

United States
Department of
Agriculture
Forest Service
Intermountain
Region



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DRAFT RECORD OF DECISION SUMMARY

HUCKLEBERRY LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROJECT

**Payette National
Forest**

**Council Ranger
District**

Adams County, Idaho



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SUMMARY OF DECISION

My decision is based on a review of the Project record, which includes a thorough review of relevant scientific information, consideration of responsible opposing views, and acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. I have considered input from groups and individuals with responsible opposing views and discussed our response to them in FEIS Appendix 8, Response to Public Comments on the DEIS, and the Project record.

I know that my decision will not completely satisfy every group or individual; however, I have concluded that it is an informed choice that provides a reasonable mix of actions and moves the Project area toward desired conditions as defined in the Forest Plan.

I firmly believe my decision as defined in the Record of Decision for the Huckleberry Landscape Restoration Project exemplifies the Chief's and Congress' intentions for accelerating restoration across a large landscape using a collaborative process. For more than 9 years, members of the Payette National Forest (Forest) staff have worked collaboratively on this and other projects with the PFC, which represents a broad range of stakeholders. The PFC gave recommendations for restoration treatments across the 67,000-acre Huckleberry landscape that were considered during Project development. The selected treatments will move forested landscapes towards desired conditions, producing forest products that support the economic viability of the surrounding rural communities while at the same time improving habitat for threatened and sensitive wildlife species, particularly northern Idaho ground squirrel, bull trout, and white-headed woodpecker. Road and watershed treatments will improve the watershed condition in all subwatersheds through decommissioning of system roads and unauthorized routes while improving over 73 miles of aquatic habitat through Riparian Conservation Areas (RCA) road decommissioning, RCA road graveling, and culvert replacement for aquatic organism passage (AOP). Over 170 miles of road, including 49 miles of NFS road and 121 miles of unauthorized routes, will ultimately be decommissioned through implementation of this Project. Improvements to Huckleberry Campground and dispersed sites in the Project area will enhance recreation opportunities while improving public safety as well as forest and watershed health. Through the use of prescribed fire on up to 67,000 acres, we will aid in restoring the natural processes that sustain the desired forest conditions while reducing hazardous fuels and the risk of uncharacteristic fires.

As disclosed in Section 1.6 of the FEIS, this decision will answer the following questions:

Should the Forest Service implement this Project, including commercial and noncommercial vegetation treatments, fuels reduction, road management, watershed and fish habitat restoration, and recreation improvements at this time?

If so:

- What and how many acres should be treated and by what means?
- What action should be taken on recreation facilities, trails, and dispersed recreation sites?
- What watershed restoration and fish habitat improvements should be implemented?
- What road management actions should be implemented and what should the MRS for the Project area be?

- What PDFs or mitigation measures are necessary to assure compliance with the Forest Plan?
- What monitoring requirements are appropriate to evaluate project implementation and effectiveness?

Selected Alternative

Based on my review of the environmental analysis disclosed in the FEIS, the Project record, and consideration of public comments received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), I have decided to implement Alternative 2 as described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS with the following modifications:

- NFS Road 50646 – Seasonal instead of decommissioning;
- NFS Road 50639 – Seasonal for the entire road instead of decommissioning in part and do not construct proposed 50639 reroute;
- Add unauthorized routes 505715000 and 507594000 to the NFS system and make Seasonal;
- Add unauthorized route 5000721000 to the NFS system as a closed Maintenance Level 2 road because it provides access to private property and has a current Special Use Permit;
- Convert unauthorized route 500720800 and a portion of 515399000 to a trail open to all vehicles (TOAV);
- Include all shaded fuel breaks (SFB) from Alternative 3 (50002, 50072, 50105, 50106, 50108, 50143, 50145, 501450255, 51575, 51575P), with the addition of an SFB along 50112 from the intersection with 50105 and 50145 at Four Corners for 6 miles just past Placer Basin. This additional SFB will exclude any riparian treatment within the one RCA it crosses on a perennial tributary to Bear Creek;
- All commercial harvest (approximately 270 acres of CT-FT, MSw, and PC) accessed from temporary roads off 50523, (Camp Creek/Upper Indian Creek) will be NTC only and all associated temporary roads (approximately 2.9 miles) are dropped from consideration due to lack of easement across private lands.

This suite of actions, which includes vegetation management activities, watershed restoration treatments, road management activities, recreation management activities, and associated actions, is further referred to as the *Selected Alternative*.

Table ROD-1 provides a summary of activities that the *Selected Alternative* authorizes for implementation. Many other activities and associated actions are included in this decision. This decision incorporates adherence to all Forest Plan management requirements, PDFs, and monitoring requirements as described in the FEIS (see FEIS Chapter 2, Tables 2.2-1 through 2.2-11).

Table ROD-1. Summary of activities to be implemented under this decision.

Proposed Treatments	Selected Alternative
Commercial and Noncommercial Vegetation Treatment (acres)	
Noncommercial Treatments	36,150
Within RCAs	1,100
Commercial Treatments	17,500
Commercial Thin-Free Thin	14,240
Within RCAs	1,100
Regeneration	3,260
Within RCAs	0
Total Acres of Vegetation Treatments	53,650
Total Acres of Vegetation Treatments Within RCAs	2,200
Prescribed Fire (acres)	
Prescribed Fire	67,000
Shaded Fuelbreak (miles)	
Shaded Fuelbreaks	45
Temporary Roads (miles)	
Existing Prism (existing unauthorized routes that would be used in harvest then decommissioned)	40.5
New Temporary Road Construction	24.1
Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resource Improvement Treatment (miles)	
Long-term Closure	64.8
Long-term Closure within RCAs	10.0
NFS Road Decommissioning	49.1
Unauthorized Route Decommissioning	123.4
Total Road Decommissioning (includes unauthorized routes used as temporary roads listed above)	172.5

Proposed Treatments	Selected Alternative
Road Decommissioning within Riparian Conservation Areas (miles)	
NFS Road Decommissioning in RCAs	13.4
Unauthorized Route Decommissioning in RCAs	44.9
Total Miles (included in the miles of road decommissioning listed above)	58.3
Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP)/Habitat Connectivity	
Number of Stream Crossings Improved	8
Transportation Management (miles)	
Road Realignment (Reroutes)	3.8
Add to System Roads	7.9
Road Surfacing (Adding gravel)	18.9
Total Road Reconstruction (includes road realignment, surfacing, and Add to System roads)	30.7
Ensure Effective Closure on Year-round and Seasonally Closed National Forest System Roads ^a	All
Resulting NFS Roads Open Year-round (ML2, ML3)	84.4
Resulting NFS Roads Open Seasonally (May 15 – September 30)	57.2
Resulting NFS Roads Closed Year-round	94.1
Resulting NFS Road Total (MRS)	235.2
Local, County, Private (No Change)	64.3
Resulting Project area Road Total	299.5
Recreation and Trails Improvements^b	
NFS Trail Converted from Two-wheel Motorized to Non-Motorized (miles)	1.4
NFS Trail Converted from Open to 50" or less to open NFS road (open to all vehicles) ^c (miles)	0.7
New Trail Open to All Vehicles (miles)	2.2
Convert roads to trails (miles)	2.4
Lookout converted to rental cabin	1

^aEnsuring effective closures may also be implemented in on-going road maintenance activities.

^bSee Section 2.2.2 Recreation Improvements for additional proposals in all action alternatives including developed and dispersed recreation improvements and addition trail maintenance and trailhead improvements.

^cTrail 293, Decorah, would be removed from the system as a trail since it would be redundant with the underlying open NFS road.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

The FEIS considered three alternatives. A description of the three alternatives analyzed in detail can be found in FEIS Chapter 2. The following tables (ROD 3-5) are comparisons of the alternatives, to the *Selected Alternative*, by activities, objectives, and issues considered in detail for this Project.

Table ROD-2. Comparison of alternatives by activity.

Proposed Treatments	Alternatives			
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative
Commercial and Noncommercial Vegetation Treatment (acres)				
Noncommercial Thinning	0	35,800	35,810	36,150
Within RCAs	0	1,090	1,100	1,100
Commercial Treatments	0	17,770	17,770	17,500
Commercial Thin-Free Thin	0	14,300	11,980	14,240
Within RCAs	0	1,100	1,100	1,100
Regeneration	0	3,470	3,470	3,260
Within RCAs	0	0	0	0
Regeneration Patch Cut	0	0	2,320	0
Within RCAs	0	0	0	0
Total Acres of Vegetation Treatments	0	53,580	53,580	53,650
Total Acres of Vegetation Treatments Within RCAs	0	2,190	2,200	2,200
Prescribed Fire (acres)				
Prescribed Fire	0	67,000	67,000	67,000
Shaded Fuelbreak (miles)				
Shaded Fuelbreaks		20	39	45
Temporary Roads (miles)				
Existing Prism (existing unauthorized routes that would be used in harvest then decommissioned)	0	40.5	40.5	40.5
New Temporary Road Construction	0	27.0	27.0	24.1
Soil, Water, Riparian, and Aquatic Resource Improvement Treatment (miles)				
Long-term Closure	0	64.8	22.4	64.8
Long-term Closure within RCAs	0	10.0	1.3	10.0
Maintenance Level One Closure	0	0	54.2	0
Maintenance Level One Closure in RCAs	0	0	12.1	0
NFS Road Decommissioning	0	51.0	27.6	49.1
Unauthorized Route Decommissioning	0	126.5	123.4	123.4
Total Road Decommissioning (includes the unauthorized routes used as temporary roads listed above)	0	177.5	151.0	172.5

Proposed Treatments	Alternatives			
	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative
Road Decommissioning within Riparian Conservation Areas (miles)				
NFS Road Decommissioning in RCAs	0	13.6	7.9	13.4
Unauthorized Route Decommissioning in RCAs	0	45.2	44.9	44.9
Total Miles (included in the miles of road decommissioning listed above)	0	58.8	52.8	58.3
Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP)/Habitat Connectivity				
Number of Stream Crossings Improved	0	8	8	8
Transportation Management (miles)				
Road Realignment (Reroutes)	0	4.2	3.8	3.8
Add to System Roads	0	6.6	7.7	7.9
Road Surfacing (Adding gravel)	0	18.9	18.9	18.9
Total Road Reconstruction (includes road realignment, surfacing, and Add to System roads)	0	29.7	30.4	30.7
Ensure Effective Closure on Year-round and Seasonally Closed National Forest System Roads ^a	0	All	All	All
NFS Roads Open Year-round (ML2, ML3)	80.8	83.9	83.9	84.4
NFS Roads Open Seasonally (May 15 – September 30)	63.0	54.5	73.2	57.2
NFS Roads Closed Year-round	131.5	94.1	99.6	94.1
NFS Road Total (MRS)	275.7	232.5	256.7	235.2
Local, County, Private	64.3	64.3	64.3	64.3
Project area Road Total	474.4	296.8	321.0	299.5
Recreation and Trails Improvements				
NFS Trail Converted from Two-wheel Motorized to Non-Motorized (miles)	0	1.4	1.4	1.4
NFS Trail Converted from Open to 50" or less to open NFS road (open to all vehicles) (miles)	0	0.7	0.7	0.7
New Trail Open to All Vehicles (miles)	0	0.0	2.2	2.2
Convert roads to trails (miles)	0	0.2	2.4	2.4
Lookout converted to rental cabin	0	1	1	1

Table ROD-3. Comparison of alternatives by objective.

Vegetation Resource Objective 1: Move vegetation toward the desired future conditions defined in the Forest Plan, with an emphasis on promoting large tree forest structure, early seral species composition, and forest resiliency.				
Measurement	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative
Tree Size Class				
Acres treated to promote the large tree size class	0	7,610	7,630	7,610
Acres treated to maintain the large tree size class	0	10,050	7,080	10,050
Tree Canopy Cover Percentage of area (acres) in each canopy cover class within the large tree size class	Varies by Potential Vegetation Groups (PVGs); see Table 3.2 17 for comparison of alternatives for canopy cover.			
Tree Species Composition Acres treated to maintain and/or promote desired species composition	0	34,320	34,320	34,320
Fire and Fuels Resource Objective 2: Restore and maintain desirable fuel levels, fire regimes, and ecological processes.				
Acres Moved towards Historical Fire Regimes	0	48,890	48,890	48,890
Fire and Fuels Resource Objective 3: Establish and maintain strategically placed shaded fuelbreaks to improve firefighter and public safety, improve the defensible space adjacent to private lands, and provide protection to infrastructure to the east of the Project area.				
Miles of Shaded Fuelbreak	0	20	39	45
Wildlife Objective 4: Improve habitat for Family 1 wildlife species, as represented by the white-headed woodpecker, a Region 4 Sensitive Species (USDA Forest Service 2011b) and Forest MIS, by restoring forest conditions that contribute to source habitat for these species. Forested stands providing these source habitats should be restored to conditions within, or near, the HRV.				
Quantity and quality of Family 1 – white-headed woodpecker habitat restored to conditions within HRV. Quantity is measured by acres of PVGs 1, 2, 3, 5, or 6, in the large tree size class and low canopy cover class. Quality is measured by the presence of old forest characteristics (e.g., legacy trees, snags, coarse woody debris (CWD), canopy gaps, and understory patchiness), as described in the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2003a).	0 (1,145 current total)	11,609	6,396	11,609

SWRA Resources Objective 5: Improve watershed and aquatic function and integrity by moving all watersheds within the Project area towards the desired condition for the soil, water, aquatic, and riparian resources.

Road Density by Subwatershed (miles/square miles); All Ownership/National Forest Land Only

Subwatershed	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative
Indian Creek	3.6/3.2	2.6/2.2	2.8/2.3	2.6/2.2
Bear Creek	3.8/3.7	2.9/2.5	3.1/2.8	2.9/2.5
Lick Creek	5.3/5.6	3.0/2.9	3.3/3.3	3.1/3.0
Total	4.5/4.2	2.8/2.5	3.1/2.7	2.9/2.6

RCA Road Density by Subwatershed (miles/square miles); National Forest Land Only

Indian Creek	3.3	2.2	2.2	2.2
Bear Creek	4.8	3.1	3.4	3.1
Lick Creek	9.7	3.7	4.2	3.7
Total	6.1	2.8	3.2	3.0

Number of Fish Barriers Replaced / Removed

Indian Creek	0	1	1	1
Bear Creek	0	1	1	1
Lick Creek	0	6	6	6
Total	0	8	8	8

Stream Miles Improved – includes miles of fish habitat reconnected and miles of stream enhanced through road decommissioning and graveling within RCAs.

Indian Creek	0	9.2	9.2	9.2
Bear Creek	0	19.3	16.7	19.3
Lick Creek	0	48.2	44.9	48.2
Total	0	76.7	70.8	76.7

Miles of Roads within RCAs by Subwatershed (National Forest Land Only)				
Indian Creek	17.5	12.0	12.0	12.0
Bear Creek	40.1	25.7	28.3	26.2
Lick Creek	64.7	25.9	29.2	24.9
Total	122.3	63.6	69.5	63.1
Percent of total road-generated sediment reduced over the long term modeled by Geomorphic Road Analysis and Inventory Package (GRAIP Lite)				
Indian Creek	0%	33.4%	30.0%	33.6%
Bear Creek	0%	38.9%	36.0%	38.9%
Lick Creek	0%	68.6%	61.0%	68.8%
Number of harvest units meeting Appendix A desired conditions for CWD, both in general and in the large (greater than 15 inches diameter) size class.	No harvest planned	Trend toward Forest Plan desired conditions as described in Appendix A more quickly than Alternative 1 in proposed harvest units.		
Recreation Objective 6: Manage recreation use in the Project area with an emphasis on identifying and hardening primary dispersed recreation areas, improving Huckleberry Campground, and improving existing trails				
Measurement	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative
Miles of NFS trail ^{a b}	34.7	33.9	36.1	36.1
Miles of NFS trail open to motorcycle use (2-wheel motorized) ^{a b}	25.0	24.3	26.5	26.5
Miles of NFS trail open to vehicles < 50" width (ATV trails) ^{a b}	0.7	0.0	2.2	2.2
Miles of NFS trail open to vehicles > 50" width (trails open to all vehicles) ^a	0.0	0.0	2.2	2.2
Miles of open and seasonally open NFS roads	143.8	138.4	157.1	141.6
Economics Objective 7: Contribute to the economic vitality of local communities.				
Employment contribution (number of jobs on annual average).	0	233	200	233
Income contribution (\$ thousands)	\$0	\$8,208	\$7,036	\$8,208

^a Trail mileages shown in Alternatives 2 and 3 do not reflect small changes in length expected to result from trail reroutes; exact reroutes mileages are unknown since these will be determined during implementation.

^b Trail 293, Decorah, which is currently open to vehicles 50" or less in width, would be removed from the system in Alternatives 2 and 3 because the underlying NFS road (50362) is opened to year-round public use; this accounts for a 0.7 mile reduction in overall trails mileage but does not constitute a lost recreational travel/access opportunity.

Table ROD-4. Comparison of alternatives by issue.

Wildlife Issue: High open road densities affect wildlife (e.g., elk) security and can lead to the removal of important habitat components (e.g., snags).					
Indicators	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Selected Alternative	
Change in elk security areas (Hillis et al. 1991). (Open and Seasonal roads, and motorized trails buffered 0.5 mile and polygons greater than 250 acres. See elk section in Wildlife Resources for additional analysis.	Current Condition 4 areas 9,772 acres	4 areas 11,098 acres (no change in number of areas, increase of 1,326 acres)	3 areas 8,735 acres (change in number of areas, decrease of 1,037 acres)	4 areas 11,098 acres (no change in number of areas, increase of 1,326 acres)	
Miles of NFS roads and unauthorized roads a) closed by physical closure, including LTC or b) decommissioned by treatments described in Chapter 2.	a) 0 b) 0	a) 94.1 b) 177.5	a) 99.6 b) 151.0	a) 94.1 b) 172.5	
Miles of open roads	80.8	83.9	83.9	84.4	
Miles of seasonal roads	63.0	54.5	73.2	57.2	
Wildlife Issue: Treatments may adversely affect source habitat for wildlife species dependent on mixed conifer forests with multilayer structural characteristics. Such forests are associated with mixed-to-lethal fire regimes and associated processes (larger scales of insect and disease outbreaks and fire effects). Species of concern include listed and sensitive species and management indicator species.					
Quantity (acres) and distribution of habitat for species of concern.	See discussion in Wildlife Resources section of Chapter 3.				
Quality (specifically old forest, snags, patch and pattern) and distribution of habitat for species of concern.	See discussion in Wildlife Resources section of Chapter 3.				
Wildlife Issue: Project activities (logging, log haul, prescribed fire, and temporary road construction) may cause disturbance to wildlife species of concern.					
Disturbance effects on species of concern	See discussion in Wildlife Resources section of Chapter 3.				
SWRA: Treatments that propose thinning of vegetation in RCAs may affect stream temperatures and LWD.					
Acres of vegetation treatment within RCAs	0	2,190	2,200	2,200	
Acres treated within one site potential tree height	0	527	531	531	
SWRA: Proposed activities may change timing and duration of peak runoff, which may affect bank stability in sensitive channels.					
Total Road Density by subwatershed mi/mi ² (all ownership)	Indian Creek	3.6	2.6	2.8	2.6
	Bear Creek	3.8	2.9	3.1	2.9
	Lick Creek	5.3	3.0	3.3	3.0