United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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Decision Notice
and
Finding of No Significant Impact
Lodge Point Project

Moose Creek Ranger District, Nez Perce National Forest
Northern Region USDA, Forest Service
Idaho County, Idaho

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I. DECISION SUMMARY

This Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of no significant impact (FONSI) document my decision and rationale for implementing the Lodge Point Project. I have decided to implement ***Alternative B*** as described in the Lodge Point Environmental Assessment (EA) issued in June 2011. Alternative B will implement commercial thinning and road management activities in the Lodge Point project area. Alternative B includes a site-specific Nez Perce Forest Plan amendment for soil quality standard #2 (see Updated EA Appendix C).

II. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Moose Creek Ranger District initiated the Lodge Point project in March 2010. We designed the project to be consistent with the Nez Perce National Forest Plan as amended. The Lodge Point project is located in the area between Lodge Point and Pine Knob along Forest Road 653 and west along Forest Road 286 (about 15 miles east of Kooskia, ID). The project is located in Little Tinker, Lodge Creek, and two unnamed subwatersheds. These subwatersheds drain into the Middle Fork Clearwater River. The 4182-acre project area is in Township 32 North, Ranger 06 East, Sections 13-17, 20-30, Boise Principle Meridian in Idaho County.

The Lodge Point analysis area was evaluated in the Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Subbasin Assessment (USDA-FS 2001). This DN and FONSI incorporate by reference the Nez Perce National Forest Plan (USDA-FS 1987), Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA-FS 1987b), and Record of Decision (USDA-FS 1987c) and the Updated Lodge Point EA. The June 2011 Lodge Point EA was updated in September 2011 to clarify content, correct errors, use terminology consistent with policy, and add omissions to correct the June 2011 document. Changes between the June 2011 EA and the Updated EA do not change the resource effects displayed in the original document. The Updated EA and project file contain analysis and documentation used to support the decision and conclusions in this DN and FONSI.

The Nez Perce Forest Plan (Chapter II) establishes overall management direction for the Forest. Chapter III of the Forest Plan details goals and standards applicable to Nez Perce National Forest management areas. Proposed vegetation treatments will occur in management areas generally allocated for timber management in the Nez Perce Forest Plan (USDA-FS 1987). The following is a brief description of each management area relevant to the Lodge Point analysis area:

> **Management Area 12 -** Manage for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained yield basis.
>
> **Management Area 15 -** Manage for timber production and other multiple uses on a sustained yield basis while improving the quality of deer and elk winter range.

III. PURPOSE AND NEED

We identified resource management opportunities based on the existing resource conditions (Updated EA, Chapter 3), applicable Forest Plan management direction (Updated EA, Chapter 4), and the needs, opportunities, and issues (Updated EA, pages 2-4) identified during the project development and public

involvement processes (Updated EA, pages 3). The Lodge Point EA documents the analysis of four alternatives (Updated EA, pages 5-12) considered to meet the identified purposes and needs for the area.

There are two purposes of the Lodge Point project: 1) improve forest health and 2) support local communities (Updated EA, pages 2).

Commercial thinning will develop vegetation conditions that are more resilient to insects, disease, and fire. Reducing vegetative density will allow for increased tree vitality by reducing competition. Retaining the largest, most healthy ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees and reducing the grand fir and smaller Douglas-fir trees will help improve tree species composition. Using prescribed fire will reduce activity fuels, reduce seedling numbers, increase nutrient availability, and reduce the potential for crown fires in the wildland urban interface (WUI).

Consistent with the Forest Plan (page II-1), there is a desire to support local communities with resource management activities.

IV. DECISION

After careful consideration of analyses, applicable laws, and public comments, I have decided to implement Alternative B, as described in the Updated Lodge Point EA. This decision is based on information contained in the project record, including the Updated EA and effects analysis described in Chapter 3, the resource specialist reports, the management requirements of the applicable laws and policies, the design features described below, and the comments received during the public involvement process.

Alternative B will implement the following management activities, design features, and monitoring activities.

Management Activities

- Commercially thin approximately 1777 acres (including merchantable and biomass wood products) of heavily stocked stands;
- Construct about 2.5 miles of temporary roads for access to units and decommission after use;
- Maintain about 17.2 miles of existing road for access to units;
- Reconstruct up to 13.6 miles of road for access to units;
- Construct 5.8 miles of temporary road on previously decommissioned road templates followed by decommissioning after use;
- Fire would be used to treat activity fuel concentrations and to reduce pine needle accumulations primarily in ponderosa pine dominated stands; and
- Site-specific Forest Plan Amendment to amend soil standard #2 (Updated EA Chapter 2 and Appendix C).

  Alternative B requires one site specific, non-significant Forest Plan Amendment to soil standard #2. I have evaluated the analysis contained in Appendix C of the Updated EA, and conclude that the following, site-specific amendment to the Nez Perce National Forest Plan for the Lodge Point Commercial Thin project, does not constitute a significant amendment to the Nez Perce National Forest Plan. I base this conclusion on the following factors, outlined in Appendix C of the Updated EA:

1. This action does not significantly alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
2. This action does not adjust management area boundaries or management prescriptions resulting from further onsite analysis when the adjustments do not cause significant changes in the multiple-use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management.
3. This action is a minor, site-specific change in soils standard #2 to be consistent with Regional soil guidelines.
4. This action maintains opportunities for additional projects or activities that will contribute to achievement of the management prescription.

NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST

LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

AMENDMENT NO. 37

SITE-SPECIFIC AMENDMENT TO SOIL QUALITY STANDARD #2

FOR THE LODGE POINT PROJECT AREA

The purpose of this amendment is to allow vegetation activities in areas that currently exceed Forest Plan soil quality standard #2.

The Nez Perce National Forest soil quality standards (Forest Plan II-22) apply to lands in the Lodge Point project area. Soil quality standard #2 currently states:

> *"A minimum of 80 percent of any activity area shall not be detrimentally compacted, displaced, or puddled upon completion of activities. This direction does not apply to permanent recreation facilities and other permanent facilities such as system roads."*

The following amendment is proposed, specific to the Lodge Point project area:

> *"Where detrimental soil conditions from past activities affect 15 percent or less of the activity area, a cumulative minimum of 85 percent of the activity area shall not be detrimentally compacted, displaced, or puddle upon completion of activities.*
>
> *Where detrimental soil conditions from past activities affect more than 15 percent of the activity area, the cumulative detrimental soil disturbance from project implementation and past activities shall not exceed the conditions prior to the planned activity and shall provide a net improvement in soil quality."*

Design Features

The design features and BMPs described below will be implemented as part of my decision.

1. PACFISH Riparian Buffers: No-harvest buffers will be implemented in the project area (150' on non-fish bearing perennial, and 100' on intermittent streams). All vegetation and woody debris will be left intact in these areas.
2. Best Management Practices (Updated EA, Appendix F): BMPs will be followed for the action alternatives as stipulated by the Idaho Forest Practices Act. Idaho water quality standards regulate non-point source pollution from timber management and road construction activities through the application of BMPs.
3. Whole tree yard all units to reduce slash in harvest units.

4. Any limbs or tops that break off during falling or skidding operations will be left on site. This small diameter organic material, in addition to current down large woody material, will be left for long-term site productivity.
5. Assure compliance with Northern Region Snag Management Protocol, January 2009 (Updated EA, Appendix H).
6. Approximately two acres of high mass wasting potential and landslide prone area will be excluded from Unit 12 and a 100 foot PACFISH riparian buffer will be implemented.
7. Excavation greater than 20 inches will be limited on temporary roads and skid trails/landings due to high subsurface erosion potential.
8. Units 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 showing slump or landslide potential related to seeps/springs or wetter ephemeral draws. A 100 to 150 foot PACFISH riparian buffer will be applied to these seeps/springs and wet draws. Ten to 15 tons/acre of downed coarse woody material will be created/maintained for added slope stability (Updated EA, Appendix H).
9. For Units 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11, cumulative detrimental soil disturbance from project implementation and past activities shall not exceed the conditions prior to the planned activity and shall provide a net improvement in soil quality.
10. For Units 2, 4, 8, and 12, new detrimental soil disturbance will be limited to 2 to 4 acres (Updated EA, Table 3-5). Portions of the unit will be dropped if the layout plan cannot reach the entire unit while staying under the 15 percent standard.
11. On all Units, a logging system layout design will be developed in order to use as many of the existing skid trails and landings as possible and to limit the amount of new detrimental disturbance. All used skid trails and landings exhibiting detrimental soil disturbance will be decompacted/decommissioned after use. Retention of approximately 50 percent or more of larger trees (>12" DBH) will provide for future stability.

    Decompaction will be required on all used skid trails where excavation or ground disturbance has taken place or where successive passes have taken place over the same trail. The Forest Service will designate the skid trails to be decompacted. Decompaction will be conducted to improve soil productivity and meet Regional soil quality guidelines. Decompaction will span the width of the compacted areas and will be 10-18 inches deep. The intent of decompaction is to effectively loosen the ground to allow water penetration and revegetation and to minimize mixing the rocky sub-surface soils with the topsoil. The depth of decompaction shall be adjusted to avoid turning up large rocks, roots, or stumps. Equipment will not be permitted to operate outside the clearing limits of the skid trail. Decompaction should be done June 15 to October 15, unless otherwise approved. No decompaction work should be done during wet weather or when the ground is frozen or otherwise unsuitable. All erosion control barriers and cross ditches removed or otherwise rendered ineffective by the decompaction treatment should be reinstalled as they were prior to the decompaction.
12. Five to 15 tons/acre of downed woody material (>3" diameter) will be placed/maintained in each of the harvest units to maintain soil stability and productivity and meet Regional soil guidelines for coarse woody material (Updated EA, Appendix H). This may be met by falling cull trees (snags <12 inches dbh) or damaged trees as directed by the Sale Administrator.
13. Temporary road locations will predominantly be located on gentle ridgetops, over existing templates, and in areas where excavation will be minimized. Erosion control stabilization consisting of out sloping, water barring, and/or seeding or mulching, as specified in the contract, will be required on all temporary roads that overwinter. All temporary roads will be closed to the public and decommissioned following use.

14. In all units, to reduce ground disturbance, no ground base logging (including mechanical falling) will be allowed on slopes over 35 percent, unless mitigating measures, such as operating on adequate compacted snow or only over short distances, are approved by the soil specialist.
15. Physically and administratively retain current access management prescriptions to retain elk security areas.
16. Minimize sediment input into the Lodge Creek tributary that lies between Unit 7 and 8 by using sediment barriers, prohibiting construction during the wet season, and dewatering the site during installation and removal of a temporary stream crossing.
17. Measures to protect residual trees will include timely slash treatment, notably in areas where ponderosa pines are present. This will be done to reduce the risk of IPS beetle infestation. Prompt slash treatment has been proven to drastically reduce this risk.
18. In order to reduce the risk of root disease (Armillaria) spread, Douglas-fir will generally be reduced in most stands to no more than one third of the species composition. Root disease resistant species, such as ponderosa pine and western redcedar will be favored for retention.
19. Halt ground-disturbing activities if cultural resources are discovered in the project area until an Archaeologist can properly evaluate and document the resources in compliance with 36 CFR 800. This will be carried out through the contract and contract administration or inspection.
20. Avoid or protect known historic properties or sites (Forest Plan, page II-17, Cultural Resources Standard #4). This will be carried out through the contract and contract administration or inspection. Two known sites will be avoided.
21. The Lodge Point project will minimize the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants by: chemically treating any noxious weed populations along the existing road systems before and after project implementation; monitoring and cleaning any equipment of loose debris prior entering the project area to prevent "new invader" weed establishment (CT6.26); and revegetating project related exposed soils using certified noxious weed free native seed mix and fertilizer (as necessary) upon project completion. All seeding will follow Regional guidelines.
22. To minimize effects of log hauling to private landowners along Forest Road 470, the contractor will be responsible for providing dust abatement near homes during hauling operations; following posted speed limits; and limiting log hauling activity to weekdays before 5 PM.

Monitoring

PACFISH Compliance

The Lodge Point project will include PACFISH compliance monitoring. This monitoring will be conducted annually by the Forest Fisheries Biologist in conjunction with BMP audits. Monitoring is conducted on randomly selected treatment areas throughout the Forest. Results will be reported in the annual Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Both implementation and effectiveness of treatments will be monitored.

Soil

The project hydrologist/soil specialist will conduct post harvest monitoring in commercial thin Units 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and 12 to assess accuracy of detrimental soil disturbance estimates; effectiveness of project design measures; implementation of Regional soil quality guidelines; and effectiveness of temporary road decommissioning.

Vegetation Treatments

This monitoring will determine if vegetation treatments were conducted in the locations identified on project maps and if they were conducted according to proposed silvicultural prescriptions. Timber Sale Administrators or Contracting Officer Representative will make weekly, if not daily, assessments on the progress of project implementation. Implemented conditions will be compared with desired project outcomes and objectives.

Fire/Fuels

The Forest Service will assess treated areas to determine if desired conditions were achieved. Burn piles will be monitored for invasive species and exposed soils.

V. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

My decision on this project was based on how well the management actions analyzed in the Updated EA address the purposes and needs of the project, and consideration of issues that were raised during the scoping process and the comment period on the EA. I considered Forest Plan and Record of Decision standards and guidance for the project area, and took into account competing interests and values of the public.

I have reviewed the alternatives analyzed in detail (Updated EA pages 5-9) and project design measures (Updated EA pages 10-12), and have found that they are responsive to the issues and concerns as well as purpose and need for action. The issues (Updated EA, pages 3-4) were developed based on public comments and an interdisciplinary review of existing conditions in the project area. The purpose and need for action (Updated EA, page 2) is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Forest Plan. I also reviewed project area conditions and recommendations in the Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Rivers Subbasin Assessment (USDA-FS 2001). I find the purpose and need to be supported by the scientific information found in these documents. In addition, I have read and considered actions analyzed in the Forest Plan as amended, the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, and the Forest Plan Record of Decision.

To ensure that an adequate range of alternatives was considered, I reviewed four alternatives to the proposed action, three in detail (Updated EA, pages 5-9). I reviewed public comments from the scoping period as well as those that were received for the EA. The interdisciplinary team (IDT) considered all public comments that were received when developing the EA (project file). I find that the range of alternatives considered was thorough and complete, and reflects public comments and concerns.

In summary, environmental effects to overall ecosystem health are determined to be neutral or beneficial in this analysis (Updated EA, Chapter 3); with potentially detrimental effects mitigated through project design measures (Updated EA, pages 10-12). Alternative B was designed to respond to the purpose and need described in Chapter 1 of the Updated EA, and to comply with the Forest Plan as amended and regulatory framework (Updated EA, Chapter 4).

Meeting the Purpose and Need

I have selected Alternative B over the other alternatives because it best meets the purposes and needs for action while being responsive to public comments and other agency concerns. The environment in the project area can be improved and moved toward desired conditions as a result of this project. Specifically, Alternative B best meets the purposes and needs because:

- Alternative B provides the greatest opportunity to manage forest vegetation by thinning heavily stocked stands to shift the area toward desired conditions. Removing suppressed trees will redistribute available sunlight, nutrients, and water to the remaining trees, causing an increase in growth, vigor, resistance, and resilience to insect and disease. Favoring ponderosa pine and large Douglas-fir will help increase representation of these species in the analysis area and help maintain forest tree species diversity.
- There is a desire to contribute to community stability and employment. Timber and transportation management activities contribute to community stability and employment.

Consideration of Issues and Concerns

Issues were generated internally, by the IDT, and externally, through public comments. Involvement of all interested individuals; business; organizations; county, state and federal agencies; and the Nez Perce Tribe was sought to provide detailed information for defining the issues, concerns, design features, and treatment options.

The interdisciplinary team designed the project to minimize effects on resources. Analysis of public and internal comments identified issues that warranted development of three alternatives to the proposed action described in the scoping letter. Public comments conveyed a number of concerns that deserved consideration, and were used to refine the alternatives considered. These concerns were addressed through project design features (Updated EA, page 10-12).

I believe the issues and concerns identified throughout the scoping and planning process were fully addressed during alternative development and analysis. One alternative was considered in response to public comments, but eliminated from detailed study because it would not sufficiently meet the purpose and need. Three alternatives were analyzed in detail.

Consideration of Public and Other Agency Comments

Appendix C includes the comments we received for the Lodge Point EA and Forest Service responses to those comments. The original comment letters and all other comments received are included in the project file.

The formal scoping period for this project started on May 14, 2010. Scoping comments were used to develop the issues and alternatives that were included in the NEPA document. All scoping comments are in the project file.

The 30-day comment period for the EA began on June 30, 2011. I considered the comments we received (Appendix C) when making my Decision, and I find that the selected alternative responds to the issues and concerns that were brought forward by the public and other agencies.

Forest Plan Consistency and Regulatory Compliance

I have reviewed the Forest Plan as amended (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)), the Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, and the Forest Plan Record of Decision. Implementing Alternative B is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan's long term goals and objectives listed on pages II-1 through II-8. With one exception, the project conforms to land and resource management plan standards (pages II-15 through II-27) and incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan guidelines for desired conditions described in the plan (pages II-13 through II-15). Alternative B amends Forest Plan soil quality standard #2 to be consistent with the Regional Soil Guidelines (see Updated EA, Appendix C).

This decision to implement Alternative B is consistent with applicable statutory laws, policies, and regulations (Updated EA, Chapter 4) including:

- National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and implementing regulations in 36 CFR 219, and 16 U.S.C. 1604 (Updated EA, pages 64, 65-68, 71).
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) implementing regulations under 40 CFR 1500-1508
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and implementing regulations under 36 CFR 800 (Updated EA, pages 61-62)
- Clean Water Act (Federal Water Pollution Control Act) together with implementing regulations under 40 CFR 130 (Updated EA, pages 60, 69)
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (P.L. 96-159 1531 c) (ESA) and implementing regulations pursuant to 50 CFR 402.06 and 40 CFR 1502.25, (Updated EA, pages 60, 73)
- Clean Air Act (CAA) and implementing regulations in 40 CFR 50 (Updated EA, pages 63)
- Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898) (Updated EA, page 73)
- Floodplains and Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 & 11990) (Updated EA, page 73)

In summary, Alternative B was designed to respond to all aspects of the project purposes and needs described in Chapter 1 of the Updated EA and to address many public issues and concerns while abiding by applicable laws, policies, and regulations. I believe Alternative B best meets the purposes and needs of the area by improving tree species composition and productivity and supporting local communities.

VI. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

I received a comment expressing concerns about the range of alternatives considered for this project. In addition to Alternative B, I considered the scoping proposal; two action alternatives analyzed in detail (Updated EA, page 6-9), one alternative, which was later dropped from detailed study (Updated EA, pages 5), and the No Action Alternative (Updated EA, page 5).

Scoping Proposal

The scoping proposal included up to 2,000 acres of vegetation treatments. After preliminary analysis and consideration of scoping comments, 105 acres were dropped to avoid unacceptable resource effects and 118 acres were dropped because field reviews indicated treatments should be deferred. Although the scoping proposal would have met the purposes and needs of the project, it would have failed to address issues raised during the project development process. We formulated Alternative B (Updated EA, pages 6-7) by modifying the scoping proposal and developing project design features (Updated EA, pages10-12) to respond to resource issues raised (Updated EA, pages 3-4).

Alternative A: No Action

The results of the No Action Alternative would be the current condition as it changes over time due to natural events and processes. No vegetation management or road management activities would occur at this time. Alternative A does not meet the purposes and needs for action (Updated EA, page 2).

Alternative B: Proposed Action (Selected Alternative)

This alternative will fully meet all aspects of the purposes and needs for this project (Updated EA, pages 2). Alternative B is described in detail in the Updated EA (pages 6-7).

Alternative C

Alternative C is described in detail in the Updated EA (pages 8-9). This alternative would treat fewer acres than Alternative B and would meet the purposes and needs for this project at a lower level than Alternative B.

Watershed Restoration Only

We formulated a watershed restoration only alternative (Updated EA, page 5) in response to a public request for an alternative that included only culvert replacement and/or road decommissioning. This alternative was not considered in detail as it does not meet the purposes and needs for this project. The interdisciplinary team has conducted a roads assessment (project file) which identifies potential roads for decommissioning. Additional field work, including potential culvert replacements, is required before a proposal can be finalized. We may pursue these activities in the future and would analyze them under a separate environmental analysis. This alternative would support local communities at a much reduced level when compared to other action alternatives. Additionally, the Forest Plan allocates the majority of this project area to MA 12, with the goal of sustained production of wood products. Existing watershed conditions do not preclude timber harvest. Alternative B includes culvert replacements related to road reconstruction.

VII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

On May 14, 2010, we mailed scoping letters describing the proposed action, location, and purposes and needs to the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) and other interested individuals, businesses, organizations and agencies. Since July 2010, the District has included the proposed action in the Forest's Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110117).

We received ten letters in response to our request for scooping comments. The interdisciplinary team (IDT) used the comments to identify the issues described in the Updated EA (pages 3-4). To address these issues, the IDT considered the alternatives described above and developed design features (Updated EA, pages 10-12).

On March 14, 2011 and July 22, 2011, Team Leader Doug Graves presented this project to tribal staff members for comment. We received no comments from the NPT at these meetings. We mailed copies of the Lodge Point EA to individuals who had provided comments during the 30-day scoping period and the Nez Perce Tribe on June 28, 2011. A legal notice requesting public comments appeared in the Lewiston Tribune on June 30, 2011. We received three comment letters during the EA comment period (Appendix B). I considered all of the public comments that were submitted in reaching my decision to select Alternative B.

The comments received indicated several issues regarding the effects of the proposed action. The issues were varied and included: range of alternatives, temporary road construction, affects to various resources, and use of herbicides containing glyphosate.

We initiated consultation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in March 2010 when the scoping letter was mailed. Additional notice was given in May 2010 when the scoping notice was published. In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and the Programmatic Agreement between the USDA Forest Service Northern Region, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Officer, a report was submitted to the SHPO in July 2011. The SHPO reviewed and concurred with our determination that this project will have no adverse effect to historic properties on August 15, 2011.

Concurrence with USF&WS and NOAA Fisheries was not necessary (see Appendix A).

VIII. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the Updated EA, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. I base my finding on the following:

Context

The setting of the project is in an intensively managed roaded area. The resources affected by the proposal are described in the Updated EA (Chapter 3). Alternative B is consistent with the management direction, standards and guidelines outlined in the Nez Perce Forest Plan (Updated EA, Chapter 4). We identified issues through the scoping process and considered them in alternative development and analysis. The project area is limited in size and the activities are limited in duration. Effects are local in nature and not likely to significantly affect regional or national resources.

Intensity

I have determined the following with regard to the intensity of this project as identified in 40 CFR 1508.27.

1. MY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS IS NOT BIASED BY THE BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE ACTION.

   Resources that could be affected by implementing Alternative B were analyzed in the Updated EA. Potential adverse effects have been disclosed (Updated EA, Chapter 3; DN/FONSI Appendix A) and mitigated through development of alternatives and project design features (Updated EA, pages 10-12). While the overall effects of implementing Alternative B are expected to be beneficial, the specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects will be within standards set forth by the Nez Perce Forest Plan as amended and consistent with applicable environmental statutes (Updated EA, Chapter 4).

2. *THERE WILL BE NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY.*

   Alternative B will have no significant adverse effects on public health and safety because OSHA safety regulations will be met during implementation and Forest Service inspectors will monitor all aspects of implementation to ensure public safety. Timber purchasers are required to comply with all State and Federal fire requirements and regulations. These types of activities (logging, hauling) have historically occurred on roads and near developed properties without creating public safety or health problems.

3. *THERE WILL BE NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AREA.*

Implementing Alternative B will not adversely affect any unique characteristics of the geographic area because of protection measures integrated into the design of the project (Updated EA, pages 10-12). Analysis and discussion of effects found in the Updated EA, Chapter 3 do not reveal any significant adverse affects. Alternative B does not affect roadless areas, parklands, prime farmlands, ecologically critical areas, or wild and scenic rivers. There are no adverse effects to wetlands in the affected area due to avoidance and other design criteria. There would be no adverse effects to two cultural sites potentially affected by this decision. One site is an existing road that is part of the haul route. To protected resources, road maintenance will not occur on this segment of road. The second site is a prehistoric trail segment that has an existing road built on the trail template. Use of the road will not adversely affect the site. The SHPO reviewed and concurred with our determination that this project will have no adverse effect to historic properties on August 15, 2011.

4. *THE EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL.*

   The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. No highly controversial issues were identified. The effects of the project are limited to the Lodge Point project area. While some people have disagreed with certain parts of the project, no person has provided evidence that the environmental effects of the project have been wrongly predicted; therefore, the effects are not controversial. I believe the known biological, social, and economic issues have been sufficiently addressed to avoid scientific controversy over the scope and intensity of effects. There is agreement between my staff and other professionals and agencies consulted about the effects and conclusions indentified in the analysis. The effects of this project do not represent a controversial impact upon the quality of the human environment, provided the design features outlined in the Updated EA are implemented.

5. *THE FOREST SERVICE HAS CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE WITH THE TYPES OF ACTIVITIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED. THE EFFECTS ANALYSIS SHOWS THE EFFECTS ARE NOT UNCERTAIN, AND DO NOT INVOLVE UNIQUE OR UNKNOWN RISK.*

   The Forest Service has a long history of implementing these activities on the Nez Perce National Forest. Alternative B does not contain effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk. Design features (Updated EA, pages 10-12) will be incorporated during project implementation to avoid and minimize known risks associated with the project. Alternative B was developed using public scoping comments, field surveys and reconnaissance, and pertinent scientific literature (Updated EA, Appendix I). Using accepted techniques, reliable data, and professional judgment, the interdisciplinary team disclosed the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects (Updated EA, Chapter 3) of the selected actions. When making this decision, I considered these factors in addition to the comments I received during the EA comment period (DN/FONSI, Appendix B).

6. *THE ACTION IS NOT LIKELY TO ESTABLISH A PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE ACTIONS WITH SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS.*

   Alternative B will not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects because it conforms to all existing Forest Plan direction, as amended (Updated EA, Chapter 4) and applies only to the project area. The proposed activities are similar in nature and effects of other projects implemented in the local area. Any future proposals for this area will be subject to NEPA requirements and will require a new Decision.

7. *THE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS ARE NOT SIGNIFICANT.*

The effects of Alternative B combined with the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions will not have any significant cumulative effects. Alternative B will have no unfavorable cumulative effects on air quality (Updated EA, page 63), fish (Updated EA, pages 19-20), cultural resources (Updated EA, page 21), economics (Updated EA, page 25), fire and fuels (Updated EA, page 26-27), invasive plants (Updated EA, page 27), threatened and sensitive plants (Updated EA, page 28), soils (Updated EA, page 34-37), vegetation (Updated EA, page 41), water quality or quantity (Updated EA, page 48-50), or wildlife (Updated EA, page 54-57).

8. *THE ACTION WILL HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON DISTRICTS, SITES, HIGHWAYS, STRUCTURES, OR OBJECTS LISTED IN OR ELIGIBLE FOR LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. THE ACTION WILL NOT CAUSE LOSS OR DESTRUCTION OF SIGNIFICANT SCIENTIFIC, CULTURAL, OR HISTORICAL RESOURCES.*

   An appropriate inventory has been conducted for this project and cultural properties are known to be located in the project area. All known heritage resource sites will be avoided. A Cultural Resource Specialist made a preliminary determination that the project will have no adverse effect to these properties. The project received cultural resource clearance from the State Historic Preservation Office on August 15, 2011.

9. *THE ACTION WILL NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT ANY ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES OR ITS HABITAT THAT HAS BEEN DETERMINED TO BE CRITICAL UNDER THE ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT OF 1973.*

   The Updated EA shows Alternative B will have no effect on Federally listed threatened or endangered species (Updated EA, pages 17, 28, 51). The Biological Assessments documenting potential effects of the selected actions on fish, plant, and wildlife species and their habitats is included in this Decision Notice (Appendix A). The determinations for all listed threatened or endangered species is "no effect".

10. *THE ACTION WILL NOT VIOLATE FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LAWS OR REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS WERE CONSIDERED IN CHAPTER 4 OF THE UPDATED EA. THE ACTION IS CONSISTENT WITH THE NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST PLAN, AS AMENDED.*

    To the best of my knowledge, my decision is consistent with all applicable laws and regulations (Updated EA, Chapter 4). The action is consistent with the Nez Perce Forest Plan, as amended (Updated EA, Chapter 4, Updated EA Appendix C). There is no conflict with any Federal, State, or local laws.

    I have reviewed the effects of Alternative B and find that these actions will comply with Executive Order 12898 (59 Federal Register 7629, 1994) and will have no disproportionate impacts on individual groups of people or communities (Updated EA, page 73). Implementing Alternative B will produce no adverse effects on minority groups or low income populations. No civil liberties of American citizens will be affected. Project specific consultation was held with the Nez Perce Tribe on March 14, 2011 (project file). Implementation is expected to have a positive contribution to local communities and businesses (Updated EA, pages 21-25). Local communities have minority populations that may benefit from project implementation.

IX. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW OR APPEAL OPPORTUNITIES

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal must be postmarked or received within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the Lewiston Tribune, Lewiston, Idaho. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the Lewiston Tribune is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Paper appeals must be submitted to:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

Or

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATNN: Appeal Deciding Officer
200 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Office hours: 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, excluding holidays

Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

Faxed appeals must be submitted to: (406) 329-3411 (FAX)

In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project (Lodge Point) being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted as an e-mail message or in plain text (.txt), Word (.doc or .docx), or Rich Text Format (.rtf) formats.

Individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project-specific or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and include the following information:

- The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
- The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either 36 CFR 215 or 36 CFR 251, subpart C;
- Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;

- Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the comments; and
- How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

If an appeal is received on this project, there may be informal resolution meetings and/or conference calls between the Responsible Official and the appellant. These discussions will take place within 15 days after the closing date for filing an appeal. All such meetings are open to the public. If you are interested in attending any informal resolution discussions, please contact the Responsible Official or monitor the following website for postings about current appeals in the Northern Region of the Forest Service: http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r1/appeal-meetings

X. IMPLEMENTATION DATE

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur before the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

XI. CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Doug Graves, Project Team Leader or Joe Hudson, District Ranger, at the Moose Creek Ranger Station, 831 Selway Road Kooskia, Idaho 83539 or by phone (208) 926-4258.

/s/ Rick Brazell September 30, 2011

RICK BRAZELL
Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

APPENDIX A: Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation

United States Department of Agriculture **Forest Service** **Moose Creek Ranger District**

File Code: 2670 **Date: August 23, 2011**
Route To: 1950 – Lodge Point Thinning Project
Subject: Biological Assessment and Evaluation
To: District Ranger

I. INTRODUCTION

The current USF&WS Threatened and Endangered species list for the project area identifies Canada lynx (unoccupied habitat), Snake River fall Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, and bull trout. This combined Biological Assessment (BA) and Biological Evaluation (BE) addresses the biological effects of this planned project on all designated Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive wildlife, and fish species, which possibly occur in the project area.

As required by the Endangered Species Act, specific habitat effects on Threatened or Endangered wildlife, fish and plant species were assessed and documented for the planned Lodge Point Thinning project. The effects analysis determined that the project would "***not affect"*** fall chinook salmon, steelhead trout, bull trout, Canada lynx, or their designated critical habitat.

The Moose Creek Ranger District of the Nez Perce National Forest proposes to commercially thin trees within the Lodge and Little Tinker Creek watersheds as well as 2 unnamed streams. All streams drain into the Middle Fork Clearwater River. The project area is about 4,200 acres in size. It is located on National Forest System lands within: Township 32 North, Range 6 East, in Sections 13-17 and 20-30, Boise Principle Meridian. The area lies about 15 miles east of Kooskia, Idaho.

This project is designed to maintain or improve the health of forested stands and support the local economy. The action is needed to maintain healthy forests by managing for forest vegetative conditions that are more resilient to insects, disease, and fire. Existing conditions include high tree densities and thick, continuous canopy cover that not only stress the trees as they compete for sunlight and nutrients, but also places the stands at a higher risk from insect and disease outbreaks. The ladder fuels and dense crowns that exist promote lethal, stand replacing crown fires. The area is entirely within a Rural Wildland Urban Interface.

II. PLANNED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

This assessment assumes that the maximum management actions will occur as described under Alternative 2. If any other alternative is selected, then the actions would be less and therefore the effects to species would be less where they are identified.

- Commercially thin approximately 1,777 acres (including merchantable and biomass wood products) of heavily stocked stands;

- Construct approximately 2.5 miles of temporary roads for access to units and decommission after use;
- Recondition about 17 miles of existing road for access to units;
- Reconstruct up to 13.6 miles of road for access to units;
- Construct 5.8 miles of temporary road previously decommissioned roadss; and
- Fire would be used to treat activity fuel concentrations and to reduce pine needle accumulations primarily in ponderosa pine dominated stands.

Design Features

The following design features would be used to minimize sediment delivery and other impacts to streams and minimize impacts to wildlife. These measures may include any combination of the following:

- PACFISH Riparian Buffers: No-harvest buffers would be implemented in the project area (150' on non-fish bearing perennial, and 100' on intermittent streams). All vegetation and woody debris would be left intact in these areas.
- Best Management Practices (Appendix F): BMPs would be followed for the action alternatives as stipulated by the Idaho Forest Practices Act. Idaho water quality standards regulate non-point source pollution from timber management and road construction activities through the application of BMPs.
- Whole tree yard all units to reduce slash in harvest units.
- Any limbs or tops that break off during falling or skidding operations would be left on site. This small diameter organic material, in addition to current down large woody material, would be left for long-term site productivity.
- Assure compliance with Northern Region Snag Management Protocol, January 2009 (Appendix H).
- Approximately two acres of high mass wasting potential and landslide prone area would be excluded from Unit 12 and a 100 foot PACFISH riparian buffer would be implemented.
- Excavation greater than 20 inches would be limited on temporary roads and skid trails/landings due to high subsurface erosion potential.
- Units 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 showing slump or landslide potential related to seeps/springs or wetter ephemeral draws. A 100 to 150 foot PACFISH riparian buffer would be applied to these seeps/springs and wet draws. Ten to 15 tons/acre of downed coarse woody material would be created/maintained for added slope stability (Appendix H).
- Decompaction would be required on all used skid trails where excavation or ground disturbance has taken place or where successive passes have taken place over the same trail. The Forest Service would designate the skid trails to be decompacted. Decompaction would be conducted to improve soil productivity and meet Regional soil quality guidelines. Decompaction would span the width of the compacted areas and would be 10-18 inches deep. The intent of decompaction is to effectively loosen the ground to allow water penetration and revegetation and to minimize mixing the rocky sub-surface soils with the topsoil. The depth of decompaction shall be adjusted to avoid turning up large rocks, roots, or stumps. Equipment would not be permitted to operate outside the clearing limits of the skid trail. Decompaction should be done June 15 to October 15, unless otherwise approved. No decompaction work should be done during wet weather or when the ground is frozen or otherwise unsuitable. All erosion control barriers and cross ditches removed or otherwise rendered ineffective by the decompaction treatment should be reinstalled as they were prior to the decompaction.
- Five to 15 tons/acre of downed woody material (>3" diameter) would be placed/maintained in each of the harvest units to maintain soil stability and productivity and meet Regional soil

guidelines for coarse woody material (Appendix H). This may be met by falling cull trees (snags <12 inches dbh) or damaged trees as directed by the Sale Administrator.

- Temporary road locations would predominantly be located on gentle ridgetops, over existing templates, and in areas where excavation would be minimized. Erosion control stabilization consisting of out sloping, water barring, and/or seeding or mulching, as specified in the contract, would be required on all temporary roads that overwinter. All temporary roads would be closed to the public and decommissioned following use.
- In all units, to reduce ground disturbance, no ground base logging (including mechanical falling) would be allowed on slopes over 35 percent, unless mitigating measures, such as operating on adequate compacted snow or only over short distances, are approved by the soil specialist.
- Minimize sediment input into the Lodge Creek tributary that lies between Unit 7 and 8 by using sediment barriers, prohibiting construction during the wet season, and dewatering the site during installation and removal of a temporary stream crossing.
- Measures to protect residual trees would include timely slash treatment, notably in areas where ponderosa pines are present. This would be done to reduce the risk of IPS beetle infestation. Prompt slash treatment has been proven to drastically reduce this risk.
- In order to reduce the risk of root disease (Armillaria) spread, Douglas-fir would generally be reduced in most stands to no more than one third of the species composition. Root disease resistant species, such as ponderosa pine and western redcedar would be favored for retention.
- The Lodge Point project would minimize the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants by: chemically treating any noxious weed populations along the existing road systems before and after project implementation; monitoring and cleaning any equipment of loose debris prior entering the project area to prevent "new invader" weed establishment (CT6.26); and revegetating project related exposed soils using certified noxious weed free native seed mix and fertilizer (as necessary) upon project completion. All seeding would follow Regional guidelines.
- Standard techniques and BMPs to minimize sediment input to streams during road reconstruction and decommissioning activities would be used.

III. BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Tables 1 thru 3, depict the biological impacts of implementing the Lodge Point Thin project on Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive species.

Table 1 - Threatened And Endangered Wildlife

Species	Determination	Rationale
Fall Chinook Salmon	***No Effect***	Fall chinook are not known to occur in Clear Creek. Rearing and spawning habitat occurs in the mainstem Clearwater River primarily downstream of the North Fork Clearwater River confluence; approximately 50 miles downstream from the project area. No impacts to fall chinook are expected due to this distance factor.
Steelhead Trout	***No Effect***	Steelhead trout are known to occur in lower West Fork Clear Creek. Densities are low and habitat occurs well away from project activities. No decommissioning would occur on fish bearing streams. Road decommissioning will reduce the stream crossing failure risk and instream sediment input.
Bull Trout	***No Effect***	Bull trout are not known to occur in either the South or West Forks of Clear Creek. No impacts to bull trout are expected due to the lack of fish and quality habitat. No decommissioning would occur on fish bearing streams. Road decommissioning will reduce the stream crossing failure risk and instream sediment input.
Canada Lynx	***No Effect***	Area is considered secondary unoccupied habitat. Project area does not contain suitable habitat nor is it in a designated Lynx Analysis Unit.

Table 2 - Sensitive Wildlife Species

Species	Determination*	Rationale
American Peregrine Falcon	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Bald Eagle	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Bighorn Sheep	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Black-backed Woodpecker	***MIIH***	Project would affect 930 acres through thinning. A total of 2020 acres would remain. PACFISH buffers and other areas not treated would continue to provide habitat for the species.
Black Swift	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Coeur d'Alene Salamander	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Fisher	***MIIH***	24% of the area contains fisher habitat. Effects are expected to be neutral. All areas, including treatment units would provide habitat for fisher.
Flammulated Owl	***No Impact***	Project would not affect species or habitat
Fringed Myotis	***No Impact***	Project would not affect species or habitat
Gray Wolf	***No Impact***	Habitat and species occurs in the vicinity of the project site. Wolves travelling through the area could avoid human contact during project activities. There would be no effect to wolf denning or rendezvous habitats.
Harlequin Duck	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Mountain Quail	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Pygmy Nuthatch	***No Impact***	Only 1 acre of suitable habitat is present and would not be treated
Ringneck Snake	***MIIH***	The project would affect 160 acres of ringneck habitat; mechanical redistribution of large down wood during project may directly impact individuals.
Long-eared myotis	***No Impact***	Project would not affect species or habitat
Long-legged myotis	***No Impact***	Project would not affect species or habitat
Townsend's Big-Eared Bat	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Western (Boreal) Toad	***No Impact***	Project would not affect species or habitat.
White Headed Woodpecker	***No Impact***	Habitat not present
Wolverine	***No Impact***	Habitat not present

*MIIH = May impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely result in a trend toward federal listing or reduced viability for the population or species.

Table 3- Sensitive Fish Species

Species	Determination	Rationale
Westslope Cutthroat Trout	***No Impact***	There are no fish within the project area due to steep stream gradients and small stream size.
Spring Chinook Salmon	***No Impact***	There are no fish within the project area due to steep stream gradients and small stream size.
Pacific Lamprey	***No Impact***	There are no fish within the project area due to steep stream gradients and small stream size.
Western Pearlshell Mussel	***No Impact***	There are no fish within the project area due to steep stream gradients and small stream size.
Inland Redband Trout	***No Impact***	There are no fish within the project area due to steep stream gradients and small stream size.

/s/ Dan L. Davis, 8/23/2011
Dan L. Davis
Forest Wildlife Biologist

/s/ Karen A. Smith, 8/23/2011
Karen A. Smith
Fisheries Biologist

/s/ ***Patrick K. Murphy, 8/23/2011***
Patrick K. Murphy
Forest Fisheries Biologist

NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION
SUMMARY OF EFFECTS FOR THREATENED AND SENSITIVE PLANT SPECIES

Project Name: Lodge Point Commercial Thin

Latin Name	Common Name	Cat.	Species Present	Habitat Present	Species Potentially Affected?	Habitat Potentially Affected?	Determination*
Mirabilis macfarlanei	Macfarlane's four-o'clock	T	No	No	No	No	No Effect
Silene Spaldingii	Spalding's catchfly	T	No	No	No	No	No Effect
Astragalus paysonii	Payson's milkvetch	S	No	Yes	No	No	No Impact
Blechnum spicant	Deerfern	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Botrychium lanceolatum var. lanc.	Lance-leaf moonwort	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Botrychium lineare	Linear-leaved moonwort	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Botrychium minganense	Megan moonwort	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Botrychium pinnatum	Northern moonwort	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Botrychium simplex	Least moonwort	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Buxbaumia aphylla **(moss)**	Leafless bug-on-a stick	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Buxbaumia viridis **(moss)**	Green bug-on-a-stick	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Calochortus nitidus	Broadfruit mariposa	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Cardamine constancei	Constance's bittercress	S	No	Yes	No	No	No Impact
Carex buxbaumii	Buxbaum's sedge	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Cornus nuttallii	Pacific dogwood	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Cypripedium fasciculatum	Clustered ladyslipper	S	No	Yes	No	No	No Impact
Dasynotus daubenmirei	Dasynotus	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Douglasia idahoensis	Idaho douglasia	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Epipactis gigantea	Giant helleborine	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Halimolobos perplexa var. perplexa	Puzzling halimolobos	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Hookeria lucens	Light hookeria	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Mimulus ampliatus	Spacious monkeyflower	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Pentagramma triangularis spp. triang.	Gold-back fern	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Rhizomnium nudum **(moss)**	Naked-stem rhizomnium	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Sphagnum mendocinum **(moss)**	Mendocino sphagnum	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Synthyris platycarpa	Evergreen kittentail	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Triantha occidentalis spp. brevistyla	Short-style sticky tofieldia	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Trifolium douglasii	Douglas clover	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Trifolium plumosum var. amplifolium	Plumed clover	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact
Waldsteinia idahoensis	Idaho barren strawberry	S	No	No	No	No	No Impact

Project Description

The Moose Creek Ranger District is proposing to commercially thin approximately 1777 acres of heavily stocked stands in the Middle Fork Clearwater drainage between Lodge Point and Pine Knob. The proposed project would alter timber stand and site characteristics such as stocking and species compostion in order to maintain or improve the health of the stands. Fire would be used to treat activity fuel concentrations and reduce pine needle accumulations primarily in Ponderosa Pine dominated stands. This action is needed to maintain healthy forests by managing for forest vegetative conditions that are more resilient to insects, disease, and fire. There is also a desire to provide forest products to support local communities as directed by the Nez Perce Forest Plan, to contribute to community stability and employment.

Effects Analysis

The proposed project is located in the Middle Fork Clearwater drainage in the area between Lodge Point and Pine Knob along Forest Road 653 and west along Forest Road 286, on the Nez Perce National Forest. The elevations range from 3,500 ft. along the Middlefork Clearwater River to approximately 5,000 ft. at Pine Knob, with a legal of T32N, R06E Sections 13-17, & 20-30, Boise Meridian. Habitats within the project area vary from the western redcedar (*Thuja plicata*) series, to moist grand fir (*Abies grandis*) types of mixed conifer stands within the riparian buffers along Lodge Creek, to dryer Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)/ninebarlk (*Physocarpus malvaceus*) types along the sunny south slopes, along with a minor understory component of Engelmann Spruce, lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine. A site visit and plant survey was conducted on August 10,12,17 and a follow-up noxious weed survey on September 9, 2010 by John Warofka Forest Service Botanist. Understory plant species include: ninebark (*Physocarpus malvaceus*), Western goldenthread(*Coptis occidentalis*), Pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritaceae),* Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), queen cup beadlily (*Clintonia uniflora*), Montana golden pea (*Thermopsis montana*), common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), mountain maple (*Acer glabrum*), wild ginger (*Asarum caudatum*), twinflower (*Linnaea borealis*), Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*), baneberry (*Actaea rubra*), beargrass (*Xerophyllum tenax*), oceanspray (*Holodiscus discolor*), and mountain ash (*Sorbus scopulina*) .

A noxious weed survey was conducted by driving all roads within the proposed project area during early September when it was the optimum time to observe invasive species along the roadways. No large, continuous populations of weeds were observed, only small and scattered satellite groups, mostly confined to the road right-of-way, in the ditches and along the disturbed cutbanks. Three noxious weed species from the Idaho State Department of Agriculture Statewide Containment List were found growing adjacent to the site, Canada thistle , Spotted knapweed, and Houndstongue. These noxious weed species were found growing along the transportation corridor, Forest roads #653, #286, & #286A.

Suitible habitat does not exist for any Proposed or Threatened plant species listed on the Nez Perce National Forest. The project area does not contain landscape characteristics, plant community composition or community structure that would suggest suitible habitat for Spalding's catchfly(*Silene spaldingii*) or Macfarlane's four-o'clock(*Mirabilis macfarlanei*), based on current knowledge of existing habitat for these species. According to the latest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species List Update 14420-2010-SL-0088 no federally listed plant species or proposed critical habitat occurs on the Moose Creek Ranger District.

Habitat does exist for three Sensitive Plant Species found on the Nez Perce National Forest, however only one of these sensitive species; Constance's bittercress (*Cardamine constancei),* is known to exist near the project area. During a survey of the site, no sensitive plant species were found growing in the proposed treatment units.

Activities proposed in the project area have the potential to increase the rate of noxious weed spread into the Middle Fork Clearwater watershed. Ground disturbance associated with heavy equipment can result in the spread of existing weed seed, along with the threat to carry weed seed from new invaders to a currently uninfested site.

Determination

The table listed above summarizes the Determinations of the the Federally Listed and Regionally Designated Sensitive Plant Species found or suspect on the Nez Perce National Forest. The determinations are based on the following criteria: 1. The project lacks suitible habitat for Federally listed plant species; 2.No Proposed, Threatened, or Sensitive plants are known to exist within any of the proposed treatment units.

Responsibility for a Revised Biological Assessment/Evaluation

This Biological Assessment/Evaluation has been prepared based on available information. If the final project design is changed so as to have effects on any proposed, threatened or sensitive plant species, and their habitat or if new information becomes available that reveals impacts not considered in this biological assessment/evaluation, a revised, or new biological assessment/evaluation will be required.

Recommendations

- Chemically treat any noxious weed populations along the existing road systems before and after project implementation
- Monitor and wash any equipment entering the project area to prevent "new invader" weed establishment
- Revegetate site (if necessary) with only native seed and/or plants from a known source (consult with district botanist)

/s/John Warofka**,** Botanist Date: 8/30/11

Appendix B – Response to Public Comments on the EA

Letter 1

Jonathan Oppenheimer <**joppenheimer@idahoconservation.org**> 07/22/2011 04:11 PM	To	<comments-northern-nezperce-moose-creek@fs.fed.us>
	cc	Joe Hudson <jbhudson@fs.fed.us>, Doug A Graves <dagraves@fs.fed.us>
	Subject	Idaho Conservation League comments on the Lodge Point EA

Attached and pasted below are our comments on Lodge Point. Please let me know if you have any questions. Also, note that there was a typo in the email address provided in the EA, but not in the legal notice.

Thakns, jdo

- - - - -

Jonathan Oppenheimer
Senior Conservation Associate
Idaho Conservation League
PO Box 844, Boise, ID 83701
208.345.6933 x 26 • fax 208.344.0344 • cell 208.867.3505
http://www.idahoconservation.org • http://www.idahoconservation.org/blog
Idaho's leading voice for conservation

Joe Hudson, District Ranger
Moose Creek Ranger District
Nez Perce National Forest
831 Selway Road
Kooskia, ID 53539

July 22, 2011

Re: Idaho Conservation League comments on the Lodge Point Commercial Thin EA

Dear Joe:

Thank you for allowing us to comment on the Lodge Point EA. Since 1973 the Idaho Conservation League has worked to protect Idaho's clean water, wilderness, and quality of life through citizen action, public education, and professional advocacy. As Idaho's leading voice for conservation, we represent over 20,000 supporters, many of whom have a deep personal interest in protecting and restoring our water, wildlands, and wildlife.

In general, the Idaho Conservation League can support logging and thinning projects in appropriate areas. Because this area has been previously logged, has an existing road system and is proximate to the communities of Lowell and Syringa, we do feel that this is an appropriate location for logging activities. At the same time, we are interested in seeing a genuine restoration approach applied through the development of silvicultural prescriptions, road plans, watershed treatments and commitment to Forest Plan and Regional standards and protections for sensitive resources (especially soils, water quality, and wildlife).

We never received a copy of the EA in the mail, and it appears that perhaps we did not submit comments during scoping. It is possible that we never received that scoping notice, as our intent is to provide comments at each stage for projects similar to Lodge Point. We specifically request that we be maintained on the mailing list for all project at scoping, EA/EIS and for decisions.

FS Response 1-1: *We will maintain you on our mailing list for all future projects.*

We appreciate that the proposal retains approximately 50% of the trees, and 60-75% of the overstory. We feel that these retention levels can sustain the values for which these lands are important to the ICL and our members, namely retention in mature forests, wildlife habitat, and protection of water quality.

At the same time, we do have some concerns with the proposal as it realtes to temporary road construction. While we prefer temporary to permanent roads, we encourage you to consider whether you can further minimize the need for new temporary road construction. We also encourage you to consider implementation of the thinning prescriptions in such a manner to maximize variability across the landscape, i.e. patches of untreated areas within the units. While we recognize that this can lead to a sloppier looking unit, we feel that retention of untreated areas within the units would benefit to wildlife, and be more consistent with how mixed severity fires would've mushed around in these types of forests.

Again, we appreciate and support your efforts to manage these plantations, and encourage you to explore further terrestrial and aquatic restoration activities throughout the district.

Relation to CFLRP Project and Monitoring

Because the project is a component of the Clearwater Basin Collaborative's CFLRP project, it is important that we ensure close coordination between the CBC and the ID Team.

> ***FS Response 1-2:*** *District Rangers and FS/CBC Liaison, Mike Ward, will make a concerted effort to coordinate with the CBC on future CFLRP projects.*

Roads

While we recognize that this project recognizes and accomplishes many purposes that are outlined below, we want to ensure that the record reflects the importance of road-related restoration that is so critical to the protection of water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat.

All roads contributing significant levels of sediment should be considered for decommissioning. The analysis should provide information regarding what the risk of erosion is for those roads that are being proposed for decommissioning under the project and ones that are being retained as system roads.

> ***FS Response 1-3:*** *There are few roads in the area that contribute sediment to streams due to their near ridgetop location and lack of stream crossings (Updated EA, pg.18). The risk of erosion for roads in the area is low (Updated EA, pg. 18).*

The EA should consider road closures and/or obliteration of additional roads after a thorough roads analysis. It should be made clear what each closure method will be for each road, as simply abandoning a road that is regularly used as an ATV route will continue to result in long-term impacts.

> ***FS Response 1-4:*** *In addition to the temporary roads, the following roads will be decommissioned by recontouring: 286C, 77752A, 77752B, 77754 and the 9724 (Updated EA, Page 18).*
>
> *The ID team conducted a road-by-road analysis (see project file) and identified all roads that were not needed for future management. These roads were identified for decommissioning. The remaining roads are needed for future management. Roads would be decompacted and none would be left in a condition where ATVs could use them (Updated EA, pg. 11).*

We appreciate that the project is addressing previous management activities that have resulted in excessive road densities on the Nez Perce National Forest. This density compromises the project area's ability to support wildlife and fish by promoting further human disturbance, fragmenting habitat, accelerating sedimentation, and encouraging ORV use. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service Bull Trout Interim Conservation Guidance states that depressed bull trout populations had an average watershed road density of 1.4 miles per square mile and were extirpated with road densities above 1.7 miles per square miles *(page 27, BTICG).* The EA should indicate the road density pre and post project implementation, including within PACFISH-delineated RHCAs (including landslide-prone areas).

FS Response 1-5: *PACFISH buffer road density is 0.6 miles/mi^2 prior to activities (Updated EA, pg. 16) and decreases by only 0.05 miles (Updated EA, pg.19). It remains below the bull trout threshold. There are no bull trout or other fish species within any of the project area streams (Updated EA, pg.15).*

There is a positive correlation between roads, even temporary ones, and human-caused wildfire ignitions and decreases in Elk Habitat Effectiveness (EHE). Statistics and findings related to human-caused fires and EHE should also be disclosed and analyzed.

FS Response 1-6: *EHE is discussed in the Updated EA (pg. 54). The existing condition for the two elk analysis units are 55% and 58%. Both EHEs are in better condition than the Forest Plan standard of 50%. These conditions remain unchanged as a result of the project (Updated EA, pg. 57).*

From 1985 to 2010, 1081 fires were reported on the Moose Creek Ranger District. 95.4% were caused by lightning, 3.4% were caused by campfires, the remainder were caused by smoking, debris burning, arson or miscellaneous. Given that the public is usually restricted from active timber sales or prefer not to camp in such areas, it is reasonable to assume that human-caused fires related to temporary road construction with removal after the active timber would not increase.

The benefits associated with road decommissioning are undeniable. Decommissioning can reconnect previously fragmented streams and forest stands, increase the amount and quality of wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion, reduce sedimentation, and improve water quality, thereby enhancing the forest as an ecosystem and an asset.

The project should decommission and obliterate all high-risk and redundant roads as determined by a complete Roads Analysis. Culverts of obliterated roads should be removed and drainage elements restored to reduce the effects to hydrologic function, water quality, and soil productivity.

FS Response 1-7: *The ID team conducted a road-by-road analysis (see project file). The proposed decommissioned roads will be obliterated and recontoured. All culverts would be removed and all roads decompacted (Updated EA, Pages 6 and 18).*

Where roads are removed, care must be taken to minimize sedimentation, remove noxious weeds, revegetate the area with native plants, and strictly enforce road closures. The obliterated road should be gated, signed, and patrolled to prevent incursions by ORVs. Given the challenges associated with enforcing road closures, measures should be considered that would minimize this potential. Steps such as obliterating the first ¼ mile or ½ mile section of roads, (when the remainder of the road may only be abandoned), placing large rocks and/or other structures to prevent unauthorized use or other methods should be considered to realize the full benefit of decommissioning and restoration.

FS Response 1-8: *The same design features used to decommission temporary roads would be used on decommissioned roads (Updated EA, pg.11). All roads that are to be decommissioned in this project will be done so by recontouring which includes obliteration of the entire road, seeding, placing straw at stream crossings and removal of culverts. Once the road is recontoured to the adjacent slope, there is no need for road closure devices since the road will be non-existent (Updated EA, Page 18). Roads would not be passable to ORVs due to decompaction activities and the placement of woody material on the surface of the road. These design features would make them impassable.*

While road obliteration will undoubtedly improve water quality in the long term, road obliteration and reconstruction will inevitably entail soil disturbance and short-term increases in sediment. Additional mitigation measures, such as stream bank stabilization upstream and downstream of the site, placement of straw wattles and bales may be needed to minimize short-term increases in soil disturbance or sedimentation in the watershed. All culverts should be removed from obliterated roads. Further a schedule for maintenance of retained culverts (on reconstructed roads) should be implemented. Culverts that are not maintained may lead to blocked drainages and eventual blowouts. Inappropriately sized culverts should be replaced with culverts that are designed to sustain a 100-year flood, at a minimum.

FS Response 1-9: *All culverts on decommissioned roads would be removed and techniques to minimize sediment input to streams would be used. Any new culverts added as part of the road reconstruction work would be sized to pass a 100-year flow event (Updated EA, pg. 18).*

Short term erosion control measures on the proposed obliterated roads include the use of straw wattles and bales where needed to minimize soil erosion. All culverts will be removed from obliterated roads. Any roads that are reconstructed with culverts will be maintained periodically. (Updated EA, Page 98)

Long-term road maintenance is critical for roads that are retained on the system. The Forest Service should detail the maintenance plan for all roads in the project area following the project. In addressing the importance of long-term maintenance, the forest should review and consider the Forest Service document: "Rightsizing" the Forest Service Road System Part 1: Road Trend Analysis" (Moore, 2007).

FS Response 1-10: *A road maintenance plan is prepared every fiscal year to address road maintenance on each Nez Perce National Forest district. This project also addresses maintenance of the roads in the action alternatives. (Updated EA, Pages 30, 47)*

The need for road maintenance is dependent on the weather for any given year (storm events, precipitation) in combination with a variety of road design factors (location, slope, surfacing, etc.). Roads are identified for maintenance using these features. Within the project area, the mainline roads open to all traffic are generally scheduled for annual maintenance. The roads that are not open to motorized use have been put into a maintenance-free condition (waterbars for drainage, overseeded with grass).

We recognize that road closure is a contentious issue, but feel that it is simply the best way to restore watersheds suffering from legacy problems. Permanently closing all non-essential roads will save money, protect water quality, protect wildlife, and safeguard endangered species and their habitats.

We look forward to working with you on this and other projects.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Oppenheimer
Senior Conservation Associate

Letter 2

Dick Artley <da99333@gmail.com>
07/27/2011 12:02 AM

July 28, 2011

To comments-northern-nezperce-moose-creek@fs.fed.us
cc
Subject Lodge Point CT comments

July 26, 2011

Dear Ranger Hudson,

I have reviewed the draft EA for the Lodge Point Commercial Thinning project.

I will show below that this project will not "maintain or improve the health of the stands."

It's good to provide jobs and income to the local communities with commercial timber sales in national forests. However placing project goals like "support the local economy" in the P&N is not consistent with Forest Service policy.

FS Response 2-1*: One of the goals in the Nez Perce Forest Plan is to, "Provide a sustained yield of resource outputs at a level that will help support the economic structure of local communities and provide for regional and national needs (page II-1)"*

Supporting the local economy by providing jobs and income must be a secondary benefit of a timber sale proposed to enhance and restore damaged ecosystems … not a purpose for the sale. The economic benefit should be described in Chapter 3.

***FS Response 2-2**: Correct. This is described in adequate detail in the economic analysis narrative in Chapter 3 and the project file.*

This benefit the "ecosystem should benefit first" policy has been in existence for several years:

This timber sale is inconsistent with 2003 statements by Forest Service Associate Chief Sally Collins and Deputy Chief Jim Furnish.

> *"our focus today in the Forest Service is no longer on logging and road-building. In the last 5 years, for example, we decommissioned 14 miles of road for every mile of road added to our forest road system. And where we do cut timber, it is usually a byproduct of forest health projects-like cutting 14-inch white fir to protect giant sequoia groves."*
>
> from a speech by Forest Service Associate Chief Sally Collins
> **"Changing Public Land Uses: A Tale of Two Debates"**
> Outdoor Writers Association of America, 76th Annual Conference
> Columbia, MO-June 17, 2003
> http://www.fs.fed.us/news/2003/speeches/06/collins.shtml
>
> *"Post-World War II, we entered a new period characterized by timber production. From the 1960s to the 1980s, every administration, with strong congressional support, called for more timber harvest from the national forests, with the goal of replacing the depleted stocks of private and state timber as a result of the war effort. We measured success largely in terms of producing timber and providing multiple uses, including outdoor recreation and fish and wildlife.*
>
> *In the early 1990s, that changed again. Today, we're in a new period focused primarily on ecological restoration and recreation. Maybe more than ever before, we are focusing on delivering values and services like clean air and water, scenic beauty, habitat for wildlife, and opportunities for outdoor recreation. Not only do Americans want these things from their national forests, but this shift is also essential to cope with some huge threats to the sustainability of these forests." (pp 8-9)*
>
> Forest Service Associate Chief Sally Collins
> "***The Future of Partnering with the Forest Service***"
> A speech presented at the Annual Meeting of the
> National Association of Conservation Districts
> Atlanta, GA—February 8, 2005
> http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/library/NACDspeech.pdf
>
> *"The agency was not bashful about pursuing aggressive timber harvesting for many decades, stopping only when required by lawsuits. And it should not be bashful about declaring - firmly and convincingly - that those days are over. It is time to embrace conservation and lead the country into the 21st century with this vision in mind. Rather than asking for more discretion, the Forest Service needs to build trust with strong commitments and then keep them.*
>
> *Americans should look for something new-evidence of a fierce green fire, a passion for exemplary land stewardship. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack has spoken with urgency about restoring and protecting water and wildlife values, and the Forest Service needs to deliver the goods."*
>
> Forest Service Deputy Chief Jim Furnish
> **Overcoming 'timber-itch'**
> Published in the *Miami Herald*
> May 25, 2011
> http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/05/25/2233904/overcoming-timber-itch.html

In the final EA please include either 1) the new direction, or 2) provide the letter exempting this sale from the direction.

The Draft EA Indicates that 2.5 Miles of Temporary Road will be Constructed as Part of this Timber Sale.

In spite of the large amount of scientific literature that clearly indicates that aquatic resource damage is caused by forest road construction, the Responsible Official proposes road construction to make log extraction possible.

We are loosing about 200 square miles of our public land to development each week.

There are over 400,000 miles of road in our national forests. That's enough to reach the moon and half way back. Isn't that enough? Shouldn't there be some merchantable trees that will never be accessed?

The draft Lodge Point EA indicates that the temporary roads will be decommissioned within three years of construction. The EA points out that "Decommissioning actions would include placement of large woody debris (>3" dbh) on the road surface to aid soil stability."

Even temporary roads that have been decommissioned back to the natural angle of repose cause sediment to enter streams because:

1) The earth must be handled twice …. when constructing the road and when obliterating the road.
2) Temp roads are "designed" by a logger on a cat with no knowledge of hydrology and the logger is under pressure to work quickly.
3) Most temp roads are outsloped, thus, the water on the road drains off the road at random places.
4) Temp roads have no surfacing to slow the water velocity. High water velocity picks up more sediment particles.
5) Temp roads have no ditch. Ditches adjacent to system roads control the water until the road designer calls for an appropriate outlet culvert location.

***FS Response 2-3**: Temporary roads have been located and designed such that no sediment would be delivered to streams. Design features include ridgetop or near ridgetop locations with no water crossings and use of existing templates (Updated EA pgs 11, 19, 47). Any sediment generated from the roads while they are in use would be filtered out by the vegetation within the harvest areas and within PACFISH buffers. These buffers have proven effective in preventing sediment from reaching streams (Updated EA, pg.10).*

Incredibly the lodge point temp roads will have large woody debris placed on the road surface. This will stop no sediment laden water from flowing over the cutbank. Water will flow under crooked limbs and small logs.

The only thing large woody debris will stop is passenger vehicles without chainsaws. Those with saws will cut their way through.

There is literature available that explains why temporary roads cause aquatic damage for years after they are obliterated. Please read and consider this literature:

> "Temporary Roads are Like Low Fat Ice Cream" by George Wuerthner , 3-17-09. The link to this article is at: http://www.newwest.net/topic/article/temporary_roads_are_like_low_fat_ice_cream/C564/L564/

If the Responsible Official is aware of literature that refutes Mr. Wuerthner's temporary road explanation, then please include it in the final EA. If there is no literature then please acknowledge the findings from this article in the final EA and explain to the public why it's not a concern.

FS Response 2-4*: Erosion control measures (waterbars, seeding, etc.) would be used on temporary roads that overwinter (Updated EA, pg.11). After harvest is complete, roads would be fully reclaimed (as recommended in the opinion piece provided by the commenter) including decompaction of the road and placement of woody debris on the surface for soil stability and nutrients (Updated EA, pg. 11, #11). Full reclamation of temporary roads is required for all timber sale contracts on the Nez Perce Forest. Full reclamation deters vehicles from being able to use these temporary roads. We have seen no use of reclaimed temporary roads on our timber sales.*

Temporary roads would be located on existing templates and on lower gradients (<10%) so high water velocities are not expected. Outsloping of roads allow for better water dispersement. Incorporating organic material and decompacting soils through decommissioning allows for increased water infiltration. Overland flow is not expected on the upper slopes of this project.

Please consider the following:

Roads Comment #1: Forest road drainage excavates gullies and cause landslides downslope on roads requiring full-bench construction. Will any of the roads (including temporary) for this project be constructing on slopes greater than 40%? If so, what will be done to eliminate such damage.

FS Response 2-5*: No temporary roads would be located on side slopes greater than 40%. Proposed temporary roads would use already existing templates. Best Management Practices (EA, Appendix F) and Timber Sale Contract standard provisions would be implemented.*

Roads Comment #2: Forest roads change the microclimate by altering temperature and moisture regimes. This adversely affects wildlife. How will this be mitigated? Please list the data and/or monitoring results showing the effectiveness of this mitigation.

FS Response 2-6*: The roads used for this sale have been in place for many years. They have been used as travel corridors by many wildlife species from deer and elk to predators, rodents and birds. Species more susceptible to temperature and moisture regimes have likely avoided the roads and their surrounding area. No new permanent roads would be constructed with the Lodge Point project. Additional changes in temperature or moisture regimes from proposed temporary roads, or road reconstruction or reconditioning are not expected to occur. The greatest changes to temperature and moisture regimes would occur as a result of timber harvest. Thinning would encourage some understory plant growth (shrubs/forbs) which could slightly improve forage for elk and deer (Updated EA, pg.57).*

Roads Comment #3: Compacted forest road surfaces generate overland flow, and much of this flow often enters the channel system, locally increasing peak flows. How will this be mitigated? Please list the data and/or monitoring results showing the effectiveness of this mitigation.

FS Response 2-7*: Overland flow can occur on road surfaces. Road reconstruction design features to reduce the effect of roads include the installation of additional ditch cross drains in order to divert roadside ditch water onto the forest floor and away from live stream channels and spot rocking (Updated EA, pg. 47). Several studies indicate these are effective design features to minimize impacts to flows and streams (Updated EA, pgs. 18, 47; also Meehan, 1991- Influences of Forest and Rangeland Management on Salmonid Fishes and Their Habitats; Takken, 2008- A Methodology to Assess the Delivery of Road Runoff in Forestry Environments). Increases in peak flows are expected to remain below desired conditions based on ECA modeling (Updated EA, pg. 46).*

Roads Comment #4: Roads fragment wildlife habitat. Forest roads also alter animal behavior by causing changes in home ranges, movement, reproductive success, and escape response. Forest road avoidance leads to underutilization of habitats that are otherwise high quality. Roads divide large landscapes into smaller patches and convert interior habitat into edge habitat. None of this can be mitigated effectively be eliminating vehicles with gates. Apparently the Responsible Official believe that timber harvest is more important than the well-being of wildlife species in the area. Please explain. The majority of American national forest visitors want to see healthy wildlife interacting with their natural habitat. They do not want to see stumps, skidtrails and landings.

***FS Response 2-8**: The existing roads are used by a variety of wildlife (please see response to Comment #2 above). No new permanent roads would be constructed and 5 miles of road would be decommissioned as a result of the project. This would be beneficial to wildlife.*

The purpose and need for the project is to improve the health of forested stands and to support the local economy (Updated EA, pg. 2). The Nez Perce Forest Plan has designated the project area for timber harvest (Updated EA, pg. 1, 2, 68). The effects of the project on terrestrial sensitive and management indicator species were analyzed on pages 54 through 57 of the Updated EA. There would be minimal effects to these species as a result of the project.

Roads Comment #5: Forest roads (both temp and system) adversely alter the subsurface hydrology of the area. They involve slope-cuts and ditching that is likely to intersect the water table and interrupt natural subsurface water movement. Has this been considered? If so, why are the roads still planned knowing that this long term impact will occur?

***FS Response 2-9**: Temporary road locations are high enough on the slope that there is little subsurface water flow. Temporary roads would be outsloped with no ditching to reroute water flow. They would also be decommissioned after 1 to 3 years, so no long term impacts would occur. In addition, road improvement and decommissioning of permanent system roads would occur.*

Roads Comment #6: Roads are the major vector for weeds and disease. How will this be mitigated? Please list the data and/or monitoring results showing the effectiveness of this mitigation.

***FS Response 2-10**: In the Existing Condition for Invasive Plants we noted that noxious weed species were found growing along forest roads 653, 286, and 286-A. Idaho County contractors sprayed all three of these roads for noxious weeds this summer and the data should be available with Carl Crabtree at the Idaho Count Extension Office in Grangeville. He should have dates of treatment, weed species found, and amount of herbicide used. Since this was the first year for treatment, we won't have monitoring results until next year, by then we should be able to determine if weeds are spreading or on the decline from our treatments.*

Roads Comment #7: Forest roads allow more human-caused fires to be ignited because they provide easier access for passenger vehicles and ATVs. How will this possibility be eliminated?

***FS Response 2-11**: The possibility for human caused fires will never be eliminated. Temporary roads constructed to carry out the proposed action will be decommissioned following their use. No other changes to the current travel regulations on roads within the project area are planned as a result of this project. The short term increase in risk of human caused fires on the temporary roads is minimal due to the expected season of use (fall hunting seasons). The project area is a short initial attack response time from both the Lochsa and Moose Creek Ranger Stations. Initial attack has been 100% successful in and around the project area within the recorded history of the area.*

Roads Comment #8: Forest roads increase isolation of populations or species which cause adverse wildlife genetic effects (i.e. inbreeding, depressed fertility/fecundity, and increased natal mortality) and decreased genetic diversity from genetic drift and bottlenecks. Please tell the public in the final EA why timber harvest so important that these adverse effects to wildlife are considered appropriate tradeoffs.

***FS Response 2-12**: Please see response to Comments #2 and #4 regarding effects of roads on wildlife. No new permanent roads would be constructed, 5 miles of road would be decommissioned and all but Road 286 would remain closed to the public after harvest activities are complete. The project actually reduces the number of roads in the area.*

The level at which genetics are potentially affected by activities is dependent on the species and their ability to move through the landscape. Smaller, less mobile species such as amphibians, have a higher potential for being affected by land management. The project minimizes potential effects by retaining PACFISH buffers where no harvest would occur and unaltered travel corridors would be provided. At least 25% of the project area is in the buffers. All areas outside of the harvest units would also provide habitat and travel corridors.

Roads Comment 9: Macropores, which provide soil drainage and infiltration, have been shown to significantly decrease in size as a result of road construction and use. Has this been considered? If so, why are the roads still planned knowing that this long term impact will occur?

***FS Response 2-13**: Temporary roads would be decommissioned after 1 to 3 years, so no long term impacts would occur. Decommissioning includes decompacting soils, incorporating organic material, recontouring, and seeding/planting; all which improve water infiltration. Temporary roads would occur on only a small area (13 acres) and on soils that are already compacted from previous harvest activities.*

Roads Comment #10: Forest roads provide increased opportunities for exploitation by humans, such as:

- poaching, overhunting, overfishing, and passive harassment of animals
- increased trapping pressures
- increased likelihood that snags and logs that are important habitat for some wildlife species will be removed for fuel wood.

***FS Response 2-14**: As noted previously, all but Road 286 will remain closed after project activities are complete. A total of 5 miles of existing road and all temporary roads would be decommissioned as part of the project. The project reduces the potential human exploitation of wildlife when compared to the existing*

Please do not construct any roads (temp or system) for this sale. Of course there will be trees that cannot be harvested. Reducing the sale volume is a tradeoff that should always be made if the wildlife and fish in the area will benefit.

Please harvest timber from existing roads. This is precisely how the public wants their land managed. If this will not be done please explain to the public why timber volume is more important to the Responsible Official than the wildlife and aquatic species in the project area.

***FS Response 2-15**: There would be beneficial effects to aquatic species from the project through road reconstruction and decommissioning (Updated EA, pg. 17-29). The effects to wildlife would be minimal (Updated EA, pg. 54-57).*

The Draft EA Proposes to Harvest Timber on 1,777 Acres

The majority of the American public does not want timber harvest to occur in their national forests. Less than 5% of the wood fiber used in America comes from national forests. There is not a softwood shortage in America. The decades-old claim by the forest service that a timber famine is eminent has not materialized.

Tree farms on private land supply more than enough wood fiber raw material to supply the domestic demand.

Harvest Comment #1: Logging landings, skid trails and skyline chutes are frequently a source of sediment during precipitation events. How will this highly likely ecosystem damage be eliminated?

***FS Response 2-16**: Design features, in particular PACFISH buffers, have been incorporated into the project to reduce or eliminate sediment input to streams (Updated EA, pgs. 10-12) and the Updated EA demonstrates the likelihood of logging activities of delivering sediment is very low (Updated EA, pgs.17, 18, 45, 46, 50). Landings, skid trails, and skyline chutes all occur outside of PACFISH buffers.*

Harvest Comment #2: Logging removes dead and dying material from the site and inhibits the recruitment of downed woody material as time progresses. Will the area be fertilized after the sale? How will the organic material hauled to the mill that will potentially become soil be replaced?

***FS Response 2-17**: All units would remain fully stocked, providing for future downed wood material. Project design measures (EA, pages 10-11, #4, #5, and #12) would be implemented to meet Regional guidance. Breakage of limbs and tops of trees during logging activities would provide additional small diameter organic material. No fertilization would occur after the project.*

Harvest Comment #3: A large body of scientific evidence indicates that increased edge effect and increased sunlight into stands, resulting from reduced canopy cover associated with timber harvest, can directly promote the population abundance, productivity and persistence of insects which cause mortality to trees of (Roland, 1993; Rothman and Roland, 1998; Kouki, McCullough and Marshall, 1997; Bellinger, Ravlin and McManus, 1989). How will this be mitigated?

***FS Response 2-18**: Stand will remain stocked after treatment. Proposed treatments are intermediate in nature, not regeneration. Canopy cover will not be significantly reduced.*

Harvest Comment #4: The Forest Service lost $2 billion on its logging program from 1992 to 1997, according to the General Accounting Office. It spends more on building roads and preparing sales than it gets back in timber receipts. Is this expected to return more money to the treasury than it cost to plan and prepare the sale?

***FS Response 2-19**: No. This project was not designed to have a positive net value and will be implemented using a service contract which is not expected to return any significant monetary receipts.*

Harvest Comment #5: Logging reduces the organic parent material (duff and woody residues) available for soil-formation processes. How will this be replaced?

***FS Response 2-20**: Designation of skid trails and skyline corridors would limit the amount of duff material displaced. When skid trails, temporary roads, and landings are obliterated, organic material is incorporated. (Please see response to comment #2).*

Harvest Comment #6: Congress finds that commercial logging harms to the recreation and tourism industries. The Lodge Point area is popular with recreationists. Will they be educated about the changes to their recreation area?

***FS Response 2-21:** The Lodge Point area is most popular with hunters who travel the area on foot. There are no recreational trails in the project area and all roads but Road 286 are closed to motorized use. The risk of effects to recreation as a result of the project is considered very low. The project reduces tree densities which may increase elk/deer forage slightly and provide better hunting opportunities.*

The Lodge Point Project is consistent with the Forest Plan recreation standards for management area 12.

The Lodge Point Project is part of the larger Selway Middle Fork Collaborative Forest Landscape Project developed cooperatively by the Forest and Clearwater Basin Collaborative. Multiparty monitoring, required by the Act will assess the positive or negative ecological, social, and economic effects of the program. Multiparty monitoring will incorporate aspects of outreach, education, training, and social science.

Harvest Comment #7: Logging adversely affects hydrologic processes by reducing canopy interception and evapotranspiration. Please explain how this might affect the sale area in the final EA.

***FS Response 2-22**: Due to the intermediate harvest prescription, stands would remain fully stocked with only small, dispersed openings in the canopy. Increases in ECA are estimated to remain below acceptable thresholds.*

Harvest Comment #8: Logging decreases hydraulic conductivity and increases bulk density in forest soils after harvest. How will this soil density be reduced without an activity that causes erosion.

***FS Response 2-23**: Although decommissioning compacted soils does move soil while the activity is occurring, this is short term (generally less than one day). Soils are stabilized and seeded/planted to reduce future erosion potential (See BMP, EA, Appendix F). Also, see response to comments #2 and #5.*

Harvest Comment #9: The spotted salamander is most likely to be affected adversely by the logging as this species of salamander relies on dense forests with full canopies. (Harding, 1997) Is this species present in the sale area?

***FS Response 2-24**: The spotted salamander only occurs east of the Mississippi River. It does not occur within the project area.*

Harvest Comment #10: Logging increases water temperature by altering available sunlight, conductivity by changing the amount of organic matter that collects in the vernal ponds, or pH if the logging process deposits foreign residues to the area. Also heavy equipment used to harvest the timber has the potential to alter the terrain. This has a major negative effect on aquatic species. How will this damage be eliminated?

***FS Response 2-25**: PACFISH buffers are being retained in order to protect aquatic habitats and water quality. These buffers have been shown to be effective (Updated EA, pgs. 10, 17, 18).*

Harvest Comment #11: Logging removes material that harbors a myriad of organisms, from bacteria and actinomycetes to higher fungi. These organisms play an important role in the forest. This damage cannot be mitigated. Please tell the public about this damage in the final EA.

***FS Response 2-26**: Only partial removal of material would occur. Stands will remain stocked with trees after treatment. While impacts to vegetation will occur due to removal of material, the loss will be replaced over time as stands respond to treatment through accumulation of additional biomass.*

Harvest Comment #12: Logging removes mature and maturing trees which conserve essential elements, whereas the area containing new very young planted trees following logging are susceptible to erosion and essential element loss. Will this occur?

***FS Response 2-27**: Due to the intermediate harvest prescription, mature trees would remain on site after project activities. Soils would be stabilized and coarse wood material guidelines would be met. (EA, page 33).*

Harvest Comment #13: Logging removes tree parts that would have created and maintained diversity in forest communities. What will be done to artificially enhance this diversity?

***FS Response 2-28**: Most units have been subject to regeneration harvest in the past. These unit acres had been dozer piled or broadcast burned. As a consequence, little woody debris remained on site. Retention of large woody debris at 5 to 15 tons per acre would be a requirement written into prescriptions for this project. This will actually add organic material to increase soil productivity.*

Harvest Comment #14: Widespread removal of dead and dying trees eliminates habitat required by bird species that feed on insects that attack living trees, with the result that outbreaks of pests may increase in size or frequency (Torgersen et al. 1990) This effect is cumulative. Please explain how it will be reduced.

***FS Response 2-29**: The project commercially thins stands which will retain 110 to 220 live trees per acre across the harvest units (Updated EA, pg. 6, 40, 41). In addition, all trees including snags would be retained in PACFISH buffers (Updated EA, pg. 2). Some retained trees would die over time. Dead and dying trees would not be eliminated from the area therefore foraging areas for birds that feed on insects would be retained.*

Harvest Comment #15: Logging removes biomass critical to future soil productivity of the forest. Activities taken on public forests should maximize growth potential and productivity. Why is this goal not important here?

***FS Response 2-30**: Soil productivity is discussed in the EA, pages 30-33. Regional soil guidelines would be met. Also, please see responses to Comments #2, #5, and #12.*

Harvest Comment #16: Logging collapses some of the subsurface pipes, increasing local pore water pressure and the chance of landslides. (Sidle, 1986) How will this be mitigated?

***FS Response 2-31**: Compacted areas would be decommissioned, allowing for water infiltration (see response to Roads Comment #9). Ground based logging activities would occur on upper slopes that have lower gradients (<35% slope) reducing the likelihood of landslides.*

Harvest Comment #17: Logging damages recreational opportunities and harms visual quality. Please see attachment #13 which shows 17 statistically significant nationwide polls showing the public's dislike of logging on their land. Doesn't it seem reasonable to manage according to the owner's wishes?

***FS Response 2-32**: Please see response to Harvest Comment #6 regarding recreational opportunities in the area. The project commercially thins trees which will leave up to 220 trees per acre (Updated EA, pg. 6, 40, 41). Visual quality would be retained when compared to regeneration harvest activities.*

The Lode Point Project is consistent with management area direction for recreation in the Nez Perce Forest Plan.

A recent poll indicated that voters across the country support increased management of America's forests (David Metz Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates. 2011. National Voter Attitudes Toward America's Forests. http://www.stateforesters.org/voter-attitudes-poll - see project file).

The Draft EA Indicates that Herbicides will be Applied to Eliminate and/or Control Non-Native Plants in the Project Area

The draft EA states:

> "21. The Lodge Point project would minimize the spread of noxious weeds and invasive plants by: chemically treating any noxious weed populations along the existing road systems before and after project implementation; monitoring and cleaning any equipment of loose debris prior entering the project area to prevent —new invader weed establishment (CT6.26); and revegetating project related exposed soils using certified noxious weed free native seed mix and fertilizer (as necessary) upon project completion. All seeding would follow Regional guidelines."

In spite of Forest Service herbicide approval EISs there are new research findings that contradict earlier safety research. Most Forest Service safety research was done in 2003 and 2004 and documented in EISs in 2005 and 2006.

***FS Response 2-33**: The Biological Assessment for Herbicide Treatment of Noxious Weeds on the Nez Perce National Forest for 2008-2012 documents the programmatic implementation and effects of ground based herbicide treatment actions as a result of the noxious weed management program on the Nez Perce National Forest.*

This research base for the Forest Service herbicide approval EISs was not done by agency scientists. The research was done by laboratories contracted and paid by the herbicide manufacturer. These research conclusions were then passed on to the Forest Service and formed the basis for the agency safety findings documented in EISs.

By far the most dangerous (and sometimes lethal) are herbicides containing glyphosate.

The recent research of hundreds of independent, unbiased Ph.D. scientists not affiliated with the US Forest Service or Monsanto Inc. reveals that even casual contact with glyphosate-containing herbicides causes the following maladies in birds, fish, and mammals (including human visitors to the forest):

***FS Response 2-34**: Spraying would only occur along roads where noxious weeds exist. The National Pesticide Information Center (2010) suggests "pure glyphosate is low in toxicity to fish and wildlife, but some products containing glyphosate may be toxic because of the other ingredients in them. Glyphosate may affect fish and wildlife indirectly because killing the plants alters the animals' habitat." (http://npic.orst.edu/factsheets/glyphogen.pdf). To address concerns about toxicity of some glyphosate contining products, we only use a product labeled for aquatic use (Aquaneat). A compendium of research from the Applied Mammal Research Institute indicates few negative effects to birds, fish, mammals, and humans from the application of glyphosate when applied at recommended concentrations. The compendium can be found at: http://www.glifocidio.org/docs/impactos%20ambientales/ia23.pdf*

The only glyphosate product (Aquaneat) used by Nez Perce National Forest is labeled for aquatic use. Use is limited to spot spraying, usually close to water. Glyphosate will not be used to treat noxious weeds within the Lodge Point project area because…. Glyphosate is a non-selective herbicide used to control/eliminate vegetation and is most commonly used in agricultural situations as your attached letter indicates. Within the Lodge Point project area, noxious weed control will likely use a selective broadleaf herbicide in accordance with the Biological Assessment for Herbicide Treatment of Noxious Weeds on the Nez Perce National Forest for 2008-2012.

- birth defects
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- mitochondrial damage
- cell asphyxia
- miscarriages
- attention deficit disorder
- endocrine disruption
- DNA damage
- skin tumors
- thyroid damage
- hairy cell leukemia
- Parkinson disease
- premature births
- decrease in the sperm count
- harm to the immune system in fish
- death of liver cells
- severe reproductive system disruptions
- chromosomal damage

Herbicides that contain glyphosate include:

Roundup Ultra©, Roundup Pro©, Accord©, Honcho©, Pondmaster©, Protocol©, Rascal©, Expedite©, Ranger©, Bronco©, Campain©, Landmaster©, and Fallow Master© manufactured by Monsanto;
Glyphomax© and Glypro© manufactured by Dow AgroSciences;
Glyphosate herbicide manufactured by Du Pont;
Silhouette© manufactured by Cenex/Land O'Lakes;
Rattler© manufactured by Helena;
MirageR© manufactured by Platte;
JuryR© manufactured by Riverside/Terra; and
Touchdown© manufactured by Zeneca.
As of November 2001, Rodeo© (previously manufactured by Monsanto) is now being manufactured by Dow AgroSciences and Monsanto is now producing Aquamaster©.

I have included an article describing recent research by unbiased, independent scientists below.

Why Is Damning New Evidence About Monsanto's Most Widely Used Herbicide Being Silenced?

It turns out that Monsanto's Roundup herbicide might not be nearly as safe as people have thought, but the media is staying mum on the revelation.

April 27, 2011

http://www.alternet.org/story/150733/why_is_damning_new_evidence_about_monsanto%27s_most_widely_used_herbicide_being_silenced?page=entire

“Dr. Don Huber did not seek fame when he quietly penned a confidential letter to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in January of this year, warning Vilsack of preliminary evidence of a microscopic organism that appears in high concentrations in genetically modified Roundup Ready corn and soybeans and "appears to significantly impact the health of plants, animals and probably human beings." Huber, a retired Purdue University professor of plant pathology and U.S. Army colonel, requested the USDA's help in researching the matter and suggested Vilsack wait until the research was concluded before deregulating Roundup Ready alfalfa. But about a month after it was sent, the letter was leaked, soon becoming an internet phenomenon.

Huber was unavailable to respond to media inquiries in the weeks following the leak, and thus unable to defend himself when several colleagues from Purdue publicly claiming to refute his accusations about Monsanto's widely used herbicide Roundup (glyphosate) and Roundup Ready crops. When his letter was finally acknowledged by the mainstream media, it was with titles like "Scientists Question Claims in Biotech Letter," noting that the letter's popularity on the internet "has raised concern among scientists that the public will believe his unsupported claim is true."

Now, Huber has finally spoken out, both in a second letter, sent to "a wide number of individuals worldwide" to explain and back up his claims from his first letter, and in interviews. While his first letter described research that was not yet complete or published, his second letter cited much more evidence about glyphosate and genetically engineered crops based on studies that have already been published in peer-reviewed journals.

The basis of both letters and much of the research is the herbicide glyphosate. First commercialized in 1974, glyphosate is the most widely used herbicide in the world and has been for some time. Glyphosate has long been considered a relatively benign product, because it was thought to break down quickly in the environment and harm little other than the weeds it was supposed to kill.

According to the National Pesticide Information Center, glyphosate prevents plants from making a certain enzyme. Without the enzyme, they are unable to make three essential amino acids, and thus, unable to survive. Once applied, glyphosate either binds to soil particles (and is thus immobilized so it can no longer harm plants) or microorganisms break it down into ammonium and carbon dioxide. Very little glyphosate runs off into waterways. For these reasons, glyphosate has been thought of as more or less harmless: you spray the weeds, they die, the glyphosate goes away, and nothing else in the environment is harmed.

But Huber says this is not true. First of all, he points out, evidence began to emerge in the 1980s that "what glyphosate does is, essentially, give a plant AIDS." Just like AIDS, which cripples a human's immune system, glyphosate makes plants unable to mount a defense against pathogens in the soil. Without its defense mechanisms functioning, the plants succumb to pathogens in the soil and die. Furthermore, glyphosate has an impact on microorganisms in the soil, helping some and hurting others. This is potentially problematic for farmers, as the last thing one would want is a buildup of pathogens in the soil where they grow crops.

The fate of glyphosate in the environment is also not as benign as once thought. It's true that glyphosate either binds to soil or is broken down quickly by microbes. Glyphosate binds to any positively charged ion in the soil, with the consequence of making many nutrients (such as iron and manganese) less available to plants. Also, glyphosate stays in the soil bound to particles for a long time and can be released later by normal agricultural practices like phosphorus fertilization. "It's not uncommon to find one to three pounds of glyphosate per acre in agricultural soils in the Midwest," says Huber, noting that this represents one to three times the typical amount of glyphosate applied to a field in a year.

Huber says these facts about glyphosate are very well known scientifically but rarely cited. When asked why, he replied that it would be harder for a company to get glyphosate approved for widespread use if it were known that the product could increase the severity of diseases on normal crop plants as well as the weeds it was intended to kill. Here in the U.S., many academic journals are not even interested in publishing studies that suggest this about glyphosate; a large number of the studies Huber cites were published in the *European Journal of Agronomy*.

If Huber's claims are true, then it follows that there must be problems with disease in crops where glyphosate is used. Huber's second letter verifies this, saying, "we are experiencing a large number of problems in production agriculture in the U.S. that appear to be intensified and sometimes directly related to genetically engineered

(GMO) crops, and/or the products they were engineered to tolerate -- especially those related to glyphosate (the active chemical in Roundup® herbicide and generic versions of this herbicide)."

He continues, saying, "We have witnessed a deterioration in the plant health of corn, soybean, wheat and other crops recently with unexplained epidemics of sudden death syndrome of soybean (SDS), Goss' wilt of corn, and take-all of small grain crops the last two years. At the same time, there has been an increasing frequency of previously unexplained animal (cattle, pig, horse, poultry) infertility and [miscarriages]. These situations are threatening the economic viability of both crop and animal producers."

Some of the crops Huber named, corn and soy, are genetically engineered to survive being sprayed with glyphosate. Others, like wheat and barley, are not. In those cases, a farmer would apply glyphosate to kill weeds about a week before planting his or her crop, but would not spray the crop itself. In the case of corn, as Huber points out, most corn varieties in the U.S. are bred using conventional breeding techniques to resist the disease Goss' wilt. However, recent preliminary research showed that when GE corn is sprayed with glyphosate, the corn becomes susceptible to Goss' wilt. Huber says in his letter that "This disease was commonly observed in many Midwestern U.S. fields planted to [Roundup Ready] corn in 2009 and 2010, while adjacent non-GMO corn had very light to no infections." In 2010, Goss' wilt was a "major contributor" to an estimated one billion bushels of corn lost in the U.S. "in spite of generally good harvest conditions," says Huber.

The subject of Huber's initial letter is a newly identified organism that appears to be the cause of infertility and miscarriages in animals. Scientists have a process to verify whether an organism is the cause of a disease: they isolate the organism, culture it, and reintroduce it to the animal to verify that it reproduces the symptoms of the disease, and then re-isolate the organism from the animal's tissue. This has already been completed for the organism in question. The organism appears in high concentrations in Roundup Ready crops. However, more research is needed to understand what this organism is and what its relationship is to glyphosate and/or Roundup Ready crops.

In order to secure the additional research needed, Huber wrote to Secretary Vilsack. Huber says he wrote his initial letter to Secretary Vilsack with the expectation that it would be forwarded to the appropriate agency within the USDA for follow-up, which it was. When the USDA contacted Huber for more information, he provided it, but he does not know how they have followed up on that information. The letter was "a private letter appealing for [the USDA's] personnel and funding," says Huber. Given recent problems with plant disease and livestock infertility and miscarriages, he says that "many producers can't wait an additional three to 10 years for someone to find the funds and neutral environment" to complete the research on this organism.

If the link between the newly discovered organism and livestock infertility and miscarriages proves true, it will be a major story. But there is already a major story here: the lack of independent research on GMOs, the reluctance of U.S. journals to publish studies critical of glyphosate and GMOs, and the near total silence from the media on Huber's leaked letter.”

In the Response to Comments please explain what the March 2007 Willamette National Forest Integrated Weed Management EA says about these health problems. If the EA says nothing please tell the public why the EA withholds this information.

In the Response to Comments please tell the public why manual and mechanical methods are not being used exclusively. If the reason glyphosate herbicides are being used is to reduce cost, then please include a section in the final EA telling the public that their safety means less than money.

I ask you to drop all plans to use chemicals. This will have a “significant effect on the human environment,” thus preparation of an honest FONSI would be impossible.

Noxious weeds are a massive problem.

There are alternatives to chemicals that are safe. In spite of the fact they cost more they are safer and provide employment for unskilled workers. Please use hand pulling and biological control.

Conclusion

After reading the information above describing the ecological harm caused by road construction and timber harvest, it should be clear that this sale might maintain or improve the health of the trees. However there are countless other important natural resources in the forest besides conifer tree species.

It is these other natural resources that will be harmed (some for the long term) by the Lodge Point Timber Sale.

Please implement everything described in the Proposed Action except 1) herbicide application, 2) timber harvest and 3) road construction.

Noxious weed spread is a massive problem on public land. They must be eradicated mechanical, hand and biological methods . . . this includes closing livestock allotments near infestation areas to prevent the spread of these weeds by livestock,

Please think of the health of our natural resources in the forest rather than the destructive, corporate-friendly, decades-old Forest Service timber policy.

Sincerely, ***

Dick Artley (retired forest planner, NEPA legal compliance reviewer, 1900-1 NEPA instructor, forest NEPA coordinator, and forest appeals/litigation coordinator --- Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho)

415 NE 2nd Street
Grangeville, Idaho 83530
dart_55@q.com

***Please note: My scanned signature is contained in the "signature" attachment.**

CC: Supervisor Brazell
Doug Graves
(See attached file: Signature.doc)
(See attached file: Opposing Views_13__Public Polls Oppose Logging__ Op Views.doc)

Letter 3

Joe Hudson, District Ranger
Moose Creek Ranger District
831 Selway Road
Kooskia, ID 83539
SENT VIA US Mail

Dear Ranger Hudson,

These are comments on the EA for the Lodge Point Commercial Thin proposal on behalf of Friends of the Clearwater, the Alliance for the Wild Rockies, and the Lands Council. We have concerns with this project. Please also refer to our scoping letter, which goes into considerable detail, and past letters about the lack of adequate forest plan monitoring (October 6, 2000).

NEPA/Purpose and Need

The EA fails its duty under NEPA to offer and disclose to the public a reasonable range of alternatives that includes scientifically and ecologically sound management proposals. Indeed, there are only two action alternatives and a restoration only alternative was rejected.

FS Response 3-1: *The Purpose and Need (Updated EA, page 2) is to maintain or improve tree health and does not include watershed restoration. However, we did consider a watershed restoration only alternative (Updated EA, page 5). The watershed restoration only alternative would not meet the purpose and need of the project and was dropped from detailed study.*

The Seventh Circuit recently explained:

> *No decision is more important than delimiting what these "reasonable alternatives" are. . . . One obvious way for an agency to slip past the strictures of NEPA is to contrive a purpose so slender as to define competing "reasonable alternatives" out of consideration (and even out of existence). .*
>
> *. . If the agency constricts the definition of the project's purpose and thereby excludes what truly are reasonable alternatives, the EIS cannot fulfill its role. Simmons, 120 F.3d at 660.*

This project is headed down the pre-determined path. The EA on page 5 makes that clear.

> *"[A]n agency may not define the objectives of its action in terms so unreasonably narrow that only one alternative . . . would accomplish the goals of the agency's action, and the EIS would become a foreordained formality." Citizens Against Burlington, Inc. v. Busey, 938 F.2d 190, 196 (D.C. Cir. 1991), cert. denied, 502 U.S. 994, 112 S. Ct. 616 (1991).*

FS Response 3-2: *The Watershed Restoration Only alternative was considered but eliminate from detailed study because it did not meet the purpose and need for the project (Updated EA, page 5). Three alternatives were considered for detailed study (Updated EA, pages 5-9).*

Watersheds/Fisheries/Soils

The EA alleges that the area likely meets forest plan appendix A. However, it is clear that no monitoring has been done to verify that allegation. Also, conflating state standards with forest plan standards fails to account for the major differences in the standards. As a rule, the forest plan standards are far more protective. Furthermore, he EA later admits the watershed actually exceeds the forest plan standards in appendix A. Which part of the EA is accurate? Without monitoring, how can an upward tend be established?

FS Response 3-3: *The Updated EA (pg. 16) shows that based on recent DEQ monitoring, Lodge Creek meets its beneficial uses (IDEQ, 2008 Integrated Report). Beneficial use surveys collect data on fish, water temperature, aquatic insect, and other habitat factors. They are similar to the information that the Fisheries Biologist uses to determine stream conditions. The Forest used the DEQ monitoring in lieu of conducting its own.*

While the Forest Plan and state standards may differ, project implementation requires us to retain PACFISH buffers in order to protect aquatic habitats and processes. They are more restrictive than Idaho Forest Practice Act standards for land management activities. Monitoring has shown them to be effective in protecting aquatic resources (Updated EA, pg.10). Logging would have no negative effect on sediment, temperature, or other aquatic habitat factors (Updated EA, pg. 17). Road decommissioning and reconstruction would have minor short term effects but long term beneficial effects to streams (Updated EA, pgs. 18-20)

The reference to "exceeds Forest Plan standards" (Updated EA, pgs. 43, 59) means in this case that it is better than the standard, not worse. Table 3-6 (Updated EA, page 43) displays the Forest Plan objective for sediment yield ranges between 45 to 70% over base. The current condition is less than 2% over base for each of the watersheds, much lower than, and therefore meeting, the objective. An upward trend is occurring due to a lack of vegetation management within Riparian buffers combined with the improvement of roads through reconstruction and decommissioning of other roads within the project area (Updated EA, pgs. 19, 47, 48).

Monitoring for the Lodge Point project was conducted in the summer of 2010 and watershed conditions were assessed (Updated EA, page 15, 42). Stream conditions were determined to be in stable conditions (Updated EA, page 43). Post project monitoring would occur as identified on EA, page 13.

State standards are complimentary to Forest Plan standards. No streams are listed for pollutants and support their beneficial uses (Updated EA, page 44).

The EA also alleges no harm to water quality from 5 miles of new road construction, 13 miles or road reconstruction and 25 miles of reconditioning. This is alleged even though new roads would be built in high landslide prone areas.

FS Response 3-4: *Temporary road locations would be located on existing templates, so there would be less soil disturbance than newly excavated roads (EA, page 47). Temporary roads be located on low gradient, dry ridges or upper slopes and away from water (EA, page 31). Temporary roads were evaluated using the NEZSED and WEPP models (EA, pages 46 and 47) and no effects to water quality were estimated. Temporary road sites were evaluated in the field by soil specialists and were determined to be in stable locations – there were no landslide prone characteristics evident in the area (EA, pages 29 and 31).*

Road reconditioning/reconstruction activities were designed to reduce potential sediment delivery and improve water drainage, both providing watershed benefits.

Furthermore, the EA uses BMP compliance from the Clearwater and not the Nez Perce National Forest. Why is this done? The EA also indicates this project is on the Lochsa Ranger District in at least once instance. Why?

FS Response 3-5: *The Clearwater National Forest has conducted more BMP monitoring than the Nez Perce National Forest because it has implemented more timber sales to be monitored. The Lodge Point area has forest characteristics more similar to those found on the Clearwater than on other portions of the Nez Perce. Use of the Clearwater BMP monitoring was appropriate given those conditions.*

The EA mentions the Lochsa Thin Project once (pg. 13). This was an error on our part and corrected in the Updated EA.

The EA notes that one unit has high landslide risk. Given that fact, why wasn't an alternative developed that didn't log in that one unit? The EA also notes that soils standards are already exceeded in 8 units and 4 units would increase to near the soil standard. Why weren't alternatives developed that didn't require a forest plan amendment that would allow more damage to areas already exceeding regional and forest plan standards?

FS Response 3-6: *Landslide risk assessments and potential landslide prone area identification are conducted in the office. All units were surveyed in the field by soil specialists and potential risk areas are specifically evaluated. As discussed on EA, pages 31 and 78, no unstable areas were identified in the drier, middle and upper slopes, and ridgetops.*

As stated on EA, pages 33 and 34, the Amendment would make the Forest Plan standard consistent with Regional soil guidelines. The Amendment would allow project activities to occur but would require a net improvement in soil quality. This would necessitate soil improvement activities, such as decommissioning existing skid trails, to be implemented. Without these activities, soils would remain compacted and unproductive. The Amendment allows for a long-term benefit to soil productivity (EA, page 34).

The question needs to be asked why build new roads if the units (or most of them as the EA now states) were all previously logged? Why is new roadbuilding necessary?

FS Response 3-7: *Some roads adjacent and within the project units were previously decommissioned by recontouring after being previously logged. In order to access the units, temporary roads would be constructed where the previous roads were decommissioned after the timber sale. There wwould be no new permanent roads constructed.*

Logging systems and management practices have changed since previous entry. Machinery has been developed to lessen soil disturbance and more efficiently harvest materials. Roads located at the lower end of steeper units were skidded to, and because new practices do not allow equipment on steeper slopes, ridge top roads are needed for cable systems. No permanent system roads are proposed with this project. Temporary roads were located in areas already disturbed (old skid trails) to lessen the amount of new soil disturbance.

Cultural Resources

The EA makes it clear that a survey for cultural resources has yet to be completed and one will be provided at a later date. How does this comply with NEPA, especially when there are two known cultural properties?

FS Response 3-8: *There has been one previous cultural resource survey conducted in the proposed project area. No new cultural resource properties were discovered during the 2010 survey conducted for the proposed project (Updated EA, page 20). The results of that inventory have been forwarded to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). It is anticipated the SHPO will concur with the Forest's determination that the Lodge Point Project will have no adverse effect to historic properties. SHPO concurrence is anticipated by September 9, 2011.*

Economics

Both action alternatives have a net negative PNV. That means the citizens will lose greatly from the action alternatives. How does this meet NFMA's economic viability requirements?

FS Response 3-9: *Because project activities result in a negative net PNV it can only be implemented using a service type stewardship contract, therefore NFMA requirements for economic viability do not apply.*

Vegetation/Fire

The EA is misleading when it suggests the project will somehow benefit community protection. Only one unit is very close to private land and that unit is downwind of the private land. Thus, a fire would burn away from the private property. Furthermore, the EA does not evaluate the private land in terms of its susceptibility to fire. According to agency dogma, logging and cutting reduce fire risk (an assumption not supported by the science). The private land has been logged so one must ask the question, "What is the condition of the private land in terms of fire risk?"

FS Response 3-10: *The Updated EA (page 1) explicitly states: "Although the project is not designed specifically as a hazardous fuel reduction project, the expected fuel reduction benefits contribute to the need for action." The benefit, in this case, is a reduction in the potential for crown fire within the WUI (page 2). We can see how it is logical to infer community protection from this, however the primary purposes of this project are made clear in the Purpose and Need: "The primary purposes of this project are to maintain or improve the health of the stands and support the local economy." (page 2). In this respect, the Updated EA is not misleading. There is no reference to the project being designed to protect communities or reduce hazardous fuels. The fire and fuels report (pages 25-27) only analyzed the crown fire potential within stands in the project area in support of the primary purpose and need. An evaluation of the susceptibility private land to fire is beyond the scope of this project and will likely be analyzed in future project development.*

Another issue that should be briefly addressed is that research shows logging increases rather than decreases disease in trees. However, this project is supposedly justified on decreasing disease through logging. We addressed this issue in scoping comments.

FS Response 3-11: *This project consists of reducing stand densities, not stand regeneration. Stands will remain stocked with the most vigorous and disease resistant species, notably ponderosa pines and western larch. Douglas-fir, a highly susceptible species will be favored for removal, though not completely eliminated from the stands. This species will make up no more than 40% of stand composition after treatment. Identifiable root rot pockets will most likely not be thinned due to reduced stocking in these areas prior to any treatment. It might be noted that most stands selected for treatment have been previously regeneration harvested and artificially regenerated.*

We are not purporting that this project will decrease the spread of disease through logging. Disease (root disease as mentioned in your scoping) is an ever-present and important disturbance agent in our forests. We agree that research has shown that human caused disturbance (logging) may exacerbate the spread of disease. The Silviculturalist determined that (root) disease is present in endemic levels within the project stands (Updated EA, pg. 38). We feel that the benefits of the project (increased growth and vigor; commercial products, etc) outweigh any potential risk because residual stands will contain species diversity and be composed of the most vigorous and disease resistant trees. Further, any future disease caused mortality will also contribute to within-stand heterogeneity and snag recruitment.

The EA suggests (page 38) that there are 122 acres that were not previously logged. The scoping letter led the public to believe all of the acreage had been previously logged. What unit or parts of units were not previously logged? This is important as the EA alleges there will no impact to the Middle Face roadless area or contiguous roadless lands and that is based upon the scoping letter's allegation that all logging would occur in previously logged stands. Is it possible roadless land (de facto or otherwise) could be affected by this proposal?

FS Response 3-12: *All stands have had some level of previous entry. Refer to the Updated EA (p. 38) where it states that the 122 acres in question have had previous sanitation/salvage treatments, but were not artificially regenerated.*

The Updated EA (page 38) indicates that five stands (122 acres) had been previously logged through sanitation/salvage treatments and had not been artificially regenerated (planted). Natural regeneration in these stands is sufficiently dense to warrant inclusion in this proposed action (Appendix B). Since these stands had been previously harvested, there would be no additional affects to roadless lands.

Wildlife

We provided significant comments on wildlife in our scoping letter. The EA doesn't address MIS population monitoring, simply habitat. Why?

FS Response 3-13: *Population monitoring is conducted at a larger scale than the project area. The project area is too small in scale to assess overall population health. The effects to MIS species from project activities were discussed in the Updated EA (pgs. 53-57).*

Regarding lynx, the US Fish and Wildlife Service must now it must reconsider lynx habitat. Blackbacked woodpeckers, fishers, and ring-necked snakes will all be affected, according to the EA. How does this meet the forest plan wildlife requirements?

FS Response 3-14: *The project area does not contain suitable habitat nor does it reside within a designated Lynx Analysis Unit (Updated EA, pg. 51), therefore it was not considered. As noted in the Updated EA, pgs. 54-57 and the Biological Evaluation (Appendix A), the project may impact individual black-backed woodpeckers, fishers, and ring-neck snakes but would not lead toward federal listing or reduced viability of the species due to suitable habitat occurring outside of the Lodge Point treatment areas.*

Sincerely,

//s//

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99201 and for
Alliance for the Wild Rockies

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