

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

INTRODUCTION

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest proposes to amend the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan to set recreation use allocations in the Wild and Scenic Snake River corridor within the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (HCNRA). Proposed allocations were derived through the Hells Canyon limits of acceptable change (LAC) planning process which produced "Recommended Limits of Acceptable Change Recreation Management Plan for the Snake River" (reference the analysis file).

New management direction resulting from the decision on this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will amend the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Implementation is scheduled for January 1995.

This amendment is considered a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan in terms of the implementing regulations of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (36 CFR 219.10 (e) and (f)), Forest Service Manual 1922.51 and 1922.52, and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 5.32.

Preparation of this EIS is in accordance with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA), as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), plus the associated National Forest System Land and Resource Planning Regulations (36 CFR 219).

Preparation of this EIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), the Council of Environmental Quality NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1500), and the implementing regulations of NFMA (36 CFR 219).

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action has been developed using recommendations from an LAC planning process. The components of the proposed action are considered connected actions in that they are closely related Federal actions and should, therefore, be analyzed and considered in this EIS. The proposed action is as follows:

REGULATE AIRCRAFT USE LEVELS

Open Sluice Creek (wild section) and Cache Creek (study section) airstrips to private fixed wing and rotary aircraft.

Prohibit private and commercial floatplane landings on the wild and scenic sections of the river during the primary season.

Limit recreational fixed wing and rotary aircraft landings to designated public airstrips in the river corridor.

Require self-issued permits at public airstrips in the river corridor.

ALLOCATE POWERBOAT USE LEVELS

Limit commercial powerboat use to 1,368 boat days, including jetbacks for floatboaters, during the primary season in the wild section of the river.

Maintain no more than 19 special use permits for commercial powerboat use in the river corridor.

Manage party size on commercial powerboats by requiring single deck boats of less than 44 feet in length and a maximum of 49 passengers on all sections of the river.

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Initiate a regulated permit system for private powerboats, allocating a maximum of 635 permits for the primary season (from Pittsburg Landing to Hells Canyon Dam), with the following provisions:

- Allow up to a total of 16 daily launches on weekend days (Friday and Saturday), with 8 daily launches above Rush Creek, and 4 of the 8 launches above Granite Creek;
- Allow up to a total of 8 launches on weekdays (Sunday through Thursday), with 4 launches above Rush Creek, and 2 of the 4 launches above Granite Creek.
- Remove navigation markers from the wild river section in cooperation with the Corp of Engineers.

INITIATE CLOSURE ON MOTORIZED PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

Initiate a permanent closure on motorized personal water vehicles on the scenic river downstream from Pittsburg Landing through the study river to the northern boundary of the HC-NRA.

ALLOCATE FLOATBOAT USE LEVELS

Maintain no more than 16 special use permits for commercial float outfitters on all segments of the river. This includes:

- Up to two one-day commercial special use permits authorizing day-use only. These would be issued to two different outfitters operating between Hells Canyon Dam and Pittsburg Landing. The permits would allow a maximum of 2 boat launches per day, on alternating days, seven days a week, year-round. Only commercial outfitters with one-day permits could offer one-day trips. One multi-day commercial float permit could be converted to a one-day commercial float permit to meet these objectives.
- Up to five launches per day by private and multi-day commercial users, plus 1 launch per day by a one-day outfitter. A maximum of 590 launches during the primary season

would be maintained, with multi-day trips having priority over one-day trips.

ESTABLISH USE SEASON, PARTY SIZE, AND CAMPSITE STAY LIMITS, AND RECREATION EXPERIENCE

Establish primary season from the Friday before Memorial Day through September 10.

Establish a year-round maximum party size of 30 persons for overnight camping for all river sections.

Maintain a maximum limit of 30 floatcraft per permitted party.

Limit camping for all users to two nights per site in the wild section and four nights per site in the scenic and study sections during the primary season.

Limit camping for all users to six nights at all campsites during the secondary season.

Maintain picnic tables at dispersed river campsites.

Provide an education program, located at portals, to increase users' awareness of river etiquette and understanding of management practices.

Phase out pit toilets at all dispersed river campsites. Initiate a solid human waste carryout program for river users once adequate carryout and disposal systems are available.

Develop regulations for drop camp users, horsepackers, and backpackers that are compatible with regulations established for river users.

Remove the non-conforming metal shed upstream from the Pittsburg Administrative Site and the metal silos at the Kirkwood Historic Ranch.

Note: Other recommendations from the LAC planning process have already been administratively implemented or are being considered for implementation through other ongoing envi-

ronmental analyses. Reference the analysis file for further discussion.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The need for the proposed action is derived from Forest Service visitor use reports showing a 147% increase in visitor use during the primary season from 1979 to 1991; from the "Visitor Profile and Recreational Use Study" (Visitor Use Study) developed by the University of Idaho's College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range Sciences; and from the "Recommended Limits of Acceptable Change Recreation Management Plan for the Snake River" developed through the LAC planning process (reference the analysis file).

The Visitor Use Study, completed in 1989, highlighted a concern that the increase in recreation use in the river corridor was negatively impacting visitors' recreation experiences. Based on this conclusion, Forest Service personnel concerned with protecting the outstandingly remarkable values (ORV's) of the river corridor and reducing visitor conflicts in Hells Canyon entered into a cooperative agreement with the University of Idaho to develop a limits of acceptable change planning process. The objective of the planning process was to recommend management actions that would protect resources and minimize conflicts.

Based on the recommendations presented in the LAC report, the proposed action would provide managers with specific strategies for implementation of the Forest Plan.

The following explanations of the need for action correspond to specific components of the proposed action:

REGULATE AIRCRAFT USE LEVELS

The Forest Service has responded to the need for access to aviators on the Oregon side of the river for fishing and camping by proposing to open Sluice Creek and Cache Creek airstrips to private aircraft. The underlying need is to manage aviation use to protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable recreation values of the river corridor by providing additional access

for aviators. The need also corresponds with monitoring aircraft use levels to ensure the protection and enhancement of the wildlife and recreation ORV's.

The Visitor Use Study noted only 8% of the recreationists surveyed said aircraft flying overhead detracted from their recreation experience, although 59% of them favored or would accept restricting aircraft landings in the corridor.

ALLOCATE POWERBOAT USE LEVELS

The Forest Service has identified the need to make allocations that are equitable to river users and that manage continuing growth in visitor use. The underlying needs of the proposal are to protect the recreation, fisheries, and wildlife ORV's of the river corridor, provide for fewer encounters between different types of users and associated noise, provide for the safety of the diverse groups of river users, and avoid the negative visual impact of "double decked" powerboats and navigation markers.

Forest Service visitor use reports show a 147% increase in visitor use during the primary season from 1979 to 1991. The Visitor Use Study noted 35% of the recreationists surveyed felt the river was crowded. Conflicts and complaints between the diverse user groups are common (Cole, 1989).

The identification of the diverse ORV's for the river corridor reveals the biologically sensitive fisheries and wildlife resources and highlights the underlying need to ensure the protection and enhancement of those ORV's in allocating powerboat use levels.

The need for length and capacity restrictions on commercial powerboats is based on concerns about the potential negative visual appearance of "double decked" boats and potential boat wake effect on other recreationists.

Limiting private powerboat permits in the wild river to a maximum of 635 in the primary season was derived in part from the Visitor Use Study. It reported that overall, 35% of the visitors felt crowded and 89% favored or would accept additional regulations if they were needed and if

they were applied equally to all river users. Additionally, 94% of the visitors surveyed favored or would accept maintaining the existing river experience if guidelines for managing the river were revised.

The removal of navigation markers from the wild section of river is derived from the need to provide for the intended recreation experience in a wild river setting.

INITIATE CLOSURE ON MOTORIZED PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

The Forest Service is responding to the need to initiate a permanent closure on motorized personal watercraft in the scenic section to protect and enhance the diverse recreational users' experiences and safety as part of the recreation ORV. The action is further derived from the need to protect the fisheries and wildlife ORV's from the very mobile motorized personal watercraft.

The need to eliminate motorized personal watercraft from Pittsburg Landing to Cache Creek is derived in part from the Visitor Use Study in which it was noted 77% of the visitors surveyed favored or would accept eliminating motorized personal watercraft use within the river corridor.

This need is in compliance with the State of Oregon Marine Board's closure of the Snake River to motorized personal watercraft (Oregon Administrative Rule 250-21-040) and pursuant to 36 CFR 261.50a, Order 208, dated January 2, 1992. Order 208 justifies the closure by identifying motorized personal watercraft as a non-valid craft which poses safety hazards to authorized power and floatboat users, as well as to the user of the non-valid craft (reference the analysis file).

ALLOCATE FLOATBOAT USE LEVELS

The need for this proposal is to refine management of the floatboat use levels in addition to protecting and enhancing the recreation ORV and the associated recreation experience for the diverse groups of river users.

ESTABLISH USE SEASON, PARTY SIZE, CAMPSITE STAY LIMITS, AND RECREATION EXPERIENCES

These proposals stem from the need to protect and enhance the scenic, recreation, wildlife, fisheries, cultural, vegetation and botanical, and ecological ORV's of the river corridor by providing onshore site protection, managing diverse users during the primary season while maintaining the existing onshore recreation experience, and making users more aware of how their presence affects the environment.

Additional need is derived from the Visitor Use Study, wherein 54% of the visitors surveyed favored or would accept a shortened primary season.

Limiting party sizes is derived from the need to minimize onshore impacts on ORV's from excessive party sizes. Party size limitations were recommended based on the Visitor Use Study in which virtually all surveyed visitors support management policies that protect the natural qualities of the river canyon.

The need for maintaining a limit on the number of floatcraft per party is to protect the expected river recreation experience and provide for the safety of the users by managing group size and river encounters.

A campsite reservation system is needed to protect and enhance the multitude of ORV's from onshore impacts and to reduce and/or eliminate the social conflict stemming from competition for campsites. The CMP provides direction to establish a reservation system for campsites upstream from Pittsburg Landing (1983 Revised Snake River Recreation Management Plan, page 3). Further, the Visitor Use Survey noted 71% favored or would accept some type of reservation/allocation system for campsites to reduce congestion and competition during the primary season.

The need for maintaining picnic tables at dispersed river campsites is derived from the need to provide resource protection at those sites.

The development of an education program is driven by the need for protecting and enhancing ORV's in the river corridor through user awareness instead of implementing excessive regulations. An education program for river users is supported by the Visitor Use Study which

noted 76% favored or would accept a requirement to attend short briefings on river etiquette at the Hells Canyon Dam Recreation Site before embarking on the river. Further, 95% favored or would accept increasing boaters' awareness of river etiquette and understanding of management practices.

The need for a solid human waste carryout system for both private and commercial users, is derived by the need to protect and enhance the fisheries and cultural ORV's and establish a schedule for implementation. A comprehensive management plan (CMP) for the HCNRA provides direction to investigate the feasibility and desirability of using alternate waste disposal systems, including a carryout system for river users in lieu of pit toilets, and to implement it, if necessary. The HCNRA, in cooperation with several partners, is participating in a human waste management pilot project (reference analysis file). The Visitor Use Study noted 45% of those surveyed felt more solid human waste disposal sites were needed and 66% favored or would accept requiring solid human waste carryout.

The need to remove non-conforming structures is driven by the need to provide for the intended recreation experience for the diverse group of users as part of protecting and enhancing the recreation ORV.

DECISIONS TO BE MADE

The Forest Supervisor will make the following decisions based on the interdisciplinary analysis contained in this EIS:

- Should the proposed action be implemented as proposed, implemented as modified, or not implemented to ensure that recreation management is compatible with the objectives of Section 7 and 10 of the HCNRA Act and ensures the protection and enhancement of the outstandingly remarkable values pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act?

Specific components of the decision are as follows:

- Private powerboat use levels in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Permanent closure of personal watercraft in the scenic section.
 - Commercial powerboat use levels in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Private floatcraft use levels in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Commercial floatcraft use levels in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Private aircraft use levels in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Removal of navigation markers in the wild section.
 - Maintenance of picnic tables in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Implementation of campsite reservation systems in the wild section.
 - Degree of management coordination with backpackers and horsepackers.
 - Campsite stay lengths in the wild and scenic sections.
 - Party sizes for recreational users.
 - Maximum number of floatcraft per party.
 - Removal of Pittsburg metal shed and Kirkwood silos.
- What relative timeline should be developed for the proposed action, if any, as an implementation schedule to achieve the management objectives?

The Record of Decision for this EIS will amend the Forest Plan. Implementation of the decision is scheduled for January 1995.

PROJECT AREA DESCRIPTION

The Wild and Scenic Snake River runs north from the Hells Canyon Dam to the Oregon-Washington border and forms the northern portion of the boundary between Oregon and Idaho. The Act establishing the Hells Canyon NRA designated 67.5 miles of the Snake River as wild and scenic, classified into the following segments:

WILD RIVER: The 31.5 miles from Hells Canyon Dam to Pittsburg Landing.

SCENIC RIVER: The 36.0 miles from Pittsburg Landing to the northern boundary of the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

STUDY RIVER: Four miles of river frontage added to Forest Service ownership and management with the acquisition of property at Cache Creek and included in this analysis.

The river corridor is approximately a quarter-mile on each side of the high-water mark. Hells Canyon Wilderness is adjacent to the corridor along southern portions of the river in both Oregon and Idaho but does not include the wild and scenic corridor (reference Figure I-1).

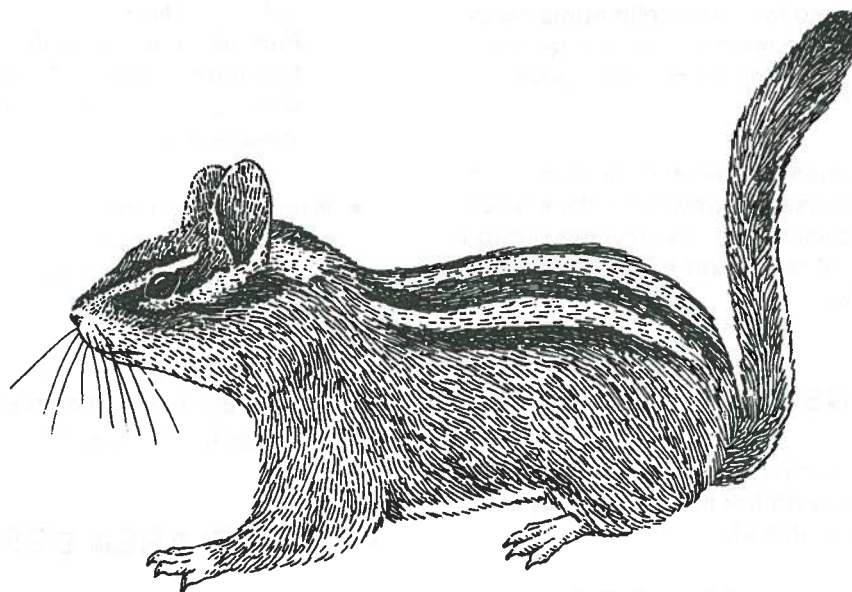
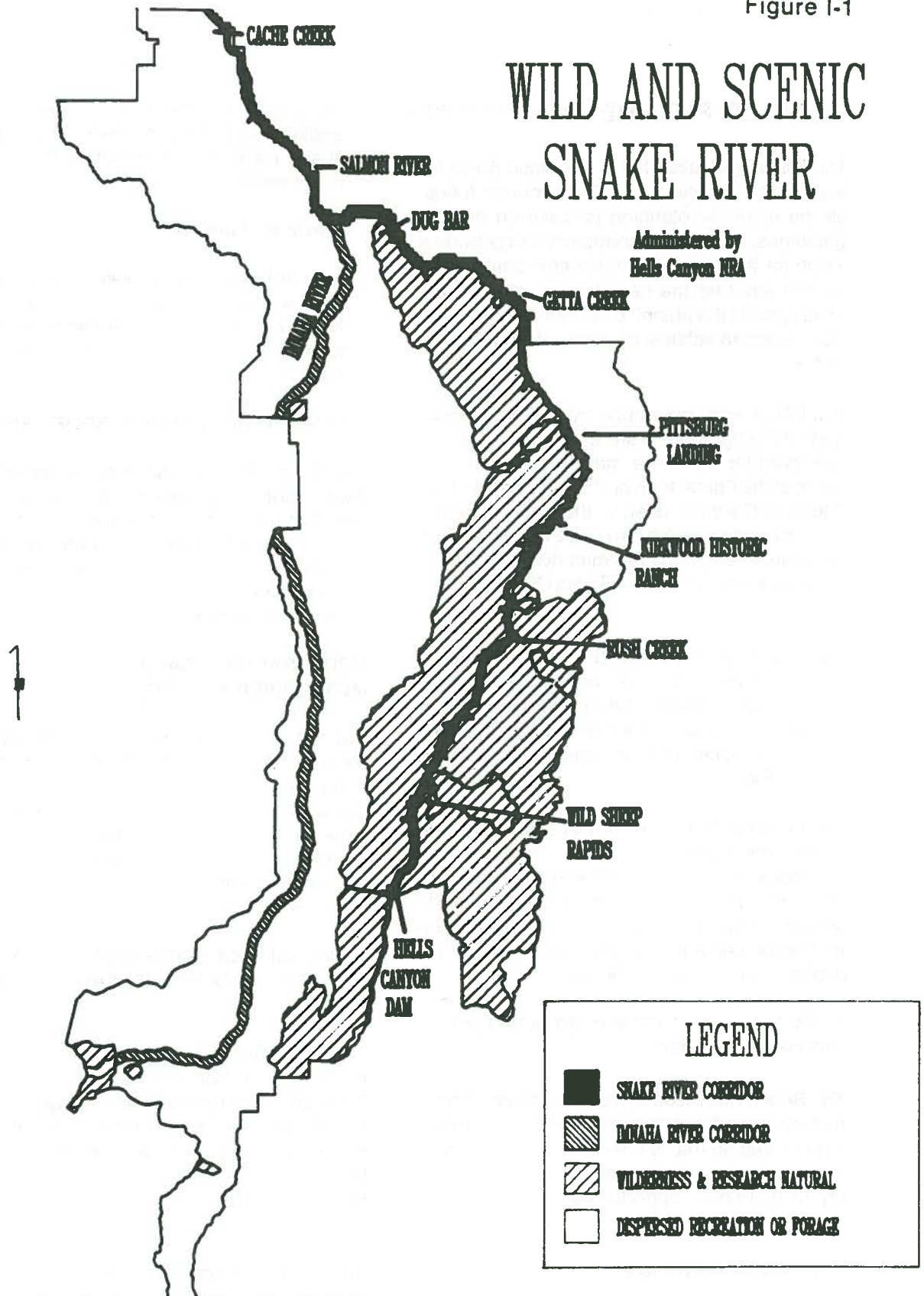


Figure I-1



WALLOWA-WHITMAN NATIONAL FOREST

DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS

The following desired future condition (DFC) for the Wild and Scenic Snake River corridor focuses the resource planning process on desired outcomes. DFC's set parameters and provide a vision for how the wild and scenic corridor will be managed for the next decade. Alternatives developed in the planning process serve as various means to achieve the vision defined by the DFC's.

The DFC's were developed by the interdisciplinary planning team to set a vision for how the river corridor would be managed to meet the intent of the Forest Plan and the legislative acts. These DFC's were used in the public scoping process and presented in the DEIS to assist the public in focusing their comments and involvement on a vision for the Wild and Scenic Snake River.

The DFC's are not intended to be used as required actions to be achieved at a specific time in the future. Instead, DFC's are designed to provide a framework in which to implement site specific projects and programmatic planning for the river corridor.

The following DFC's provide a holistic and integrated description of the river corridor for the next decade. The DFC's are intended to be applied with the desired recreation opportunity settings of Chapter III to ensure the protection and enhancement of all the outstandingly remarkable values within the river corridor.

A UNIQUE BLEND OF WHITEWATER BOATING OPPORTUNITIES

The Snake River would provide a blend of both motorized and non-motorized whitewater boating in a setting that is unique in North America. This would provide diverse user groups a variety of recreation opportunities within a major river environment.

Travel by Powerboat

The Snake River of Hells Canyon would be a premier four-season whitewater powerboat-

ing river in North America. It would remain available as an area for powerboaters to travel and camp in a river setting that includes major rapids.

Travel by Floatboat

A Hells Canyon whitewater floating experience would be one of the best in the Pacific Northwest. Floatboaters would be able to enjoy a variety of trip lengths, usually one to six days in duration.

A YEAR-ROUND DIVERSE SPORT FISHERY

The Snake River would provide habitat for a diverse and productive mix of cold water species. The river would provide year-round fishing that includes white sturgeon during the summer and steelhead during the fall and winter. The rainbow trout fisheries would remain extremely popular with anglers.

HORSEPACKING/BACKPACKING IN A REMOTE, RIVER SETTING

Due to the favorable canyon/river climate, people would horsepack and backpack in the area during the spring and fall. The canyon would provide a variety of challenges and scenery in a large diverse backcountry setting centering on the river. In addition, trail users would access the adjacent wilderness from the river to a variety of elevations.

A DIVERSITY OF INTERPRETIVE, SIGHTSEEING, AND WILDLIFE VIEWING OPPORTUNITIES

The Snake River corridor would provide an environment rich in both cultural and natural history. There are unsurpassed concentrations of prehistoric sites, a colorful history of exploration, mining and settlement, and numerous national historic sites. These combine to support the entire area as the Hells Canyon Archaeological District.

Rugged topography, fascinating geologic formations, and unique geographical features would provide a diverse, appealing landscape for sightseers.

The variety of wildlife would create year-round viewing opportunities. The opportunity to observe peregrine falcons, bald eagles, big horn sheep and many other wildlife species in their natural habitat would be a unique experience for many visitors to the corridor.

River travel in Hells Canyon would allow adventurous physically-challenged individuals to visit remote prehistoric sites and to view wildlife and unique plant life in a natural setting.

PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES

The Snake River of Hells Canyon would provide for great contrasts of landform, vegetation, color, climate, and sound.

Geology of the canyon would provide research potential and continue to portray the complex geological history of the Canyon and western North America.

Diverse wildlife species inhabit the corridor and affirm its importance as wildlife habitat. Wintering and year-round habitat for numerous species is maintained and provides opportunities for human interaction with these creatures.

There would be several stocks of anadromous fish, including spring, summer, and fall chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, summer steelhead, trout, and Pacific lamprey, as well as several other resident species of native fish. Nationally and regionally, the Snake River would be known for its abundant, unique, and diverse sport fishery. The protection of the diverse aquatic resources would ensure the existence of these important species.

One of the richest accumulations of riverine archaeological resources in western North America would be enjoyed by visitors and continue to provide unlimited research potential for the historic and prehistoric cultural resources of the canyon.

Populations of MacFarlane's four-o'clock would be preserved. The concentration and number of rare or endemic plant species found within the canyon would be preserved.

The Snake River of Hells Canyon would provide protection and special designation through the inclusion of certain sites in the research natural area system. The canyon's special environment will continue to foster unusual and specific relationships in the flora and fauna and physical environment that make the ecological aspects of the corridor an outstandingly remarkable value.

LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS AND MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

Management of the river corridor is guided by numerous legislated requirements and management direction. Correspondingly, development of a recreation management plan for the Wild and Scenic Snake River requires that this management direction be embodied in the recreation management plan. Figure I-2 displays the relationship of the requirements which guided the development of this plan.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), along with the associated National Forest System Land and Resource Planning Regulations (36 CFR 219), sets forth a process for developing, adopting, and revising land and resource management plans.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and the Council of Environmental Quality NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1500) provide the basic national charter for protection of the environment.

In Section 7(2) of the Act establishing the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area (Public Law 94-199) the Secretary directs conservation of scenic, wilderness, cultural, scientific, and other values through applicable laws, rules, and regulations. Section 10 (c and d) provides for control of the use and number of motorized and non-motorized rivercraft (see Appendix A).

Section 10 of the HCNRA Act further requires the Secretary to promulgate rules and regulations to accomplish the purposes of the Act. The public land use rules are anticipated to be completed by July 1994 and will provide refined

standards and guidelines for management of the river.

The Act establishing the wild and scenic rivers system (Public Laws 90-542 and 99-590) Section 10 (a), requires emphasis and protection be given to the aesthetic, scenic, historic, archeologic, and scientific features of the river which caused it to be included in the Act. The Act limits other uses to those that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values (see Appendix B). Chapter III, Affected Environment, presents the outstandingly remarkable values for the Wild and Scenic Snake River as identified by the Forest Service planning team. In February 1980 the National Park Service recommended the study portion of the river be designated as scenic. The Forest Service will be recommending to Congress in 1994 that this study portion be included in wild and scenic river system as scenic. For the purposes of this analysis the study portion is considered scenic (reference the analysis file).

The listing of the Snake River sockeye salmon as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) limits river use to activities that do not damage salmon habitat. Other endangered species requiring protection are the MacFarlane's four-o'clock and the peregrine falcon.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) provides direction for management of the river to ensure a national mandate to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities is provided through enforceable standards.

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (ARPA) provides for the protection of archaeological resources and sites on public lands.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) provides direction to ensure adequate access to the owner of non-federal lands to secure reasonable use and enjoyment.

The HCNRA Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), as amended by the December 6, 1983 Revised Snake River Recreation Management

Plan, and incorporated by reference into the 1990 Forest Plan, identifies several recreation management objectives. They are to maintain or enhance the values for which the river was designated; maintain or enhance the values for which the HCNRA was established; provide for a wide range of recreation uses compatible with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Hells Canyon NRA Act; and manage for semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities (reference the analysis file).

The Decision of the Secretary of Agriculture on boating appeals (April 21, 1983), does not limit the number of daily trips by powerboats. Monitoring through registration was intended to determine if and when adjustments to boating levels became necessary. Adjustments were not to be made before 1985 and then only after public notice and comment.

The Forest Plan provides guidance through its established goals, objectives, desired future conditions, Forest-wide standards and guidelines, and specific management area direction.

The primary management emphasis for Forest Plan Management Area 8, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Snake River Corridor, is to maintain the recreation experiences available at the time the area was established.

Hells Canyon Creek Launch Site, Kirkwood Historic Ranch, Pittsburg Landing Recreation Site, Pittsburg Administrative Site located on the Oregon side of the river, Dug Bar Recreation Site, and Cache Creek Ranch are to be managed in accordance with Forest Plan Management Area 16, Administrative and Recreation Sites.

Management Area 8 in the Forest Plan covers 14,355 acres in the Snake River corridor. Primary emphasis is to maintain the recreation experiences that were available at the time the HCNRA was established (pages 4-76 & 4-77 of the Forest Plan).

The study river portion is managed according to the guidance provided by Management Area 7, Wild and Scenic Rivers, until determined unsuitable as a wild and scenic river or acted upon by Congress.

Four research natural areas are located within the river corridor and are managed according to the guidance provided by Management Area 12 (pages 4-83 through 4-85 of the Forest Plan).

FSM 2300 provides direction to state the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classification featured in the river and procedures for maintaining the ROS settings over time. Chapter III displays this description of the desired ROS characteristics in the section describing the recreation ORV.

Included within the river corridor is the historic crossing site of Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce Tribe near Dug Bar, which is part of the Nez Perce National Historic Park.

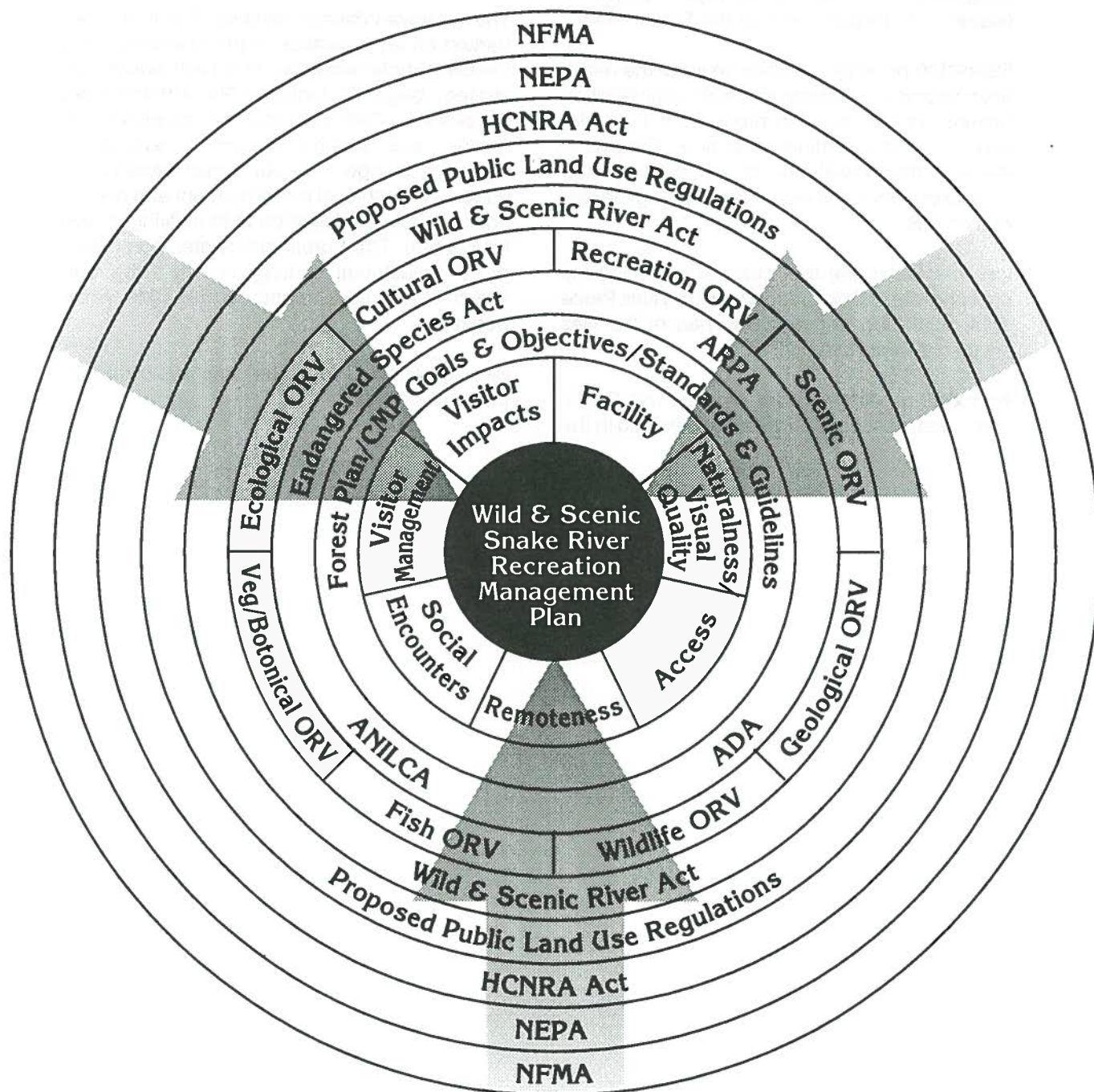
An existing utility corridor crosses the Snake River upstream from Dug Bar as identified in the

1992 Western Regional Corridor Study and the Forest Plan.

The Wallowa-Whitman National Forest has embarked on an evaluation of the effectiveness of the CMP implementation. This CMP adjustment strategy began in January 1994 with the intent of reviewing CMP management objectives, direction, and accomplishment to evaluate a need for change. The adjustment strategy involves a Forest-level planning team and considerable public participation in identifying a need for change. The Forest anticipates completion of the adjustment strategy in July 1994, from which formal adjustments of the CMP would begin.

See Appendix C for further discussion on the intent of the Acts.

Wild & Scenic Snake River—Management Direction



ISSUES

An important step in the planning process is the identification of public issues and management concerns. This was accomplished through an extensive scoping process involving interested and affected individuals, representatives of special interest and user groups, and concerned State and Federal agencies. Contacts were made through publications, mailings, and public meetings.

Following are discussions of the issues. In reviewing the remaining sections of the EIS, the reader should keep these issues and concerns in mind. An important test of any alternative action is how well it addresses and resolves these issues.

A summary of comments received during the scoping process is available in the analysis file.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Based on concerns and comments received during the scoping process, the following issues were identified as significant in relation to the proposed action. These issues are the focus for formulating alternatives to the proposed action.

Each issue discussed in this chapter has one or more associated key indicators. Key indicators are select units of measure of how, or to what degree, each alternative responds to the issue. Key indicators are responsive to changes in effects and are measurable and predictable. They provide the decision maker with a basis for comparing the alternatives.

PROTECTION OF THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SALMON

Recreation use allocation should be consistent with the protection and enhancement of threatened and endangered salmon fisheries and habitat in the river corridor.

Many people questioned what effect varying recreation use levels in the river corridor could have on threatened and endangered salmon fisheries and habitat. Specifically, they were

concerned about potential effects of exhaust emissions and fuel and oil discharge from motorized craft on salmon fisheries. The potential effect of motorized and non-motorized craft passing over salmon spawning areas was an additional concern.

Other comments expressed concerns over the potential effects on salmon fisheries and habitat from recreation activities such as swimming and fishing.

Key Indicators:

- Potential for species to be inadvertently hooked by anglers.
- Potential for boat disturbance on migration/spawning behavior.
- Potential for boat disturbance to eggs/embryo in redds.
- Potential for species to be disturbed while in tributary stream.

EFFECTS OF RECREATION USE REGULATION ON SOCIO-ECONOMICS CONDITIONS

Regulation of recreation use could affect the socio-economic condition of current and future river users, recreation-related businesses, and related community and regional infrastructures.

Many comments focused on the potential socio-economic impacts on private recreationists who own motorized or non-motorized craft and how the proposed recreation use allocations may affect their ability to use their craft as they have in the past. In addition, many people felt the Forest Service should view recreation use allocations from a regional perspective. Specifically, the Wild and Scenic Snake River is one of the few remaining whitewater rivers in the region available for motorized use and should remain as such.

Other comments were related to the potential effects recreation use allocations may have on recreation-related businesses such as powerboat manufacturing, motorized and non-motorized commercial operators, and retail

sporting goods. Additional concerns were expressed regarding the potential effects on related community and regional service industries such as restaurants, service stations, and lodging.

Key Indicators:

- Total commercial permittee revenue.
- Total associated expenditures by recreationists.
- Number and type of recreational users displaced by proposed regulations.
- River corridor management costs.

MANAGING FOR THE INTENDED RECREATION EXPERIENCE

The establishment of appropriate and equitable levels of boating and aircraft use should meet the intended recreation experience within the wild and scenic river.

This is a complex issue, and the comments represented a wide spectrum of opinion and concern regarding appropriate use levels within the river corridor. Many perspectives concerning this issue related to powerboat use levels within the wild section, equitable levels of allocation between powerboaters and floatboat users, equitable levels of allocation between commercial and private boaters, and whether motorized personal watercraft are appropriate within the scenic section.

An additional component of the issue concerned opening Sluice Creek and Cache Creek airstrips and the resulting effect on the intended recreation experience within the wild and scenic sections.

A majority of comments on recreation use focused on the compatibility of competing uses and the effects of noise from motorized watercraft and aircraft in relation to the intended recreation experience for non-motorized users on the wild and scenic sections.

Comments regarding campsite stay limits addressed a fear that the proposed limits were

constraining. Specifically, people felt limits would eliminate opportunities for river parties to enjoy long weekends or extended stays, particularly in the wild section during the primary season. Other people felt the limits in the secondary season would conflict with stays of hunting parties.

Many comments supported developing a campsite reservation system as a means of resolving conflicts over campsite competition and ensuring user accountability, with an expressed concern that the system be equitable between the various river users, including aviators, hikers, and horsepackers.

Key Indicators:

- Using the ROS classes, evaluate each alternative's ability to protect and enhance the recreation ORV and DFC's, through the following settings:
 - Degree of providing access.
 - Degree of providing remoteness.
 - Degree of social encounters.
 - Degree of visitor management.
 - Degree of facilities and site management.
 - Degree of user fairness and equitability.

MINIMIZE ONSHORE DEGRADATION

Party size restrictions, solid human waste carryout, and campsite stay limits should minimize onshore impacts from recreational users.

Comments on party size were concerned with the impact parties may have on the physical resources. Additionally, some comments were concerns about the ability to hold special events on the river that would result in parties exceeding 30 people.

Comments on the proposal for phasing out pit toilets and initiating a human solid waste carryout system were varied. Many expressed sup-

port for such a system, providing the system would be environmentally and aesthetically sound. Others expressed concern that a timeline for installation of a solid human waste carry-out system be developed. Other comments suggested the system was unnecessary, an inconvenience to all parties and there were alternative methods to a carryout system.

Key Indicators:

- Risk of visitor impacts from onshore recreation use on:
 - Proposed, endangered, threatened, and sensitive plant species and habitat
 - Cultural resources

OTHER ISSUES

The following issues, concerns, and opportunities were identified during scoping and are addressed in this EIS by establishing management elements, mitigation measures, and monitoring.

REMOVING NAVIGATION MARKERS FROM THE WILD SECTION OF THE RIVER CORRIDOR

This element of the proposed action generated some concern from the variety of user groups and is further addressed in Chapter II and IV under the individual description of the alternatives.

MOTORIZED SOUNDS EFFECTING RECREATIONAL USERS IN THE HELLS CANYON WILDERNESS

Many people are concerned about how motorized watercraft sounds affect the recreation experience of Hells Canyon Wilderness users. This concern is addressed through ongoing monitoring activities within the Hells Canyon Wilderness, in addition to the disclosure of the environmental consequences in Chapter IV of this EIS.

PROHIBITING PRIVATE AND COMMERCIAL FLOATPLANE LANDINGS ON THE ENTIRE RIVER CORRIDOR DURING THE PRIMARY SEASON

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to action alternatives B through G.

LIMITING RECREATION AIRCRAFT LANDINGS TO DESIGNATED PUBLIC LANDING STRIPS IN ALL RIVER SECTIONS

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives.

REQUIRING SELF-ISSUED PERMITS AT PUBLIC AIRSTRIPS

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives.

MAINTAINING A MAXIMUM CEILING OF 19 SPECIAL USE PERMITS FOR COMMERCIAL POWERBOAT OUTFITTERS AND 16 SPECIAL USE PERMITS FOR COMMERCIAL FLOAT OUTFITTERS

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives.

MAINTAINING A MAXIMUM BOAT SIZE OF 44 FEET IN LENGTH FOR ALL SECTIONS OF THE RIVER

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to action alternatives B through G.

ESTABLISHING A NEW PRIMARY SEASON FROM THE FRIDAY BEFORE MEMORIAL DAY THROUGH SEPTEMBER 10

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives.

PROVIDING AN EDUCATION PROGRAM AT PORTALS TO INCREASE RECREATIONAL USER'S AWARENESS OF RIVER ETIQUETTE AND UNDERSTANDING OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

There was broad support for this element of the proposed action through the scoping process. This element is carried forward in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives and is presented in detail in Appendix L.

MINIMIZING THE EFFECTS OF POWERBOAT WAKE ON MOORED WATERCRAFT

This concern is addressed in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives.

MAINTAINING THE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES HELD BY MEMBERS OF THE NEZ PERCE TRIBE THAT ENTITLE THEM TO HUNT, FISH, GATHER ROOTS AND BERRIES, AND PASTURE STOCK ON CERTAIN OPEN AND UNCLAIMED LANDS

This concern is addressed in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives through the tiering to the Forest-wide standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan.

ENSURING THE PROTECTION OF WETLANDS FROM ADVERSE EFFECTS RESULTING FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

This concern is addressed in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives through the tiering to the Forest-wide standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan.

CONTROLLING THE INTRODUCTION AND SPREAD OF NOXIOUS WEEDS

This concern is addressed in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives through the tiering to the Forest-wide standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan.

MINIMIZING THE EFFECTS THAT POWERBOATS HAVE ON STREAMBANK EROSION

This concern is addressed in Appendix E of this EIS through a powerboat wake study.

ENSURE THE COMPATIBILITY OF NEW MANAGEMENT DIRECTION WITH OTHER RIVER CORRIDOR USES, SUCH AS HIKING AND HORSEPACKING, AND ON PRIVATE HOLDINGS

This concern is addressed in Chapter II as a management element common to all action alternatives and in the individual descriptions of the alternatives.

MAXIMUM PARTY SIZE REQUIREMENT FOR COMMERCIAL MOTORIZED WATERCRAFT

This concern is addressed in Chapter II.

SUMMARY OF SCOPING PROCESS

Numerous articles were published in local and regional papers covering the planning process and sharing information as components of the planned steps were completed. Refer to the analysis file for copies of the articles.

The Forest Service published a notice of intent in the Federal Register on December 8, 1992, clearly describing the proposed action.

At the time of the publishing of the DEIS, there were approximately 1,370 individuals and organizations on the mailing list. That has grown to about 1,700 on the current mailing list.

Copies of published information sheets sent to individuals and organizations on the mailing list are in the analysis file and available for review. Public participation has included the following:

In addition to the information sheets and public meetings, there have been many informal meetings and telephone conversations with interested organizations and individuals. Approximately 400 letters were received from varied interest groups across the country during initial scoping. An article soliciting input from readers in various special interest groups' newsletters, and a letter from an outfitter to their clientele, resulted in outreach to a multitude of people from numerous places across the United States.

A summary of actions and information from the public comment period following the release of the draft EIS has been recorded in Appendix K.

Consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service regarding the preferred alternative has occurred.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Approximate Number of Non- Forest Service People Involved</u>
9/30/92	Information sheet sent to the mailing list. Topic: task force recommendations and proposed action.	650
10/13-20/92	Public meetings held at Halfway, OR; Boise, Lewiston, and Riggins, ID to discuss task force recommendations and proposed action and to acquire feedback.	270
12/8/92	Information sheet sent to the mailing list. Topic: update on process and identification of issues.	900
1/12/93	Information sheet sent to the mailing list. Topic: an invitation for help in identifying preliminary ways of resolving issues.	1,200
1/19-28/93	Public meetings held at Enterprise, La Grande, and Portland, OR; Boise and Riggins, ID; and Clarkston, WA to address ways of resolving significant issues.	350
3/93	Information sheet sent to the mailing list. Topic: comments received at January public meetings.	1,300
8/93	Summaries of Draft Environmental Impact Statement sent to the mailing list.	1,500
8/93	Draft Environmental Impact Statement sent to interested public and required agencies.	300

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8/93-11/93	Additional Draft Environment Impact Statements sent those who requested them and handed out at public meetings.	345
9/7-9/16/93	Public meetings held at Enterprise, Halfway, La Grande, and Portland, OR; Boise and Riggins, ID; and Clarkston, WA; to explain the DEIS preferred alternative.	430

CHANGES BETWEEN DRAFT AND FINAL

Several changes have occurred in the time between release of the DEIS and this FEIS. These changes reflect a combination of public and agency comment on the DEIS, changed conditions, and revisions in the methods by which information is displayed.

The section describing the ROS settings has been moved from Chapter IV to Chapter III, and expanded to more fully illustrate the characteristics developed from Forest Service guidelines.

One additional alternative was developed within the range of the existing alternatives carried forward from the draft EIS. Alternative G is described, analyzed, and compared to the other alternatives considered in detail. It has become the preferred alternative in the FEIS.

The section on management direction common to all alternatives has been re-written based on public comments.

Environmental consequences in Chapter IV have been refined based on enhancement of the key indicators as displayed in Chapter I and based on public comment.

DFC's segmented by river section has not been carried forward because the concept lacked public support.

Several terms have been used to identify the two season used to manage river use levels. The FEIS uses primary to describe the period between Memorial Day weekend and Septem-

ber 10, and secondary for the rest of the year. During the LAC planning process, high use season and low use season were used. The DEIS was written using regulated season and unregulated season. High use, regulated, and primary all refer to the summer season, while low use, unregulated, and secondary identify the remaining "off" season.

The proposed annual monitoring plan has been expanded and moved from the body of the EIS to Appendix J.

Two other appendices have been added. Public comments are in Appendix K, and a river user education program is in Appendix L.

The FEIS has additional information in Appendix D related to the adjustment strategy initiated in January 1994 to evaluate the potential need for changes to the comprehensive management plan for the HCNRA.

Appendices G and I have been updated to reflect changes resulting from the development of preferred Alternative G.

ANALYSIS FILE

All the documents and files chronicling the planning process for this DEIS are available for review at the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Headquarters, 1550 Dewey Avenue, Baker City, Oregon 97814. These documents and files contain the detailed information and decisions used in developing the DEIS and are referenced at appropriate places in the text and appendices.