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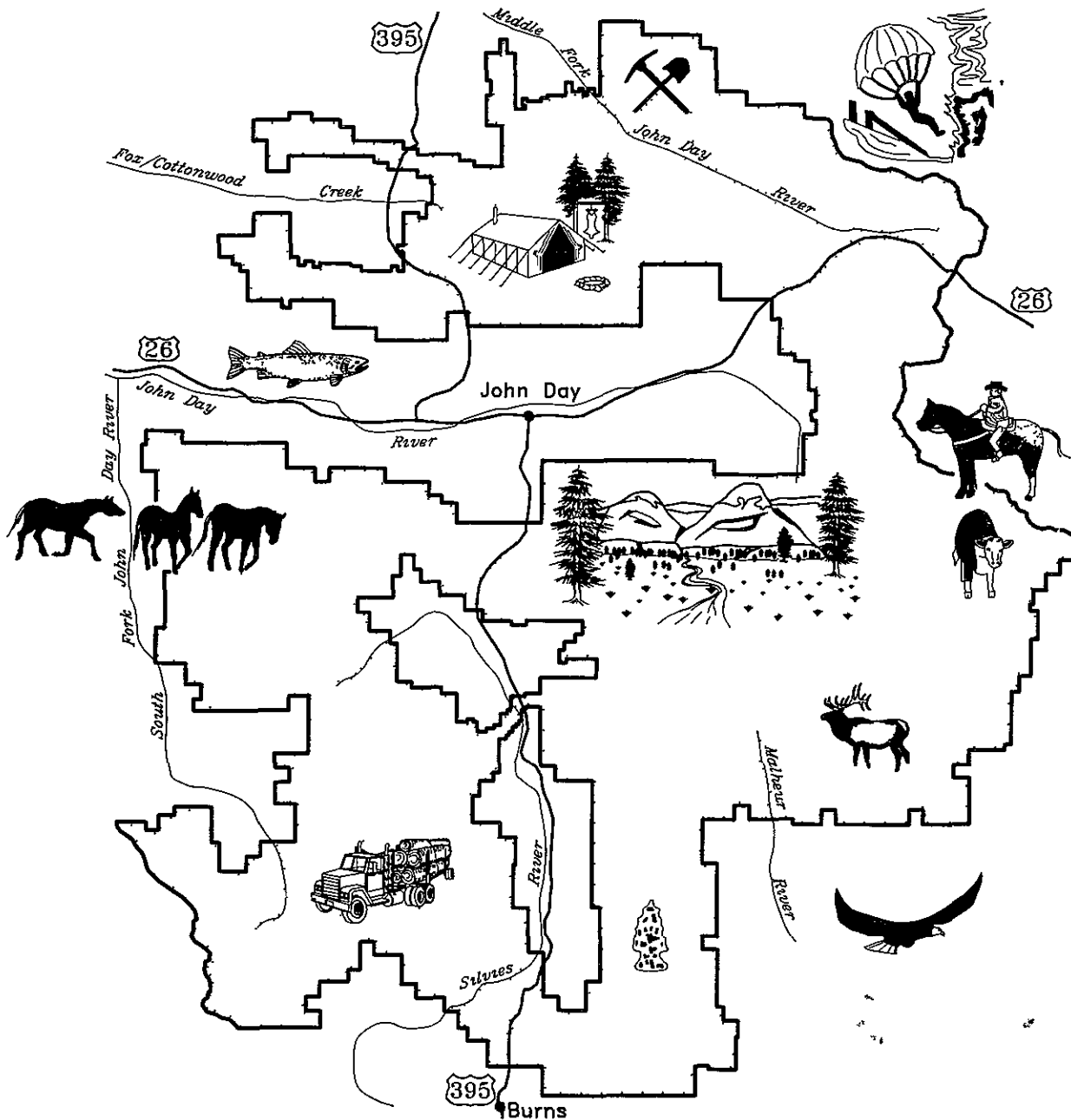
1990



Record of Decision

Land and Resource Management Plan

Malheur National Forest



RECORD OF DECISION

USDA FOREST SERVICE

Final Environmental Impact Statement
Malheur National Forest

Land and Resource Management Plan

Grant, Harney, Baker and Malheur Counties in Oregon

May 25, 1990

Printed on Recycled Paper

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SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

BASIS AND NEED FOR DECISION

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision and rationale for approving the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the lands administered by the Malheur National Forest

Throughout this ROD, I have used many technical terms which may be unfamiliar to a large segment of the public. Please refer to the FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER VI, GLOSSARY which contains definitions for many of these terms.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Forest Plan were filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and made available to the public on August 14, 1987. A Notice of Availability was published in the *Federal Register* on that same date. News releases were prepared for the media throughout Oregon. Additional detail on the meetings, notices, and documents preceding the FEIS and Forest Plan is available in the FEIS, CHAPTER V.

AUTHORITY

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

The Forest Plan is part of the framework for long-range planning established by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA). The Forest Plan establishes general direction for 10 to 15 years, and must be revised at least every 15 years [36 CFR 219.10(q)]. The Forest Plan replaces previous resource management plans including:

- The Malheur National Forest Timber Resource Management Plan
- The John Day Unit Plan
- The Silvies-Malheur Unit Plan
- The South Fork Unit Plan

Subject to valid existing rights, all permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of National Forest System land will be in conformance with the Forest Plan at the earliest possible date, generally within three years.

AFFECTED AREA

The Malheur National Forest is located on the east side of the Cascade Mountain Range in eastern Oregon, approximately equidistant from the borders of Washington, Idaho and Nevada. The planning area includes the entire Malheur National Forest located in Grant, Harney, Baker, and Malheur Counties.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Pursuant to the intent of NFMA, the Malheur National Forest conducted an active public involvement program throughout the Forest planning process. Formal public involvement activities included consultations with Federal, State, and local government agencies; formal public comment periods on draft documents; and numerous meetings, presentations, and information distributions (See FEIS, SUMMARY, CHAPTER V, and FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER III).

In March 1988 the Forest invited all those who commented on the Proposed Forest Plan and Draft EIS to participate as a member of a "Citizens Working Group." The purpose of the working group was to bring together a group of interested and affected publics, representing a variety of viewpoints regarding the management of the Malheur National Forest, to discuss the Forest Plan.

Two meetings were held. The first, in April, 1988 was a preliminary meeting to update the participants, build rapport and understanding, and identify a smaller group to meet for a two day meeting in May. The second "Citizens Working Group" meeting was held in May with a group of 21 representatives chosen by the larger April meeting group. The objectives of this second meeting were to (1) continue to build rapport among participants, (2) review preliminary results of the analysis of issues, (3) review information about issues developed at the first meeting; (4) explore potential areas of agreement among participants, and (5) narrow the scope of and/or clarify areas of continuing disagreement.

Recommendations presented to the Regional Forester by the Forest were formulated using information and suggestions developed by the entire array of public input.

In addition to the formal activities, Forest employees informally explained the purpose of the Forest Plan and how to effectively participate in the process to many different publics who either requested information or whom employees may have come in contact with through work or in the community.

ISSUES

Land and resource management planning began with the identification of issues and concerns through public contacts with local civic and community organizations, individuals, local, State, and Federal agencies, private industries; adjacent landowners, various interest groups, Native American tribes, and Forest Service employees. During the early planning stages, over 30 issues and concerns were identified. Some of these issues were beyond the jurisdiction of the USDA Forest Service, resolved by existing laws, or best handled on a case-by-case basis. These issues are not addressed in the Forest Plan or FEIS. The remaining issues which indicated a need to examine current management direction, were then grouped based on common

elements and similarities. These issues (described in detail in the FEIS, CHAPTERS I and V, and the FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER III) are specifically addressed in this ROD in SECTION III, RATIONALE FOR THE DECISIONS. They center on the following issue areas:

- Riparian Areas
- Big-game Habitat
- Roadless Areas
- Economic Stability
- Timber Management
- Road Management

In addition to the primary issues listed above, which directed the NEPA process, there were numerous secondary issues and even some which surfaced late in the planning process. Additional issues which I felt were important in making my decision are:

- Forest Health
- Old Growth
- Visuals
- Native American Treaty Rights
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Ecosystem Diversity

WHAT THE FOREST PLAN IS, AND IS NOT

As a long-range strategy for managing the Malheur National Forest, the Forest Plan and accompanying FEIS are programmatic. The Forest Plan provides management direction to produce goods, services, and uses in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits. It is not a plan for the day-to-day administrative activities of the Forest; it does not address such matters as vehicle and equipment management or organizational structure.

The Forest Plan emphasizes the application of various management practices to achieve multiple use goals and objectives in an economically efficient and environmentally sound manner. It does not make site-specific decisions, but through standards and management area direction (displayed in FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER IV) significantly influences design, execution, and monitoring of site-specific activities. Standards are principles specifying conditions or levels of environmental quality to be achieved. They are the rules that govern resource management practices and are the key to successful implementation of the Plan. They will not be violated to achieve annual targets, or outputs. Management areas are geographic areas established by the Plan that have similar management objectives and a common management prescription.

SECTION II

DECISIONS

SUMMARY OF THE DECISION

My decision is to approve, adopt, and implement, the Forest Plan which accompanies the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) I have made this decision after fully understanding and reviewing the alternatives available to me. This decision is a modification of Alternative I in the FEIS. My decision to modify Alternative I is discussed in greater detail below, but first I would like to clarify the terminology for alternatives and then give you some background on the development of Alternative I.

The terminology surrounding alternatives is difficult to understand and some clarification is needed to give the reader a full understanding of the subtle differences. The FEIS analyzes several alternatives, one of which is Alternative I. After completion of the analysis of alternatives, Alternative I was recommended as the "preferred alternative". These terms are synonymous and for ease I will use Alternative I throughout the remainder of this document. After review of the alternatives I have decided to select Alternative I after making some modifications, which is referred to as the "selected alternative" or Alternative I as modified.

Now, for some background on Alternative I. It is the result of, and represents, the incorporation of public comments received on the DEIS and Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan, the State of Oregon's involvement, incorporation of new information and legislation, and additional analyses conducted following the DEIS. Alternative I attempts to respond to issues in a reasoned, deliberate, comprehensive, and equitable manner. It is my goal to select an alternative which best provides for healthy and productive forest and range ecosystems, and I feel Alternative I, as modified, best meets this goal. The selected alternative includes the following goals for responding to issues and concerns.

- Maintain visual character of the Forest through use of uneven-aged management on up to 30% of the suitable timber acreage
- Maintain big-game habitat in providing for animal populations at or near state management objective levels.
- Provide a timber supply (or harvest level) and livestock production at or near recent levels
- Provide for a high level of anadromous fish production and riparian protection throughout all streamside zones
- Provide old growth and mature tree habitat above the Management Requirement (MR) levels
- Intensify timber management activities where severe insect and disease conditions have resulted.
- Maintain the amenity attributes in most roadless areas that have had strong public interest regarding those features
- Provide for production of ponderosa pine over time by converting potential pine sites from mixed conifer composition
- Provide for a mix of unroaded, roaded, and closed road dispersed recreation that is compatible with other resource objectives
- Maintain community stability by providing for the physical, biological, economic and social environment of the Forest's area of influence.

Further, the Forest Plan establishes numerous multiple use goals and desired future conditions. These are discussed in detail in FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER IV, and FEIS, CHAPTER II.

It is vital for the reviewer to understand what the Forest Plan does not do. It does not.

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

As I stated earlier, my decision is to modify Alternative I. Some changes reflecting my decision have been able to be made in the Forest Plan prior to going to the printer and others have not. I find it in the best interest of all parties to fully disclose the status and nature of these changes. All of these changes are discussed in much greater detail in ROD, SECTION III, RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION. My intent here is to briefly introduce the reader to the modifications I have made to Alternative I and provide a single place for tracking the status of changes. The Forest Plan will fully incorporate these changes at the soonest possible date. If this is unable to be done prior to the first Plan amendment, these changes will be incorporated into that first amendment. No additional NEPA analysis will be required to incorporate the following changes.

Change between Alternative I and the Selected Alternative	Forest Plan Current?		
	land allocation	standards	outputs
Additional protection to Class I & II nonanadromous riparian areas	No	Yes	No
Increase in HEI objectives in both summer and winter range	No	No	No
Reduction of winter range satisfactory and total cover standards on selected watersheds	No	Yes	No
Reduction of summer range satisfactory cover standards in Malheur & Silvies watersheds.	No	Yes	No
Reduction of cover acreage standards for summer range in Malheur & Silvies watersheds.	No	Yes	No
Change Dry Cabin from Management Area 20 (wildlife emphasis w/ scheduled harvest) to Management Area 21 (wildlife emphasis without scheduled harvest)	No	N/A	No
Change McClellan Mountain from Management Area 10 (Semiprimitive nonmotorized) to Management Area 21 (wildlife emphasis without scheduled harvest)	No	N/A	No
Add economically inefficient acres into the suitable land base	No	N/A	No

ELEMENTS OF THE DECISION

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

- Forest-wide goals and objectives
- Forest-wide desired future condition
- Forest-wide standards
- Management area goals and location
- Management area standards
- Monitoring program and evaluation process.
- Identification (location) of lands considered suitable for timber harvesting
- Establishment of the Forest-wide allowable sale quantity

INTENDED ACTIVITIES

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

It is important to note that all proposals in the Forest Plan can be accomplished from a physical, biological, economic, social, and legal perspective. It is not certain that these proposals will be accomplished. First, the outputs specified in the Forest Plan are estimates and projections based on available inventory data and assumptions.

Second, all activities, many of which are interdependent, may be affected by annual budgets. The Forest Plan is implemented through various site-specific projects such as wildlife habitat improvements, campground development, road building or timber sales. Budget allocations for any given year covered by the Forest Plan may cause projects to be rescheduled. However, the goals and land use allocations described in the Forest Plan will not change unless the Plan itself were changed. If actual budgets are significantly different from those projected over a period of several years, the Forest Plan may have to be amended and, consequently, would reflect different outputs and environmental conditions. The significance of changes related to budgets or other factors is determined in the context of the particular circumstances.

During implementation, when the various projects are designed, site-specific analyses will be performed. These analyses may be disclosed in an environmental document and may result in an amendment or revision of the Forest Plan. Any resulting documents are to be tiered to the FEIS for the Forest Plan, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28

RECOMMENDATION

I also am recommending a decision to the Chief, who holds the authority to make a final decision on establishment of Research Natural Areas (RNAs). Like my final decisions, this recommendation is accompanied by all supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. However, the authority to make a final decision on the issue lies outside my authority. If the Chief accepts the recommendation, the resulting final decision *will not* ordinarily be revisited or reassessed by the Forest Service during implementation.

In this Forest Plan I am recommending four Research Natural Areas (Dixie Butte, Baldy Mountain, Dugout Creek and Shaketable) in addition to the one that has already been established (Canyon Creek). I strongly recommend that these four areas become established RNAs to provide for research, observation and study of undisturbed ecosystems. The importance of what we can learn from these ecosystems cannot be overemphasized, in that it helps to establish a baseline from which we can measure our successes.

SECTION III

RATIONALE FOR THE DECISIONS

I approached my decisions by first looking at the major issues and public comment on those issues and then comparing the various alternative's response to the issues. My rationale for these decisions is built upon this comparison and is presented below.

During the period between the Draft and Final EIS, Malheur National Forest employees held numerous meetings with interested publics. Initially Forest employees met with the interested citizens to hear their concerns and clarify issues. Next, Forest employees looked at ways to address these comments, developed proposals for the major issues and shared them with the citizens. These citizens responded to the proposals, and their responses were used to develop the recommendations to me.

In arriving at this decision, I reviewed the environmental consequences of the Forest Plan and the alternatives. I gave particular attention to how the alternatives respond to the public issues and management concerns. In my judgement, the selected alternative promotes the highest level of land stewardship in striving for healthy forest and range ecosystems, while producing both monetary and nonmonetary resource outputs.

RATIONALE FOR RESOLVING EACH ISSUE

The response of each alternative to the major issues, which were grouped based on common elements and similarities into six different issue areas, was a primary consideration in choosing the selected alternative. The alternatives and their resolution of the issues are discussed below, and are disclosed in greater detail in the FEIS, CHAPTERS I and V.

ISSUE AREA : Riparian Areas

- What effect will forest management activities have on riparian areas, what level of fisheries habitat productivity should be maintained, what level of timber harvest is compatible with riparian-dependent resources?

Although they occupy only a small portion of the Forest's land base, riparian areas are the most productive and biologically diverse areas on the Forest. These areas provide important fish and wildlife habitat and often contain very productive timber stands and productive, lush forage in grazing allotments. Their gentle topography makes riparian areas attractive for road location and, in the semiarid west, the combination of water and riparian vegetation attracts recreationists. Because of the variety and sometimes conflicting nature of these concentrated uses, riparian areas have the greatest potential for resource-use conflict on the Forest.

Public response to the draft documents included many comments that were critical of our riparian area management, especially about the effects of livestock grazing. I believe many of these criticisms have merit and that changes in management standards are necessary. For this reason new grazing utilization standards were developed in 1988 and have been adopted in this Forest Plan. In general, these standards will have the effect of reducing the level of forage utilization by livestock in riparian areas. This will be helpful in our efforts to restore and maintain stream shade and streambank stability.

During the past couple of years, Forests and Regional Offices in Regions 1, 4, and 6 have been working closely with Columbia Basin Indian tribes and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) on the issue of anadromous fish habitat management. At this time, a Forest Service draft policy and policy implementation guide have been developed, and are expected to be approved in the

near future. Upon approval of the policy and implementation guide, the Forest Plan will be reviewed and amended if necessary. This will be completed as soon as it is possible to do so. I believe this policy will be an important factor in helping to achieve a mutual goal of the Tribes and the Forest Service to provide strategies for habitat management and anadromous fish production consistent with fish restoration goals of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. I will make it a point that the CRITFC be contacted early in the scoping phase of analysis for any projects located in anadromous fish drainages on the Forest.

Alternative I permitted scheduled timber harvest inside the riparian area for Class I and II nonanadromous streams, but not anadromous streams. I have modified this alternative to exclude from scheduled harvest, a strip of land 100 feet on each side of all Class I and II streams. I have several reasons for taking this approach:

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

This does not mean that no harvest can occur in riparian areas. As with all lands outside the suitable base, harvest is allowed "when necessary to accomplish multiple use objectives other than timber" (FOREST PLAN, FOREST-WIDE STANDARD #103 and MANAGEMENT AREAS 3a and 3b #25). This means that in riparian areas non-scheduled harvest is allowed if doing so will accomplish specific riparian resource objectives.

In making this decision I have considered the economic consequences of removing these areas from scheduled harvest. Analysis indicates that removing these lands (approximately 5,000 acres) from the suitable base results in a drop in the annual ASQ of approximately 0.2 MMCF (1 MMBF). I believe that this trade-off is worth the benefits received from the added stream protection. This change is reflected in the Forest Plan standards but not in the outputs such as those identified in the schedule of management activities or the land allocation adjustment to unsuitable timber lands.

ISSUE AREA : Big-game Habitat

- What level of big-game habitat should be provided to meet the needs for desirable big-game herds?

Elk populations prior to 1970 were relatively stable but low. During the past decade populations have steadily increased to a current summer population of about 6,600 elk; about one-third of these elk winter on the Forest. Mule deer population have fluctuated during the past 40 years and are currently on a downward trend in 2 of the 7 game management units which include the Forest. Management of winter range for elk will provide for the wintering needs of mule deer as well since mule deer winter range on the Forest is minimal and overlaps with elk winter range. Mule deer winter ranges occur principally on private lands below the Forest.

- Management of big-game herd levels is the responsibility of the State of Oregon, Department of Fish and Wildlife while the Forest Service manages the habitat occurring on the Forest. Ultimately the cooperation of both agencies will assure quality habitat that supports viable populations. The State management objective for elk populations in that portion of game management units which occur on the Malheur National Forest is 2,800 elk wintering on the Forest.

Ranchers on private land adjacent to the Forest are concerned about the movement of deer and elk off the Forest to private land. Presently, some herds move off the National Forest to winter on private land adjacent to the Forest. The amount and distribution of cover, snow depth, weather, disturbance (human activities) and animal preference for forage all influence big game use of public or private lands. The increased potential of the Forest to carry larger populations will also increase the potential for more big game to winter on private land. Forage improvements on the winter range may increase the carrying capacity and retain more deer and elk on National Forest lands, depending on the other factors listed above.

The wildlife issue of most concern to the public deals with big game habitat for elk hunting opportunities. Most of the dispersed recreation use occurs on the Forest during the deer and elk hunting seasons. Most local, and many regional and statewide residents and hunter's groups, are concerned about forest management activities and their effect on elk numbers and hunting opportunities. Most hunters are not only concerned about quality habitat (Forest Service responsibility) but are also concerned about the length of the hunting season, population numbers, opportunities for success, and whether hunting will be on a limited entry basis that would reduce their hunting freedom (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife responsibility).

Big-game habitat management and timber management are interrelated. Habitat quality for big-game populations is determined by cover quality, size and spacing, and by forage and road density (disturbance) factors. Timber management activities can influence the balance and distribution of cover and forage. Elk population numbers have increased, probably responding to available forage and controlled hunts.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W) population objectives for the elk and deer herds, hunter success rates, and the need to limit hunting opportunities in certain units are related to the anticipated effects of Forest management on big-game habitat. For example, in addition to total population objectives, ODF&W has objectives for bull-to-cow and buck-to-doe ratios for each herd at the end of the hunting season. To ensure that the appropriate number of males are harvested, the Forest Service must limit access (by closing roads) and/or ODF&W must limit the number of hunters. The Forest activity that most affects the management actions of ODF&W to meet its population objectives is the control of access for hunters using motorized vehicles.

It is my decision to manage big-game habitat so as to maintain deer and elk populations at approximately the State's population management objective levels. The application of big-game cover standards and the elk habitat effectiveness model (Thomas et al. 1988), will be used to balance cover quality, cover spacing, forage, and security (open road densities) to achieve habitat effectiveness objectives on big-game summer and winter range areas. Effective vegetation manipulation and road management techniques will contribute to a slight increase through time of the Forest-wide habitat effectiveness for big game.

Our analysis shows that Alternative C-modified would be the best alternative for wildlife. (See Chapter IV of the FEIS). However, I do not believe the gains in wildlife habitat and increased old growth allocations justify the reduction in timber harvest that would result. Similarly, I do not believe the gains in timber production from Alternative B-modified is worth the potential risk to big game habitat or hunting recreation experiences on a Forest such as the Malheur -- a Forest valued by many for its

wildlife and hunting values. I believe Alternative I is a reasonable compromise with some slight modifications.

It is my decision to select Alternative I with several modifications to big-game habitat. The next several pages describe my four changes to Alternative I in the following order:

1. Increase in HEI objectives in both summer and winter range
2. Reduction of winter range satisfactory and total cover standards on selected watersheds.
3. Reduction of summer range satisfactory cover standards in Malheur & Silvies watersheds
4. Reduction of summer range cover acreage for HEI calculations in Malheur & Silvies watersheds

1 Increase in HEI objectives in both summer and winter range

Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI) measures Rocky Mountain elk habitat. It is the relative value of habitat conditions based on the potential of the habitat type to provide cover, the quality of existing cover, and the miles of road open to vehicular traffic. The use of HEI, and in particular the integration of this technique with silvicultural techniques, is still being tested and evaluated. Further testing and evaluation will occur during plan implementation and monitoring.

In Alternative I the minimum HEI standard is 4 in summer range and 5 in winter range. On the Umatilla National Forest, which is adjacent to the north, the minimum HEI standard is 6 in summer range and .7 in winter range. The State of Oregon has raised a concern about this discrepancy. I am also concerned with the consistency between forests, therefore I have modified Alternative I to increase HEI objectives to .5 in summer range and 6 in winter range. This means that the minimum standards are to remain the same as in the Alternative I but that the goals to strive towards in site-specific project implementation will be slightly higher, as shown in the table below. As projects are planned the opportunity to achieve higher objectives will be considered where site-specific vegetative characteristics and health provide that opportunity.

Elk Habitat Effectiveness Index (HEI)		
	Minimum Standard	Desired Objective
Winter Range	.5	6
Summer Range	.4	5

In those instances where both timber and HEI objectives can't be achieved in summer range, as determined through monitoring, the plan direction will be amended. Until that can be done, the timber objective will be met in a manner as consistent as possible with the HEI objective. Project analysis will consider site-specific conditions and the need to maintain quality big-game habitat and projected timber yields.

The reason I feel that it is acceptable for the two forests to be slightly different is because the situation on the Malheur is somewhat different than on the Umatilla. The habitat capability for elk changes as one moves from the Blue Mountains in the north to the Great Basin high desert in the southern reaches.

of the Malheur The slightly lower HEI values on the Malheur in both summer and winter range reflect this change in habitat

Another reason for slightly lower HEI standards on the Malheur is to allow for vegetative treatment so that epidemic levels of insect and disease can be curtailed. This will maintain both forest health and achieve as high a level of HEI as may be compatible While vegetative treatments are occurring, the habitat effectiveness will be reduced from desired levels in some areas. Road closures and other actions such a forage seeding will be used to mitigate these effects Treatment activities needed to deal with current insect and disease problems make it possible to achieve future desired HEI levels. In many cases, not treating vegetative health conditions now will result in a significant loss of cover in the near future.

The difference in HEI levels between the Malheur and Umatilla and the application of that model to different habitat conditions will allow the Forests to test the objectives on the ground and evaluate these different applications

2. Reduction of satisfactory and total cover standards for winter range on selected watersheds.

During the last year the Forest has collected new data which indicated that implementation of satisfactory cover standards in winter ranges may be extremely difficult, to impossible, to achieve in some drainages. The Forest Plan yield tables were calculated on 1980 data and ground conditions have changed since that time. Insects and disease have increased to epidemic levels. Although modeling projections were updated to 1990 conditions, new data suggests that much of what was considered cover in the modeling process does not meet the definition of cover on the ground. This is in part due to the impacts from epidemic insects and disease infestations and in part due to the natural ecological potential of the land. In some areas nonforested lands such as scablands naturally limit the ability of the land to become big-game cover

Given the conditions listed in the above paragraph, the impacts on the timber supply would be too great in that the timber outputs (ASQ) would be difficult to obtain with the standards identified in Alternative I. Therefore I have directed the Forest Supervisor to reduce satisfactory cover standards in winter range (Management Area 4a) in 4 out of 7 major watersheds, and total cover in 3 out of the 7 major watersheds (see table below for changes) These changes will not effect ASQ These new standards have been incorporated into the Plan.

Changes between Alternative I and Selected Alternative in Management Area 4a (Winter Range)				
Winter Range	Satisfactory Cover		Total Cover	
Watershed	Alternative I	Selected Alternative	Alternative I	Selected Alternative
Fox/Cottonwood	10	10	25	25
M.F. John Day	10	10	25	25
S.F. John Day	10	8	25	20
N F Malheur	10	8	25	20
Upper John Day	10	10	25	25
Malheur	10	5	25	20
Sivies	10	8	25	25

3. Reduction of satisfactory cover standards for summer range in Malheur and Silvies watersheds

Management Area 1 (General Forest) has a variety of objectives. The primary objective is timber production, but big-game habitat (summer range) is an important objective also. Through silvicultural prescriptions and the suitable lands on which they apply, a certain contribution to the Forest-wide ASQ is anticipated. Like winter range, it is anticipated that achievement of both the ASQ and cover standards will be difficult. The State of Oregon is very concerned about being able to achieve the ASQ output on the southern half of the forest and so am I. Therefore I have asked the Forest Supervisor to plan for an additional 2 MMBF per year in the Malheur and Silvies drainages by lowering satisfactory cover standards to 5% and 8%, respectively (see table below). Total cover will remain the same at 20%. Because mule deer need less cover as compared to elk, my decision will result in giving stronger emphasis on the southern summer range to mule deer in combination with elk.

Changes between Alternative I and Selected Alternative in Management Area 1 (General Forest) Summer Range				
Summer Range	Satisfactory Cover		Total Cover	
Watershed	Alternative I	Selected Alternative	Alternative I	Selected Alternative
Fox/Cottonwood	12	12	20	20
M F. John Day	12	12	20	20
S.F. John Day	12	12	20	20
N F. Malheur	12	12	20	20
Upper John Day	12	12	20	20
Malheur	12	5	20	20
Silvies	12	8	20	20

4. Reduction of cover acreage for HEI calculations in Malheur and Silvies watersheds.

Alternative I provided for satisfactory and marginal cover in blocks of at least 30 acres on summer range. Consistent with my decision above to give stronger emphasis to deer on the southern portion of the forest I have decided to modify Alternative I to allow for satisfactory cover in blocks of 10 acres on both the Malheur and Silvies watersheds. All other watersheds will provide for cover in blocks of 30 acres in size but this may not be possible to do this due to site condition or potential in all areas. Where cover in 10-30 acre blocks is known to provide adequate habitat, site-specific analysis will recognize the value of these smaller cover areas and include these acres in HEI calculations.

Prior to making the four changes discussed above, I had created the Blue Mountain Elk Initiative, which is discussed in more detail below.

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

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

The Forest will work with the States and other entities thru the Blue Mountain Elk Management Initiative, to address questions of public and private land interaction with elk habitat management, and other potential strategies for minimizing impacts on elk habitat during plan implementation, project design and execution, and monitoring.

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

ISSUE AREA : Roadless Areas

- Should some or all of the Forest's roadless areas remain roadless, or be opened to roaded development? Should Pine Creek study area be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification?

The Forest currently has 18 separate roadless areas comprising 180,948 acres. Some people enjoy the recreation experience available in areas which have many characteristics of wilderness but fewer restrictions. Such areas can be characterized as providing semiprimitive nonmotorized or motorized recreation opportunities. Maintaining the undeveloped character will mean excluding such areas from regulated timber harvest and road construction. In areas providing for motorized use, off-road vehicle use may continue; mineral exploration and extraction could continue in both types of area.

Areas maintained in an undeveloped state will also be eligible for future wilderness consideration. National and Regional environmental groups such as the Wilderness Society, Native Plant Society, and Oregon Natural Resources Council are opposed to development of these areas stating that in many cases there is no need for development and they should remain undeveloped rather than foreclose on future wilderness possibilities. One of these areas, Pine Creek, was analyzed in this planning process for potential inclusion in the National Wilderness System because it was designated for further planning review by the RARE II Final Environmental Impact Statement. These same groups as well as local environmental groups, some hunters, and some local residents favor roadless management of these areas because they believe it protects sensitive plant species, wildlife habitat, water quality and other amenity values, better than management geared toward consumptive uses.

Others such as the mining and timber industry associations and businesses, many local residents, and local governments state that the management of these areas has been in limbo long enough. They want to develop access and the resources in these areas to end the uncertainty about their availability. They state that the resources in these areas need to be managed so that they can contribute to local industrial and economic needs. They believe that wildlife habitat can be improved and the vegetation will be in a more vigorous condition if the resources are managed for consumptive uses (primarily wood fiber production).

Three of the current roadless areas, Malheur River, Flag Creek, and North Fork Malheur River have been affected by the 1988 legislation adding two rivers to the Wild and Scenic River Act. The rivers, the Malheur and the North Fork Malheur, both have scenic segments, only the Malheur River has a wild segment. Acres within wild river designation will have no timber harvest and no road building. Acres within scenic river designation may be available for timber harvest and road construction after development of river management plans. For more information see ROD, ISSUE, WILD AND SCENIC

During the past year analysis has been underway to reassess the "outstandingly remarkable" qualities of the rivers mentioned above. On March 5, 1990 I signed a decision notice establishing the Wild and Scenic River boundaries based on the outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers. The Forest Plan has incorporated these new boundaries. Should my decision notice of March 5, 1990 be appealed and subsequently changed, the Plan will be amended.

The State of Oregon and other individuals have brought to my attention two concerns, which I will discuss next. The first is increasing ASQ in selected wildlife emphasis areas. The second concern is specific to McClellan Mountain and Dry Cabin.

This Plan has two management areas for wildlife emphasis, one that has scheduled timber harvest (Management Area 20) and one that does not (Management Area 21). Management Area 20 has scheduled harvest which contributes to the ASQ. Management Area 21 does not have scheduled harvest yet this prescription still allows for non-scheduled timber harvest "to accomplish wildlife habitat or fish habitat objectives, as established in a project-level environmental analysis" (FOREST PLAN, MANAGEMENT AREA 21, STANDARD #10). The State of Oregon and others felt that ASQ could be scheduled from Dixie Butte, Jumpoff Joe, and Nipple Butte, all located in Management Area 21. I seriously considered this possibility but felt that data was currently lacking to ensure a routine, scheduled harvest. Since these areas are roadless, there has not been as much data collected for them as compared to other areas of the forest.

In response to the Governor's concerns, and due to the lack of data for these areas, I have asked the Forest Supervisor to complete an integrated resource analysis for Jumpoff Joe, Nipple Butte, and a portion of Dixie Butte. This process will encompass data collection and analysis for all resources, such as wildlife, recreation, timber and more. After data collection and analysis has been completed I feel we will be in a much stronger position to see if data supports scheduled timber harvest to meet wildlife objectives. If indeed it does, NEPA analysis will be completed and the Plan can be amended to move these areas into the suitable land base (Management Area 20). This will require additional monies to accomplish and the requested budgets will need to be altered to reflect the necessary increase in dollars to complete this workload. In summary, I do not feel that I can schedule harvest from these acres at this time but will consider the State's request to do so after additional data collection and analysis has been completed.

The State of Oregon requested a hazard reduction analysis for Baldy Mountain and Glacier be completed. Baldy Mountain is in Management Area 21, and Glacier is in Management Area 11, both which allow non-scheduled harvest if in accord with management area objectives. I thought this was a reasonable request and have asked the Forest Supervisor to complete an integrated resource analysis area for both areas. If the analysis shows a need to reduce fire hazard levels to accomplish management area objectives, this activity can occur under the existing prescriptions. This project too will require additional monies to accomplish and the requested budgets will need to be altered to reflect the necessary increase in dollars to complete this workload.

Dry Cabin was in Management Area 20, scheduled timber harvest in Alternative I. The State of Oregon and others have requested that we take a look at the possibility of taking the southern two-thirds of the area out of the suitable land base and into Management Area 21. I have reviewed the data on this area and found it to be marginal timber growing land at best, contributing less than 1 MMBF annually.

to the ASQ. The land is characterized by stringers of timber which would be difficult to log and require expensive logging systems. More importantly this area is appropriate for wildlife emphasis and could not support a scheduled harvest regime while simultaneously meeting wildlife objectives. The land allocation adjacent to the south is semiprimitive nonmotorized (Management Area 10) and allocation of southern Dry Cabin into Management area 21 will be more consistent with the adjacent objectives. For these reasons it is my decision to place the southern two-thirds of Dry Cabin into Management Area 21. Changes to the suitable land base acreage and outputs have not been made to the Plan, nor are they reflected on Alternative I maps.

Over 50 citizens from Mount Vernon as well as the State of Oregon have voiced a concern about the land allocation for McClellan Mountain in Alternative I. I have listened to their concerns and deliberated over what the desired future condition for the area should be. The citizens of Mount Vernon would like to see ORV use permitted on the area. The State of Oregon would like to see the area emphasize wildlife objectives while scheduling timber harvest.

I feel that it is possible for ORV use and wildlife emphasis to be compatible if the area is managed for semiprimitive motorized recreation on **designated** roads and trails only. I do not feel that these values are compatible with scheduled timber harvest. With this in mind I have decided to change the **eastern** portion of McClellan Mountain **only** from Management Area 10 (semiprimitive nonmotorized) into Management Area 21 (wildlife emphasis without scheduled harvest). A standard has been added to allow motorized recreation on designated trails after completion of site-specific analysis, which will include analysis of soils, watershed and wildlife to assess their compatibility and to analyze the environmental impacts. If NEPA analysis shows that ORV trails and wildlife objectives are compatible and the impacts to the environment are acceptable, then ORV trails may be designated for motorized use. All other changes have not been incorporated into the Plan, nor are they reflected in Alternative I maps. The remainder of McClellan Mountain (western and central portions) will remain semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation just like in Alternative I.

Where the management strategy is to develop a previously undeveloped area, the Forest will minimize permanently open roads if not needed to meet management objectives. Provision is made for removal of trees when volume is lost through catastrophic events, when it meets the area's objectives.

The Jumpoff Joe Roadless Area is unique in that its acreage straddles across two national forest boundaries. The northern portion is located within the Umatilla National Forest, while the southern part is within the Malheur. This raises the concern regarding how consistent the two forests treat this area in their respective plans. In the Malheur plan, the area is treated by prescribing a wildlife emphasis with no scheduled timber harvest, and it is not included in the Malheur's suitable timber base. In the Umatilla Plan, it is treated as a scenic area and is included in the Umatilla's suitable timber base, although no scheduled timber harvest is scheduled to come off these acres. I feel these two different approaches are acceptable for a couple of reasons. First, the two forests are separate administrative units in slightly different settings. Second, the end result on the area in both plans is the same, no harvest is scheduled to come off of these acres. This means that although the plans technically treat the Jumpoff Joe differently, the forest uses will not be effected differently.

The following is a summary of the decisions I have made regarding roadless areas. The acres displayed here incorporate the changes I have discussed above but again, these acreage changes have not been made to the Plan.

Approximately 75,034 acres (44% of the current roadless area inventory) will be managed with no scheduled timber harvest and no additional roads (through semiprimitive motorized or nonmotorized and the wild portion of the wild and scenic river allocations). These acres consist of two roadless areas in their entirety and parts of six others. These include: Aldrich (8,609 acres); Shaketable (8,977 acres); parts of McClellan Mountain (13,917 acres), Bear Creek (former North Fork Malheur River) (2,710

acres); Malheur River (3,066 acres); Glacier Mountain (14,578 acres); Myrtle-Silvies (9,855 acres); and Greenhorn Mountain (13,322 acres). Greenhorn Mountain is also known as Vinegar Hill-Indian Rock Scenic Area, Management Area 7, (See Appendix J, Allocation of RARE II Acres by management area).

The acres mentioned above (75,034) are to be managed in an unroaded condition, but for multiple use. Although some may argue that this is creating "de facto wilderness", we in fact allow many activities which are not allowed in wilderness areas. The many uses allowed in these unroaded areas that cannot occur in wilderness include structural habitat improvements, recreation facility improvements such as sanitary facilities and primitive camp sites, and under certain conditions, special uses such as electronic sites. In addition, the use of mechanical equipment will be allowed in the maintenance and administration of lands in the unroaded allocations.

Approximately 14,274 acres in, or adjacent to, two other roadless areas will be managed with a "wildlife emphasis - with scheduled timber harvest" prescription. These include 5,229 acres in the Dry Cabin Wildlife Emphasis Area (Management Area 20A), and 9,045 acres in the Utley Butte Wildlife Emphasis Area (Management Area 20B).

Also, 37,476 acres in, or portions of, six roadless areas will be managed with a "wildlife emphasis - no scheduled timber harvest" prescription (Management Area 21). These areas include Jumpoff Joe (4,006 acres); Baldy Mountain (5,380 acres); Dixie Butte (6,895 acres), and Nipple Butte (5,795 acres); McClellan Mountain (4,800 acres) and Dry Cabin (10,600 acres). In these areas timber harvest will be allowed only if it is needed to meet wildlife objectives.

While roads in the wildlife emphasis areas, with and without scheduled timber harvest (Management Areas 20A, 20B, and 21), will be allowed, additional road construction will be minimized. In these areas all roads will be obliterated or closed to vehicle traffic once project activities are completed.

Before timber harvesting and road building takes place in any former RARE II roadless area, an area transportation analysis will be completed for it and the surrounding area.

Approximately 2,646 acres of the Dixie roadless area will be allocated to the General Forest Management Area. However, these acres will be managed to emphasize winter recreation potential.

Those areas not selected for unroaded management were assigned to a variety of management emphases. Developmental activities will occur in all these areas to varying degrees. In some areas the activities will occur over much of the land area, significantly reducing its roadless character. In other areas, varying amounts of undeveloped land area will remain.

It is my decision not to recommend Pine Creek for wilderness classification at this time. The Pine Creek area will be managed primarily to maintain big-game winter range habitat. The remainder of the area will be managed primarily to protect bald eagle winter roosts and maintain old growth.

ISSUE AREA : Economic Stability

- How will management of Forest resources affect local communities?

The Malheur National Forest comprises about 39% of Grant County's acreage and 5% of Harney County's acreage, as well as small acreages in Baker and Malheur Counties. Because of the substantial acreages, distinct economic ties, and the people's use patterns, the Forest's primary zone of influence has been determined to be Grant and northern Harney counties. Industries and communities in adjacent counties are also affected by resource management policies on the Forest.

Malheur National Forest policies have a direct impact on local, dependent industries which, in turn, affect business income, wages, employment, and revenues to the counties. The principal industries in the Forest's zone of influence are wood manufacturing, agriculture (i.e., ranching), and retail trade. These three industries account for about half of all employment in the area. Another large part of the economy is government employment, including state agencies and federal agencies (more than just the Forest Service), and much of that is also based on timber and livestock management.

Forest management activities and the resulting outputs influence job opportunities, incomes, and the way of life of the approximately 15,000 residents in local communities. Changes in Forest outputs and activities will affect the social and economic life of the local population.

Economic and community stability are acknowledged to be very important, and social stability is strongest when the local industries are healthy. Some people equate stability with a sustained supply of Malheur National Forest timber adequate to meet the demands of local industry. Others believe that the counties have been too dependent on primary timber manufacturing, and that a more diversified economy should be cultivated, including growth in tourism and development of secondary wood products manufacturing.

My decision strives to maintain economic and community stability. Under the selected alternative a sufficient mix of resource uses will be provided to meet foreseeable demand for most resource uses. Range outputs will decline slightly from recent use, however, the ranching industry will be provided with sufficient access to Forest forage to maintain most herd levels. This will assist in maintaining an industry which contributes to the social stability of the area. The selected alternative also produces an annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 200 million board feet (MMBF). As the timber industry health is directly tied to the economy in eastern Oregon, the following discussion portrays the relationship of timber supply to local economic stability.

From 1980-1989, the average annual timber sold on the Malheur NF was 219 MMBF (similar to ASQ). The selected alternative will make available an amount that is slightly (9%) below this level. The average annual harvest over the same ten years was 174 MMBF. This period has included the worst recession since establishment of the local timber industry (65 MMBF of net sawtimber harvested in 1982) and the highest recorded harvest (281 MMBF harvested in 1986) in Malheur National Forest history.

However, from 1970 through 1989, the average annual timber sale level (net volume, similar to ASQ) was about 198 MMBF. Average annual harvest for this time was 168 MMBF. This 20 year period of time gives a clearer picture of the long term timber supply history, as the extremes that have occurred within the last 8 years are moderated.

With only a slight decrease in the timber supply level over recent years (1980-89), and essentially the same as the long term average, a stable amount of raw material is projected to be available for timber industries within and adjacent to the Forest's zone of influence. This is expected to be a stable supply of timber in order to maintain local industries currently in place. This is virtually the same amount of timber that has been supplied annually over the last 20 years from the Malheur National Forest, and so should help to remain a cornerstone of a stable and predictable local economy.

It is important to note that although the timber supply is projected to be approximately the same as the long term average, the species mix and size class of products will change. Generally speaking, the amount of ponderosa pine will decrease and the diameter (size) of logs of all species offered will be reduced as we move from harvesting of large diameter trees to managing secondary growth. This is discussed in greater detail in the following issue "timber management".

Competition is expected to intensify for the high quality, large diameter material (primarily ponderosa pine) available from the Forest during the life of this plan. Not only will competition intensify for high

quality material, competition is also increasing from outside the historical zone of influence for all timber volume offered

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

It is my decision to manage noncommodity resources at a level which maintains the rural, forested setting important to local lifestyles, as well as providing a strong foundation for diversifying the economic base of the affected communities. Approximately 40% of the Forest will be managed under guidelines which do not include scheduled timber harvest. Much of this area will provide a recreation setting relatively free of human intrusions. Many other areas will be managed to meet other concerns important to Forest visitors, such as scenic travel corridors and big-game habitat. We will work with partners to develop and enhance recreational use of the Malheur National Forest and promote tourism in the area.

Frequently people have commented that payments to counties must not be reduced. Returns to counties for schools and roads depend on the price of timber as much as on the amount sold because payments are based on receipts rather than harvest volume. Ponderosa pine is the most valuable species on the Malheur National Forest, thus this species greatly influences payments to counties. The amount of ponderosa pine offered for sale must be reduced. It simply is no longer available in the amounts necessary to sustain annual harvest at past rates. It is my decision to emphasize future availability of ponderosa pine by reverting 75,000 acres of currently mixed conifer stands back to ponderosa pine type over the next 50 years. In addition the selected alternative schedules commercial thins in many ponderosa pine stands. This reduces the number of trees, allowing the remaining stand more room to grow, thus gaining some harvest now and more rapid growth of the remaining trees. Both these efforts will help support a strong economic base for the future.

In Alternative I 29,090 acres were not selected for timber harvest because they were not economically efficient, or it will cost more to harvest than can be recovered in the short-term. Some of these acres are decadent, low value, mixed conifer species which have the potential of being productive in the next stand rotation. It is my decision to bring these acres back into the suitable land base but not schedule ASQ off them at this time. These acres will be located and treated based on site-specific analysis, when market conditions are favorable and the budget allows. If these acres can be treated and brought back into a productive condition, the ASQ will be added back into scheduled harvest after initial treatment. Estimates are that this could be as much as 4 MMBF per year.

The reason I have chosen to put these acres back into the suitable base is because they are good timber producing sites although they do not have productive stands on them now. The reason I did **not** schedule harvest off them at this time is because although they are productive lands, they do not have the ability to contribute to ASQ without treatment. The 29,090 acres that were not selected for timber harvest are not distinguishable from those which have been selected except through site-specific analysis. Therefore, site-specific analysis will identify if a given acre is indeed economically inefficient and has the potential to be productive in the next stand rotation. After treatment, the ASQ will be added back into the scheduled harvest.

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

ISSUE AREA : Timber Management

- What level of sustained annual yield of timber products should the Forest provide while still maintaining Forest productivity and meeting local, regional and national needs? How much timber land should be managed for wood fiber production, what species should be favored, and what management methods will be used to achieve the desired harvest level and species mix?

In many ways this issue is inseparable from the previous issue termed "economic stability". Responses to the draft documents indicated a great deal of concern for the effect the proposed plan would have on the local economies at a time when eastern Oregon communities were suffering serious economic hardship. Many writers feared that their means of livelihood would be lost if the proposed plan were implemented. But there were also expressions of support for the proposed plan, as well as support for a reduced level of timber harvest. Frequently respondents cited neither a preference for increase or decrease, but a genuine concern that the harvest level be sustainable for future generations. I carefully considered all points of view, including two new alternatives suggested by publics that were incorporated into the analysis.

It is my decision to select an alternative with an average annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of 34 8 million cubic feet (MMCF) or 200 million board feet (MMBF) of timber. The ASQ is the upper limit of chargeable wood to be sold from suitable forest land during a decade of the planning period. Although it is a decadal figure, it is most often expressed on an annual basis as the "average annual allowable sale quantity". It is important to note that ASQ is not an actual proposal for timber sale offerings. The annual timber sale offerings include non-chargeable as well as chargeable material and depends on budget appropriations, multiple use objectives, and market conditions.

Chargeable volume, or the ASQ, is composed of categories of timber which were used in making growth and yield projections during the development of the Plan. On the Malheur National Forest, this will include some mortality salvage. Other volume (non-chargeable) was not used in yield calculations because it did not meet regional utilization standards or standards for soundness, or because it is to be harvested from lands not suitable for timber production (i.e., salvage from a nonscheduled wildlife emphasis area such as in Management Area 21). Harvest from unsuitable lands occurs only when removal of the timber will meet the goals and objectives of the management area.

From the total suitable acres, the average annual ASQ is planned to be 34 8 MMCF (200 MMBF) over the next 10 years. An additional 3 6 MMCF (11 MMBF) per year of non-chargeable volume is expected to be harvested annually over the next decade in the form of salvage cutting, cull logs, and miscellaneous products such as firewood and posts and poles. The total volume sold (chargeable plus non-chargeable) is referred to as the annual timber sale program quantity (TSPQ). The TSPQ will be 38.4 MMCF (211 MMBF) per year. To achieve this TSPQ yearly targets are developed. This TSPQ is a decrease of 17 MMBF over the quantity sold during the past 10 years but roughly the same as the volume sold during the past 20 years.

A note on units of measure: Timber outputs will be monitored and controlled on a cubic foot measure. The board foot volume associated with the cubic foot volume (i.e., the board foot/cubic foot conversion ratio) varies from stand to stand depending on the size and form of trees. Both board foot and cubic foot measures (MMBF and MMCF) are displayed below since the board foot measure continues to be a customary unit of measure.

Alternative I schedules harvest on 835,970 acres (80% of those lands that were available and tentatively suitable for timber management) on the Malheur National Forest. In addition I have asked the Forest Supervisor to bring back into the suitable base an additional 29,090 acres of "economically inefficient" lands. This has been discussed in greater detail under the previous issue called "economic suitability".

The ASQ is divided into two categories: volume scheduled from inventoried roadless areas and volume scheduled elsewhere on the Forest. If the volume scheduled from inventoried roadless areas cannot be sold, that volume will not be replaced by volume scheduled elsewhere. Volume scheduled from inventoried roadless areas is estimated to be 18.6 MMCF (108 MMBF) or 5.4% of the ASQ in the first decade. During implementation, the specific volume from roadless areas will be determined through site specific analysis. If the volume cannot be sold, the plan may be amended.

A portion of the average annual ASQ established in this plan depends on the application of intensive timber management practices, including thinnings and plantation establishment, which may occur as part of even-aged or uneven-aged management. Which practices can or should be used depends on budget appropriations and site-specific analysis. If these intensive management practices are not carried out, the ASQ will be reduced and the plan will be amended.

Of the total sell volume, roughly 16.1 MMCF per year (92 MMBF), or 46%, is expected to be ponderosa pine during the first decade. About 30% of this volume, or 30 MMBF will be small diameter material from commercial thinnings.

The State of Oregon has brought to my attention that local industries need ample time to adjust to the changing harvest conditions in addition to the need to have a stable supply of ponderosa pine volume. Therefore I have asked the Forest Supervisor to make every effort to rampdown the sell volume for ponderosa pine during the first decade to reach a sustainable level in the second decade.

In general, the volume of ponderosa pine is decreasing. By reducing the amount of ponderosa pine, this Forest Plan brings the mix of species offered for sale closer to the mix reflected in the standing timber inventory. While the total ASQ level (in cubic feet) is sustainable through time, the ponderosa pine portion of the ASQ is not. Despite our efforts to create a smooth transition to a sustainable level, it is highly probable that the ponderosa pine offerings will fluctuate in future decades to compensate for accelerated harvest over the last 10 years.

Many publics, including the State of Oregon, emphasized the need to reduce even-aged management and place a stronger emphasis on uneven-aged management. Our analysis shows that uneven-aged management techniques can be used to compliment many resource objectives such as visuals and riparian. For example, clearcutting (even-aged management) in riparian areas does not meet the riparian objective of providing stream shading, whereas selective cutting of individual trees or groups of trees can occur while still meeting the riparian objective of stream shading. This is just one example of where uneven-aged management harvesting techniques can complement other resource objectives.

On the other hand our analysis also shows that uneven-aged management conflicts with wildlife cover objectives. For example, a stand of trees which is selectively harvested (individual trees removed from throughout the stand) will not meet cover standards in that the canopy will be too open.

Because uneven-aged management has not been used as intensively in the past as even-aged management, we do not have the knowledge base to draw upon. It appears that this technique has many benefits, therefore I have decided to proceed cautiously by harvesting 64,242 acres (22% of the suitable land base) with uneven-aged techniques during the first decade. We will monitor and evaluate this management techniques to ensure that Forest Plan goals are being met. This roughly doubles the amount of acres in uneven-aged management from the draft. The remaining 214,930 acres (78%) will emphasize even-age management.

Of the land scheduled for timber harvest, approximately 56% will be intensively managed for a full yield of timber. Over the next 10 years, approximately 6,300 acres of two-storied stands will be harvested annually using overstory removal harvest methods. During this time approximately 3,330 acres will be

harvested annually using clearcut harvest methods. This method of management is expected to be fully compatible with the multiple use management goals for those lands. The lands on which less-than-full-yield timber management occurs reflect modifications for resources such as riparian habitat, visual corridors, and uneven-aged management or even-aged management in the General Forest Management Area to produce more ponderosa pine volume in later decades. Under Alternative I, growth on commercial forest lands will be increased from an average of 21 cubic feet per acre per year to 39 cubic feet per acre per year by the year 2039.

Over the past decade, there have been serious insect epidemics and several forest fires on the Malheur National Forest. In view of these events, and more, there are many people who suspect that the timber inventory for the Forest has been significantly reduced, thereby casting doubt on the ASQ calculation. I am very concerned that the timber inventory may not accurately reflect the current conditions. The Forest shares this concern and has initiated a new vegetation inventory (including timber). The vegetation mapping phase will be complete in 1991 and managed stand survey data is expected to be available in 1992. This new data will be compared with the inventory used in the Forest Plan and if significant differences are apparent, adjustments in the projected ASQ will be made and a plan amendment issued.

The entire timber inventory will be completed around 1995 or 1996. At that time breakage and defect data will be available. If breakage and defect data, along with the entire timber inventory, reflects significant differences from the data used in developing this Plan, adjustments will be made in the ASQ and the Plan amended.

After reviewing the analyses, I selected a revised land allocation for Alternative I that will provide an additional 2 MMBF annually on the southern half of the forest, particularly in the Malheur and Silvies drainages. This was accomplished by increasing the amount of area to be managed for timber emphasis by reducing satisfactory cover standards on the southern half of the Forest. My intent was to ensure that an adequate, stable timber supply can be realized. This subject is discussed in more detail under the issue big-game habitat.

The decision I have made has not been easy, but I feel confident that I have weighed the trade-offs and selected an alternative which not only provides for an adequate supply of timber, but increases the emphasis on ponderosa pine while protecting other multiple resource uses; however, I am also aware of a rapidly changing insect and disease situation and fully expect the Forest Supervisor to analyze and treat the forest accordingly to promote a healthy forest and range ecosystem. This may require an amendment to the plan in the near future.

ISSUE AREA : Road Management

- How can road management be used to make timber harvest, big-game habitat needs, and recreation opportunities more compatible?

Currently the Malheur National Forest, in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, has four Cooperative Travel Management Areas. These seasonal road closures are designed to protect wildlife habitat, minimize harassment of wildlife, maintain adequate buck and bull escapement, and promote nonmotorized hunting. These management areas are under the "green dot system" during the hunting seasons, with enforcement through the State Police and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Total National Forest land affected by these seasonal closures is approximately 172,000 acres.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the public have expressed concerns about the lack of a specific road and access management policy for the Forest as a whole and for some resources, in particular. General concerns include a belief that road densities are too high, that local roads should be closed and put back into resource production immediately following timber harvest, and that in many cases road construction and maintenance standards were too high.

The greatest concern is the road management policy in relation to big-game habitat and hunting. Specific desires expressed included permanently or seasonally closing roads to enhance big-game summer and winter range. Included in this was increasing big-game habitat effectiveness, providing escapement areas, and providing for a nonmotorized hunting experience.

Access management planning will strive for 1.0 miles of road per square mile area (mi/mi²) on winter range and 1.5 mi/mi² on summer range unless these densities do not allow activities that maintain a healthy and productive Forest as envisioned in the desired future condition, or interfere with access to private land. Open road densities will be no greater than 2.2 mi/mi² in winter range (Management Area 4a), 1.5 mi/mi² in wildlife emphasis areas (Management Areas 20a, 20b & 21) and 3.2 mi/mi² in summer range (all other Management Areas) by the end of the first decade. These densities will be monitored on a watershed basis.

Road density concerns will be addressed through the access management plan which will establish road management objectives for each road on the Forest. The existing road system will be reviewed to identify roads to be closed or obliterated because they no longer contribute to integrated land management objectives. The status of all roads will be determined by integrated land management analysis, incorporating objectives such as big-game habitat needs (including security needs), high quality recreation, timber harvest, and firewood cutting. This will be an open process with public involvement, meeting the full intent of NEPA.

Currently, there are an estimated 8,570 miles of Forest Service roads on the Forest. Under this Forest Plan 618 miles of new road will be constructed by timber purchasers during the Plan period (1990-1999). This represents a 250-mile decrease from Alternative F (the preferred alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement). In addition, road reconstruction by timber purchasers will approximate 1,320 miles during the first decade. By 1999, roads on the Forest will approximate 9,188 miles. Approximately 30% of the 9,188 miles of road (or roughly 2,688 miles) will be closed to vehicle traffic or obliterated and removed from the transportation system. This will result in 6,500 miles of open Forest Service roads at the end of the decade.

Forest goals, objectives, and standards have been strengthened and expanded in the Forest Plan to emphasize that roads will be planned, designed, constructed and maintained to the minimum level necessary to meet the needs of all resources. FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER IV provides direction on how these objectives will be accomplished and how the transportation system will be managed.

OTHER DECISION FACTORS

The following issues also factored into my decision. I encourage readers to also review Chapter V of the FEIS. It provides detailed answers to many questions posed by the reviewers of the draft documents on a variety of Forest management topics.

ISSUE AREA : Forest Health

The Forest has and is currently experiencing large-scale insect infestations of forested areas. The attacks have created large stands of dead and dying trees. These large-scale pest epidemics have major impacts on wildlife habitats, recreation opportunities, timber growth and yield, visual resources, fire hazards, and other resources. A number of groups, agencies, and individuals are concerned about the damage and commensurate losses. My goal is to provide for a healthy and productive range and forest ecosystem.

My decision has the potential to reduce insects and diseases and possible losses from these pests, thus providing for forest health. Approximately 40% of the total forested area will be in an older forest condition. Seventy percent of the regeneration acres will be managed using even-aged management, resulting in high control effectiveness. The risk of losses from insects and diseases is at a relatively moderate level because of acres receiving stocking level control.

Under this Forest Plan, integrated pest management approaches are used in a cost-effective manner to prevent and control forest pests. The principle approach in preventing the spread is through vegetation management activities. When prevention fails, early detection and aggressive control action may assist in alleviating large pest outbreaks. The appropriate control method for forest pests will continue to be determined through site-specific environmental analyses. For additional information on forest health reference the FEIS, IX, INDEX, "INSECTS & DISEASE".

ISSUE AREA : Old Growth

As described in the FEIS, there are several reasons why responsible management should include retaining old growth forest areas. At issue, of course, is how much land to retain and what constitutes old growth. For the definition of old growth used in Malheur National Forest planning refer to the FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER VI, GLOSSARY.

Meeting management requirements for wildlife on the Malheur National Forest means retaining 38,090 acres of old growth forest outside of wilderness, research natural areas, semiprimitive areas, and wild and scenic rivers. I believe there are several reasons why somewhat more than that amount should be retained:

1. The management requirement is based on current knowledge and estimates of what is necessary to retain viable populations of wildlife that rely on old growth conditions.
2. In order to achieve adequate distribution of old growth stands, it was necessary to select several that only marginally meet the definition of old growth or will need to grow into old growth. It can be argued that some of the stands we have designated don't meet the accepted definition at present, although they have the potential to grow into old growth in the future.
3. Recent wildfires as well as insect and disease epidemics over the past decade illustrate how easily old growth stands can be lost.

For these reasons, we have prescribed that an additional 9,600 acres, or a total of 47,690 acres, be managed as dedicated old growth in Management Area 13. This is approximately the same amount as was shown in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement after adjustments are made for changes into different land allocations such as roadless and wild and scenic river areas.

There are those who have suggested that the allocation of old growth acres should be higher. The dedicated old growth represents only a portion of the old-growth habitat existing on the forest. Additional old growth will remain protected in wilderness, semiprimitive areas and other management allocations that are distributed across the forest.

Connectivity corridors provide travelways between old growth areas. Although important for all wildlife, it is crucial for small game so that populations do not become genetically secluded. My selected alternative provides for connectivity corridors through land allocations in riparian areas, visual corridors, wild and scenic rivers and more.

The State of Oregon is concerned about the amount of ponderosa pine old growth in dedicated old growth (Management Area 13) and so am I. They have requested that we reassess that amount of old growth which is captured in designated areas. I feel this is a reasonable request and have asked the Forest Supervisor to inventory designated old growth within one year to ensure that at least 5,000 to 7,000 acres are in ponderosa pine climax or in mixed conifer with a majority of ponderosa pine. If the inventory shows dedicated old growth does not capture at least this acreage, steps will be taken to rectify this situation.

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

ISSUE AREA : Visuals

Visuals are an integral part of the Malheur National Forest. Many publics come to enjoy a recreational setting away from an urban life and the scenery is part of their total outdoor experience. There was a great deal of public comment about the visual character of the Forest in response to the DEIS. In general, respondents felt that maintaining the visual integrity of the Forest was important. Several publics, including the State of Oregon, suggested that we use uneven-aged management to retain large diameter trees in critical viewshed.

Our analysis showed that uneven-aged management can be used to retain large diameter trees in specific areas. This was one of the reasons that Alternative I allocated 30% of the suitable timber lands to uneven-aged management. In addition Alternative I established tighter standards to retain the visual character of the Forest.

The State of Oregon commented on two specific visual areas, Logan Valley and along the North Fork of the Malheur trail. In Logan Valley they requested to change the foreground from retention to partial retention, the latter being less restrictive on timber harvesting, thus gaining a possible 1 MMBF to the ASQ. I seriously considered their request and fully realize the importance additional ASQ is to the timber industry but felt that the impacts to the Logan Valley visual corridor did not warrant an additional 1 MMBF.

My rationale for retaining the Logan Valley foreground at retention is fairly straight forward. The area is under consideration for a Scenic Byway and as such is definitely a visually sensitive area. I am not certain that it is possible to schedule additional ASQ in this area without dramatically altering the landscape, but I do agree that if the uses are compatible we should schedule more harvest. Therefore I have directed the Forest Supervisor to proceed with a corridor plan in this viewshed (with foreground at retention). After completion of a corridor plan I will revisit the opportunity for additional volume by

changing to partial retention. I feel this way we will be in a much stronger position to make a decision in this sensitive area

The State also requested that the visual middleground be protected from the North Fork Malheur trail and meadows. The middleground is area 1/4 to 3 miles from the viewpoint, in this case the trail and meadow I fully agree with this request and have added a standard which allows protection to the middleground as seen from the trail and meadow

For additional information on visuals reference the FEIS, IX, INDEX, "VISUAL RESOURCE and VISUALS CORRIDORS".

ISSUE AREA : Native American Treaty Rights

Following release of the Draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan, the Forest received formal and detailed substantive comments and recommendations from Native American groups, primarily Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Most comments were highly critical of the consideration given to Native American treaty rights. Often mentioned were strong concerns over lack of adequate protection of Forest resources, specifically anadromous fisheries and riparian zones, big game, timber management, old growth, and unroaded areas.

During development of the final Forest Plan, the Forest has consulted with Native American people to ensure greater consideration to their needs and rights under existing treaties. Both through formal and informal consultation with Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and other Native American groups, the Forest has established greater understanding of Native American concerns for management of the Malheur National Forest.

The selected alternative affords greater consideration to the treaty-protected rights of fishing and hunting than was provided in the DEIS preferred alternative (Alternative F). Anadromous fish are a resource having subsistence, ceremonial, and commercial value to tribal members. The Forest has a substantial role in anadromous fish production in the Columbia River basin, as the Forest manages much of the headwater lands of the greater John Day River system. The Forest also manages lands within the headwaters of the Malheur River system, where the Burns Paiute, Cayuse, Umatilla (CTUIR), Nez Perce (LAPWAI), and Tenino (Warm Springs) once shared camps in and around Logan Valley.

Additionally, the selected alternative will support big game populations, which are important to tribes for both subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Emphasis will be given to wildlife management in most unroaded areas. Uneven-aged timber management will be featured on many acres of the Forest, with production of ponderosa pine a key emphasis. Livestock grazing and protection of Native sites having religious and cultural importance are also provided for by the Plan.

I expect the Forest to establish and maintain even closer coordination and a government to government relationship with the tribes in the future on implementation and monitoring of the Forest Plan. For additional information on this subject reference the FEIS, CHAPTER IX, INDEX, "NATIVE AMERICAN and NATIVE AMERICAN TREATY RIGHTS"

ISSUE AREA · Wild and Scenic Rivers

Since the draft EIS was published, evaluation of all potential candidates for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (P.L. 90-542) has been completed. Comments received on the DEIS were incorporated into this analysis. A discussion of the process is included in CHAPTER III of the FEIS. As

a result of this analysis, the Forest leadership team determined that portions of the North Fork Malheur River and Malheur River on the Forest were suitable for potential designation as Wild and Scenic Rivers. Before these recommendations could be formally submitted, the same river segments were designated in the Oregon Omnibus Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1988 (P.L. 100-577).

These two areas are identified in the Forest Plan in Management Area 22. Boundaries for the river corridors to be managed under this designation were recently defined and have included the "outstandingly remarkable" characteristics. As required under the Omnibus Oregon Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, a detailed management plan will be prepared by October, 1991 for both of these areas. This plan will identify specific direction and prescriptions to be followed in the management of these areas. When completed, this management plan will be incorporated into the Forest Plan. Until the management plan is completed, no timber harvest or construction projects, such as recreation facilities or trails, will be permitted.

For additional information on this subject reference the FEIS, CHAPTER IX, INDEX, "WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS".

ISSUE AREA : Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities

Diversity is the distribution and abundance of different plant and animal communities and species in a given area. Diversity, however, is too complex to be evaluated, measured or managed as a single entity. Biological communities, ecosystems, species, genetic variability, and landscape all contribute to the concept of ecosystem diversity.

New and greater demands are being placed on the Forest by a growing human population and changing patterns of forest uses. There are different opinions on how plant and animal communities should be treated on the Forest, and the type, magnitude, and intensity of future resource management activities that should be allowed. Areas of the Forest where vegetation is not actively managed are desired by some people. The productivity on the Forest in terms of wood products and plant and animal populations is of critical interest to others. How ecosystems are managed and what attributes make the Forest valuable to the American public are all subjects that generate interest.

The paragraphs above give a broad overview of the complexity surrounding diversity. I feel that the Malheur selected alternative best provides for biological diversity. In order to maintain the natural vegetative diversity that exists across the Forest, thus providing a variety of landscape or habitat conditions across the Forest, the selected alternative:

- Features/emphasizes ponderosa pine on many of the Forest's mixed conifer acres and on all of our ponderosa pine acres.
- Increases uneven-aged management to approximately 225,000 acres of the managed forestland. This technique will feature multiaged canopies with fairly small parcels (approximately 2 acres) of forestland.
- Provides snags and snag replacement trees at or above 40% potential population levels over the entire Forest (all lands capable of producing snags).
- Provides old-growth replacement timber management strategies that will give an intermediate age class structure between intensively managed forest and unmanaged (dedicated) old-growth habitat.

- Closes roads not needed for Forest access, whereby providing for maintenance of higher snag levels, simply because removal for firewood harvest will be more difficult.
- Maintains higher levels of cover across the Forest for big-game habitat emphasis, thus providing the potential for greater vegetative diversity

I urge the reader to refer to the FEIS, CHAPTERS III and V for a more in-depth discussion on diversity. I strongly feel that the selected alternative, for the reasons listed above and also in the FEIS, provides for a rich and diversified ecosystem.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Ten alternatives were analyzed in detail in the Draft EIS. Through a review of the analysis process, updating the modeling techniques, and in response to public comments, Alternative I has been developed and is included in alternative evaluations for the FEIS. In addition, five alternatives included in the DEIS have been deleted as viable options due to lack of broad support and their similarities to other developed alternatives (see: Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study in CHAPTER II of the FEIS).

During the public review and comment period, the Forest was requested to analyze three additional alternatives. The first two requests were made by the Grant County Conservationists, for the "Grant County Conservationist Alternative" (GCC) and also an alternative called the "Citizen's Multiple Use Alternative" (CMUA). The latter alternative was developed by a coalition including the Grant County Conservationists, the Oregon Natural Resources Council, the Oregon Hunters Association, the Oregon Wildlife Federation, and other organizations.

Also during the comment period, a coalition of timber industry representatives developed their own alternative, "Alternative Preferred-Plus - The Community Oriented Plan." This alternative was also supported by such industry organizations as Associated Oregon Loggers, Northwest Forest Resource Council, the Northwest Forestry Association, and the Western Forest Industries Association.

Meetings throughout the spring and early summer of 1988 with advocates of the GCC, CMUA, and Preferred-Plus alternatives provided the information necessary to model these alternatives, using FORPLAN analysis to describe resource outputs. However, these alternatives were eliminated from detailed study (Final EIS, Chapter II, Section B) either because they closely resembled other alternatives which were developed in detail, or because they were determined not to be fully implementable alternatives. Two of the fully developed alternatives (B-Modified and C-Modified) were modified, incorporating aspects of the GCC, CMUA, and Preferred-Plus Alternatives. For additional information on this subject reference the FEIS, CHAPTER IX, INDEX, "ALTERNATIVES".

- **ALTERNATIVE NC (No Change)**

The No Change Alternative (Alternative NC) was developed in response to appeals brought by the Northwest Forest Resource Council who stated that a "... true no-action alternative representing current management plans" was not included in Forest Plan EIS.

This alternative continues management under the 1979 Timber Resource Management Plan without the full requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA). It could not be implemented or used in future management of the Malheur NF under the Forest Plan without Congressional and/or Secretary of Agriculture action to change law or regulations.

- **ALTERNATIVE A (No Action)**

This is the "No Action" alternative required by NEPA. This alternative continues management under the 1979 Timber Resource Management Plan while meeting the full requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA). This, as well as all viable alternatives, complies with standards and includes updated information and management requirements.

- **ALTERNATIVE B-MODIFIED**

This alternative emphasizes the production of marketable resources such as timber, forage, developed recreation, and minerals; providing for the highest level of timber outputs of any alternative detailed in the FEIS.

This was Alternative B in the Draft EIS; updated to incorporate timber industry comments into the FEIS, and modified to bring the theme of Alternative "Preferred Plus" into a fully-developed alternative format.

- **ALTERNATIVE C-MODIFIED**

This alternative provides the greatest resource emphasis on the non-market values, protecting soil, water, wildlife, recreation, aesthetics and other amenities. All current roadless areas outside of existing wilderness are assigned to management prescriptions which maintain their roadless status.

This was Alternative C in the Draft EIS; updated to incorporate environmental concerns into the FEIS, and modified to bring the themes of "Grant County Conservationists" and "Citizens Multiple Use" Alternatives into a fully-developed alternative format.

- **ALTERNATIVE F (DEIS Preferred)**

This alternative features a relatively high level of timber production, while maintaining a mix of other resource features over time. To balance the economic effects of amenity features outside of unroaded areas, commodity production is featured on a majority of the currently roadless areas.

This was the Draft EIS preferred alternative for the Forest; updated to 1990 conditions and made to comply with current law and regulations.

- **ALTERNATIVE I (Final Preferred)**

Alternative I is the result of the incorporation of public comments, the State of Oregon's involvement, new information and legislation, and the analyses conducted following the DEIS. A range of land uses between amenity values and commodity production emphasis are featured in this alternative. Harvest in riparian zones is reduced, regeneration harvest in stands with severe insect and disease damage is intensified, and uneven-aged management is featured on roughly 30% of the suitable timber land.

HIGHER PRESENT NET VALUE ALTERNATIVES

Net public benefit (NPB) is the overall long-term value of all benefits less all associated costs. Many priced benefits and all financial costs of management can be measured in dollars. However, other nonpriced public concerns, benefits, and negative effects cannot be fully valued in economic terms.

The future value to society of this Forest will depend upon the mix of economic and other values that are produced and the costs of managing the Forest to produce these values. In determining the most economically efficient alternative, the Forest uses an estimate of present net value (PNV). PNV is the sum of priced benefits minus the sum of costs for the 150-year planning horizon, discounted to the present.

Emphasizing responses to issues that focus on nonpriced outputs reduces net economic values, principally because of reductions in the timber production land base. Timber is the main component of PNV. Land allocations to backcountry recreation, research natural area, and designated wildlife habitat management areas reduce the area for programmed timber harvest.

The selected alternative has a PNV of 257 million dollars. The following alternatives have a higher PNV than the selected alternative.

Alternative	Present Net Value (PNV)
No Change	382
B-Modified	351
F	328
A	300

Handwritten calculation showing 382 minus 257 equals 125.

$$\begin{array}{r} 382 \\ -257 \\ \hline 125 \end{array}$$

Present net value does not include all costs and benefits. Some of the more important nonpriced benefits include local community stability, ecosystem diversity, and habitat for wildlife species. Monetary values have not been assigned to these benefits, but the costs of providing community stability, ecosystem diversity, and wildlife habitat are reflected in this analysis.

Based on this, present net value is not the only criterion used in selecting an alternative. Also used was the maximization of net public benefits, which includes both the net value of priced outputs and consideration of the nonpriced outputs. Although the selected alternative has a lower PNV than alternatives listed above, it provides greater overall net public benefits. In recognizing the importance of the Malheur National Forest to local and national economies, it provides higher overall benefits, valuing the importance of nonpriced attributes such as water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic values, and recreation. The selected alternative is sensitive to both economic and environmental issues, striking balance among commodity and amenity values.

The selected alternative is more responsive to public concerns expressed during the comment period than any of those alternatives having higher monetary values. It includes more acreage in the semiprimitive management areas, thus reducing the base of land from which timber sales are allocated. Consequently, the PNV is lower. More amenity uses of the Malheur National Forest were increased partly in response to numerous public comments on the DEIS.

Another issue that generated public comments is riparian area management. The selected alternative addresses this concern through assignment of key stream classes to a more restrictive riparian management prescription. This also reduces PNV by limiting timber harvest in those areas.

Timber production and the local economy have been important issues to weigh in selecting the Forest Plan alternative. Due to the structure of the local economy and the Malheur National Forest's position in that marketplace, the two issues can be addressed together. Many would like to have the harvest levels of Alternative B-Modified, but few people want to see a dramatic change in the visual character of landscapes appear on the Malheur National Forest that would result from Alternative B-Modified timber harvest level

In the final assessment, I believe that Alternative I is more responsive to the issues raised during the analysis process, and in the long run will result in the highest net public benefits.

ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE ALTERNATIVE

An environmentally preferable alternative causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment and protects, preserves, and enhances the historic, cultural, and natural resources. All alternatives considered in detail satisfy legal and environmental standards except the No Change Alternative, which does not satisfy NFMA management requirements.

The environmentally preferable alternative is Alternative C-Modified. This alternative schedules less intense development activity, retains more acres in an unroaded and undeveloped condition, and programs less ground disturbing activity during the 10 to 15 year life of the Forest Plan, than is programmed in Alternative I.

Additional information on the environmentally preferable alternative and all of the alternatives considered is disclosed in the final EIS, CHAPTER II.

I did not select the environmentally preferable alternative, because:

- It does not achieve a reasonable balance between concerns for maintaining environmental quality and satisfying the demand of society for commodity and non-commodity outputs from the Malheur National Forest.
- It fails to favorably respond to the timber supply needs of purchasers in the planning area.
- The Forest Plan has a more positive response to issues and concerns contributing to local economic stability, providing a timber supply, and contributing to maintaining the existing population, land uses, employment opportunities, and developed and roaded recreations opportunities than is provided by the environmentally preferable alternative.

Alternative I, the Forest Plan, recognized and provides for landscape, resource, vegetation, and animal diversity through the land use allocation pattern displayed in the FEIS, MAP PACKET - Alternative I.

Alternative I, the Forest Plan, provides appropriate environmental safeguards at an acceptable direct economic cost. This alternative incorporates the perspective that the Forest Service is the trustee of the environment for succeeding generations. I believe Alternative I provides for the proper and continued use and development of the Malheur National Forest resources in a manner that maintains economic stability, yet retains local natural heritages, such as fish and wildlife habitat, water quality and quantity, outdoor recreation opportunities, scenic quality, and open range.

This Forest Plan has been developed with public participation, which included involvement, coordination, and comments from Federal, State, and local agencies including the Oregon State Governor's Office, the Oregon

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State Department of Wildlife, the Oregon State Department of Fisheries, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Oregon State Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Burns Paiute Tribes, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, the affected County Commissioners, representatives of city governments, industry groups, special interest groups, and individuals.

Extensive efforts were made to ensure that the selected alternative considered the goals of other public agencies and of Native American tribes

I believe Alternative I is compatible with and complimentary to the goals of other agencies and Native American tribes. Comments and letters from agencies and Native American tribes were reviewed extensively and actions taken to address their concerns

Coordination with many agencies, groups, and individuals will continue as projects are implemented.

SECTION IV

IMPLEMENTATION

SCHEDULES

The Forest Plan will be implemented through identification, selection, and scheduling of projects to meet the management goals and objectives provided by the Forest Plan. These projects are displayed in FOREST PLAN, APPENDIX A.

Project schedules will be available for review at the Ranger District Offices and Supervisor's Office. Schedules of possible projects will routinely change as projects are implemented or are removed from the listings for other reasons and as new projects take their place. Adjustments to the schedule may be made based on results of monitoring, budgets, and unforeseen events.

The Forest Plan provides direction in the form of goals and objectives, standards, monitoring requirements, and probable scheduling of management practices. It does not cover projects on specific sites except in a broad manner. Each proposed project will be subject to site-specific analysis and documentation in compliance with NEPA. Considerations revealed through this process may result in a decision not to proceed with the proposed project, even though the project may be permissible under the Forest Plan.

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

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

The Forest Plan incorporates the Pacific Northwest Region's FEIS for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation. In implementing project activities, the Forest will comply with the Record of Decision issued by the Regional Forester December 8, 1988, and the mediated agreement of May 1989. Use of all vegetation management techniques is allowed, but the use of herbicides is allowed only when other methods are ineffective or will unreasonably increase project costs. Emphasis must be placed on prevention and early treatment of unwanted vegetation and public involvement in all aspects of project planning and implementation. Information about the vegetation management EIS, its Record of Decision, and the mediated agreement is available for review at Forest Service offices throughout Washington and Oregon.

Upon implementation of the Forest Plan, all projects, including timber sales to be offered, will be in compliance with direction contained in the Forest Plan. In addition, all new permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of National Forest system land and resource uses must also be in conformance with the Forest Plan. Permits, contracts and other instruments which were in existence prior to Forest Plan implementation will be revised (if needed) subject to valid existing rights. This updating will generally be done within three years.

Consistent with the paragraph above, existing term grazing permits, together with Allotment Management Plans, will be in conformance with the Forest Plan when reissued. Temporary grazing permits and livestock use permits, which are issued for 1 year or less, will comply with Forest Plan direction when issued. Just like all other existing permits, contracts and instruments (see paragraph above), grazing permits which were in

existence prior to Forest Plan implementation will be revised and updated as soon as practical, generally within three years

Since a number of the decisions described herein reflect recent changes in the planning process, some planned timber sale projects for fiscal year 1990 are at variance with the specific requirements dealing with timber management adjacent to non-anadromous Class I and II streams, utilization standards to a 7-inch diameter tree and area basis for calculating HEI. I have decided not to ask the Forest Supervisor to revise these projects. All requirements will be met for projects planned for fiscal year 1991 and succeeding years.

The Forest Plan will be implemented 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Forest Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision appears in the Federal Register.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

I have a strong personal commitment to this program. A Forest Plan is not cast in stone, it must adapt to best meet the management needs of the Forest. Throughout the life of the Plan, monitoring and evaluation is the management control system for the Forest Plan. It will be used to provide information on the progress and results of implementation. One of the results of monitoring will be an assessment of the need for amending or revising the Plan. Monitoring and Evaluation are discussed in more detail in the FOREST PLAN CHAPTER V.

Monitoring is intended to help keep the Forest Plan current and responsive to changes. Monitoring and evaluation each have a distinctly different purpose and scope. Monitoring consists of gathering data, observations, and information. During evaluation, the data and information are analyzed and interpreted. This process provides the information necessary to determine if conditions are within the bounds and intent of the Plan direction. Forest Plan monitoring does not replace or substitute for other Forest monitoring activities. Many activities are currently being monitored on the Forest to comply with administrative and legal responsibilities (FSM - Admin. Review Procedures)

Monitoring and evaluation will provide information to:

- Compare planned versus applied management standards and guidelines to determine if objectives are achieved [36 CFR 219.12(k)]
- Quantitatively compare planned versus actual outputs and services [36 CFR 219.12(k)(1)].
- Measure effects of prescriptions, including significant changes in land productivity [36 CFR 219.12(k)(2)]
- Determine planned costs versus actual costs associated with carrying out prescriptions [36 CFR 219.12(k)(3)].
- Determine population trends of the management indicator species and relationship to habitat changes [36 CFR 219.19(a)(6)].
- Evaluate effects of National Forest management on adjacent land, resources, and communities [36 CFR 219.7(f)].
- Identify research needs to support or improve National Forest management [36 CFR 219.28]
- Determine if lands are adequately restocked [36 CFR 219.12(k)(5)(i)].

- Determine, at least every ten years, if lands identified as unsuitable for timber production have become suitable [36 CFR 219.12(k)(5)(ii)].
- Determine whether maximum size limits for harvest areas should be continued [36 CFR 219.12(k)(5)(iii)]
- Ensure that destructive insects and disease organisms do not increase to potentially damaging levels following management activities [36 CFR 219 12(k)(5)(iv)]

Results of the evaluation will lead to decisions of the following types.

- Continue practice, no change necessary.
- Refer the problem to the appropriate Forest officer for corrective action
- Modify the management practice through Plan amendments
- Modify land designation through Plan amendments.
- Revise output schedules.
- Revise unit output costs.
- Revise the Plan

Three types of monitoring and evaluation will be conducted

- IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING - Implementation monitoring will determine if plans, prescriptions, projects, and activities are implemented as designed and in compliance with Forest Plan objectives and Standards and Guidelines
- EFFECTIVENESS MONITORING - Effectiveness monitoring will determine if plans, prescriptions, projects, and activities are effective in meeting management direction, objectives, and the standards and guidelines.
- VALIDATION MONITORING - Validation monitoring will determine whether the initial data, assumptions, and coefficients used in development of the Plan are correct, or if there is a better way to meet forest planning regulations, policies, goals, and objectives

Evaluation of the results of the site-specific monitoring program will be documented in an annual evaluation by the Forest Interdisciplinary Team. Based on the evaluation any need for further action is recommended to the Forest Supervisor

Actions directed by the Forest Supervisor could include one or several of the following:

- A determination that no action is needed
- District Ranger(s) may be directed to improve application of management direction
- Management direction for a particular piece of land may be modified as a Forest Plan amendment.
- The standards and guidelines may be modified as a Forest Plan amendment
- The projected schedule of outputs may be modified as a Forest Plan amendment
- The needed action may singly or cumulatively be so significant as to cause the Forest Supervisor to initiate revision of the Forest Plan.

MITIGATION

Mitigation means to make less harsh or severe. In Forest management, it means to soften or mollify the effects of a management activity on other resources, for example to reduce the effects of timber harvest on soils or wildlife. Mitigation measures have been developed through interdisciplinary efforts and incorporated into the Forest Plan.

Mitigation measures are an integral part of the Standards and Guidelines and Management Area direction described in Chapter IV of the Forest Plan. They include Best Management Practices (BMPs) which are measures that have been proven over time to be effective in protecting water quality.

I believe all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted. Site-specific mitigation measures will be developed at the project planning level.

AMENDMENT AND REVISION PROCESS

This Forest Plan may be changed either by an amendment or a revision. Such changes may come about as a result of the monitoring process or project analysis (see FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER 5). An amendment may become necessary as a result of different situations. They could include, for example:

- Recommendations of the Interdisciplinary Team based on their review of monitoring results
- The determination that an existing or proposed permit, contract, cooperative agreement, or other instrument authorizing occupancy and use is not consistent with the Forest Plan, but should be approved, based on project level analysis
- Adjustment of management area boundaries or prescriptions
- Changes necessitated by resolution of administrative appeals
- Changes needed to improve monitoring plans or information and assumptions used in the Forest Plan.
- Changes made necessary by altered physical, biological, social, or economic conditions

Based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and other aspects of the Forest Plan, the Malheur National Forest Supervisor shall determine whether a proposed amendment will result in a significant change to the Forest Plan. If the change is determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of the Forest Plan. If the change is determined not to be significant, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment after the appropriate public notice and compliance with NEPA. The procedure is described by 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), FSM 1922 51-52 and FSH 1909 12.

As Regional Forester, I will approve significant amendments and the Forest Supervisor "nonsignificant" amendments. The determination of significance must be documented in a decision notice and will be appealable under 36 CFR 217. A mailing list will be maintained to provide notification and invitation to comment on proposed amendments.

The amendment documentation will include as a minimum:

- A statement of why the Forest Plan is being amended (some possible reasons are mentioned above).
- The actual amendment will be described.
- Rationale for the amendment.
- A statement of significance related to FSM 1922.51. This is the NFMA significance and relates to changes to the Forest Plan.
- A statement regarding NEPA compliance (40 CFR 1500-1508, FSM 1950, and FSH 1909.15) regarding effects on the environment and how the effects disclosed in the Plan EIS may change as a result of the amendment.
- A statement of the appeal rights.

The NFMA requires revision of the Forest Plan at least every 15 years. However, it may be revised sooner if physical conditions or demands on the land and resources have changed sufficiently to affect overall goals or uses for the entire Forest. If a revision becomes necessary, the procedures described in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed.

SECTION V

APPEAL RIGHTS

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

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

A copy must be sent simultaneously to the Deciding Officer:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I encourage anyone concerned about the Final Plan or Final Environmental Impact Statement to contact the Forest Supervisor or Planning Staff Officer in John Day, Oregon, (503) 575-1731, or any of the following district offices. (Bear Valley (503) 575-2110, Burns (503) 573-7292, Long Creek (503) 575-2110, Prairie City (503) 820-3311) before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve the concern or misunderstanding in a less formal manner.



JOHN F. BUTRUILLE
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May 25, 1990

Date