service
LuVerne Grussing	Bureau of Land Management
Keith Kiler	Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Ken Witty	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Jeff Hoedt	State of Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation

#### **AIRCRAFT INTERESTS**

David Bennett

#### **ANGLERS INTERESTS**

John Patterson

#### **COMMUNITY INTERESTS**

Population Centers - Lewiston/Clarkston

Gerry Tatcher

Idaho Communities

Jeff Peavey

Oregon Communities

Arleigh Isley

#### **CONSERVATION INTERESTS**

Ric Bailey  
Ron Wise

#### **IDAHO POWER COMPANY**

Dwayne Wood

#### **LANDOWNERS**

George Enneking

#### **NATIVE AMERICANS**

Sandi McFarland

#### **OUTFITTERS**

Float Boats

Curt Chang  
George Hauptman

Power Boats

Wally Beamer  
Darell Bantz

#### **PRIVATE BOATERS**

Float Boats

Jim Lafferty  
Al Hams

Power Boats

Dennis Gratton  
Rich Rogers



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Wallowa-Whitman  
National Forest

P. O. Box 907  
Baker City, OR 97814

Reply To: 1950

Date: November 8, 1994

*Amendment No. 12*

Dear Reviewer/User:

Enclosed is a summary of the recently completed Wild and Scenic Snake River Recreation Management Plan. The recreation plan provides a framework for management of the Wild and Scenic Snake River corridor for the next ten to fifteen years. It specifically addresses the significant issues identified in the proposed action and the public comments received in response to the draft and final environmental impact statements.

The recreation plan establishes an allocation system for limited, shared motorized and non-motorized river use during the primary season (the Friday before Memorial Day through September 10), except that an eight-week period during July and August will be motor-free on a portion of the wild river, Monday through Wednesday.

During the secondary season (September 11 through the Thursday before Memorial Day), use levels will not be regulated for either motorized or non-motorized users in either section of the river. When monitoring indicates the daily averages in the secondary season exceed those established for the primary season for two consecutive years, the control period for the primary season will be expanded.

Should there be direction in this management plan that you disagree with, you have an opportunity to file an appeal with the reviewing officer, who, in this case, is the Regional Forester in Portland, Oregon. Appeals to the Regional Forester must be postmarked no later than December 27, 1994. Appeal regulations are found in the Code of Federal Regulations under 36 CFR 217.

For more information, a copy of the complete management plan, or a copy of the record of decision, call Kurt Wiedenmann at (503) 523-1296 or write:

Forest Supervisor  
Attention: Snake River Planning Team  
P. O. Box 907  
Baker City, OR 97814

↑  
RED SIGNED  
10-21-94  
MANAGEMENT PLAN  
REPLACES RIVER  
MGT. DIRECTION IN  
EXISTING CMP.

The Planning Team, Ranger Ed Cole, and I extend our thanks to those of you who participated in this rather intensive planning process. We look forward to working with you to implement this new management plan.

Sincerely,

R. M. RICHMOND  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure



Caring for the Land and Serving People

FS-6200-28(7-82)

**Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
Hells Canyon National Recreation Area**

**SUMMARY OF RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FOR WILD AND SCENIC SNAKE RIVER CORRIDOR**

**Management Direction for River Use**

Motorized kickers cannot be mounted on floatcraft or used in any manner to traverse the wild river at any time but can be stowed onboard, out of sight, until entering the scenic section. Motorized kickers can be used in the scenic section, year-round.

An active and timely education program at all river portals will be used to increase recreation users' awareness of acceptable social river etiquette and understanding of management practices.

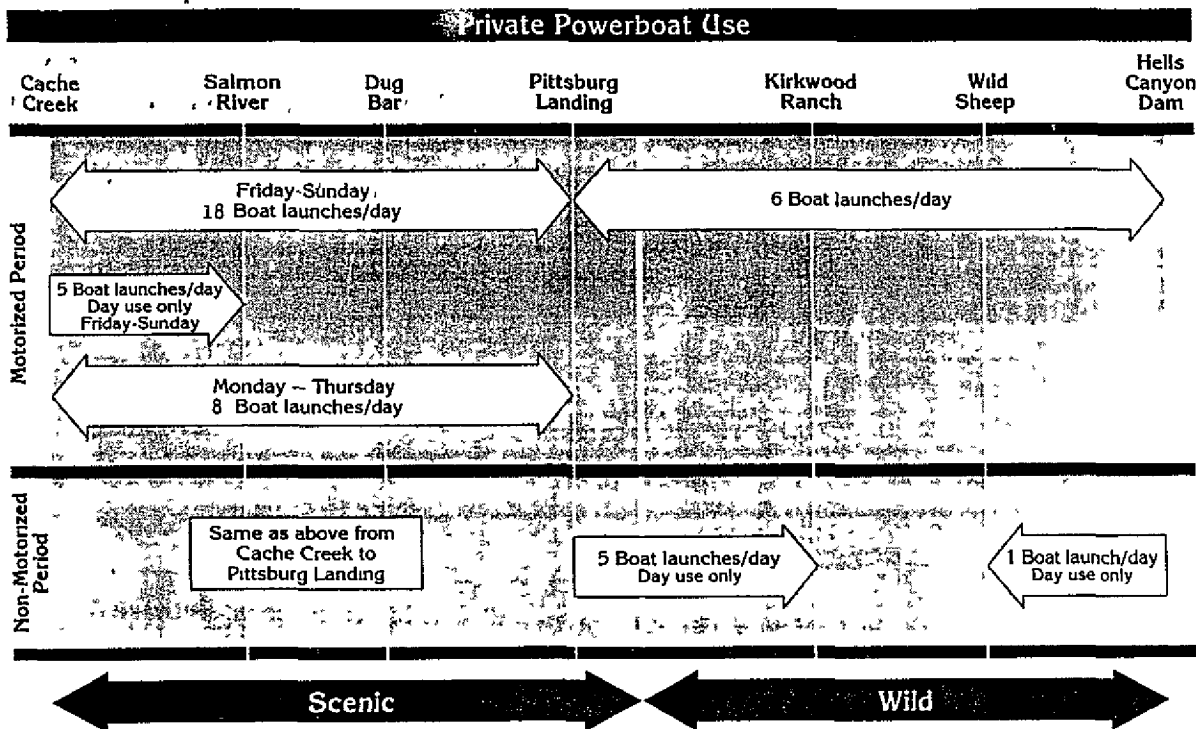
Launch reservations are required for all river users in the wild section during the primary season. In the scenic section, launch reservations are required for all river users Friday through Sunday during the primary season.

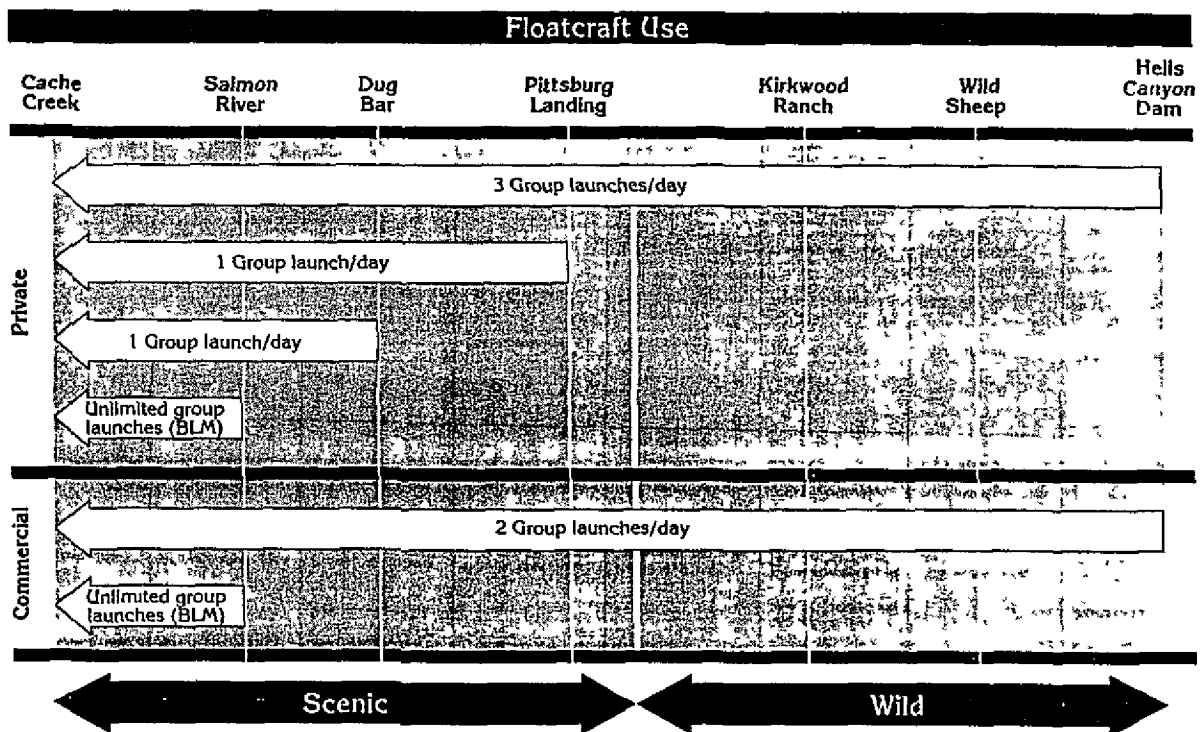
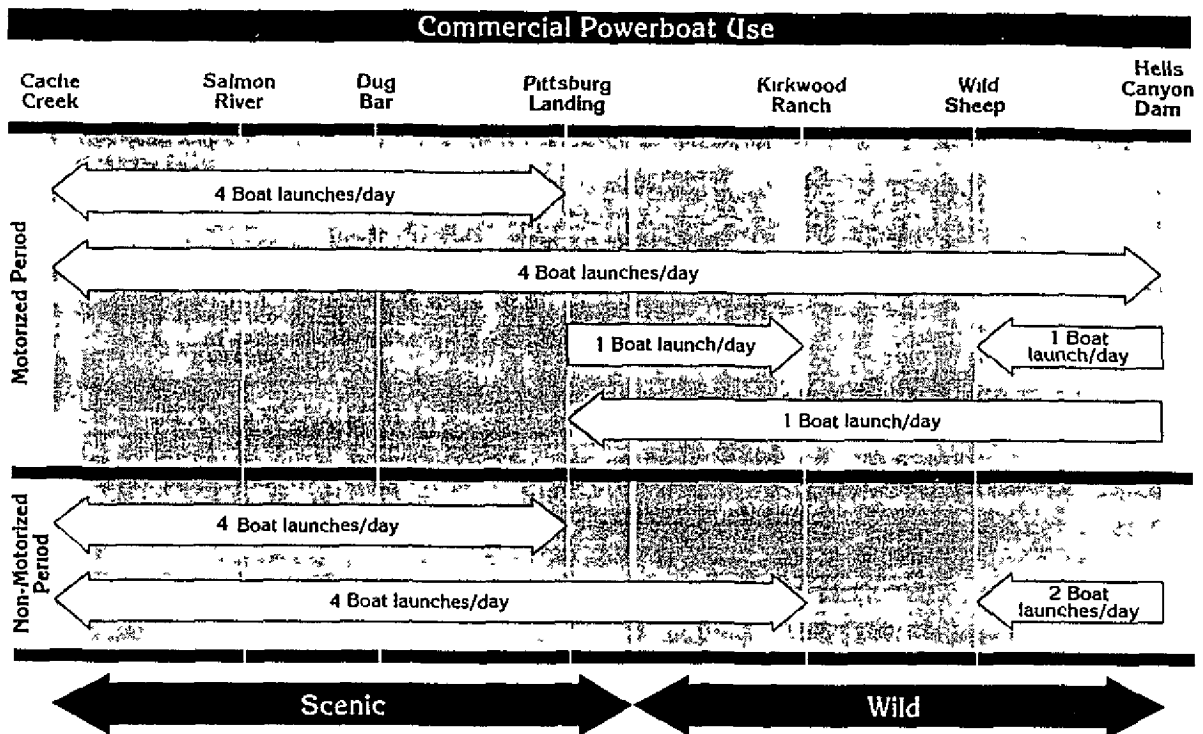
**Use Seasons**

The primary season is the Friday before Memorial Day through September 10, inclusive. The secondary season is from September 11 through the Thursday before Memorial Day.

**Allocation for Rivercraft Use**

The number of rivercraft permitted to launch into the wild and scenic river will be regulated within the allocation indicated below. Motorized craft will not be permitted access to the section of wild river between the top of Wild Sheep Rapid and the upper landing at Kirkwood Historic Ranch, Monday through Wednesday each week, for a maximum of eight weeks during the primary season between the Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends.





## **Salmon River Coordination and Management**

The effects of lower Salmon River recreational use will be evaluated in coordination with the Bureau of Land Management to meet the desired future conditions established for the scenic section of the Snake River. Standards have been established to facilitate a smooth merging of Salmon River and Snake River float traffic.

## **Disposal of Solid Human Waste**

Solid human waste carryout is required for the wild river in 1996 and for the scenic river in 1997. All pit toilets will be removed from the wild river by the beginning of the primary season in 1996 and from the scenic river by 1997. Toilet facilities will be maintained at administrative and developed recreation sites and managed according to site development plans and State regulations. Most other users will be required to use a "cat hole" method for disposal of solid human waste.

## **Camping**

Camping outside of designated dispersed campsites and developed recreation sites will be prohibited for water-based users. Drop camps will be prohibited during the primary season and permitted during the secondary season.

Although campsite reservations are not currently required, a reservation system would be implemented for the wild and/or scenic rivers if monitoring indicates a need to resolve conflicts resulting from campsite competition and additional mitigation does not adequately resolve the conflict.

Party size for day and overnight use for all river users (with the exception of commercial powerboat day-use) would be limited to a maximum of 24 people per party in all river sections, year-round.

During the primary season, stay lengths of three days and two nights per campsite in the wild section, and four days and three nights in the scenic section, will be permitted within 1/4 mile of high watermark. During the secondary season, stay lengths of 14 days and 13 nights per campsite will be permitted within 1/4 mile of high watermark. Monitoring of stay lengths may indicate a need to manage campsite competition at some time in the future.

## **Management of Upland Use**

Self-issued permits will be required for trail users between Pittsburg Landing and Kirkwood Historic Ranch. If monitoring indicates trail and camping impacts are affecting the recreation setting and/or ORV, limits will be established to protect them.

Backpackers and hikers transported to trailheads from Hells Canyon Creek by powerboat will be required to obtain a self-issued permit prior to launch.

## **Facilities and Improvements**

Administrative and recreation sites would be managed in accordance with the provisions of Management Area 16 in the Forest Plan.

There will be no navigation/survey markers upstream from Kirkwood Historic Ranch.

Picnic tables in campsites in the wild river, except at Sheep Creek Ranch and Kirkwood Historic Ranch, will be prohibited. Picnic tables at campsites in the scenic section may be maintained.

The metal shed upstream from the Pittsburg administrative site and the newer of the two metal grain silos at the Kirkwood Historic Ranch will be dismantled and removed.

#### **Grazing Allotment, Permittee Facilities, and Private Inholding Access**

Access to grazing allotments, permittee facilities, and private inholding during the primary season will be managed in accordance with the applicable regulations. In the secondary season, there would be no restrictions on river access to these sites

#### **Aircraft Use**

Recreational aircraft (fixed wing and rotary) landings are limited to designated public airstrips in the river corridor and self-issued permits are required.

Big Bar landing strip will remain open, year-round, for private and commercial aircraft. Sluice Creek will remain closed during the primary season (except for emergency use related to fire suppression and rescue efforts) and open during the secondary season. Dug Bar, Pittsburg, and Salmon Bar landing strips will be open, year-round, to private and commercial aircraft. Cache Creek airstrip will be open, year-round, to private aircraft use only.

Floatplane landings are prohibited on the entire river corridor, year-round.

Incidental commercial aircraft use of airstrips within the river corridor will be allowed within established guidelines.

#### **MITIGATION AND MONITORING**

Mitigation measures have been designed to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for environmental effects of implementing the management plan.

Various activities will be monitored to provide an evaluation of the effect of management activities upon the environment of the corridor. Monitoring plans have been developed to assure compliance in achieving the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan, the protection and enhancement of the ORVs of the river corridor, and the ability to achieve and maintain appropriate river settings. Based upon an evaluation of the monitoring results, the Area District Ranger will recommend to the Forest Supervisor changes in the management direction for the river corridor.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Wallowa-Whitman National Forest  
P. O. Box 907  
Baker City, OR 97814

**FIRST CLASS**

**END  
OF  
PHYSICAL  
FILE**