RECORD OF DECISION
FOR
USDA FOREST SERVICE

NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST

LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Idaho County, Idaho

October 1987

NEZ PERCE NATIONAL FOREST
RECORD OF DECISION
FOREST PLAN
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I. INTRODUCTION

A. What is being decided?

This Record of Decision documents my decision and rationale for selecting an alternative for the land and resource management of the Nez Perce National Forest. That Alternative, known as Alternative G, is the best strategy for management of the Forest over the next 10 to 15 years.

Alternative G, the selected alternative, is contained in the document titled "Nez Perce National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan" (July, 1987). It provides direction in the form of goals and objectives, standards, guidelines, monitoring requirements, and probable schedule of management practices. The analysis of alternatives and public comments I considered in this decision can be found in the Final Environmental Impact Statement on the Forest Plan dated September 1987.

B. What is the goal of the Forest Plan?

The Forest Plan is part of the long-range resource planning process established by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), an amendment to Forest and Rangelands Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA).

My goal in selecting Alternative G was maximizing public benefit. In determining net public benefit, I considered public input, other agencies and Indian tribe goals, community stability, environmental quality, resources upon which dollar values can be placed (priced), and resources upon which dollar values cannot be placed (nonpriced). In the section of this Record of Decision entitled "Rationale For The Decision", I discuss how these factors were considered in my Decision.

C. What will happen to existing plans on the Nez Perce National Forest?

Once adopted, the Forest Plan will replace all previous resource management plans, subject to existing rights, contracts, leases, and specific authorities for special areas such as those related to Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Recreation Trails.

D. What is the duration of the Forest Plan, and can it be changed?

The Forest Plan is a 10 to 15-year Plan. It will normally be revised every 10 years, but by law must be revised every 15 years.

It can be changed at any time by either amendment or revision to respond to changing needs and opportunities, congressional land classifications, catastrophic events, monitoring results, or major new management or production technology. In making changes, the Forest Supervisor will follow amendment or revision procedures outlined in the National Forest Management Act and planning regulations (36 CFR Part 219.10(f)(g)), which include provisions for public notification and involvement.

E. What is not being decided?

The Forest Plan contains general management direction but does not include projects or actions on specific sites. Site-specific environmental analysis will be done at the project level and this analysis will follow National Environmental Policy Act procedures. The Forest Plan does not address day-to-day management. For example, personnel matters, internal

organization, and equipment and property management are not included.

It is important to note that the production levels projected in the Forest Plan for various resources are not the decision in and of themselves. Although from a physical, biologic, economic, and legal perspective all outputs in the Forest Plan can be accomplished, the Plan does not guarantee that they will be. For instance, the projected average annual timber output of 108 million board feet is dependent upon several external factors beyond the scope of the Plan. This projected volume is the maximum average annual volume, or allowable sale quantity, that may be sold during the planning period. Timber imports, national housing starts, home mortgage rates, and local demand for raw material all influence the timber volume that is actually sold. Similarly, the anadromous fishery projections in the Plan are dependent upon factors as diverse as mitigation of downstream escapement problems at dams and seasonal streamflow levels.

In this Record of Decision, I am not making management recommendations for those portions of contiguous roadless areas located on adjacent Forests. Management of these lands will be described in the Forest Plan Records of Decision of those Forests.

II. MAJOR FEATURES OF THE FOREST

The Nez Perce National Forest contains over 2.2 million acres, all in Idaho County, Idaho. It lies immediately to the north of the Salmon River, and extends from the Oregon border on the west to the Montana border on the east. It is within an easy half day's drive of the regional population centers of Spokane, Washington and Boise, Idaho.

Elevations on the Nez Perce range from less than 1,500 feet above sea level in the Snake River canyon more than 9,000 feet in the Seven Devils range. Generally, the land is steep and rugged, but high-elevation rolling hills are also common. Like much of northern Idaho, the Forest has a milder climate than might be expected at its latitude; this reflects the influence of the Pacific Ocean.

The Gospel-Hump Wilderness is entirely within the Forest, as are parts of three others--Hells Canyon, Frank Church-River of No Return, and Selway-Bitterroot. In addition, parts of four classified Wild and Scenic rivers flow through or are adjacent to the Forest--Middle Fork of the Clearwater, Salmon, Selway, and Rapid Rivers. These wildernesses and rivers, all protected under Acts of Congress, are known nationally.

Nez Perce streams are important to the anadromous fishery of the Columbia River system. Some 10 percent of all summer steelhead and spring chinook salmon in the system are produced on the Forest.

Of the many wildlife species found on the Nez Perce, elk are perhaps most important both locally and nationally. Although elk numbers peaked about 1949, population declines have been reversed in recent years.

Since the 1940s, the Forest has been a major supplier of timber to local mills; today the wood products industry is a major component of the economies of adjacent communities.

III. RELATIONSHIP OF PEOPLE TO THE FOREST

The National Forest has been the home of the Nez Perce Indians for centuries. About 7,500years ago, the native Nez Perce had developed a subsistence routine based on fishing,

hunting, and gathering of roots and berries. It required a nomadic way of life, and the social structure that evolved consisted of a number of independent, permanent villages located on the major rivers together with many temporary, seasonal camps elsewhere. These people depended on the resources of the land for the essentials of their existence.

The situation changed abruptly when gold was discovered in 1861. Boom towns grew up at Elk City and Florence, and prospectors searched every drainage for a bonanza.

Settlers followed the miners. Farming and stock-raising began and a few sawmills were set up to furnish lumber.

Placer mining soon declined but promising hardrock discoveries were made near the end of the nineteenth century, and the industry revived. People began moving in with interests unrelated to mining.

From the earliest days of Forest management until World War II, the users of the Forest were mostly sheep ranchers and miners. There was little commercial use for timber; it was used for ranching and mining. The relationship of the Forest Service to local people was largely that of employer and patron of local businesses; to everyone, the mission was conservation and protection of timber resources for future use.

The economic depression of the 1930s brought hundreds of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) enrollees to the Nez Perce from as far away as New York and Arkansas. Many of the roads, bridges, and trails they built are still in use. The CCC ended in 1942, but in the 1960s and 1970s, the Forest ran Job Corps Centers and Youth Conservation Corps programs, which were patterned in part after the CCC experiment. Many of individuals involved in the CCC returned to the area following World War II and became permanent residents.

Following World War II, the local wood products industry developed rapidly and soon was the area's largest employer. Sheep ranchers gave way to today's cattlemen. The area remained relatively isolated, while "locals" pursued their interests on the National Forests. Timber from the Nez Perce National Forest became essential to the economic health of Idaho County.

Postwar economic expansion also brought increased interest in outdoor recreation of all kinds, and the Nez Perce, with a wide variety of recreational settings, became well known locally and regionally. By the 1960s, nationwide attention was directed toward the extensive roadless areas and free-flowing rivers on the Nez Perce. In 1964, the Wilderness Act established the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness as the largest in the initial wilderness system; and in 1968, the Middle Fork of the Clearwater, the Lochsa, and the Selway were the first rivers classified under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Thus, the Nez Perce also became known nationally.

These events, coupled with modern transportation, have made the Forest accessible to more recreationists. The elk hunting and whitewater experiences are nationally renowned.

Although the major uses of the Nez Perce National Forest today are timber supply and recreation, traditional uses, such as grazing and mining, have continued. The relationship between the Forest and the public---once only the local public but in recent years the national public as well---is of necessity a close one; it is important now and will become even more so in the future.

IV. A VISION OF THE FUTURE

The Forest Service vision of the Nez Perce National Forest is of a Forest managed to benefit the public while maintaining a balance of resources in harmony with the capability of the land. The forest planning process tailors national and regional direction to provide a combination of opportunities and uses from the diverse variety of Forest resources, both now and in the future. The basic mission of the Forest is caring for the land and serving people. It requires a balanced consideration of all Forest resources in meeting the present and future needs of society, as well as those of future generations. It relies on the application of scientific knowledge, conservation leadership and wise stewardship in partnership with other public agencies, tribal governments, and others interested and affected by the Forest programs.

The Nez Perce National Forest will continue to be a place of natural beauty, sought after for the grandeur of steep canyons, whitewater rivers, and mountains. The visual character of the Forest landscape will change to a more varied mosaic as harvesting changes the distribution of trees of various ages. There will always be diverse vegetative types and age classes including old-growth timber.

A full spectrum of recreational opportunities will be maintained. Trails will be significantly improved for horses, backpackers, and motorized users. The four areas of the Forest classified as wilderness will remain as such, and four rivers will continue to be managed under provisions of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. In addition, significant land areas will continue to be available for semiprimitive experiences.

Big game habitat will be improved significantly on winter ranges and maintained on summer ranges. Threatened and endangered species habitats will be managed to provide for increased population levels.

Water quality and anadromous fish habitat will be maintained in all drainages and improved where found below Plan objectives. Management of wild steelhead and chinook salmon will be emphasized for maintaining gene pools.

Cultural resources will be evaluated and protected.

The Nez Perce National Forest will continue to provide a significant portion of the timber base to support the local and regional economies. Harvesting of timber will approach a balanced age class distribution and provide for an increased timber harvest.

Research natural areas will be used to increase our knowledge of natural processes and will continue to serve as a baseline for comparison to managed areas.

This vision for the Nez Perce includes a commitment to listen to the public and respond to its needs promptly with courtesy and fairness. It envisions a dedication to being good neighbors, working cooperatively, inviting the involvement of others and extending recognition for accomplishment. In this way, public trust and confidence in professional management of the Nez Perce National Forest will be maintained and enhanced.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public involvement was essential to the development of Forest Plan issues and alternatives.

The Notice of Intent to prepare a Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was published in the ?Federal Register? in October 1979. Letters were sent to individuals, agencies, and organizations announcing the intent to begin preparation of a Forest Plan. Legal notices and news releases were sent to the media. Major public issues and concerns were identified during a series of six public workshops and through comments submitted by letter. Additional management concerns were identified during eight Forest employee workshops.

A total of 819 concerns was identified and eventually this number was reduced to 13 major issues. This process is described in Appendix A of the Environmental Impact Statement.

Additional public involvement, generating 75 letters, was initiated in September 1983 to aid in the roadless area reevaluation. This became an issue as a result of a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Decision in October 1982 concerning the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation II (RARE II). The decision caused revision of 36 CFR 219.17, which required the Forest to evaluate roadless areas in the forest planning process.

The Draft Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) were released in February 1985. Approximately 1,800 copies of a brief "Overview" and 550 copies of the entire set of documents were distributed to people on the mailing list, and copies were made available in public and college libraries. The review period began on February 22, 1985 and ended June 1, 1985; however, the Forest accepted comments until May 1986. A total of 582 letters was received during this time. During this review period, twelve meetings with special interest groups and six public meetings were held.

Since 1980, over 700 people have attended meetings and/or submitted written comments concerning the Forest Plan and EIS. Detailed information concerning public involvement can be found in Chapter VI and Appendix A of the EIS.

The initial list of issues and concerns identified at the start of the planning process did not change appreciably as a result of the subsequent public involvement effort and public comments. At the beginning, the wilderness issue was to have been resolved through RARE II and was not a part of the planning process. RARE II was invalidated by the courts; wilderness became an issue to be resolved in Forest Plans.

The key issues and management concerns used in selecting the Forest Plan from the various alternatives are discussed under the decision.

VI. THE DECISION

My decision is to implement Alternative G as the Forest Plan to guide the management of the Nez Perce National Forest for the next ten to fifteen years. Alternative G establishes a basis to resolve the issues identified and, in my opinion, maximizes net public benefit.

Analysis of public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and draft Forest Plan provided additional information that caused me to make adjustments in Alternative G. I conclude the magnitude of change from the DEIS Alternative G was within the range of alternatives discussed, and that the environmental effects disclosed are adequate to make an informed decision (See Section VIII, Alternatives, of this document for changes).

The decision on this Forest Plan speaks to the land and its many resources. Underlying these decisions are some basic philosophies. Succinctly, I recognize people as part of the

environment and want the decision and direction to minimize disruption of people's lives and values. As well, I want to ensure a caring for the land and provide choices for future generations.

In making this decision, I recognize the limitations of the physical and biological systems, and that the Nez Perce National Forest cannot provide everything each individual or group would like.

Some major aspects of this decision are:

Allowable Sale Quantity *See Amend #7 for clarification of 2nd Decade ASQ*

I have decided to establish an allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the first decade of 108 million board feet which can be sold annually. This is 11 million board feet more each year than the average amount of timber offered from the Forest over the past decade. Of the 108 million, 5 million board feet is from wood products that have traditionally been sold but not included in the ASQ such as pulpwood and roundwood. This additional material (volume) will be considered a non-interchangeable component of the 108 million. The actual annual amount offered for sale will vary depending on demand and available funds. I believe that the amount of timber to be offered for sale will provide opportunities to meet the local industry demand as well as protect other values.

I intend to increase the ASQ at the end of the 10 year Plan period to the projected second decade timber harvest level. This will be an approximate increase of 30 million board feet / year to a new ASQ level of 138 million board feet / year.

I recognize that timber sale purchasers need a certain amount of volume under contract to efficiently schedule and conduct their logging activities. The Forest Service, in turn, should be able to adjust the amount of timber offered for sale based on the demands of the market. I intend to conduct an annual evaluation of the planned sales program to determine if changes should be made in the program of work. I am asking the Forest Supervisor to monitor the volume under contract and the volume offered and sold each year. This information will then be evaluated along with other relevant factors to make recommendations on any necessary changes in the timber sales program.

The timber sale program quantity includes the ASQ (chargeable volume) and any estimated additional material (nonchargeable volume) planned for sale.

Even-aged Management

Even-aged management, which includes shelterwood, seed tree, and clearcut silvicultural systems, will predominate. Uneven-aged management will be used where it is biologically feasible and consistent with management objectives. Ultimately, the selection of the silvicultural system will be based on site-specific evaluation of biological and management factors at the project level. Clearcutting will be used only where it is determined to be the optimal method to meet the objectives and requirements of the Forest Plan. Refer to Section VII of this document and Appendix F, "Vegetation Management Practices" in the Forest Plan for further information.

Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978

In the Endangered American Wilderness Act of 1978, Congress created the Gospel-Hump

Wilderness and directed the Forest Service to develop a multiple-use plan to guide the development of three specific areas referred to as the "Gospel-Hump Multipurpose Resource Development Area". Refer to Chapter I, Section D, "Special Planning Requirements" in the Forest Plan for further information on the multipurpose resource development areas. The Forest Plan meets this direction and provides specific management direction for these areas in Chapter IV, "Geographic Display Areas".

Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980

In the Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980 (CIWA) (PL 96-312), the East Meadow Creek area, along with twelve other roadless areas, was evaluated for wilderness and non-wilderness uses. One of the purposes of the act stated in Section 2.(b)(2) was "to end the controversy over which lands within the central Idaho region will be designated wilderness - thereby assuring that certain adjacent lands better suited for multiple uses other than wilderness will be managed by the Forest Service under existing laws and applicable land management plans."

The Conference Report for the committee of conference for the CIWA states, relative to the Meadow Creek East area and the other areas considered but not designated wilderness, that these areas are available for multiple-use management and provides that the uses are to be determined through Forest Planning in accordance with the National Forest Management Act of 1976:

> "The roadless areas listed above have been examined by the Congress. They are not being designated wilderness by this legislation and will remain subject to sustained-yield, multiple-use management under the statutes and regulations generally applicable to all non-wilderness National Forest System lands. The timber resources on these unclassified lands shall be included, as appropriate, in the normal timber management planning process, in the calculation of the potential yield (allowable sale quantity) and allowable timber harvest levels for the appropriate national forests.
>
> "Of course, the non-wilderness multiple-use status of these lands resulting from this decision does not imply that they are to receive any less careful management in the future. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) was designed to assure careful and judicious planning for all national forests. The regulations which were promulgated by the Secretary of Agriculture pursuant to Section 6 of that Act (36 CFR 219...) will help make certain that these lands are properly managed under principles of wise forest stewardship."
>
> (Conference Report No. 96-1126, pages 11 and 12).

I believe that the Forest Plan addresses this expression of intent by the Congressional committees through the Forest Planning process conducted in accordance with the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (36 CFR 219) and that the Forest Plan establishes the management direction for these areas in compliance with this mandate.

In addition to the areas identified by the CIWA, other existing roadless areas were also evaluated in Forest Planning.

Roadless Areas

Management decisions for the roadless areas (503,162 acres) on the Forest include:

- No land will be recommended as additions to the present wilderness acreage on the Forest.

- 140,275 acres will not be suited for timber production. This includes parts of two areas that will be managed for semiprimitive recreation and protection of cultural resources. These are parts of Rapid River (19,343 acres) and Silver Creek-Pilot Knob (13,300 acres). Refer to Management Area 11, Chapter III in the Forest Plan for a complete discussion of the goals and standards for these areas.

- Portions of the remaining areas (302,036 acres) are included in the suitable timber base.

- The entire West Meadow Creek roadless area remains in the timber suitable land base. It is my decision to make this area, along with the remaining suitable land base, available for road construction and timber harvesting as needed to meet Forest Plan goals and objectives. Entry into this area will be a Forest Supervisor decision during Forest Plan implementation.

- Through the Forest Planning process, I have carefully considered nonwilderness multiple-use management including timber harvesting for East Meadow Creek. At this time, I do not believe we have adequate information to protect the sensitive watersheds and anadromous fisheries that exist in the area. However, I believe that there are opportunities to develop and use the timber resources on 60,851 acres of tentatively suitable land.

  This area will be available for a wide range of multiple-use activities including mineral exploration and development. I have decided to exclude this area from the suitable land base and the calculations of ASQ so that we can, through further study based on existing management practices, gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the proposed vegetative management activities and road building as carried out under the principles of wise stewardship. Under this plan, no capital investments will be made. Adequate funding will be programmed to insure that the necessary studies are accomplished and the data evaluated before any such activities occur in the area. This information is, in my opinion, necessary before a sound decision can be reached on timber suitability and scheduling of activities.

  My intent is to manage this area for nonwilderness multiple-use options and insure sufficient protection of the sensitive water and fisheries resources of the area. This decision provides for making appropriate additions to the suitable land base and the ASQ based on further analysis with plan amendment procedures and full public involvement.

Anadromous Fish Habitat

Anadromous fish habitat will be managed to achieve 87 percent of its potential. This will be achieved by managing each drainage to an established fish and water quality objective (see Appendix A of the Forest Plan) and implementing 4,000 acres of direct fish habitat improvements during the Plan period. An analysis will be completed to provide the details on the problems with each stream that is currently below the stated habitat objective, the type of habitat improvement that is needed in each stream, and which streams will receive improvements first.

Water Quality Standards

Current State and Federal water quality standards will be met or exceeded. This will be accomplished through fishery and water quality drainage objectives and resulting sediment budgets; careful riparian area management, application of best management practices, and soil, water, and fishery resource improvement projects. Stream channel stability and integrity will be maintained by limiting increases in sediment and water yields.

Wildlife Habitat

Deer and elk winter range will be improved by burning approximately 50,000 acres of winter range during the Plan period (1988-1997) and by harvesting 12,500 acres of timber on deer/elk winter range. This will result in winter range available to support 23,000 elk by 1997.

Summer elk habitat will be managed to achieve a habitat carrying capacity of about 32,200 elk by 1997. To achieve this, 989,341 acres will be managed at near 100 percent of habitat effectiveness, including 875,000 acres of elk summer habitat in wilderness. In addition, 187,506 acres, 541,460 acres, and 168,799 acres outside wilderness, will be managed at 75 percent, 50 percent, and 25 percent of habitat effectiveness respectively. Habitat effectiveness is an estimate of the quality of elk habitat and potential elk use. One hundred percent habitat effectiveness means that a site has the optimum amount of cover, forage, and security. Summer elk habitat will be managed and evaluated using the "Guidelines for Evaluating and Managing Summer Elk Habitat in Northern Idaho" (see Appendix B in the Forest Plan).

Old-growth habitat has been designated and will be managed to maintain viable populations of species dependent on it. Refer to Appendix N, "Old Growth and Snag Management," in the Forest Plan.

Approximately 53,000 acres on the Forest will be managed as winter habitat for moose. These areas contain old growth, grand fir-Pacific yew vegetative communities. My decision is that the steeper grounds (generally over 35 percent slope) that have been identified as moose winter habitat are unsuitable for timber management.

Management standards will maintain suitable habitat for all native wildlife species and provide opportunities for recovery of habitat for grizzly bear, gray wolf, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon, which are threatened or endangered species. This is in compliance with the Threatened and Endangered Species Act.

Transportation System

Approximately 830 additional miles of road will be needed during the planning period to achieve the objectives specified in Alternative G. Approximately 280 million board feet or 28 percent of the timber harvest planned for the Plan period (1988-1997) is in areas that are now roadless.

As a result of public comments, road management standards have been strengthened and expanded in the Forest Plan. The process and procedures that will be used to guide decisions on forest access (closed or open roads) will follow facilities standards as listed in Chapter II and III of the Forest Plan.

For the benefit of wildlife, there will be more "closed" and "restricted" roads than "unrestricted" roads. An access management plan will be implemented to monitor and evaluate the effects of roads on wildlife and the ability of the transportation system to accomplish the designed use.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Rivers and streams that are eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System have been inventoried. These streams and the potential classifications follow:

TABLE 1.--Potential Classification for Rivers and Streams

Stream or River	Potential Classification	Outstanding Features 1/
Bargamin Creek		
a. Mouth to wilderness boundary	Wild	C,F,R,S,T&E,V,W
b. Wilderness boundary to headwaters	Scenic	
John's Creek - entire length	Wild	F,R,S,W
Lake Creek		
a. Mouth to wilderness boundary	Wild	C,G,R,S,T&E,V,W
b. Wilderness boundary to headwaters	Recreation	
Meadow Creek - entire length	Wild	C,F,R,S,T&E,V,W
Salmon		
a. Little Salmon to Long Tom Bar	Recreation	C,F,R,S,W
Slate Creek		
a. Mouth to wilderness boundary	Recreation	
b. Within Gospel Hump Wilderness	Wild	C,F,R,G,S
South Fork Clearwater	Recreation	F,G,R,S
Running Creek		
a. Headwaters to wilderness boundary	Wild	F,G,R,W
White Bird Creek		
a. Mouth to confluence of north and south forks	Recreation	C,F,G
Three Links Complex		
a. Bear Creek		
b. Moose Creek	Wild	C,F,G,R,S,V
c. Three Links		
West Fork Gedney Creek	Wild	C,F,G,R,S,V

1/ Key to Outstanding Features

C - Cultural	T&E - Threatened & Endangered Species
F - Fisheries	S - Scenic
G - Geologic	V - Vegetation
R - Recreation	W - Wildlife

2/ Within Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness

3/ Outside Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness

Bear Creek, Moose Creek, Three Links, and West Fork of Gedney Creek are entirely within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and are eligible for "wild" classification.

These inventoried streams will be studied for suitability prior to undertaking any action which would change their current inventory status. A management area (MA8) has been included in the Forest Plan to provide management direction for the current Wild and Scenic rivers on the Forest: Selway, Salmon and Middle Fork of Clearwater.

Livestock Grazing

Livestock grazing will gradually increase by 3,000 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) to 43,000 AUMs in the first decade. Since primary range on the Forest is now fully stocked, any increases in future livestock grazing will be on acres of temporary forage created by vegetative management activities.

Minerals

Leasable Minerals - All lands on the Nez Perce National Forest are available for leasing unless formally withdrawn. The consent decision or recommendation for lease applications, permits and licenses will be formulated in compliance with NEPA and processed in a timely manner based on the direction in the Plan, including standards in the Management Area presciptions.

Oil and Gas: I have identified lands available for leasing, lands available for leasing with No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulations and lands where conditions may lead to recommendations not to lease. (Refer to Chapters II and III in the Forest Plan.)

a. Areas that are available for leasing using the stipulations in the Forest Plan are Management Areas 1, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 totaling 1,188,361 acres.

b. Areas available for leasing with NSO stipulations are Management Areas 2, 3, 7, and 10 totaling 14,337 acres. In these areas, surface disturbance is incompatible with surface resource values.

c. Areas where leases are not compatible with long-term goals or are formally withdrawn are Management Areas 6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3 totaling 909,364 acres.

Locatable Minerals - All lands on the Nez Perce National Forest are available for entry unless formally withdrawn. About 1,252,646 acres on the Forest are open to mineral entry. Significant surface disturbing activities on mining claims, mill sites and tunnel site locations will require a Notice of Intent and/or a Plan of Operations under 36 CFR 228 to assure orderly development of the mineral resource and protection of surface resources. Decisions on submittals for development will be formulated in compliance with NEPA and processed in a timely manner based on direction in the Plan, including standards identified in Management Area Prescriptions. About 965,394 acres of wilderness areas, campgrounds and administrative sites are withdrawn from mineral entry.

Common Variety Minerals - Lands on the Nez Perce National Forest are available for development of common variety resources. Decisions on proposals for development will be formulated in compliance with NEPA and processed in a timely manner based on direction

in the Plan, including standards identified in Management Area prescriptions. About 965,394 acres are withdrawn or development is not permitted by direction in the Forest Plan.

Visual Quality

Visual quality objectives have been established for the entire Forest and are incorporated into the objectives set for each management area. In order to protect natural-appearing landscapes, resource management activities will be guided by visual quality objectives in areas adjacent to or readily visible from major highways, roads, trails, campgrounds, and other recreational developments.

Recreation

A diversity of recreation opportunities provides for growth in the tourist industry. Semiprimitive recreation will be enhanced. Dispersed recreation opportunities and settings will shift from semiprimitive to roaded, natural classifications as transportation systems are developed in areas previously roadless. Existing campground and picnic capacity is adequate to meet demand expected for three decades. Only maintenance activities will be necessary. Ten miles of trail will be constructed or reconstructed over the next 10 to 15 years.

Research Natural Areas

I am recommending to the Chief of the Forest Service study for the establishment of seven Research Natural Areas. Two such areas have already been established. These nine areas will meet the Forest's objectives for representative habitat types as listed in the Northern Region Guide. Three of the areas recommended as additions are in established wilderness.

TABLE 2.--Research Natural Areas

Existing (E) or Proposed RNA	Vegetative Habitat Types
Little Granite Creek 1/	PIPO/AGSP
Little Granite Creek 1/	PIPO/FEID
Little Granite Creek 1/	PIPO/SYAL
Elk Creek/1	PIPO/PHMA
O'Hara Creek(E)	PSME/PHMA
Little Granite Creek/1	PSME/SYAL
Little Granite Creek/1	PSME/CARU
O'Hara Creek(E)	ABGR/XETE
Upper Newsome Creek	ABGR/ASCA
O'Hara Creek	ABGR/CLUN
Warm Springs Creek	ABGR/SETR
Warm Springs Creek	ABGR/LIBO
O'Hara Creek	THPL/ASCA
O'Hara Creek	THPL/ADPE
No Business Creek	ABGR/PHMA
Little Granite Creek/1	ABLA/CLUN
Fish Lake/2	ABLA/STAM
Fish Lake/2	ABLA/CACA
No Business Creek	ABLA/LIBO
No Business Creek	ABLA/MEFE
No Business Creek	ABLA/XETE
Fish Lake/2	ABLA/VAGL
Upper Newsome Creek	Taxus Brevifolia
Little Granite Creek/1	AGSP/POSA
Little Granite Creek/1	AGSP/OPPO
Little Granite Creek/1	FEID/CAHO
Little Granite Creek/1	FEID/AGSP
Little Granite Creek/1	FEID/SYAL
O'Hara Creek/2	ALSI/SHRU
Elk Creek/2	CELE/AGSP
Square Mountain Creek/2	Douglasis Idahoensis
O'Hara Creek(E)	Type I Streams
O'Hara Creek(E)	Type II Streams
O'Hara Creek(E)	Type III Streams
Little Granite Creek/1	Waterfalls
O'Hara Creek(E)	Beaver Ponds
O'Hara Creek(E)	Special Fauna
Little Granite Creek/1	Rivers
Little Granite Creek/1	Permanent Ponds
Little Granite Creek/1	Low Production Lake
Fish Lake/2	Lakes with Fish
Moose Meadow Creek(E)	Fresh Marsh
Moose Meadow Creek(E)	Bog Meadows
O'Hara Creek(E)	Wet Meadows
Warm Springs Creek	Thermal Springs

1/ In Hells Canyon NRA and established wilderness administered by Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.
2/ In established wilderness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this decision to adopt Alternative G as the Forest Plan is not static and will be evaluated continuously. The planning process provides for continued public participation to provide a foundation upon which to build amendments and revisions. A sound and achievable monitoring program is a part of the Forest Plan, and evaluation of these findings is an important part of the management control system. This information will be made public and will provide an opportunity for interested groups and individuals to make their own assessments of our success or failure.

VII. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

The factors I have used to determine which alternative maximizes net public benefit include response to issues, concerns, and opportunities; environmental quality; economic efficiency; and compatibility with the goals of other agencies and Indian tribes. In making this decision, I recognize the limitations of physical and biological systems, and that the Nez Perce National Forest cannot provide everything each individual or group would like.

Of critical importance is the minimization of disruptions to people's lives and values. By this, I mean to contribute to a predictable, orderly, and manageable rate of change in the local communities. Any significant short-run changes caused by this decision would be viewed as undesireable. This knowledge allows community leaders, businesses, and people sufficient time to react to those changes.

While the Forest Plan is a decision that shapes and affects communities and people, other factors are also at work. Variables include national supply and demand, changes in preferences, and social changes within communities close to home as well as nationally and worldwide.

My reasoning for making this decision follows:

A. Response to Issues, Concerns and Opportunities

One of the major reasons I chose to implement Alternative G is because it responds positively and thoroughly to public issues and management concerns on the Nez Perce National Forest. Since many issues and concerns on the Forest conflict, it is impossible to resolve them all. Following is my evaluation of the selected alternative's response to each issue.

1. Issue: Timber harvest; Allowable Sale Quantity

The timber issue is one of the more controversial because of its relationship to all other forest resources and uses. People have conflicting views on timber harvest. Some view timber as being compatible with other uses of the Forest and see it as being in the public interest. Others believe it is generally detrimental to other forest resources and uses and believe that timber harvests should be few in number or even eliminated altogether.

I recognize the timber industry's desire to have more timber offered for sale in the next 10 to 15 years. I have studied the data presented in the Idaho Timber Supply Study (USDA Forest Service, February 1987) and understand that the supply of timber from industrial and private lands will decrease in the coming decade from harvest levels of the previous decade. I also understand the significance of the National Forest timber supply to the needs of the timber industry when evaluated from a regional and statewide perspective.

Within Idaho County, timber processing is a major, basic industry, providing 17 percent of the jobs. Several lumber mills in the area rely upon the Nez Perce National Forest to supply approximately 70 percent of their timber volume needs. In addition to providing jobs, I realize the significance of National Forest timber sale receipts to local governments in providing schools and roads.

An important reason for selecting the allowable sale quantity of 108 million board feet was that the findings of the Idaho Timber Supply Study indicated this level is necessary to help maintain historic demand levels, while retaining sufficient levels of inventory to provide for supply to local dependent communities when the supply from the private industrial land declines in the future.

I also recognize the concerns of the environmental community that timber harvest has the potential to negatively impact other resources and that an over emphasis on it could reduce non-timber resource values. The degree to which other resources could be potentially impacted by timber harvest has been carefully analyzed (Chapter IV, pages 10-40 EIS) and I considered these impacts in my decision.

I have evaluated those alternatives that offered timber sale quantities in excess of the past 10-year average and less than the 10-year average. Given the available timber supply and environmental considerations in Alternative G, I believe it maximizes net public benefit. While the allowable sale quantity will be 108 million board feet during the Plan period (1988-1997), the amount of timber actually offered for sale each year may vary depending on demand and money available to prepare the sales.

During the review of the Forest Plan, it was brought out that part of the wood products available for harvest on the Forest were not being included in calculation of the allowable sale quantity. This material has been sold for pulpwood, shakes, fence posts, and the like, as part of the Forest's total program sale quantity in previous years. Included in this category are green trees and salvageable dead trees resulting from endemic insect and disease mortality on suitable lands. The amount of this material sold has fluctuated with market conditions. I have decided to include this category of timber as a non-interchangeable component of the 108 million board foot allowable sale quantity; it may not be interchanged or substituted with the regular, green sawlog component. Fifty million board feet may be harvested from this component during the Plan period (1988-1987) or approximately 5 million annually.

Concerns were raised during the public comment period about the number of acres available for timber management. In response to these concerns, I have reevaluated the Nez Perce Forest suitability determinations. A summary of the suitable acre decision is displayed in Table 3, Timber Resource Land Suitability. Table 3 displays acres classified as "Not Suited" and "Tentatively Suitable". Tentatively Suitable acres are further separated into "Suitable" and and "Tentatively Not Suited". Under the suitable category, the total acres were separated into three additional categories. This analysis indicates there are approximately 814 thousand acres of tentatively suitable lands on the Nez Perce National Forest where direct benefits exceed direct costs, including associated road costs. The ASQ from these lands during the Plan period will average 104.7 million board feet.

An additional 23,000 acres of suitable lands are assigned to timber management to meet resource objectives other than timber management. These are primarily areas where timber

harvesting will increase forage production as big game winter habitats. The ASQ from these lands during the Plan period will average 3.3 MMBF.

The other 75,000 acres of suitable lands are assigned to timber management to provide opportunities for local jobs. The timber from these lands is used to support local mills which provide local employment and income to the local communities. No timber harvest is scheduled on these lands during the Plan period.

About 61,000 acres of land in the category "Tentatively Not Suited", and under the item, "Lands Not Cost Efficient to Meet Objectives - Future Timber Production Possible", lie within ecological settings that are sensitive to timber management activities. Significantly higher costs occur to access and operate on these areas. If demand develops, there is an opportunity to increase the harvest by 2.0 MMBF per year through amendment of the Forest Plan. While identified as an opportunity, no change is proposed in the Preferred Alternative because of the significantly higher timber prices that would be required before these lands would become economically suitable.

There are 98,000 acres that are "Tentatively Not Suited" because of their value for "other uses". Much of this acreage is stands of timber that are important habitat for wildlife and are important Native American cultural sites. Part of this acreage is in roadless areas where roading is not proposed or recommended.

TABLE 3.

Timber Resource Land Suitability

(located on this page)

An opportunity exists to add 60,851 suitable acres during the Plan period. The potential increase in the allowable sale quantity for the Plan period from this area is 20 million board feet. This land is located in East Meadow Creek.

Maintenance and improvement of existing anadromous fish habitat is achievable by designing and scheduling management activities, primarily road construction, to control the amount of sediment these activities produce.

During the review of the Proposed Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, it was discovered that some of the Nez Perce fish / water quality objectives were lower than the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's objectives as stated in their "Anadromous Fisheries Management Plan, 1985-1990". An initial analysis showed that simply raising the objectives in the affected drainages would reduce timber harvest throughout the Forest to 880 million board feet over the Plan period. However, additional analysis showed that the timber harvest could be maintained while meeting Fish and Game Department objectives by increasing measures to reduce sediment in 23 key drainages. Sediment mitigation practices are discussed on pages 82-84, Chapter IV in EIS.

Two basic ways to manage timber stands on the Nez Perce National Forest are even-aged and uneven-aged. This was the subject of considerable public comment.

In determining the appropriate silvicultural systems, I considered three groups of factors.

The first group considered was the major vegetative types found on the Forest and common individual stand conditions. The four major vegetative types found on the Forest are mixed conifer, Ponderosa pine-Rocky Mountain Douglas fir, Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir, and lodgepole pine. State-of-the-art silvicultural information indicates that either even-aged or uneven-aged management can be used on any of these vegetative types; however, individual stand conditions are critical to the decision. (?Silvicultural Systems for Major Forest Types of the United States?, Agricultural Handbook 455, USDA Forest Service.) Stands with decadent overstory vegetation and sparse regeneration, and stands at high risk to insect disease epidemics are common on the Forest. With even-aged systems, stands with a high percentage of overmature, suppressed, or diseased trees can be rapidly regenerated into young, vigorous stands. There is also more opportunity to control species and stocking to minimize future pest problems.

The second group of factors I considered were the non-timber resource objectives and the ways they are affected by silvicultural systems. Included were the amount of wildlife disturbance due to logging and related activities, the economical efficiency of timber harvesting and transportation system, the impact on visual quality, the ability to meet riparian-dependent resource needs, and the growth rate of regenerated stands.

Even-aged management maximizes the volume of timber per unit of road and enhances the economics of harvesting. This is an important consideration in maintaining water quality and fish habitat without severely impacting timber harvest. Even-aged management, even though it has a more immediate impact on wildlife than uneven-aged management, usually requires only one to three harvest entries during an 80 to 120 year rotation.

I did consider uneven-aged management for those areas where resource objectives can be met by stand conditions created by harvest operations associated with selection harvest. Uneven-aged management generally provides continuous tree cover, resulting in less

apparent visual change and hiding cover for some wildlife species; however, it also requires frequent logging entries over a larger land area to harvest the same volume of timber. It is my opinion that minimizing disturbance to wildlife is more important than continuous tree cover in most instances, but that continuous tree cover is desirable in certain areas to maintain high visual quality. Uneven-aged management may be used in both visually sensitive areas and in riparian areas depending on the site-specific silvicultural prescriptions.

The third group of factors I considered were the standards for silvicultural systems established in the Northern Region Guide. This includes the ability to create stand conditions required to meet other resource objectives in the Forest Plan, the ability to promptly regenerate the site and maintain adequate stand production, stand conditions that minimize risk of damage from pests, animals, and fire, and the selection of a system that is compatible with current technology and logging systems.

I have decided that, in general, even-aged management is the appropriate silvicultural system to use on the Nez Perce National Forest. However, since a wide variety of unique conditions exist on the Forest, all vegetative management practices will be preceded by a silvicultural examination, an on-the-ground analysis of the area, and a site-specific prescription. These prescriptions will detail the actual silvicultural system or vegetative manipulation method to be implemented on a case-by-case basis.

Clearcutting and shelterwood are the primary harvest methods used for regeneration harvests in even-aged management. Under certain physical and biological conditions, clearcutting is the optimum harvest method when considering other multiple resource objectives. The conditions under which tree regeneration clearcutting will be considered are: favorable moisture and temperature on the cleared site for tree regeneration; disease and/or insect conditions in the existing stand that can best be treated by complete removal; and overall resource objectives for the stand (wildlife habitat, visuals, etc.). (See Chapter IV, pages 45-48 of EIS for further discussion on shelterwood and clearcutting methods.) I estimate that clearcutting will be the optimum harvest system on approximately 50 percent of the acres harvested.

The final decision on which harvest method will be used will be based on a site-specific silvicultural prescription and interdisciplinary review. Additional discussion on the impacts of even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural systems and an evaluation of each can be found in Chapter II, pages 119-122, Chapter IV, pages 46-49 of the EIS, and in Appendix F "Vegetation Management Practices" of the Forest Plan.

2. Issue: Roadless Area Management; Wilderness Recommendations

Public response made it very clear that management of roadless areas is an issue on the Nez Perce National Forest. People commenting on the future management of roadless areas wanted them opened up for timber harvest, left in the current roadless condition, or added to the wilderness system.

Those people favoring development were concerned that multiple-use values, including timber, would be lost; that there would be fewer timber-related jobs if these areas were not developed; and that lack of roads in these areas would prevent their use by those without the time or money to pack in.

Those in favor of continued roadless management cited high wildlife, watershed, and fish

values; high recreation and scenic values; low timber values; and a growing outfitter and guide industry.

People favoring wilderness classification for roadless areas expressed concerns similar to those favoring roadless management. In addition, many felt that interest in wilderness is increasing and that additional areas should be preserved for future generations.

In making my decision on the management of lands now roadless, I carefully considered priced and nonpriced benefits from both national and local perspectives, along with public comments, existing laws, and the analysis contained in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. My decisions apply only to those roadless areas, or parts of roadless areas, administered by the Nez Perce National Forest. Management decisions on roadless lands administered by other Forests are documented in the decisions for these Forests. However, the wilderness/nonwilderness decision for any roadless area that lies on two or more Forests is a shared responsibility.

In the Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980 (PL 96-312), many roadless areas in Central Idaho were evaluated for wilderness and nonwilderness uses. One of the purposes of the Act stated in Sec 2.(b)(2), was "to end the controversy over which lands within the Central Idaho region will be designated wilderness, thereby assuring that certain adjacent lands better suited for multiple uses other than wilderness will be managed by the Forest Service under existing laws and applicable land management plans."

In addition, the Senate and House committee notes made clear mention that the areas not classified as wilderness are available for other multiple-use management. It also provided that the uses were to be determined through Forest Planning and the National Forest Management Act.

Specific areas included in this consideration on the Forest were: Gospel Hump, Mallard, East and West Meadow Creek, Rackliff-Gedney, Clear Creek, Silver Creek/Pilot Knob, North Fork and Little Slate Creek, and John Day.

In view of this specific direction form Congress, I have decided not to recommend any roadless areas on the Nez Perce National Forest for wilderness classification. It is my judgment that those acres on the Nez Perce most valuable as wilderness have already been classified.

Approximately 41 percent or 926,188 acres are designated wilderness on the Nez Perce National Forest. The congressional acts affecting the Forest and resulting wilderness are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4.--Wilderness Legislation Affecting the Nez Perce National Forest

Act	Wilderness	Nez Perce Acres
Wilderness Act of 1964	Selway-Bitterroot	560,088
Hells Canyon National Recreation Area Act of 1975	Hells Canyon	59,900
Endangered Wilderness Act of 1978	Gospel-Hump	200,464
Central Idaho Wilderness Act of 1980	Frank Church-River of No Return	105,736
TOTAL WILDERNESS ACREAGE		926,188

Another criterion I used in making my decision was the uniqueness of each roadless area's ecosystem. In my opinion, none of the roadless areas on the Nez Perce would add a unique ecosystem to the wilderness system; they would be adding more acres of ecosystems already included in the wilderness system.

Some of the roadless areas suggested as candidates for wilderness recommendation are proposed for multiple-use management emphasizing fisheries, wildlife, and high-quality dispersed recreation, and will remain roadless. These include parts of Rapid River and parts of the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob roadless areas. I believe that the mentioned multiple-use objectives above can best be met by continuing to manage these areas with no additional road development. Table 5 summarizes my decision regarding all roadless areas considered in the RARE II process and the Forest Plan.

Table 5.--Roadless Areas Considered in RARE II and the Forest Plan

Area Name	RARE II Acres	1986 Acres	Semiprim Rec/Defer MA 11	Wilderness MA 9	Available for Development
Big Canyon 1/	16,500	0			0
Clear Creek	26,700	11,876			11,876
Dixie Sumit Nut Hill	17,746	11,943			11,943
Dixie Tail 2/	8,288	0			0
Gospel-Hump (Jersey-Jack)	56,780	54,321			54,321
John Day	10,000	14,991			14,991
Kelly Mountain 3/	800	0			0
Klopton Cr.-Corral Cr. 1/	23,520	0			0
Lick Pt.	8,006	8,006			8,006
Little Slate	9,200	19,588			19,588
Mallard	22,919	23,232			23,232
Meadow Creek					
East Meadow	97,720	94,203	94,203		0
West Meadow	95,380	107,512			107,512
Middle Bargamin	12,800	0			0
Middle Fork Face	11,200	10,170			10,170
North Fork Slate	14,500	12,783			12,783
O'Hara-Falls Cr.	25,326	25,326			25,326
Rackliff-Gedney					
(Nez Perce NF portion)	53,000	55,463			55,463
Rapid River					
(Nez Perce NF portion)	27,940	23,300	19,343		3,957
Salmon Face	9,300	9,414			9,414
Silver Cr.-Pilot Knob	35,729	21,034	13,300		7,734

l/ Included in Hell's Canyon National Recreation Area
2/ Included in Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness
3/ No longer meets criteria

I believe that wilderness designation for these roadless areas would unnecessarily forgo present and future options for multiple-use management.

A case-by-case evaluation of each roadless area indicated that due to inherent characteristics such as geographic location, size, existing resources and resource potentials, some roadless areas were more significant than others. The public also recognized these distinctions and frequently mentioned specific roadless areas in their comments. As a result of this individual area evaluation and public comments, I identified several key roadless areas. These key roadless areas and my rationale for decisions for each follow:

East Meadow Creek

This area consists of 94,203 acres which contain both significant and sensitive resources. Streams in this area contain some of the most significant anadromous fish habitat on the Forest; this habitat will contribute to the recovery of wild populations of anadromous fish. Approximately 12 percent of the biological potential, forest-wide (excluding wilderness), for anadromous smolt production comes from the streams within this roadless area. The area also contains an important winter range for elk.

About 60,851 acres are considered tentatively suitable for timber production. The middle elevation contains stands of ponderosa pine on southern and western exposures. Cedar is present in the lower creek bottoms, and lodgepole pine and subalpine species prevail at the higher elevations. There are no known threats of insects, or disease that will cause loss of the timber potential, in the next decade. Most of the potentially valuable stands of timber occur in scattered pockets on the lower slopes of the area. Due to landforms in the drainages in the area, the commercially valuable stands can only be accessed from above.

Because of the remote location of this area in relation to existing transportation facilities, the location of many of the valuable timber stands in lower elevations, and the inability to access this timber from below, an excessive amount of road construction would be necessary to access potential timber sales. Steep slopes, fragile soils, and high fishery values, require extensive mitigation measures to protect the fishery and water resources.

I have reviewed both the CIWA and the Congressional Reports related to this area. I believe that my decision complies with the intent of these documents. As directed, considerations for careful management of this area have led me to the conclusion that information is not available at this point upon which to base a decision on suitability of timber production and scheduling of activities. This conclusion was reached after an examination of concerns raised by the public related to the compatibility of timber production with anadromous fish habitat and soil and water quality protection in this area. I intend to strengthen existing resource information and evaluate the adequacy of sediment mitigation measures before reaching decisions on development of this area.

Maintenance and enhancement of habitat for the wild steelhead and salmon run in the upper Clearwater River drainage is of primary importance. I am deferring timber production until further analysis can determine whether and how these values can be protected.

Rackliff-Gedney

The Nez Perce portion of this area consists of 55,463 acres between the Lochsa and Selway Rivers from their confluence eastward to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Vegetation over about 75 percent of the area is largely a result of wildfires 50-70 years ago. Although trees have regenerated on some sites, much of the area consists of extensive brush fields with islands of unburned trees and snags.

While brush fields are a major supply of browse for big game, much of this vegetation has grown too high to furnish quality browse, resulting in declining elk populations. Of the remaining 25 percent of the area, approximately 20 percent (11,000 acres) is suitable timber land with mature and overmature stands of timber. Approximately 5 percent (2,800 acres) are located along the higher ridges and are unsuitable for timber management.

My decision is to manage approximately 38,000 acres of brush fields in this area primarily for the benefit of big game (Refer to Management Area 16, page III-16, in the Forest Plan). An active burning program will be implemented to improve elk winter range. I have also decided that the remaining 11,000 acres of standing timber will be managed as suitable timber land and will be developed in coordination with other resource objectives in the area.

Rapid River

The Nez Perce portion of this roadless area consists of 23,300 acres adjoining the Hells

Canyon Wilderness. This area contains Rapid River, a national Wild and Scenic River.

A chinook salmon hatchery operated by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game is located just outside of the Nez Perce National Forest boundary on the northeast side of the roadless area. This hatchery, built by the Idaho Power Company as compensation for fishery losses resulting from the construction of the Hells Canyon Dam complex, uses water from Rapid River.

The area is generally very steep, resulting in high potentials for erosion and mass soil movement. Areas of active mass soil movements are evident throughout the area.

My decision is to manage 19,343 acres of this area with no new road construction. These acres encompass the Nez Perce portion of the roadless area that are in the Rapid River Drainage. Based on soil and topographical features in the Rapid River drainage and the resulting erosion hazards, I believe this is necessary to provide high-quality water to ensure the successful operation of the Rapid River fish hatchery.

The remaining 3,957 acres will be managed for timber and other multiple uses as described in Chapter III of the Forest Plan.

West Meadow Creek

This area consists of 107,512 acres to the west of Meadow Creek and is the largest roadless area on the Forest. Much of the area is steep, especially on the middle and lower reaches of Meadow Creek. Much of the upper Meadow Creek drainage burned in 1919 and is now covered with 60-to 65-year-old, regenerated timber stands. Scattered pockets of older stands of spruce and fir have escaped fire.

Of all of the roadless areas on the Forest, this area received the most public comment. Many comments cited the high fishery and wildlife value as a reason for wanting this area left roadless. Other comments supported the development of the area citing the need for an adequate timber supply to assure that timber-related jobs would not be lost. Concerns were also expressed about the impacts of development on big-game outfitters and guides who operate in the area.

Senate Report 96-414 (to accompany S. 2009), page 11, states:

> "...The Committee gave careful consideration to the future use of this area and concurred with the Administration's RARE II recommendation that the area not become wilderness. This area is close to the timer-dependent community of Elk City, Idaho and the Committee agrees that this unit should be available to provide timber which, in turn, provides jobs and a healthy economy in the small towns in Idaho County.
>
> As was the case with the east side of Meadow Creek, the western reaches of the watershed contribute clean water to Meadow Creek which flows into the Selway River. Thus, any development of this area should be done cautiously with the water quality of Meadow Creek in mind."

I considered the Congressional intent in developing management direction for this area.

The management prescription applied to the area west of Meadow Creek offers a cost-efficient means of meeting Forest Plan goals and objectives over the planning horizon.

This prescription includes the area in the suitable land base for timber harvest. The management objectives for nontimber resources in the area are not precluded by timber harvest and road construction.

Resource values such as water quality, fish, wildlife, and recreation, will remain high. Management standards and practices outlined in the Forest Plan can maintain or enhance these other resource values in conjunction with timber harvest and development. Sediment mitigation practices, restricting use of new roads, and careful placement of harvest units are some of the steps that will assure that other resources are protected.

Increasing the timber values as a result of growth or market conditions will improve the economic viability of sales in this area. Also, road access costs will tend to decline as the primary road system is completed in adjacent areas. The combination of these factors will result in improved timber sale economics in West Meadow Creek.

Silver Creek-Pilot Knob

This area consists of 21,034 acres and includes the upper part of Silver Creek and several small tributaries of Newsome Creek. The area is dominated by Pilot Rock and Pilot Knob, a 7,000-foot ridge in the center of the area that can be seen from any high point on the west side of the Forest.

In the Proposed Forest Plan, 6 million board feet of timber were scheduled for harvest within the roadless area boundary.

During the review period for the Proposed Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee expressed concern for the protection of important Indian cultural and religious sites in the area. The committee requested that no timber harvesting, road building, or any other land-disturbing activities be allowed to take place adjacent or in close proximity to those sites. Members of my staff worked with Tribal committee members to identify areas of specific concern.

As a result of this joint effort, my decision is to manage approximately 13,300 acres of this area, in the upper part of Silver Creek, with no additional roads and no scheduled timber harvests. This management will also be beneficial for fisheries, wildlife, and dispersed recreation resources.

Mallard and Gospel-Hump

These two areas combined consist of 77,553 acres immediately above the Salmon River Breaks. This is high, rolling, timbered country with meadows along some of the larger creeks. The predominant timber type is lodgepole pine. There are also stands of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir adjacent to the boundary of the Frank Church - River of No Return Wilderness.

Under the proposed Forest Plan, there were approximately 81 million board feet of timber scheduled for harvest in these two areas.

During formal consultation on the proposed Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, as required by the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made "conservation recommendations" for each of these areas. They recommended that timber harvesting and road construction be delayed in part of both roadless areas for

the Plan period (1988-1997) to provide habitat to contribute to the reestablishment of the gray wolf.

My decision is to proceed with the direction identified in the proposed Forest Plan, that is, road construction and timber harvesting in these roadless areas during the Plan period (1988-1997). Prior to implementing any activities in these areas, however, we will complete a more site-specific Environmental Impact Statement for the areas to be roaded and harvested to address the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's concerns, in particular, the cumulative effects of timber harvesting and road building on gray wolf habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed by letter of April 21, 1986, that this will satisfy their concerns.

In addition, management standards related to gray wolf and gray wolf habitat have been added to the Final Forest Plan. (See Forest Plan page II-23, standards 8-17.)

3. *Issue: Compatibility of timber harvest and roaded development with water quality and anadromous fish habitat*

Some people commented that the development plans and standards in the proposed Forest Plan were not adequate to protect water quality and anadromous fish habitat. Many of the same people were concerned that the Forest would not meet State and Federal laws governing water quality. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission felt that the Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement should contain more specifics on how streams that are currently below their stated fish and water quality objective would be improved and a schedule which would show when streams would receive improvements. (Refer to Chapter VI, "Public Agency Comments", EIS.) Other respondents felt the standards were overprotective of water quality, that State and Federal water quality guidelines would be exceeded, and the timber output would be reduced.

The Nez Perce National Forest has habitat capable of producing approximately 10 percent of the summer steelhead and 9 percent of the spring chinook salmon in the Columbia River Basin.

Much of the Nez Perce is located in a highly erosive geologic area known as the Idaho Batholith. Sediment, as it affects anadromous fish habitat, was one of the primary concerns in conducting the analysis for the Forest Plan.

Sediment caused by road construction, logging, and mining can reduce the quality and quantity of anadromous and resident fish spawning and rearing habitat. Sediment reduces the area in which the adults spawn and poses problems for juvenile fish. It has a major effect on egg and fry survival because it limits water flow and oxygen supply to eggs and inhibits fry escaping from the spawning gravel. Sediment also reduces pool volume (living space) and aquatic food production. Generally speaking, the more sediment in a stream, the fewer young fish that stream can support. Refer to Chapter IV of the Environmental Impact Statement for additional discussion on the effects of sedimentation on fish habitat.

In order to maintain or improve anadromous fish habitat, activities such as road construction, will be scheduled and designed to mitigate the duration and timing of sediment production.

I believe that maintaining and improving water quality and fisheries habitat is one of the highest priorities of national forest management. Forest Plan water quality standards will meet or exceed State and Federal water quality implementation standards.

My decision is to manage anadromous fish habitat on the Forest to improve existing habitat capacity by: (a) meeting the drainage-specific fish / water quality objectives stated in Appendix A of the Forest Plan; and (b) implementing 4,000 acres / structures of direct fish habitat improvements during the Plan period. For additional information on the types of habitat improvements that may be used, refer to Chapter IV in the Environmental Impact Statement.

The Forest will complete an analysis that will provide the details on: (a) the problems with each stream that is currently below the stated habitat objective, (b) the type of habitat improvement that is needed in each stream, and (c) which streams will receive improvements first.

During the review of the proposed Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement, I discovered that some of our fish / water quality objectives were lower than the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's objectives as stated in their "Anadromous Fisheries Management Plan, 1985-1990" (March 1985). We analyzed the impacts increasing our objectives in those drainages where there were differences.

Meeting the State fishery objectives required us to increase sediment mitigation for reducing to prevent reductions in the allowable sale quantity of timber. Reductions in the ASQ were undesirable due to potential adverse impacts on the local economy; however, increased mitigation levels will result in higher road costs in some areas.

In light of the significance of the anadromous fish resource on the Nez Perce, the importance of the timber sale program to the local economy, and the desirability of being consistent with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game objectives, I believe the trade-off in additional costs is justified.

In some drainages, the established objectives for fish habitat are higher than the existing habitat production. These drainages are footnoted in Appendix A of the Forest Plan. In order to meet the objectives in these drainages, we will implement an aggressive habitat improvement program for each drainage. At the same time, other resource management activities will be regulated with the goal of improving fish habitat recovery. If, through monitoring this is not realized, management for other resources will be curtailed until fish habitat again improves.

4. Issue: Wildlife Management

The Nez Perce National Forest contains a large and diverse wildlife population. Our inventory includes 8 big-game species, 4 threatened and endangered species, 38 small-game species, 13 fur-bearing species, and 327 non-game species.

Elk

Public concern about future management of the Nez Perce wildlife resource was paramount in the comments received on the proposed Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. In particular, many people were concerned with proposals for, and perceived adverse effects upon, elk as a game animal.

Approximately 16,800 elk spend the winter and 22,000 elk spend the summer on the Forest. In 1984, approximately 12 percent of those who hunted elk in Idaho hunted on the Nez Perce. They accounted for 14 percent of the State's total elk hunter days and harvested about 15

percent of the State's total.

The biological potential of the non-wilderness portion of the Forest is 29,360 elk on summer range and 23,980 on winter range. Currently, summer range capacity on the non-wilderness portion of the Forest is 16,800 elk and winter range capacity is 6,120. This is much below the potential capacity.

Since the 1950s, effective fire suppression has allowed brush fields created by past wildfires to grow beyond the reach of the animals and become decadent. As a result of this dwindling forage base, elk carrying capacity on winter ranges has declined.

My decision is to implement an aggressive elk winter range improvement program by burning approximately 50,000 acres of winter range during the Plan period (1988-1997). This will be able to support about 12,100 elk on the non-wilderness portion of the Forest by 1997.

Elk summer habitat will be managed using "Guidelines for Evaluating and Managing Summer Elk Habitat in Northern Idaho" to achieve a projected nonwilderness summer habitat carrying capacity of 19,670 elk by 1997.

Moose

The present population of moose on the Forest is estimated to be 740 animals. During the summer, moose prefer high mountain and riparian areas. Studies done on the habits and movement of the moose population between 1979 and 1983 indicate that the old-growth grand fir / Pacific yew vegetative type is a critical habitat for moose (Pierce, University of Idaho, 1983). Therefore, management of this plant community is important to present and future moose populations.

The steeper grounds within the grand fir / Pacific yew habitat type that have been identified as moose winter range are unavailable for timber management. With current technology it is infeasible to treat timber-sale-generated slash on cable ground without broadcast burning. Broadcast burning kills the fire sensitive yew, and thus destroys the desirable habitat features. As a consequence, timber harvesting is scheduled on the flatter grounds where satisfactory fire hazard reduction is possible without broadcast slash burning, and the steeper grounds are preserved as moose habitat.

I believe we have provided suitable habitat for species dependent on old-growth and snags such as the pileated woodpecker, goshawk, fisher, and pine marten. At least 10 percent of the forested acres that are now suitable old-growth habitat will be managed for these species. This acreage will be distributed across the Forest in a way that will assure that at least 5 percent of the forested acres within major prescription watersheds of 6,000 to 10,000 acres will be managed as old-growth habitat.

Threatened and Endangered Species

We have consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed Forest Plan. A nonjeopardy opinion was documented in their letter of June 25, 1985. This letter also contained recommendations to protect current habitats and promote the reestablishment of four threatened and endangered species. The peregrine falcon, bald eagle, Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf, and grizzly bear. Forest Plan Standards (Chapter II, pages 21 to 24) were developed to this end. In many cases, the desirable habitats and ecosystems are located in the vast acreage of wilderness, wild and

scenic rivers, and roadless areas; these provide excellent opportunities to promote recovery efforts.

Overall management of nonwilderness lands to promote recovery of the gray wolf and grizzly bear will of necessity be closely coordinated with human activities. Maintenance of secure areas free from human disturbance and conflict will be a key factor in promoting recovery of these species. The Nez Perce National Forest's assigned portion of the gray wolf recovery goal for central Idaho is habitat to support 10 animals. Objectives for the gray wolf will be achieved within wilderness, and through coordination with elk management, timber sale scheduling, and access management. They will be achieved in wilderness and on currently undeveloped lands adjacent to wilderness. One of my rationale in selecting the Forest Plan was to increase the prey base necessary for meeting the gray wolf recovery goals.

As the Forest Plan is implemented, impacts on threatened and endangered species will be evaluated for individual actions. No action will be taken that will jeopardize a threatened and/or endangered species. Actions will be modified to prevent adverse impacts. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be informally consulted throughout implementation, and formal consultation will occur if an activity may adversely affect a species or its habitat.

5. *Issue: Forest Access Management*

There seems to be more agreement among various interest groups and individuals on the need for more comprehensive and thorough road management than on any other issue. Many comments on the proposed Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement indicate that people feel too many miles of roads are to be built, which would adversely affect wildlife. Others felt that the problem is not the additional roads to be built, but that the Forest's road management is ineffective (i.e., our enforcement of closures is poor, more closures are needed after timber harvest activities, and the logic of decisions to close roads is not always understood by the public).

I have decided roads will be closed or restricted primarily to provide security for wildlife.

I have strengthened the Forest Plan standards by establishing explicit objectives for road management and standards for road planning, construction, and maintenance. I believe this will result in the resource protection people want, while achieving multiple-use benefits.

I believe controlling access into the Forest and monitoring the effects of access on forest resources as well as the ability of the transportation system to meet the intended use will address public concerns.

I have decided to change our approach regarding road closures. This is a subtle but significant change from past practice. In the past, we decided which roads should be closed; now we will be deciding which roads are to remain open. If we cannot justify leaving a road open, it will be closed or restricted. The process to determine which roads will remain open will be developed in Forest Plan Access Management Policy and will follow the standards for access facilities listed in Chapters II and III of the Forest Plan.

6. Other Issues:

Wild and Scenic Rivers

My decision for all the inventoried and eligible river segments is to preserve future management options for recreational / scenic / wild congressional classification. It is likely that congressional classification would be preceded by a separate NEPA analysis. This decision is based on the current inventory and national policy to study eligible rivers prior to changes in their potential classification.

Refer to Table 1 for the outstanding resource values that were identified and formed the basis for the selection of eligible river segments.

Research Natural Areas

In the Forest Plan, I will recommend study for the establishment of seven research natural areas on the Forest in addition to the two currently established. My decision is based on the need to preserve biological diversity for a variety of vegetative habitat types. Objectives for preserving these habitat types are listed in the Northern Region Guide.

Minerals

I believe maintaining the existing rights for prospecting, developing and mining mineral resources is important to our national well-being. There is a significant potential for the development of non-energy mineral resources on the Forest. Resource management standards in the Forest Plan will be included in the Plan of Operation for activities relating to the development and extraction of mineral resources. Standards also exist in the Forest Plan for oil and gas; however, it appears that the potential for any activity related to these resources is low.

Visual Quality Objectives

Visual quality and natural-appearing landscapes are important to many Forest users, particularly along major roads, trails, rivers and near recreation sites. The appearance of the surrounding Forest is an important part of the recreation experience. In order to maintain the natural-appearing landscapes in these areas, I have established standards for visual quality and identified the visual quality objectives for each management area.

Cultural Resources

The Nez Perce National Forest has a long history of pre-historic and historic human habitation. I believe it is important to locate, preserve and evaluate these sites in order to increase our knowledge of previous cultures and human use of the Forest. The Nez Perce Tribe maintains close ties with traditional uses of the land. Protecting these sites is important in maintaining tribal culture. Cultural resource values will be inventoried, evaluated, and protected in accordance with the Natural Historic Preservation Act, the procedures outlined in 36 CFR 800, and Executive Order 11593.

Range

Livestock grazing on the Nez Perce is important to local ranching operations. With over 80 percent of the land area in Idaho County in Federal ownership, livestock grazing on Forest Service lands is a key source of forage. Since ranching and livestock grazing are important components of the local economy, I will provide a grazing program with a potential for modest increases above current levels.

B. Environmental Quality

Because environmental quality was a consideration in selecting Alternative G, I considered the environmental consequences of the various alternatives. Air quality will be maintained within legal limits and water quality will meet State and Federal water quality standards. Soil erosion will be minimized and long-term soil productivity will be maintained. Fish and wildlife populations will be maintained, and timber harvest and road construction will be designed to minimize adverse effects on wildlife, especially fish and big-game species. Forest management will improve the health, vigor, and diversity of the forest and will reduce the risk of insect and disease epidemics and catastrophic wildfire.

The management standards developed to protect environmental quality are displayed in Chapters II and III of the Forest Plan. These standards do not vary by alternative. The standards provide that specific direction and mitigation measures to assure long-term productivity are not impaired by the application of short-term management practices. These consequences will be monitored.

The adverse effects that cannot be avoided are identified by resource in Chapter IV of the Environmental Impact Statement. Although the application of Forestwide Standards is intended to limit the number and duration of these adverse effects, increases in sedimentation and short-term reductions in air quality are associated to some extent with all alternatives.

Consideration of all of these factors, while comparing the outputs of each alternative, led me to select Alternative G. I feel Alternative G improves the environmental quality of the Nez Perce National Forest over current direction.

C. Social and Economic Stability

I considered the social and economic consequences of the various alternatives as I arrived at my decision. These effects are described in the Environmental Impact Statement and the Idaho Timber Supply Study. I have discussed timber allowable sale quantity and its relationship to community stability in Section VI and VII-A of this Record. I believe the sale level set in the Forest Plan provides the opportunity to promote community stability.

Many residents of communities near the Forest have expressed a desire to maintain traditional lifestyles of the area. These lifestyles are closely related to leisure activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, and firewood gathering. Consideration of these qualitative factors of social stability was an important part of my decision to balance the needs for jobs and economic stability with environmental values. I believe the Forest Plan provides the best balance among these factors.

D. Economic Efficiency

In determining the most economically efficient alternative, the Forest Service uses an estimate of present net value, which is the difference between discounted benefits and discounted costs. In calculating present net value, a dollar value is assigned to various outputs. Some of these output values are market-determined, such as timber, and produce a revenue. Other resource outputs use assigned values derived from research studies, such as recreation. However, present net value does not include a value for some resources that neither produce revenue nor have a basis from which to estimate a value as in the case of fish and water quality. Therefore, present net value cannot be the only criterion used in selecting the Preferred Alternative. The criterion used was the maximization of net public benefit, which includes both the net value of the priced outputs and the consideration of the nonpriced outputs.

Related to the issue of economic efficiency is the controversy over below-cost sales, which have become a national concern. In the past three years, overall timber-related costs have not been recovered by the Forest's timber sale receipts. This has been a management concern and emphasis is being placed on reducing costs related to timber management. Regional direction requires additional project-level analysis of each timber sale over one million board feet to assure that the sale has been designed with the most cost-effective measures possible in keeping with environmental concerns. However, "below cost" sales may still occur but, in my judgement, these sales are the least-cost method of accomplishing the Forest Plan goals and objectives.

Timber harvesting can produce benefits other than direct cash receipts such as improved wildlife habitat (big-game winter range), opportunities for increasing livestock forage, opportunities to reduce fire protection costs and manage insects and disease in forest stands, provide for plant diversity and improve visual quality.

In making my decision, I felt it was necessary to evaluate how opportunities would change by selecting alternatives with varying combinations of present net value and nonpriced outputs. This helped me understand the interactions occurring between resources in determining net public benefit. Table 6 displays each alternative along with the estimate of present net value arranged in order of decreasing present net value. In addition, Table 6 shows estimated outputs for selected priced and nonpriced resources that relate to the key issues used in selecting the Forest Plan.

TABLE 6.-- Comparison of Alternatives - Nez Perce National Forest
(Plan period Outputs)

Alternative	Present Net Value (Million dollars) 1/	Timber (MMBF Per Year)	Anadrom-ous Fish Potential (%) 2/	Elk Winter Range (No. of Elk)	Ad-ditional Wilderne-ss (Acres)	Unroaded Acres (Acres)	Additional Road Construc-tion 3/ (Miles)	Change (Jobs)
Max PNV	1119.7	196	72	15,040	0	0	130	1299
D	1113.4	157	72	15,040	0	0	115	799
G1	1067.2	111	87	20,320	0	126,846	85	68
J	1013.5	137	74	14,400	219,105	0	103	527
F	1005.2	116	76	16,990	0	250,519	93	278
G (Sel-Alt)	986.3	108	87	20,320	0	126,846	83	90
K	980.1	102	87	17,040	172,866	0	92	90
L	976.9	102	87	17,020	94,203	78,763	94	90
C	944.1	74	84	15,510	0	330,419	65	-280
E	923.5	127	81	16,520	0	0	97	432
I	915.7	123	75	14,760	326,617	0	95	336
H1	877.7	89	75	13,840	503,162	0	76	-51
H	822.1	94	76	13,850	503,162	0	76	-46
A (Cur Dir)	806.5	84	78	16,040	0	78,763	71	-168

1/ Present Net Value is projected for the Planning Horizon (15 decades)
2/ Current anadromous fish habitat potential is 84 percent of potential.
3/ Average annual miles of roads constructed in first decade.

The following discussion presents the differences among the alternatives that have a higher present net value than the Selected Alternative (Alternative G).

Alternative D

Alternative D has the highest present net value of all the alternatives, slightly less than the maximum present net value benchmark. Correspondingly, it has the highest levels of timber harvest, grazing, and motorized dispersed recreation. The result of emphasizing the market resources is a lower level of nonmarket and nonpriced outputs. Anadromous fishery habitat potential is 14 percent less than Alternative G. The summer elk population is slightly less, and the elk winter range capacity is 11 percent less than Alternative G. Under this alternative, no lands would be assigned to unroaded management. Alternative D does not adequately resolve the above mentioned issues in maximizing net public benefits, even though its present net value is $6 million less than the maximum present net value benchmark. The tradeoff is mostly due to the objective for a high timber level versus high levels of fish and water quality, elk winter range, and unroaded lands. Alternative G has a lower present net value and timber output than Alternative D, but is more responsive to the above mentioned outputs.

Alternative G1

Alternative G1 has the second highest present net value among the alternatives, $68 million less than the maximum present net value benchmark. Under this alternative, present net value is reduced by excluding timber harvest in one entire roadless area (East Meadow Creek) and parts of two others (Rapid River, Silver Creek-Pilot Knob).

This alternative is identical to Alternative G except the timber harvest level is allowed to

exceed the long-term sustained yield for some decades and ultimately to decline in future decades. For this alternative, the timber harvest is significantly higher in the fifth through the ninth decades than the long-term sustained yield capacity. This departure in the base sale schedule in these decades explains the significantly higher present net value for this alternative than for Alternative G.

Even though Alternative G1 is similar to Alternative G for most of the outputs and has a higher present net value, I believe that Alternative G comes closer to maximizing net public benefit than Alternative G1 because of the negative impacts to communities if a decline in timber sales occurs in future decades.

Alternative J

Alternative J has the third highest present net value, $106 million less than the maximum present net value benchmark. This reduction in present net value is primarily due to excluding timber management from 218,000 acres of unroaded areas that would be proposed for wilderness designation. This results in more intensive timber management of available timber land with the second highest timber harvest level of all the alternatives. The result is that the levels of anadromous fish habitat potential, elk winter range capacity, and wildlife habitat improvement would make Alternative J inadequate to maximize net public benefits. The potential for anadromous fish habitat is 12 percent less than Alternative G, elk winter range capacity is 15 percent less, and no acres are assigned for wildlife habitat improvement. The tradeoff of a high timber harvest level and wilderness assignment is achieving higher levels of anadromous fish habitat potential, elk winter range, and wildlife habitat improvement. Alternative G has a lower present net value, timber harvest level, and wilderness acreage than Alternative J. Still, I believe that Alternative G resolves more adequately the public issues of anadromous fish habitat potential, elk winter range, and wildlife habitat and is closer to maximizing net public benefits.

Alternative F

Alternative F has the fourth highest present net value; $110 million less than the maximum present net value benchmark. The reduction in present net value is primarily due to excluding timber harvest from 218,000 acres of unroaded areas to provide for high quality fisheries. The result is more intensive management on the remaining timber land and more road construction. The first decade timber harvest is the third highest of all alternatives. I believe that Alternative F does not maximize net public benefits.

E. Compatibility with Goals of Other Public Agencies and Indian Tribes

This Plan has been developed with public participation, which included such agencies as the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Nez Perce Tribe, as well as individuals, industry groups and environmental organizations.

Extensive efforts were made to ensure that the selected alternative considered the goals of other public agencies and of Indian tribes. Plans of other agencies were reviewed and numerous meetings were conducted with officials from other agencies and Nez Perce Tribal representatives. (See Chapter VI and Appendix A of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for details.)

I believe Alternative G is compatible and complementary to the goals of other agencies and Indian tribes. The Nez Perce Tribe, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service were the major entities that expressed concerns about the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed Forest Plan. Some of the changes made to the Preferred Alternative are in response to their concerns.

Coordination with the Nez Perce Tribe, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue as projects are implemented.

I believe the Selected Alternative will permit the Nez Perce National Forest to contribute to the achievement of the various goals of the State of Idaho. The Forest Plan has been developed in close cooperation with the State of Idaho. Concerns expressed by former Governor Evans on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and proposed Forest Plan have been responded to in the Final Forest Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement.

High levels of wildlife habitat are provided along with increased emphasis on water quality and fisheries enhancement that will contribute to achieving State fish and wildlife goals. Although my decision reflects a change in the allowable sale quantity of timber from previous plans, I believe the Selected Alternative provides timber sales that will be adequate to meet the demand in the decade ahead.

F. Summary of Reasons for Selecting the Plan

As described in the preceding pages, I believe the Forest Plan provides a management strategy for the Forest that maximizes net public benefit. This is achieved by providing a balance among commodity outputs, thus providing for local employment while protecting amenity values such as wildlife, fish, scenic quality, and diverse recreation opportunities that are important to forest users. Management is within the physical and biological capability of the land and can be accomplished without reducing that capability.

I am confident the Forest Plan provides for meeting the demands on the Forest resources for the next 10 to 15 years. Many divergent opinions were considered in the development and selection of the Plan. It was impossible to meet all requests and desires; however, I believe the Plan achieves a balance between commodity and amenity values considering the range and intensity of the concerns expressed by the public on the various resources.

I made the decision to adopt Alternative G in light of the Forest Service mission as defined by the legislative mandate of the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960, and the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976. The Forest Plan, to the best of my knowledge, complies with the legal requirements and policies applicable to the Nez Perce National Forest.

VIII. ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives were developed to display the array of land management options and to provide analytical data to help you and me make comparisons and determine the relative effects of various ways of addressing the issues.

Development of alternatives started with a series of public workshops in 1980. Interested individuals helped formulate the management goals by describing a wide range of management strategies. From these responses, the Forest planning team developed 13 alternatives which were considered in detail, including Current Direction (Alternative A).

Each alternative considered in detail incorporates a common set of management standards and guidelines to ensure "multiple-use" management as well as mitigation measures that protect environmental quality. Each alternative represents a technically and legally feasible strategy for managing the Forest and each alternative addresses the planning questions differently; all anticipate changes in demand for Forest resources.

These 13 alternatives were displayed in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement which, along with the proposed Forest Plan, was circulated for public review in February 1985.

Analysis of public comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement produced additional information that prompted us to make adjustments in Alternative G (the Preferred Alternative). Since the changes made to Alternative G are within the range of alternatives considered in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, no significant new information has been added, and the changes between the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Final Environmental Impact Statement are a result of public comments, I find that no supplements to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement are needed. A complete discussion of Alternative G, including the changes, is presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

All alternatives that were addressed are briefly described below. More detailed information on alternatives can be found in Chapter II and in Appendix B of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Alternative A
(Current Direction)

The goal of this alternative is to continue the management direction set out in plans formulated and approved prior to passage of the National Forest Management Act and contained in existing policies, standards, and guidelines. The Forest's budget would be held to current levels. A total of 78,763 acres in the inventoried roadless areas would be managed without additional roads.

Alternative B

The goal of this alternative is to manage the Forest at the minimum level required to maintain it in public ownership. This alternative did not respond to a wide range of public issues and concerns so it was dropped from detailed consideration.

Alternative C

The goal of this alternative is to emphasize nonmarket opportunities. Water, fish (wild gene pools), wildlife, recreation, and other amenities would be highlighted without adversely affecting other resources. Fisheries, semiprimitive recreation, and wildlife resources are emphasized under this alternative by excluding new road construction from 330,419 acres in the roadless inventory.

Alternative D

The goal of this alternative is to emphasize outputs that have an established market price, without adversely affecting other resources. Development of timber resources is emphasized on all tentatively suitable lands outside of the classified areas, including all 503,162 acres in the inventoried roadless areas.

Alternative E

The goal of this alternative is to meet the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) assignments, as set out in the Regional Guide. RPA targets for timber, fisheries, range, and elk are the primary objectives of this alternative. All tentatively suitable lands are available for harvest, including all 503,162 acres in the inventoried roadless areas.

Alternative F

The goal of this alternative is to emphasize fish and wildlife resources with a specified minimum level of timber production. Fisheries, semiprimitive recreation, and wildlife resources are emphasized under this alternative by excluding new road construction in 250,519 acres of the inventoried roadless areas.

Alternative G
(Selected Alternative)

The goal of this alternative is to emphasize water quality and fish and wildlife resources through specific drainage objectives, and to provide a high level of market outputs. Fisheries, semiprimitive recreation, and wildlife resources are emphasized by excluding new road construction in 126,846 acres of the inventoried roadless areas.

Several changes were made to Alternative G after the Draft Forest Plan was released. These changes were in response to public comments received on the draft EIS and Forest Plan. The significant changes include:

- Fish and water quality objectives have been increased in 64 drainages; anadromous fish habitat will be managed at 87 percent of its potential throughout the Forest. This was done to make Alternative G consistent with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's "Anadromous Fisheries Management Plan, 1985-1990".

- Prescribed burning of deer/elk winter range was increased from 2,700 acres to 5,000 acres per year during the Plan period (1987-1996).

- West Meadow Creek roadless area has been included in the suitable base for timber harvest.

- Approximately 13,300 acres of the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob roadless area will be managed without roads for high quality fisheries, water quality, wildlife, dispersed recreation, and protection of Native American religious and cultural values.

- The East Meadow Creek area will be managed at a minimum level, maintaining all options for future management. Approximately 61,000 acres have been identified as an opportunity to add to the tentatively suitable base, if conditions and needs change significantly. Further inventory data will be gathered to evaluate the resource impacts associated with road construction and logging.

- The Rackliff-Gedney roadless area will be managed with road improvements and additions. Approximately 11,000 acres will be available for timber management. The remaining 38,000 acres of tentatively suitable lands will be managed to meet wildlife objectives using prescribed burning.

- In the Draft Preferred Alternative, some riparian acres were included in the suitable timber base and some acres were assigned minimum level management. For consistency, all riparian acres are included in the suitable base. A site-specific analysis of the suitability of each area for timber management will be made during implementation, following the objectives and management standards in the Forest Plan.

- The allowable sale quantity of timber was increased from 102 million board feet to 108 million board feet over the Plan period (1987-1996). One million board feet is the result of an increase in suitable acres (Rackliff-Gedney and riparian areas), the other 5 million board feet increase is a non-interchangeable component linked specifically to timber on suitable lands that is currently utilitized for sawtimber. Included in this non-interchangeable component is material that can be utilized for pulp, lumber, and other merchantable products. This is a 6 percent increase from the Draft Preferred Alternative allowable sale quantity.

- Visual quality objectives along trails in the John's Creek area have been increased.

Alternative G1

This alternative is essentially the same as Alternative G, except timber harvest levels are increased by allowing a decline in the base sale schedule (departure) after the fifth decade. This would allow the primary road system to be constructed at a rate consistent with fishery and water quality objectives. Changes in Alternative G since the draft Forest Plan (see listing under Alternative G) were also made in this alternative.

Alternative H

The goal of this alternative is to maximize the Forest's wilderness resource. Market outputs from lands outside of existing and proposed wilderness would also be maximized. All acreage in the inventoried roadless areas (503,162 acres) would be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification.

Alternative H1

The goal of this alternative is to maximize the Forest's wilderness resource, and increase timber harvests by departing from the long-term sustained yield capacity. Market outputs from lands outside of existing and proposed wilderness would be maximized, but not to the point that minimum management requirements for resource protection are not met. All acreages in the inventoried roadless areas (503,162 acres) would be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification. This alternative is essentially the same as Alternative H except for the increase in timber harvest in later decades.

Alternative I

The goal of this alternative is to furnish a high-acreage addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Market outputs from lands outside of existing and proposed wilderness would also be maximized. Six roadless areas (326,617 acres) would be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification.

Alternative J

The goal of this alternative is to furnish a medium-acreage addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Market outputs from lands outside existing and proposed wilderness would also be emphasized. Five roadless areas (219,105 acres) would be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification.

Alternative K

The goal of this alternative is to furnish a moderate-acreage addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System and to emphasize fish and wildlife resources outside of the existing and proposed wilderness through specific drainage objectives. Three roadless areas (172,966 acres) would be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification.

Alternative L

The goal of this alternative is to furnish a low-acreage addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System and to emphasize fish and wildlife resources outside existing and proposed wilderness through specific drainage objectives. One roadless area (94,203 acres) would be recommended to Congress for wilderness classification. Two other roadless areas (78,763 acres) would remain roadless.

IX. COMPARISON OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE AND THE SELECTED ALTERNATIVE

Alternative C was determined to be the environmentally preferred alternative. Implementation of this alternative would cause less physical and biological disturbance than any other alternative because fewer acres would be disturbed by timber harvesting and fewer roads would be required in the Plan period (1988-1997) than in other alternatives. Approximately 70 percent (330,000 acres) of roadless area inventory would continue to be managed without additional roads or development. In the developed portion of the Forest, objectives for water quality, fish, and wildlife would assure full protection of these resources. Timber harvesting and road construction would occur in this alternative, however, having some negative impacts on these resources.

In addition to Alternative C, Alternative H would recommend all of the existing roadless areas for wilderness classification and would preserve the most land in an undisturbed condition. Alternative H, however, would have lower objectives for water quality, fish, and wildlife in the developed areas. As a result, the overall impact on these resources would be greater than in Alternative C.

Overall, Alternative C would harvest the fewest acres and construct the fewest roads in the first decade. Although it would not maintain all of the undeveloped areas in their current

condition, management for and protection of water quality, fish, and wildlife management would be emphasized in the developed areas.

The environmentally preferred alternative differs from the selected alternative in several respects.

Roadless

Alternative C would maintain approximately 330,000 acres which is 70 percent of the current roadless inventory, as undeveloped. Alternative G, the selected alternative will maintain 126,846 acres (27 percent) as roadless. Roadless management would have the least impact on the 203,000 acre difference between the two alternatives. Alternative C is environmentally superior to the Forest Plan.

Timber

Alternative C would harvest 4232 acres per year during the Plan period for a total volume of 740 million board feet over the Plan period. Alternative G, the selected alternative for the Forest Plan will harvest approximately 4,450 acres annually for a volume of 1,080 million over the Plan period (1988-1997). The fewer harvest acres under Alternative C would reduce the potential for negative impacts on other resources.

Water Quality and Fisheries

Water quality and fish objectives in Alternative C are similar to those in the Forest Plan. As a result, fish habitat potential is approximately the same for both Alternatives C and G. Due to the increased number of watersheds that would remain undeveloped in Alternative C; however, the risks of adversely impacting water quality and fish in those watersheds would be greater in the Forest Plan. Alternative C would have a slight environmental advantage over the Forest Plan.

Wildlife

Additional acres of roadless areas in Alternative C would provide more undisturbed, secure habitats for many wildlife species on the Forest than will be available in the Forest Plan. The species that would benefit the most would be those dependent on old-growth stands.

Soils

Fewer soil-disturbing activities, such as timber harvesting and road construction would occur in Alternative C than in the Forest Plan. As a result, the potential for adverse impacts such as compaction, displacement, and erosion would be less than in the Forest Plan.

Economic Efficiency

Alternative C has a present net value of $944.1 million. Alternative G has a higher present net value, $986.3 million, and therefore is a more efficient alternative.

Economic Impact

Alternative C results in a decrease of 411 jobs over the Plan period. In contrast, the selected alternative (G) provides for an increase of 93 jobs during the Plan period, thus making a positive contribution to community stability.

Conclusion

Even though Alternative C is preferable from the standpoint of the physical and biological environment, I believe Alternative G provides for a better mix of management emphasis and maximizes the net public benefit while protecting the environment. Some components of the environment will be managed at similar levels in Alternative C and G, such as water quality and fish. Also, increased emphasis on programs such as habitat improvement in Alternative G will result in higher resource outputs than in Alternative C.

X. IMPLEMENTATION, MITIGATION, AND MONITORING

A. Implementation

Implementation of the Forest Plan will begin 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision appear in the ?Federal Register? (36 CFR 219.10 (c) (1)).

Implementation requires moving from an existing land-use management program with a budget and schedule of activities, to the level of management outlined in the Forest Plan. In areas where management activities have already been imposed, some period of adjustment may be required to attain Forest Plan goals and objectives. However, as soon as practicable the Forest Supervisor will ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all projects and contractual obligations are consistent with the Forest Plan.

The management activity schedule displayed in Appendix J of the Forest Plan is not a decision of the Forest Plan for individual projects. It provides public information as required by Forest Service Manual 1922.5. This schedule is subject to updates based upon budget, market or other considerations. The public will be notified, at least annually, of changes to this schedule during Forest Plan implementation.

The Forest Supervisor has authority to change the implementation schedule to reflect differences between proposed annual budgets and actual appropriated funds. Such scheduled changes are considered an amendment to the Forest Plan, but are not considered a significant amendment nor require the preparation of an environmental impact statement, unless the changes significantly alter the long-term relationships between levels of multiple-use goods and services projected under planned budget proposals as compared to those projected under actual appropriations (36 CFR 219.10 (e)).

If, during Forest Plan implementation, it is determined that the best way to achieve the prescription for a management area does not totally conform to a management prescription standard, the Forest Supervisor may amend that standard for a specific project. Such site-specific amendments (CFR 219.10(f)) and the rationale for the changes must conform to the

National Environmental Policy Act, the Threatened and Endangered Species Act, and other statutory requirements.

Implementation is guided by the Forestwide Management Standards located in Chapter II of the Forest Plan and by the specific Management Area prescriptions and requirements addressed in Chapter III of the Plan.

B. Mitigation

Mitigation measures are an integral part of standards for each management area and therefore an essential part of the Forest Plan. Implementation is guided by the Forestwide management standards located in Chapter II of the Forest Plan and by the specific management area prescriptions and requirements addressed in Chapter III of the Forest Plan. The management standards were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse environmental effects. Additional mitigation measures and management standards are discussed in the various appendices to the Forest Plan. To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures have been adopted and are included in the Forest Plan.

C. Monitoring and Evaluation

The management control system for the Forest Plan includes monitoring and evaluation. It will provide you and me with information on the progress and results of implementation. This information and evaluation will provide feedback into the Forest planning process for possible future change.

Table V-1 in the Forest Plan displays the basic outline of the monitoring process. An annual monitoring program, developed in accordance with its outline, will be prepared as part of the Nez Perce National Forest annual work program. Detailed programs will be prepared for all resources and activities requiring monitoring. These programs will be based on funds available. If funds are inadequate to monitor the Forest Plan goals and objectives properly, a further course of action will be developed. This may include Forest Plan amendment or revision, or dropping of projects.

The results and trends of monitoring will be described in the monitoring report, and be evaluated and summarized periodically. A report will be available for public review.

Data acquired by monitoring will be used to update inventories, to improve further mitigation measures, and to assess the need for amending or revising the Forest Plan.

XI. PLANNING RECORDS

Planning records contain the detailed information and decisions used in developing the Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement as required in 36 CFR 219.12.

All of the documentation chronicling the Forest planning process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

Forest Supervisor's Office
Nez Perce National Forest
Rt. 2, Box 475
Grangeville, Idaho 83530
(208) 983-1950

These records are incorporated by reference into the Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan.

XII. APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

James C. Overbay, Regional Forester
Northern Region
U.S.D.A. Forest Service
P. O. Box 7669
Missoula, Montana 59807

Notice of appeal must be submitted within 45 days from the date of this decision or within 30 days after publication by the Environmental Protection Agency of the Notice of Availability of the Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan in the ?Federal Register?, whichever date is later. A statement of reasons to support the appeal and any request for oral presentation must be filed within the 45-day period for filing a notice of appeal.

/James C. Overbay/
JAMES C. OVERBAY
Regional Forester

OCT 08 1987
Date