UCRB

Chapter 1

Purpose and Need

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Key Terms

Adaptive management ~ A type of natural resource management in which decisions are made as part of an on-going process. Adaptive management involves testing, monitoring, evaluation, and incorporating new knowledge into management approaches based on scientific findings and the needs of society. Results are used to modify management policy.

Biological diversity (biodiversity) ~ The variety and variability among living organisms and the ecological complexes in which they occur.

Ecological integrity ~ In general, ecological integrity refers to the degree to which all ecological components and their interactions are represented and functioning; the quality of being complete; a sense of wholeness. Absolute measures of integrity do not exist. Proxies provide useful measures to estimate the integrity of major ecosystem components (forestland, rangeland, aquatic, and hydrologic). Estimating these integrity components in a relative sense across the basin, aids in explaining current conditions and prioritizing future management. Thus, areas of high integrity would represent areas where ecological function and processes are better represented and functioning than areas rated as low integrity.

Ecological processes ~ The flow and cycling of energy, materials, and organisms in an ecosystem.

Ecosystem-based management ~ Scientifically based land and resource management that integrates ecological capabilities with social values and economic relationships, to produce, restore, or sustain ecosystem integrity and desired conditions, uses, products, values, and services over the long term.

Ecosystem health (forest health, rangeland health, aquatic system health) ~ A condition where the parts and functions of an ecosystem are sustained over time and where the system's capacity for self-repair is maintained, such that goals for uses, values, and services of the ecosystem are met.

INFISH ~ Interim Inland Native Fish Strategy for the Intermountain, Northern, and Pacific Northwest regions (Forest Service).

Issue ~ A matter of controversy, dispute, or general concern over resource management activities or land uses. To be considered a "significant' EIS issue, it must be well defined, relevant to the proposed action, and within the ability of the agency to address through alternative management strategies.

PACFISH ~ Interim strategy for managing Pacific anadromous fish-producing watersheds in eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and portions of California.

Planning area ~ Refers to either the UCRB EIS area or the Eastside EIS area

Project area ~ refers to the entire ICBEMP area, encompassing both EIS areas

Resilience ~ (1) The ability of a system to respond to disturbances. Resiliency is one of the properties that enable the system to persist in many different states or successional stages. (2) In human communities, refers to the ability of a community to respond to externally induced changes such as larger economic forces.

Restoration ~ Holistic actions taken to modify an ecosystem to achieve desired, healthy, and functioning conditions and processes. Generally refers to the process of compensating for disturbances on an ecosystem so that the system can resume acting, or continue to act, as if those disturbances were absent. Ecological restoration includes well-laid plans and is targeted toward a specific historical ecosystem model.

Scoping ~ the early stages of preparation of an environmental impact statement, used to solicit public opinion, receive comments and suggestions, and determine the issues to be considered in the EIS analysis.

Sustainability ~ (1) Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of future generations to meet their needs; emphasizing and maintaining the underlying ecological processes that ensure long-term productivity of goods, services, and values without impairing productivity of the land. (2) In commodity production, refers to the yield of a natural resource that can be produced continually at a given intensity of management.

Viable population ~ A population that is regarded as having the estimated numbers and distribution of reproductive individuals to ensure that its continued existence is well distributed in the project area.

For additional terms, see Chapter 5, Glossary.

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Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the U.S. Department of Interior (USDI) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) propose to develop and implement a scientifically sound ecosystem-based management strategy for lands they administer in the Upper Columbia River Basin (UCRB). This proposal is part of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP). The project reexamines management direction for National Forests and BLM-administered lands across parts of seven States and provides a context for managers to make sound, local decisions while considering effects, particularly cumulative effects, at a scale larger than individual administrative units.

Two Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) were prepared to examine management options in different portions of the interior Columbia River Basin. This document, the UCRB Draft EIS, addresses Forest Service- or BLM-administered (agency) lands in parts of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, and Utah (Map 1-1). A separate document, the Eastside Draft EIS, addresses agency lands in eastern Oregon and Washington. Both Draft EISs were prepared concurrently, in a coordinated manner, and have the same seven alternatives. Each EIS reflects differences in conditions and trends that exist in one area but not the other. Neither document proposes or imposes management direction or requirements on any private lands in the project area.

Chapter 1 of this EIS describes the ICBEMP project area, UCRB planning area, proposed action, purpose of and need for action, decisions to be made, and public participation activities, including public issues surrounding the proposal. Chapter 2 describes the existing condition of the area, including trends based on historical and current conditions. In Chapter 3, a variety of alternative ecosystem strategies are developed for Forest Service and BLM lands in the UCRB planning area, incorporating the latest scientific information. The possible environmental, social, and economic consequences of implementing each alternative are evaluated and disclosed in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 the EIS lists the preparers of this document; the literature cited; glossary terms; and the organizations, agencies, and individuals to whom copies of this Draft were sent.

Geographic Project and Planning Areas

The ICBEMP project area encompasses eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, western Montana and Wyoming, and northern Utah and Nevada. This area includes approximately 144 million acres, of which about 75 million are administered by the Forest Service or BLM.

Ecosystem Health

A healthy body works the way it's needed to. It can do the work asked of it. Some people ask their bodies to do logging, some to do ranch work, some to type, play football, dance ballet, or teach. These different kinds of work call for different kinds of strength, endurance, or skill. But they all require similar basic conditions of health, such as functioning lungs, hearts, brains, and other parts working together as integrated systems.

The same is true of ecosystems. They do various kinds of work: convert sunlight into plant and animal tissues, sustain life and its many processes, and provide for products and places for people. A healthy ecosystem is one that can do the work expected of it in terms of environmental, social, and economic goals. In order to do this, ecosystems need to have their parts and systems in working order.

One of the signs of a healthy ecosystem in good working order is its ability to respond to disturbances such as fire, insects, or floods in a dynamic way. The system absorbs and recovers from disturbances without losing its processes or functions, although recovery may take varying amounts of time, or specific conditions may look different afterward. If the ecosystem is healthy, it will continue to produce populations of plants and animals that are diverse and viable, waters that are clear, air that is clean, soils that are fertile. A sign of an unhealthy ecosystem is the presence of disturbances that are too large, intense, or frequent for the system to handle.

"Project Area" ~ refers to the whole ICBEMP area, encompassing both EIS planning areas.

"Planning Area" ~ refers to either the UCRB EIS area or the Eastside EIS area.

The UCRB EIS planning area covers Federal lands within the upper portions of the Columbia River Basin that are administered by the BLM Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada State offices or by the Forest Service Northern and Intermountain Regions, with the exceptions noted below. The Eastside EIS covers those parts of BLM- or Forest Service-administered lands in the interior Columbia Basin, upper Klamath Basin, and Great Basin that are in Oregon and Washington east of the crest of the Cascade Range. Management strategies are proposed for approximately 30 million acres in the Eastside EIS and approximately 42 million acres in the UCRB EIS. Approximately 3 million acres of the project area were excluded from consideration in the UCRB EIS, as discussed below.

Exception: The Targhee and Bridger-Teton National Forests and portions of the Caribou National Forest that lie within the boundaries of both the UCRB and the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem are excluded from decisions resulting from this EIS. This exception has been made in order to avoid implementing direction for the National Forests of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem on a piecemeal basis. All BLM lands within the boundaries of the UCRB, whether or not they overlap with boundaries of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, are covered by the decisions in the UCRB Records(s) of Decision (Hughes and Bosworth 1995).

Map 1-1 illustrates the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project area and the two EIS planning areas. Map 1-2 illustrates the Upper Columbia River Basin (UCRB) planning area in more detail. Table 1-1 lists the National Forests and BLM Districts that lie wholly or partially within the UCRB planning area.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service and BLM propose to provide a scientifically sound, ecosystem-based management strategy for lands administered by the Forest Service or BLM in the upper Columbia River Basin.

Purpose of and Need for Action

Purpose

The purpose of this action is to create a coordinated approach and to select a management strategy that best achieves a combination of the following:

- Restore and maintain long-term ecosystem health and integrity.
- Support economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities, and provide sustainable and predictable levels of products and services from lands administered by the Forest Service or BLM, including fish, wildlife, and native plant communites.
- Update or amend current Forest Service and BLM management plans with long-term direction primarily at the regional and sub-regional levels.
- Emphasize adaptive management over the long term.
- Provide consistent direction at regional and sub-regional levels that will assist managers in making project decisions at a local level in the context of broader ecological considerations.
- Help restore and maintain habitats and viability of plant and animal species, especially for threatened, endangered, and candidate species and of special interest to tribes. This would be done primarily by moving toward desired ranges of landscape conditions on a sub-regional and regional basis.

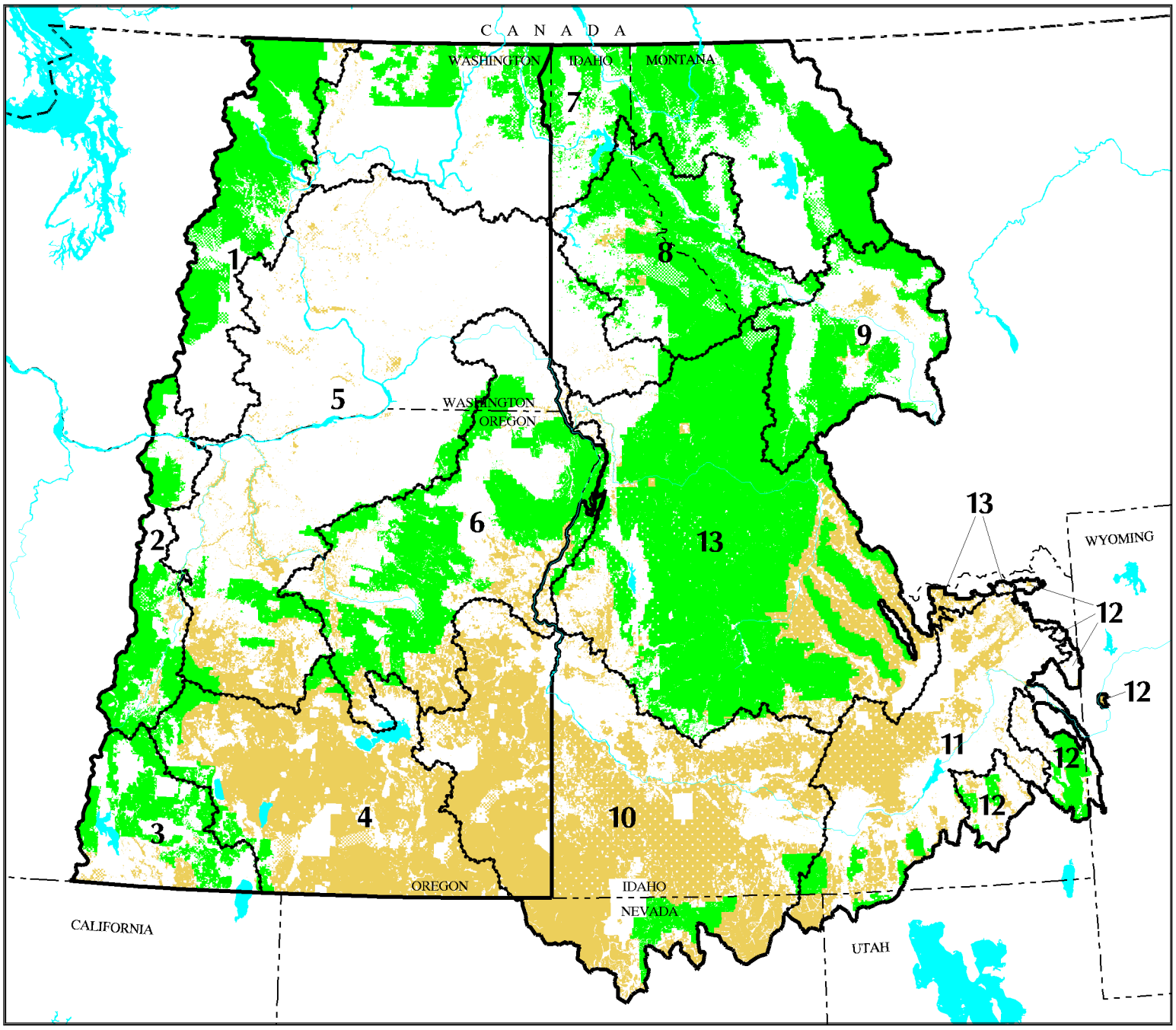
Levels

In this document, the terms regional, sub-regional, and local are used as relative terms that refer to geographic extent. While the specific extent of a region, sub-region, or local area depends on the issue being addressed, the terms generally are used in the following way:

Regional ~ refers to the planning area (one EIS) or the project area (whole ICBEMP)

Sub-regional ~ refers to areas geographically smaller than "regional" but larger than a single administrative unit (such as a National Forest or a BLM District)

Local ~ refers to areas geographically equal to or smaller than a single administrative unit.



Map 1-1.
BLM & Forest Service Administered Lands

50 0 50 100 150 miles
50 0 50 100 150 km
N

- *Forest Service Administered Lands*
- *BLM Administered Lands*
- *Water*
- *EIS Area Border*
- *Ecological Reporting Unit Border:*

1 *Northern Cascades*
2 *Southern Cascades*
3 *Upper Klamath*
4 *Northern Great Basin*
5 *Columbia Plateau*
6 *Blue Mountains*
7 *Northern Glaciated Mountains*
8 *Lower Clark Fork*
9 *Upper Clark Fork*
10 *Owyhee Uplands*
11 *Upper Snake*
12 *Snake Headwaters*
13 *Central Idaho Mountains*

INTERIOR COLUMBIA
BASIN ECOSYSTEM
MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Project Area
1996

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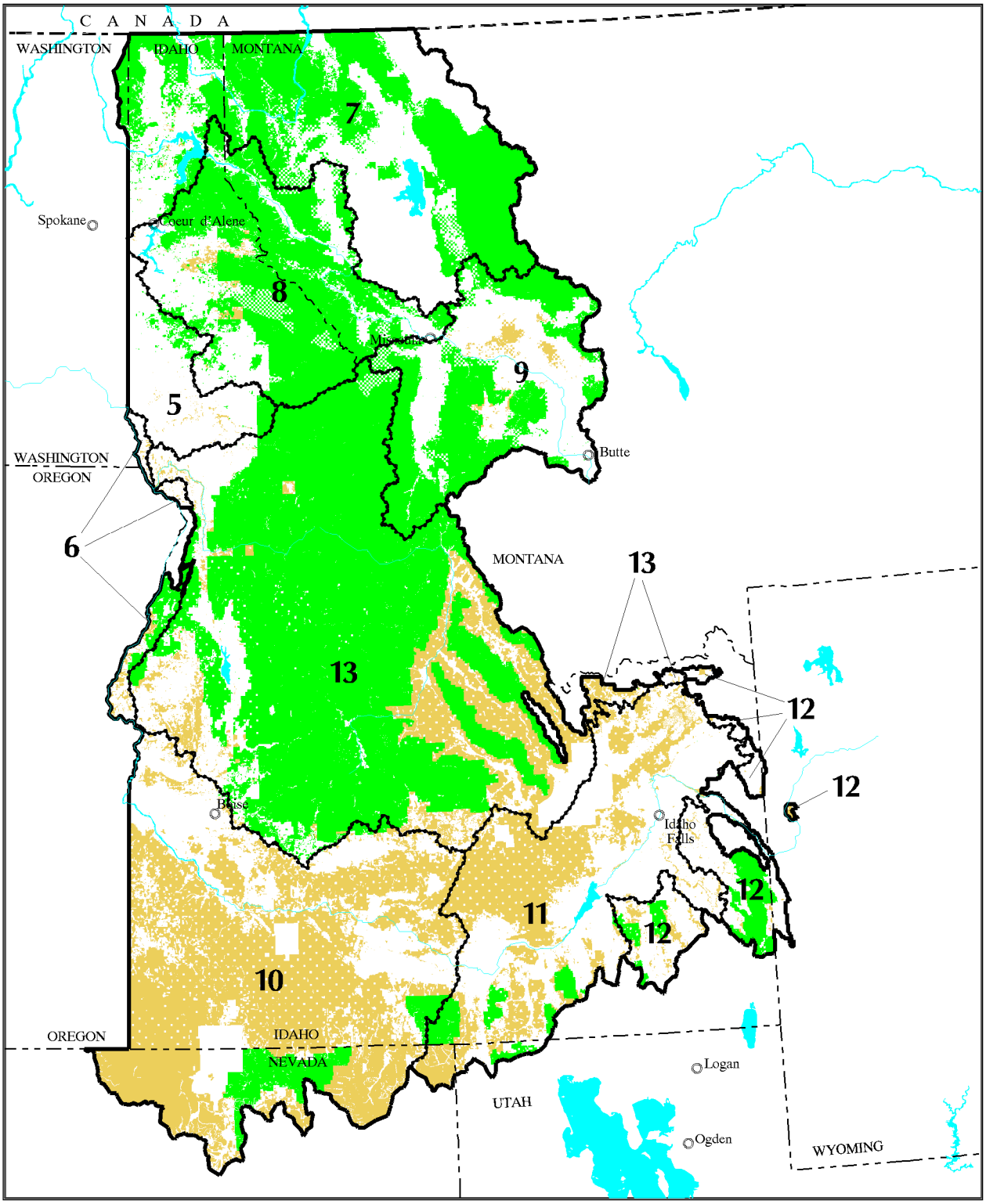

Map 1-2.
BLM & Forest Service Administered Lands

INTERIOR COLUMBIA BASIN ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Draft UCRB EIS
1996

- *Forest Service Administered Lands*
- *BLM Administered Lands*
- *Water*
- *EIS Area Border*
- *Ecological Reporting Unit Border:*
- 5 *Columbia Plateau*
- 6 *Blue Mountains*
- 7 *Northern Glaciated Mountains*
- 8 *Lower Clark Fork*
- 9 *Upper Clark Fork*
- 10 *Owyhee Uplands*
- 11 *Upper Snake*
- 12 *Snake Headwaters*
- 13 *Central Idaho Mountains*

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Table 1-1. National Forests and BLM Districts Addressed by the UCRB EIS.

State	National Forest Or Blm District	Unit Size (Approx. Acres in the UCRB)
Idaho	Bitterroot NF	470,500
	Boise NF	2,573,500
	Caribou NF (*excludes portion within the GYE)	580,000
	Challis NF	2,463,000
	Clearwater NF	1,814,500
	Curlew NG	4,000
	Idaho Panhandle NF (*includes WA 119,000 ac)	2,456,000
	Kootenai NF	45,000
	Nez Perce NF (*includes portion assigned to EEIS)	2,111,500
	Payette NF (*includes portion assigned to EEIS)	2,354,000
	Salmon NF	1,687,500
	Sawtooth NF	1,691,000
	Lower Snake River District (BLM)	5,169,000
	Upper Snake River Districts (BLM)	5,017,000
	Upper Columbia-Salmon Clearwater Districts (BLM)	1,550,500
Montana	Bitterroot NF	1,115,000
	Deerlodge NF	695,000
	Flathead NF	2,369,500
	Helena NF	385,000
	Idaho Panhandle NFs	27,500
	Kootenai NF	2,207,000
	Lolo NF	2,075,000
	Butte District (BLM)	150,000
Nevada	Humboldt NF	632,000
	Elko District & Winnemucca District (BLM)	1,953,000
	Lower Snake River District (BLM)	49,500
Utah	Sawtooth NF	59,000
	Salt Lake District (BLM)	52,500
Wyoming	Caribou NF	7,000
	Rock Springs District (BLM)	23,000
TOTAL	**Forest Service and BLM**	**41,787,000**

SOURCE: ICBEMP GIS data (converted to 100x100 meter grid and rounded to nearest 500 acres). These totals will not match official Goverment Land Office (GLO) totals or those shown elsewhere in documents that were calculated from a 1000x1000 meter grid (1 km^2).

- Provide opportunities for cultural, recreational, and aesthetic experiences.
- Replace interim direction (PACFISH and INFISH) with primarily ecosystem-based, long-term, regional and sub-regional strategies, to provide a broader context for local direction.
- Identify where current policy, regulation, or law may act as barriers to implementing the strategy or achieving desired conditions.

Need

The alternative management strategies examined in detail in this EIS are based upon underlying needs for:

- **Restoration and maintenance of long-term ecosystem health and integrity.** There is a need to restore and maintain forest, rangeland, and aquatic and riparian ecosystem health and integrity and to identify desired ranges of future landscape conditions for vegetation structure, composition, succession, and disturbances; for hydrologic processes and functions; and for aquatic habitat structure and complexity.
- **Support of the economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities, and sustainable and predictable levels of goods and services from National Forest System and Bureau of Land Management lands.** There is a need to contribute to the vitality and resiliency of human communities and to provide for human uses and values of natural resources consistent with maintaining healthy, diverse ecosystems.

Identification of these needs comes primarily from:

- Changed conditions;
- New information and understandings of ecological relationships; and
- Requirements and authority for more comprehensive regional and sub-regional long-term management direction.

These conditions, information, and requirements have developed or become more apparent since current land-use plans were signed.

Changed Conditions

Since most current plans have been in effect, ecological and social-economic conditions have changed, as documented in *An Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins* (Quigley and Arbelbide 1996), the *Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins* (Quigley, Graham, and Haynes 1996), and other studies. Society places value on many of the changes that have occurred on Federal lands since historical times (around the mid-1800s), while other changes may cause concern. Many pre-settlement conditions are neither reasonable nor possible to recreate because of such factors as dams, urban development, highways, and land-use or ownership patterns. Historical conditions are described not as a goal but as a reference to help understand landscape potential, how landscapes evolve, the role of disturbance on the landscape, and human influences on landscapes.

Forest ecosystem health has been deteriorating in some places, as evidenced by increasing occurrences of uncharacteristic insect and disease outbreaks and intense wildfires. Declines in rangeland health are evidenced by the spread of exotic plants and changes in fire frequency. The social and economic stability of some communities dependent on National Forest System and BLM-administered lands has been placed at increasing risk, as evidenced by declining predictability in some resource supplies related to declining ecosystem health and to administrative appeals and lawsuits over broad-scale issues such as water quality, species viability, and cumulative effects. Aquatic and riparian ecosystem health also has declined, as evidenced by a lack of habitat complexity, loss of connectivity, and altered hydrologic functions in many areas. Concern about the future of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species has been increasing, as evidenced by additional listings under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and proposals for such listings.

Specific observations and symptoms that support the need to respond to changed conditions and understandings of land and resources include, but are not limited to, the following trends, which are derived from the *Assessment* (Quigley and Arbelbide 1996) and are described in detail in Chapter 2.

- Current conditions in **forested** communities indicate significant changes in the successional and disturbance processes since European settlement in the basin in the 1800s. Traditional forestry emphasized harvest of the largest

trees, including removal of shade-intolerant species (such as ponderosa pine) that are resistant to fires and droughts and that in open stands are resistant to insects and diseases. As an example, fire prevention and suppression changed dry forests with large, fire-tolerant species and minimal fuel loads to forests comprised of few large trees; many small patches of dense, small- and medium-sized shade-tolerant trees; and heavy fuel loads. These areas are more susceptible to fires, insect outbreaks, and disease epidemics. Fire regime patterns on the landscape have been converted from low-intensity ground fires that burned in a mosaic and maintained the vegetation pattern and structure, to homogeneous high-intensity crown fires that replace the vegetation structure. These changes have decreased productivity, increased the probability of severe or chaotic events, and resulted in habitats that differ from those with which native wildlife species evolved.

- Current trends in **rangeland** plant communities indicate that substantial changes have occurred in structure and species composition. Shrub canopies are becoming more dense, with an accompanying decline in perennial grasses and forbs. Current conditions in many shrublands are characterized by a changed vegetation structure that is more susceptible to uncharacteristic fire regimes. In both shrub and grassland communities, these changes in vegetation and changes in soil integrity and productivity have inhibited plant communities' abilities to compete with invading exotic plants, which replace native species with uniform communities of weedy species. The loss of native plant species results in a loss of resiliency and productivity of forage and browse for wildlife species and domestic livestock and loss of habitat structure that supports native wildlife. The physical structure of rangeland soils has been sufficiently altered over many decades in some areas to the point where soil functions have been impaired.

- Increasing risks to **species population viability, species diversity, and species abundance** of some plants and animals are attributed to loss of diverse aquatic and terrestrial habitats that are well distributed and well connected across the landscape. These increasing risks are evidenced by additional listings under the Endangered Species Act, proposals for such listings, and successful lawsuits over compliance with viability requirements of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). Approximately 34 species of plants, terrestrial vertebrates, and fish in the ICBEMP project area have Federal listing status of either endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate.

- In some **aquatic and riparian environments**, hydrologic functions have been altered. Water quality, amount and timing of streamflow, natural sediment levels, streambank stability, and the amount and distribution of woody debris are among the features that have been altered. Complexity has decreased and connectivity has been lost between streams, their floodplains, adjacent riparian areas, and uplands. These changes have contributed to decreases in the natural reproduction of anadromous and inland fishes and other aquatic-dependent species. Native species no longer inhabit important portions of their historical ranges. Numbers of many remaining populations have decreased or are isolated. Important strongholds for salmonids and regions of high ecological integrity are scattered throughout the basin and generally are tied to lands under Federal management.

- **Human uses and values** have undergone rapid change along with changing biophysical conditions over the past 50 years, confronting managers and the public with a complex situation for which no easy answers exist. Based on society's needs and values, choices were made to promote development, grow crops, raise cattle, build dams, build roads, and harvest timber among other activities. The area's population has increased significantly during this period, which has increased pressure on natural resources, and it appears this trend will continue. More recently, values have shifted among some of the American public toward a stronger emphasis on environmental quality and resource protection, intensifying controversy about the role of resource use on public lands. A declining and unpredictable flow of commodities from public lands has directly affected local people in resource-dependent communities through job losses, and has generated national and regional consequences as well. Declining ecosystem health conditions generally have increased the risk of large-scale losses or damages to property. Changes within the forests and rangelands have affected use patterns of certain wildlife species with consequences for adjacent lands.

- American Indians were primary users of public lands historically. **Tribal rights and interests**

in public lands and resources persists today; however, traditional use patterns have changed. Examples include the following: changes in access; the presence and availability of resources that the tribes reserved the right to use; and competition with non-Indians over resource use.

- The increasing number of **appeals and lawsuits** over Forest Service and BLM land management decisions suggests changing attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding healthy, productive, and well balanced resource conditions. Some appeals and lawsuits have focused on such regional issues as species viability, biodiversity, and related cumulative effects, which have been difficult to address successfully because of the absence of a truly broad scale dimension to BLM and Forest Service land management planning.

New Information and Understandings

Increased scientific understanding of ecosystem processes and functions over the past decade has led to better awareness that many forest, rangeland, riparian, and aquatic ecosystems are becoming less resilient, as discussed above. Cumulative human activities and management practices – such as timber harvest, fire exclusion, pest suppression, livestock use, road construction, mining and waste disposal, flood control and irrigation, agricultural development, fish harvest and hatcheries, increased recreation use, and urban expansion – are now known to have affected natural resource conditions in ways that were previously not understood. While these conditions have evolved over many decades as a result of the interaction of human activity and naturally occurring events, new knowledge and understanding of their implications for long-term ecosystem health are only now coming to light.

Requirements or Authority for New Long-Term Management Direction

Requirements or authority for permanent, ecosystem-based, management direction have come from: directives; commitments made through interim direction; consultations with regulatory agencies; and court orders including *Pacific Rivers Council v. Thomas*. (See Appendix B for more details.) These include but are not limited to the following:

- Directives

  Chief of the Forest Service's directive of June 4, 1992, directing Regional Foresters and Station Directors to undertake ecosystem-based management on National Forests and Grasslands.

  Director of BLM's memo of August 20, 1993, directing all employees to undertake an ecosystem-based approach to land management.

  President Clinton's directive of July 1993, directing the Forest Service to develop a scientifically sound and ecosystem-based strategy for management of eastside forests.

  BLM's directive of late 1993 to develop a similar strategy for eastside BLM-administered lands. These led to directives in the project's Charter.

  Chief of the Forest Service's decision of 1994 related to the Forest Service's Western Forest Health Initiative.

  Chief of the Forest Service's October 1994 Forest Service Ethics and Course to the Future.

- Commitments Made Through Interim Direction

  PACFISH-Implementation of Interim Strategies for Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California (Feb. 24, 1995): Calls for long-term strategy to be developed and evaluated for arresting the degradation and beginning the restoration of aquatic and riparian ecosystems for anadromous fish.

  INFISH-Inland Native Fish Strategy (July 28, 1995): Calls for long-term management direction to protect habitat and populations of resident native fishes outside of anadromous fish habitat.

- Consultations with Regulatory Agencies

  Each of the alternatives analyzed in this Draft EIS is a programmatic approach to management of Forest Service- and BLM-administered lands within the project area. This Draft EIS does not analyze on-the-ground impacts of site-specific management actions. On-the-ground impacts will be assessed in subsequent decision-making before site-specific actions will be taken.

  Formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service will be completed before any decisions are made on the basis of this EIS. Formal

consultation will include the preparation of a Biological Opinion, which will not address incidental take of listed species because of the programmatic nature of the alternatives analyzed in this EIS. Assessment of the incidental take can only be accomplished for site-specific actions.

Subsequent proposals for site-specific actions that implement the programmatic approach to management selected from this EIS, and which "may affect" a listed species, shall require consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Services and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Those site-specific consultations will assess on-the-ground impacts and will include specific incidental take statements in the Biological Opinion. The National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to coordinate with the Forest Service and BLM regarding implementation of the programmatic approach to management selected from this EIS.

Management Priorities

In developing and implementing decisions, the Forest Service and BLM are guided by some basic principles and priorities. Both the Forest Service and the BLM are multiple-use agencies that promote the sustainability of ecosystems by ensuring their health, diversity, and productivity. Priorities for management will include:

- **Protecting Ecosystems**. The agencies will work to ensure the health and diversity of ecosystems while meeting people's needs. Special care for fragile or rare ecosystem components will be provided on lands administered by the Forest Service or BLM.
- **Restoring Deteriorated Ecosystems**. The BLM and Forest Service will improve deteriorated ecosystems on the lands they administer, based on scientific understanding and emerging technologies.
- **Providing Multiple Benefits for People Within the Capabilities of Ecosystems.** Within the limitations of ecological integrity, health, and diversity, forests and rangelands must meet people's needs for uses, values, products, and services.

Decisions resulting from this EIS and subsequent actions will be implemented under these three priorities. In essence, ecosystems must be healthy, diverse, and productive in order to meet the needs of society today as well as those needs of future generations.

New Information

New information that documents the observations and symptoms described above includes recent research, studies, and reports on ecosystem functions and processes, conservation biology, ecosystem health, species viability, and plan implementation. Some of the major studies are listed below and are discussed in Appendix A. For a complete list of literature cited in this EIS, see Chapter 5.

- *An Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins.* (Quigley and Arbelbide 1996)
- *An Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins.* (Quigley, Graham, and Haynes 1996)
- *Assessing Forest Ecosystem Health in the Inland West.* (Sampson and Adams 1994)
- *Distribution of Two Exotic Grasses on Intermountain Rangelands: Status in 1992.* (Pellant and Hall 1994)
- *Eastside Forest Ecosystem Health Assessment.* (Everett et al. 1994)
- *Environmental Assessment for the Implementation of Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, and Portions of California (PACFISH).* (USDA Forest Service and USDI Bureau of Land Management 1994)
- *Inland Native Fish Strategy Environmental Assessment Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact: Interim Strategies for Managing Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho, Western Montana and Portions of Nevada (INFISH).* (USDA Forest Service 1995)
- *Eastside Forests Scientific Panel Report to Congress and President on Interim Protection for Late-successional Forests, Fisheries, and Watersheds for National Forests East of the Cascade Crest in Oregon and Washington.* (Henjum et al. 1994)
- *Management History of Eastside Ecosystems: Changes in Fish Habitat over 50 Years, 1935-1992.* (McIntosh et al. 1993)
- *Pacific Salmon at the Crossroads: Stocks at Risk from California, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington.* (Nehlsen et al. 1991)

Background

In the western portion of the Pacific Northwest, a long-lasting controversy concerning management of old-growth ecosystems and associated species on Federal lands resulted in numerous lawsuits, court rulings, appeals, and protests. The Northwest Forest Plan was completed to address those issues. In recent years, the controversy has expanded to the rest of the Pacific Northwest over management of old forest ecosystems, anadromous fish species, and other resources on Federal lands. The traditional approach of individual BLM and Forest Service offices addressing single resource issues has sometimes resulted in conflicting management direction among agencies and offices, as well as management of competing resource needs. Interim strategies including PACFISH and the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) were put in place as temporary measures until permanent direction could be prepared.

In July 1993, as part of his plan for ecosystem-based management in the Pacific Northwest, President Clinton directed the Forest Service "to develop a scientifically sound and ecosystem-based strategy for management of eastside forests," referring to National Forest System lands in eastern Oregon and Washington east of the Cascade Crest. The BLM joined the effort in late 1993. In July 1994 the Director of the BLM and the Chief of the Forest Service directed that a separate EIS team develop an ecosystem-based management strategy for forests and rangelands administered by the Forest Service or BLM in the upper Columbia River Basin (UCRB).

To provide the appropriate context for development and implementation of an ecosystem-based management strategy, the Chief of the Forest Service and the Director of the BLM chartered an interagency team of Federal scientists, referred to as the Science Integration Team (SIT). The SIT was directed to: examine ecological, economic, and social systems; look at current as well as historical conditions; and see whether outcomes associated with current practices and trends would be consistent with long-term maintenance of ecosystem processes.

Products developed by the SIT are discussed in more detail in Appendix A. They include the following documents:

- *A Scientific Framework* of broad concepts and analytical processes for ecosystem analysis, planning, management, and monitoring at various scales on lands administered by the Forest Service or BLM in the interior Columbia River Basin;
- *A Scientific Assessment* of ecosystem processes and functions within the interior Columbia River Basin, which resulted in two documents (*An Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins*, and *An Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins*) that provided the basis for developing both EISs; and
- An evaluation of the ecosystem-based management alternatives developed in the Draft Eastside and UCRB EISs.

As directed by the project charter, both the Eastside and UCRB strategies:

- Focus on restoring the health of forest, range, aquatic, and riparian ecosystems;
- Draw from the recently completed forest health studies (Everett et al. 1994, Sampson and Adams 1994) and other studies, including the *Scientific Assessment* and other Science Integration Team products (see Appendix A);
- Are scientifically sound and ecosystem-based;
- Recognize the integration of human elements with biophysical systems;
- Involve the public in an open multi-agency process; and
- Are analyzed through an environmental impact statement.

As directed, the two EIS teams collaborated with each other, the SIT, and the public. These efforts were conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and with BLM and Forest Service planning regulations. Also participating in the EIS process were the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Bureau of Mines, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service). Coordination with tribal, Federal, State, county, and local government agencies occurred throughout the process.

Decisions to Be Made

Planning Considerations

The Nature of Planning on National Forest System and BLM Lands

In order to understand the decisions to be made based on this EIS, it is important to understand the Forest Service's and BLM's multi-stage process for land-use planning.

Under the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, the Forest Service Chief's office prepares nation-wide Renewable Resources Assessment and Program documents (36 CFR 219.4(b)). Under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the BLM Director provides guidance for the preparation of resource management plans, which includes national level policy (43 CFR 1610.1(a)).

The next planning level involves preparation of a regional guide for each Forest Service region to address "major issues and management concerns which need to be considered at the regional level" (36 CFR 219.8(a)). Parallel to this, the BLM State Director provides State level guidance for resource management plan preparation (43 CFR 1610.1(a)). Next, individual National Forest and BLM land-use plans are prepared, which are "land and resource management plans (*forest plans*) for units of the National Forest System" (16 U.S.C. 1604(a); 36 CFR 219.10 to 219.27) and "resource management plans [which are] prepared and maintained on a resource area basis" (43 CFR 1610.1(b)).

Finally, individual projects, such as timber sales, are evaluated and may be approved only if they are consistent with applicable Forest Service or BLM land-use plans and other applicable environmental standards (16 U.S.C. 1604(I), 36 CFR 223.30, and 43 CFR 1610.5-3).

Plans for both National Forest System and BLM-administered lands are designed to be consistent with national-level agency policies and regulations. BLM plans at the project or activity level tier to resource management plans or management framework plans, which may be based on State Director guidance when needed. Forest Service project plans must be consistent with forest plans, which in turn are based on regional guides. When needed, larger scale multi-regional plans, such as this one, may be developed for issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. Forest health and anadromous fish species viability are two such issues.

When a large-scale plan is prepared for management of federal lands on a regional or multi-regional basis, a broad overview EIS, or *programmatic* EIS, can provide a valuable and necessary analysis of the affected environment and potential cumulative effects of the reasonably foreseeable actions under that program or within that geographical area. One or more analyses of lesser scope or a site-specific EIS or analysis can be tiered to a programmatic EIS.

To comply with statutory obligations arising from the National Forest Management Act, Federal Land Policy and Management Act, National

The Role of Science in Ecosystem-based Management

"Scientific research has a significant role in ecosystem management, including the use of scientific methods in understanding the basic capabilities of different ecosystems, discerning the needs and wants of people, ... and designing monitoring systems to allow for periodic adaptation to new knowledge. However, there are not unique or scientifically perfect answers for how a balance of goals and practices for ecosystem management should be struck. People's values, preferences, and aspirations are crucial factors in policy making.

The role of science in ecosystem management is to help define what is possible ... to shed light on how to best attain a desired set of conditions or benefits, and to help people understand the estimated costs, benefits, and consequences of alternative courses. To fulfill this role effectively, social, biological, and physical sciences must be integrated to reflect the complexity of how ecosystems actually function."

– H.Salwasser, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service Region 1
excerpted from Salwasser 1994

Environmental Policy Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and other environmental laws, it is necessary to perform site-specific environmental analysis of projects and activities prior to making an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. It is virtually impossible to prepare a Forest Service or BLM land-use plan and associated EIS of sufficient specificity to identify and adequately analyze all projects or activities that may occur in the 10-year planning period.

Courts have recognized the difference in the nature of environmental impacts caused by such programmatic decisions, and the NEPA obligations are more limited. One court characterized forest plans in the following way. (This characterization is applicable to BLM resource management plans, as well.)

> [A forest plan] is, in essence, a programmatic statement of intent that establishes basic guidelines and sets forth the planning element that will be employed by the Forest Service in future site-specific decisions.
>
> It provides guidelines and approved methods by which forest management decisions are to be made for a period of 10 to15 years. Adoption of the plan does not effectuate any on-the-ground environmental changes. Nor does it dictate that any particular site-specific action causing environmental injury must occur. *Sierra Club v. Robertson*, 28 F.3d 753 (8th Cir. 1994)

Thus, regional guides and Forest Service or BLM land-use plans are only part of a multiple-level decision making framework. It is the subsequent site-specific level of decision making that affects the environmental status-quo. Site-specific decisions are made by local managers (Forest Supervisors, District Managers, District Rangers, Area Managers). These officials and their staffs are familiar with the issues presented and local conditions associated with the planning area and are charged with monitoring and evaluating the land-use plan or resource area and proposing changes to it, as necessary, through amendment and revision.

Status of Planning on National Forest System and BLM Lands

During the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, the BLM and Forest Service released comprehensive land-use plans and framework documents for individual National Forests and Grasslands and BLM Districts. Appendix A includes a list showing the current plans in the UCRB area and their approval dates. These plans remain in effect until amended or revised. The Forest Service is required by NFMA to revise forest plans at least every 10 to 15 years. BLM plans are generally revised every 10 to 15 years. Several plans are currently being revised and their efforts are being coordinated with this project.

Decisions made by the Forest Service and BLM based on the UCRB EIS are expected to amend existing land-use plans and may amend regional guides, where they conflict with the new decisions. The relevant parts of the selected alternative will become part of these plans and will guide project decision-making until replaced through subsequent amendment or revision.

For the purpose of the analysis and disclosure of environmental impacts, direction from the Record of Decision (ROD) for the UCRB EIS is assumed to be in place for 10 years. Direction that is specific to each individual administrative unit (such as standards applicable to particular areas) will be revisited at the time of revision. Direction that applies to multiple units (such as broad-scale objectives) will remain in place to guide future amendments and revisions. It is the intent of the agencies that subsequent plan amendments or revisions for individual administrative units will be designed to achieve this broad-scale direction.

Implications of Planning for Multiple Administrative Units

The process for making programmatic decisions is described in Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR Part 219, and in BLM regulations at 43 CFR Part 1600. These processes were designed to facilitate planning for individual administrative units, and to address issues specific to those units. This EIS and resulting decision will focus on large-scale issues that cross jurisdictional boundaries. This focus provides a broad context for management strategies that cannot adequately be developed at the BLM and Forest Service land and resource management plan level. The purpose and need for the proposed action is much broader than a traditional Forest Service or BLM land-use plan and EIS and is based on a different management approach, ecosystem-based management. Because of this broader focus, the Forest Service and BLM planning regulations do not precisely fit the type of land-use plan amendments that will occur if one of the action alternatives should be selected.

Much of the management direction proposed for adoption is applicable to multiple administrative units in aggregate rather than to individual units. As such, it is not possible to reliably predict actions or effects for each unit. Moreover, determinations with respect to each administrative unit that would normally be made as part of the planning process are not possible. As with many planning concepts developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the regulations must be applied to the extent reasonable, given the current broader focus on ecosystem-based management and interagency cooperation as depicted in this EIS.

This Assessment and EIS Process

What Has Been Accomplished to Date

The Science Integration Team (SIT) prepared the *Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins* (Quigley and Arbelbide 1996) and several smaller documents, as well as databases and computer models. The databases contain information on vegetation, landform, climate, stream inventories, terrestrial species relationships, county indicators, and economic conditions. The models range from those that predict change in vegetation under different disturbance regimes to those that describe resiliency of people's communities. Together, the documents, databases, and models provide the basis for an assessment of the project area.

Database/information systems/information gathering for the ICBEMP generally can be categorized into five groups: 1) databases (more than 20 were acquired or developed); 2) GIS themes or layers (more than 170 were generated); 3) expert panels/workshops (approximately 40 were convened); 4) contract reports (more than 130 were used); and 5) current literature reviews.

From an ecological perspective, the *Assessment* developed an understanding of the status, condition, and trends associated with the components of the ecosystems and economies of the project area. The SIT characterized the landscape and vegetation components from a broad perspective, addressing those elements that have been altered during the past 100 years and developing the concept of the biophysical template that brings understanding to the capabilities and disturbance processes operating in the environment. Terrestrial wildlife species and their habitats within the project area were characterized and examined from a broad perspective, bringing forward a reduced list of species that are likely to be at risk. The SIT also characterized and examined aquatic species and their habitats within the project area, drawing from information about species abundance, distribution, diversity, and habitat inferences.

Projections of risk came primarily from a functional perspective, identifying those elements that affect the aquatic, terrestrial, and landscape systems using common databases and assumptions about the future. These findings and projections are useful considerations for managers as they examine future options and establish policies regarding management.

What is Yet to be Accomplished

Because the ICBEMP represents a new way of thinking, as of the publication of this Draft EIS many items were left undone from an ecological perspective. These are items that will be completed before publication of the Final EIS(s).

The level of understanding brought forward together with the models, databases, and GIS themes now make possible a process of prioritization and integrated risk assessment that was not possible until now. The team is ready to prioritize the most important habitat for aquatic species persistence. With that identification, the question could be answered of what disturbance processes are likely to affect these areas and which of these will likely have the greatest negative impact on the aquatic system. The result would be an integrated risk statement concerning aquatic systems related to broad-scale disturbance processes.

The information is now available to initiate the process of grouping terrestrial wildlife species into similar communities of species, identifying the most important habitats for terrestrial species persistence, and identifying disturbances that cause the greatest risk to their continued persistence. This information makes it possible to answer the integrated risk questions associated with terrestrial species and their habitats related to broad-scale disturbance processes. This should also make it possible to address the questions of connectivity and fragmentation regarding the important habitat features of terrestrial species guilds. Addressing the integrated

risk questions from a landscape perspective allows the integration of aquatic strategies with terrestrial species and an evaluation of the risks associated with broad-scale disturbances and broad management direction/activities.

New Information and the Adaptability of Plans

The *Scientific Assessment* and UCRB and Eastside EISs may provide significant new information within the meaning of the Council of Environmental Quality regulations and the BLM and Forest Service planning regulations. This may require supplementation of NEPA documents, amendment or revision of plans, or reinitiation of consultation under the Endangered Species Act.

Adjustments in plan direction are crucial to the agencies' ability to meet the continuing compliance and new information obligations of NEPA and other environmental laws.

Each new piece of information will raise new questions as it answers others. Recognizing this is a key feature of adaptive management. Continually assessing resources from a broad perspective as well as from finer scales will enable managers to address the full complement of risk.

The alternatives brought forward in this Draft EIS open the door to new understanding that will grow and advance as the next several years progress. It can be thought of as a continuum of information and advances of knowledge. Adaptive management processes will be important at the project area level, as well as at lower levels. The selected alternative would attempt to fully manage the risks to important ecological and economic resources if the ability to assess broad scale conditions and risks are coupled with adaptive processes on administrative units.

Decisions That Will Be Made Through This Planning Process

For the UCRB EIS, responsible officials for National Forest System lands in the planning area are the Regional Foresters for the Intermountain Region and the Northern Region. Responsible officials for the UCRB public lands administered by the BLM are the State Directors for the States of Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Nevada.

Once the Final EIS has been completed, the responsible officials can decide to:

- Select one of the alternatives analyzed within the Final EIS, including the no-action alternative; or
- Modify an alternative (for example, combine parts of different alternatives), as long as the environmental consequences of the modified action have been analyzed within the Final EIS.

The alternative selected for implementation will be documented in the Record of Decision (ROD).

Specific decisions involved in the selection of an alternative include adoption of:

- Management goals;
- A desired range of future conditions expected over the next 50 to 100 years;
- Objectives to be used in measuring progress toward attainment of the management goals; and
- Standards, which are required actions to be used in designing and implementing future management actions.

A list of guidelines, which are suggested techniques that should prove useful in meeting the objectives, are included in Appendix H. In addition, each alternative specifies a range of management actions (for example, acres of rangeland improvement) needed to achieve the desired range of future conditions. Selection of an alternative does not mandate a specific level of activity. However, the identified range of management actions for the selected alternative will be used in developing future annual work plans and for monitoring the implementation of the ecosystem-based management strategy.

Decision(s) made by the agencies will provide an ecological context for Forest Service and BLM land and resource management plans. They also will help clarify the relationship of agency activities to ecosystem capabilities and will help develop realistic expectations for the production of economic and social benefits. Most decisions will focus on regional and sub-regional problems and establish desired landscape patterns, structure, and succession and disturbance regimes to address the problems. The decision(s) also will

establish general direction for management of habitat for threatened, endangered, and candidate species or communities of species that require integrated management across broad landscapes to assure viability. For the most part, local-level decisions will be deferred to individual administrative units after appropriate site-specific analysis.

The ROD(s) issued by the agencies may amend current Forest Service regional guides, may change planning schedules and funding priorities, and are expected to amend Forest Service and BLM land-use plans if necessary. The ROD(s) will identify necessary changes to policy or suggest modifications to existing laws as needed to implement the decision. The relevant parts of the UCRB EIS's selected alternative will become part of the amended plans and will guide activity-level decision-making until replaced through subsequent amendment or revision. Management direction and land allocations in existing plans not directly superseded by the UCRB ROD(s) will remain in effect.

The alternatives analyzed in the Draft EIS include standards for rangeland health and guidelines for livestock grazing which are consistent with the BLM's grazing regulations (43 CFR 4100). Final standards for rangeland health and guidelines for livestock grazing are also being developed by the Healthy Rangelands initiative, a nationwide effort focusing on rangelands managed by BLM. BLM State Directors are developing these standards and guidelines in consultation with affected Resource Advisory Councils, Provincial Advisory Committees, and others. These standards and guidelines are expected to be finalized in a separate document in August 1997. Objectives, standards, and guidelines being analyzed in this EIS affecting rangeland health and livestock grazing are compatible with BLM's Healthy Rangeland initiative.

Fundamentals of Rangeland Health were established for the BLM in their new regulations signed February 22, 1995 (43 CFR 4180). These fundamentals, described in the following paragraph, are to be used to develop standards for rangeland health and guidelines for livestock grazing on BLM-administered land.

Watersheds are in or are making significant progress toward properly functioning condition, including uplands, riparian areas and wetlands, and aquatic components; soil and plant conditions support infiltration, soil moisture storage, and the release of water that are in balance with climate and landform; and maintain or improve water quality, quantity, and the timing and duration of flow. Ecological processes, including the hydrologic cycle, nutrient cycle, and energy flow, are maintained, or there is significant progress toward their attainment to support healthy biotic populations and communities. Water quantity complies with state water quality standards and achieves, or is making significant progress toward achieving, established BLM management objectives, such as meeting wildlife habitat requirements. Habitats are or are making significant progress toward being restored or maintained for federal threatened, endangered, candidate, or other special status species.

At a minimum, State or regional standards, developed under the fundamentals of rangeland health, must address the following: watershed function; nutrient cycling and energy flow; water quality; habitat for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate, and special status species; and habitat quality for native plant and animal populations and communities.

The UCRB decision(s) would provide direction only for public lands administered by the Forest Service or the BLM in the planning area. The ROD(s) based on this EIS would make no management decisions for and would not impose regulations on State, local (city or county), tribal, or private lands in the upper Columbia River Basin. The decisions are not intended to affect rights, privileges, regulations, policies, or provisions made by State or local agencies or private landowners.

The combination of goals, objectives, and standards for each action alternative (Alternatives 3 through 7) provide different ecosystem-based management strategies for Forest Service- and BLM-administered lands. Each strategy is intended to replace interim direction from PACFISH and INFISH. This would include direction for both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

Factors Affecting Implementation

Many factors affect implementation of the decisions made through this planning process. Some of these factors affecting implementation of the UCRB ROD are:

- **Purpose and need.** The action alternatives (Alternatives 3 through 7) must meet the purpose of and need for the proposed action, described earlier in this chapter.

- **Scale of decision.** The broad-scale nature of this planning process does not include site-specific decisions. Those will be made by local managers (District Managers, Area Managers, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers) during smaller scale planning processes. Many decisions in this planning process are based on information and projections over periods longer than 10 years. The adequacy and completeness of some types of data at this scale requires discussion under 40 CFR 1502.22. See the Scale of Decision and Incomplete and Unavailable Information sections in Chapter 4.

- **Valid existing rights.** Nothing in this plan can override valid existing rights or permits, such as water rights, mineral leases, mining claims, rights-of-way, livestock grazing permits, awarded contracts, and special use permits. However, to meet the objectives of an alternative, some reasonable changes may be required in the way maintenance and operations are carried out.

- **Decision Space.** In formulating an array of alternatives relating to management of public lands in the planning area, it is important for the decision space to be well defined and understood. That is, the decisions deciding officials *can* make (including management activities and intensities on lands they administer) and *can not* make (including activities on lands they do not administer), or decisions assigned to another agency, such as changing water rights, which fall under state jurisdiction. The decision space should demonstrate the degree of flexibility for management, and expected outcomes of land management actions at the landscape level (on each Forest Service Ranger District or BLM Resource Area).

  Various Federal and State laws, such as the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Endangered Species Act, and National Forest Management Act have minimum requirements or conditions (thresholds) that must be attained prior to or while conducting management activities. While these thresholds may define the lower limits of a decision space, the upper limit is often bounded by the biological potential, or maximum capabilities of the land and resources. This then allows for a range of management options between the thresholds and the biological potential. Selection of a preferred alternative within that range of management options can then be focused on social, economic, or special resource considerations. In general, a combination of social, economic, and resource values will be greatest somewhere short of maximizing any one value, except where very limited opportunities, or rare and sensitive species or habitat conditions exist.

- **Other planning efforts (Federal, State, tribal, and local).** Other Federal agencies, as well as State, tribal, and local governments have been actively involved in the public involvement process for this Draft EIS as provided in NEPA, NFMA, FLPMA, and other regulations. During the comment period on the Draft EIS, there will be further opportunities to resolve conflicts.

  BLM planning regulations require that its resource management plans be consistent with officially approved or adopted resource-related plans, and the policies and procedures therein, of other Federal, State, and local agencies, and Indian tribes, so long as the resource management plans would still be consistent with applicable Federal laws and regulations (43 CFR 1610.3-2)

  The Council on Environmental Quality regulations in 40 CFR 1502.16(c) require a discussion of "possible conflicts between the proposed action and the objectives of Federal, regional, State, and local (and in the case of reservation, Indian tribe) land-use plans, policies and controls for areas concerned." FLPMA and NFMA require that Federal land management agency plans identify consistencies and inconsistencies with other land-use plans, such as planning and zoning efforts of local governments. The geographic scope of the project's EISs, involving over 100 counties in the interior Pacific Northwest, make a consistency review effort more challenging.

  One effort undertaken during the planning process to ensure consistency with local planning efforts involved the collection and review of a large number of county land-use, economic development, and other plans which were submitted in late 1994 and early 1995. A summary report, the *County/Community Vision Statement Project*, completed in August 1995, reviewed 32 such plans. Additional plans submitted to the project were also reviewed. The Eastside Coalition of Counties assisted the project by requesting that local governments in the area provide copies of their plans to the project for review.

  State and tribal plans were considered when analyzing cumulative effects for the UCRB EIS.

The project also reviewed other plans of other agencies, including but not limited to, Idaho Governor Philip E. Batt's proposed Bull Trout Conservation Plan.

- **Relationship to Federal, State, and local environmental protection laws.** The UCRB EIS was prepared with full consideration of all relevant laws, regulations, and executive orders. Decisions must be consistent with many Federal laws, including the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, National Forest Management Act, Endangered Species Act, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, National Historic Preservation Act, the Clean Air Act, and Clean Water Act (see Appendix A for a list of the most relevant Federal laws).

  Under the Endangered Species Act, Federal activities that may have an effect on threatened or endangered species are subject to consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). (Departments of Agriculture (Forest Service), Commerce (National Marine Fisheries Service), and Interior (Bureau of Land Management, and Fish and Wildlife Service) MOU dated May 31, 1995.) Requirements for consultation will remain in effect under any selected alternative. If the selected alternative may have an effect on threatened and endangered species, biological assessment(s), appropriate for the scale of the decision, will be submitted to FWS and NMFS for consultation. Consultation will be completed prior to any ground-disturbing activities.

  Some Federal laws contain provisions for State administration of specific environmental programs or for making State laws applicable to Federal lands and facilities. State and local laws relating to the health, safety, and welfare of people apply to activities on Federal lands.

  Nothing in the alternatives in this Draft EIS precludes compliance or commits the agencies to any action which would violate such legal requirements. Compliance can be assured at the individual plan and project levels.

- **Federal trust reponsibility to Indian tribes.** There are 22 Federally recognized American Indian tribes within the ICBEMP project area, 16 of which have interests in the UCRB EIS planning effort. The Federal Government has a trust and legal responsibility to American Indian tribes, which comes from commitments made by the United States in treaties, executive orders, and agreements. Upholding these tribal rights specified in the treaties, executive orders, statutes, and agreements constitutes the Federal Government's legal responsibility. The Federal Government also has a responsibility to consult with affected tribes whenever its actions affect the resources upon which the exercise of tribal hunting, fishing, gathering, and grazing rights depend.

  The following are the 16 tribes with interests in the UCRB planning area: Kalispel; Kootenai of Idaho; Blackfeet; Coeur d'Alene; Nez Perce; Colville; Spokane; Salish-Kootenai (Flathead); Shoshone-Bannock (Fort Hall); Shoshone-Paiute (Duck Valley); Paiute (Fort McDermitt); Eastern Shoshone (Wind River); Northwest Band of Shoshoni Nation (Fort Hall); CTWSR (Warm Springs); CTYN (Yakama); and CTUIR (Umatilla).

  See Chapter 2 and Appendix C for more detailed discussions of American Indian Tribes.

- **Water rights and adjudications.** Conditions upon which this document is based are predicated on the availability of instream flows sufficient to maintain and restore channel conditions, provide for viable aquatic species such as fish, protect recreation flows in wild and scenic river areas, and provide for other needs under which the National Forests and certain BLM-administered lands were established. It is the position of the United States that the right to use water for management of public lands was reserved by the United States when the National Forests, wildernesses, wild and scenic river areas, national recreation areas, and certain BLM-administered lands were established. Those reserved water rights, as well as water rights claimed under state authority, are established through water rights adjudications and are beyond the scope of this EIS. The agencies' ability to meet the purposes for which these Federal reservations were established, are predicated on having the minimum amount of water necessary for both instream and consumptive uses. The selected alternative may have effects that are different from those described in this EIS, and may not accomplish the purpose and need of the proposed action if sufficient water is not available to manage the public lands for their intended purpose.

- **Mitigation measures.** The alternatives discussed in this Draft EIS were developed to implement certain themes in accomplishing the purpose and need. As a practical matter, the environmental effects of objectives and

standards for the action alternatives in the UCRB Draft EIS may require mitigation of various activities at local levels. See Chapter 4.

- **Recovery plans.** Recovery plans are technical scientific documents prepared by biological experts from Federal, State, and local agencies, and in some cases the private sector. The plans identify specific actions to be undertaken in order to conserve and recover a particular species, and they develop a plan to implement such actions. Recovery plans are formulated and carried out by a "recovery team," which itself is usually composed of a mix of Federal, State, and private sector individuals.

  The recovery plan process is one of the key focal points of the Secretary of Interior's efforts under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to conserve and recover listed species. Although the authority to develop recovery plans was implicit in the 1973 ESA, there was no express obligation to do so. Consequently, prior to 1978, recovery planning had been relegated to a low priority within the ESA budget process.

  That year, Congress amended the ESA, requiring the Secretary of the Interior (through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) to develop and implement recovery plans for the "conservation and survival" of listed species "unless he finds that such a plan will not promote the conservation of the species." The Secretary is also directed to establish a priority system for development of recovery plans in which he gives priority to those species that are most likely to benefit from such plans. The Secretary must give public notice and opportunity to comment on proposed recovery plans and take into account any comment provided prior to finalizing a recovery plan.

  For a complete list of recovery plans for species in the UCRB EIS area, see Appendix E.

- **Funding.** The ROD(s) for this EIS may affect funding levels; however, decisions on Forest Service and BLM funding are made through other processes that are outside the scope of this planning process. The alternatives (other than No-Action) (Chapter 3) and effects of the alternatives (Chapter 4) assume full funding for implementation. If full funding does not occur, then the rate of implementation will be decreased appropriately.

- **Staffing levels.** Like funding, staffing decisions are made through other processes that are outside the scope of this planning process. Standards will be met at any staffing level; however, the rate of implementation will be decreased appropriately if staffing levels decrease.

- **Implementation feasibility.** The feasibility of implementing the selected alternative, especially the location of those actions, must be determined by local Forest Service and BLM managers, in light of local circumstances and conditions.

Determination of Significance of Amendment Under the National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

- **Regional guides.** The BLM does not have a mandatory level of planning corresponding to the regional guides of the Forest Service. At the present time, it appears that the objectives and standards in Chapter 3 will be adopted at the Forest and BLM District planning levels. However, after the comment period following the issuance of this Draft EIS and the preparation of a Final EIS, a ROD can be drafted which will make a determination as to whether any guide amendments will be made.

- **Significant amendments to Forest Plans.** The scale of the *Scientific Assessment* and this Draft EIS is broad enough that it is neither feasible nor appropriate to make fine-scale amendments to land-use plans. With the possible exception of the aquatic conservation strategy, the alternatives are not specific to particular Forests or BLM Districts. None of the action alternatives would require a change in the roadless areas described in existing plans. No allowable sale quantity changes are needed at this level of planning. Allowable sale quantity determinations will be made in the revisions to Forest Service and BLM land-use plans.

  In the usual forest planning situation, a Forest Supevisor determines the significant issues identified in scoping. For the ICBEMP planning process, the selection role was assigned to the

Project Managers under the supervision of an Executive Steering Committee, comprised of Regional Foresters, BLM State Directors, and Forest Service Research Station Directors. The issues identified were not appropriate or suitable to deal with in the detail described in 36 CFR 219.12.(b)- (k). Topics such as planning criteria, inventory data and information collection, analysis of management situation, and formulation of alternatives are controlled by the issues identified in scoping. This Draft EIS accomplished all of the steps in the significant amendment process as appropriate in estimating effects of alternatives, evaluation of alternatives, and selection of a preferred alternative. The Project Managers followed the Northwest Forest Plan process; the reconciliation with individual plans will be accomplished at a later date.

The figures for suitable timber acres in the individual existing forest plans, as amended by the anticipated decision here, will be adjusted when the plans are revised. In the meantime, the goals, objectives, and standards, and guidelines from the anticipated decision here, as amended into the individual forest plans, will control management activity.

The figures for allowable sale quantities in the individual existing forest plans will be adjusted when forest plans are revised. Chapter 4 estimates the timber sale volume for the future. By the time the forest plan revisions occur, the Forests and BLM Districts will have experience with the application of the standards and guidelines in the anticipated ROD and will be able to make specific adjustments to allowable sale quantities.

The current forest plans evaluate roadless areas. Wilderness Acts have been enacted for Oregon and Washington with "release" language for roadless areas. Such language allows multiple-use management on areas not designated as Wilderness. Efforts have been made and Congress has had ample opportunity to consider roadless areas in Idaho and Montana for designation as Wilderness. The current decision does not need to consider this issue again at this scale. It will be considered during the forest plan revision processes.

The NFMA planning regulations require that Forest Service planning efforts establish and address management indicator species for the planning area. This requirement is not applicable to BLM. The designation of management indicator species was made for each existing Forest Service regional guide and Forest Service land and resource management plan per 36 CFR 219.19(a). The decisions made through this effort will not change those designations. Upon future amendment or revision of existing Forest Service land and resource management plans, management indicator species lists will be adjusted, as appropriate, in response to local conditions and information.

Both the public involvement and the disclosure requirements of NEPA and NFMA have been met in this planning effort.

Planning Criteria Under BLM Planning Regulations

Planning criteria, a BLM regulatory requirement, were prepared to guide development of the UCRB ecosystem-based management strategy, indicating the factors and data that must be considered in making decisions. The following general criteria were used to prepare this EIS:

- This planning action will be driven by the statement of the purpose of this action.
- The alternatives described and analyzed in this process will all (with the exception of the no-action alternative) be responsive to the statement of the need for this action and to the significant issues identified by the public.
- This planning action will be based upon the data provided in *An Assessment of Ecosystem Components in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins* (Quigley and Arbelbide 1996), *An Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin and Portions of the Klamath and Great Basins* (Quigley, Graham, and Haynes 1996), and on other published, peer-reviewed scientific literature.
- The alternative management strategies described and analyzed in this planning action will be no more detailed and specific than the *Assessment* and other appropriate literature, mentioned above.
- The detail and specificity of the alternative management strategies will be limited to that necessary to address the needs identified above.

Public Participation

Scoping: Invitation to the public

The scoping process required under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1501.7) was followed to invite public participation and to determine the issues to be addressed. The Forest Service and the BLM sought information, comments, and assistance from Federal, tribal, State, and local agencies, and from other groups and individuals interested in or affected by the proposed action. For a detailed description of the public scoping process and a summary of public comments received during scoping, see Appendix D.

Notice of Intent (NOI) ~ The formal scoping period opened with publication of the Notice of Intent to produce an Environmental Impact Statement, which appeared in the Federal Register on December 7, 1994.

Scoping Meetings ~ The UCRB EIS scoping meeting was held simultaneously in 27 locations on January 28, 1995, via satellite. This medium was used to allow the greatest number of individuals and communities to participate in the shortest amount of time. The teleconference originated from Boise State University, Idaho, and was broadcast to 27 locations where local Forest Service and/or BLM staff were on hand to facilitate discussions. A live afternoon broadcast involved sharing and responding to comments and concerns. The scoping meeting also was broadcast over three public access television stations. The facilitated sessions were attended by a total of 928 people. In addition, anyone with access to a satellite dish within the continental United States was able to view the program. Comments were collected from all meeting sites and analyzed along with all letters, phone calls, and other comments received during the scoping period. Two additional scoping meetings were held in Salmon and Challis, Idaho, February 21 and 22 respectively. The formal scoping period concluded on April 15, 1995.

Briefings, consultations, and meetings with key publics were held throughout. See Appendix D, Public Involvement, for a list of consultation and coordination activities.

Other Government Agency Involvement. All levels of government participated extensively throughout the planning process, including the following:

Federal and State: In addition to Forest Service and BLM employees on the EIS team, the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and National Marine Fisheries Service provided liaisons to the team. The governors' offices in the States of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana were contacted by letter, and each was requested to designate representatives for the respective States to provide advice and recommendations to the project as allowed under the recently enacted exemption from the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

County: The Associations of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana Counties jointly formed the Eastside Ecosystem Coalition of Counties to represent counties directly affected by the ICBEMP; this coalition participated actively throughout the process. In September 1995, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the ICBEMP and the Eastside Ecosystem Coalition of Counties to define the roles of project leaders and county commissioners on behalf of their State associations of counties. The MOU outlines communication between the parties and for the county elected officials to provide advice and recommendations to the project, taking advantage of a recently enacted exemption from FACA.

Tribal: The project's Tribal Liaison Group contacted 22 individual tribes, 16 of which reside within or have rights and interests in the UCRB planning area. The purpose of the contact was to help develop, based on a government-to-government relationship, a consultation process with each tribe and to work closely and continuously with each other to integrate tribal rights and interests in the planning process.

Early tribal involvement and consultation in such a complex project as the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project is a relatively new undertaking. All the tribes contacted have participated to varying degrees and at various times, based in part on differing interpretations of the concepts of "involvement" and "consultation". Although all the tribes have provided at least informal feedback upon request and have made significant early contributions to this process, some have chosen to provide formal consultation and official tribal comments only upon release of the completed Draft EIS. Deciding officials are committed to formal government-to-government consultation and are prepared to ensure that all tribes have the

opportunity to participate to the degree and in the way they wish before the Final EIS and Record of Decision are released.

Next steps in the Planning Process

Availability of this Draft EIS for review will be announced in the *Federal Register* and in local media. Publication of the Notice of Availability opens a period for the public to submit comments on the Draft. Documents will be mailed to those on the Distribution List (see Chapter 5) and any others upon request. Public meetings will be held in locations and at times and dates announced in the letter accompanying this document and in local media.

Commenting on the DEIS

Those who do not comment on this Draft EIS or otherwise participate in this EIS process, may have limited options to appeal or protest the final decision.

Federal court decisions have ruled that environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after the completion of the Final EIS. The reason for this is to ensure that substantive comments and objections be made available to the Forest Service and the BLM at a time when they can be meaningfully considered and responded to in the Final EIS.

To be most helpful, comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible, mentioning particular pages or chapters of this document where appropriate. Comments also may address the adequacy of the Draft EIS itself, the merits of the alternatives, or the procedures followed in the preparation of this document as called for under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations. Copies of NEPA and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations may be viewed at any Forest Service or BLM office or at your public library.

Comments received on the Draft EIS, along with comments received during scoping or at other stages of this process, will be placed into the administrative record where they will be available for public review. Commenters should thus be aware that information, such as addresses and phone numbers, may be viewed and copied by anyone with access to these public files in this open process.

After analysis and consideration of public comment on the Draft EIS, the UCRB Final EIS is expected to be released in mid 1998. Any ensuing Record(s) of Decision (RODs) will be issued following the Final in accordance with appropriate Forest Service or BLM regulations. The availability of the Final EIS and ROD(s) will be published in the Federal Register and in local media. Opportunities to protest proposed decisions (BLM) or appeal decision(s) (Forest Service) will be provided in accordance with BLM and Forest Service regulations and policies.

Figure 1-1 (on page 22) shows the general steps in the planning process. Figure 1-2 (on page 23) shows the scoping results for the UCRB EIS.

Issues that Emerged from the Scoping Process

Project scoping identified the issues and concerns people have about public lands administered by the BLM or Forest Service in the upper Columbia River Basin. This information was collected for several reasons:

- To help identify what data should be collected for the UCRB Draft EIS;
- To help develop ecosystem-based management alternatives for the UCRB Draft EIS;
- To help identify environmental consequences that should be addressed in the UCRB Draft EIS.

An "issue" for planning purposes is defined as a matter of controversy, dispute, or general concern over resource management activities or land uses. To be considered as a "significant" EIS issue, an issue must be well defined, relevant to the proposed action, and within the ability of the agencies to address in the formulation of a range of management alternatives or possible mitigation measures. Other factors used to identify significant issues include the geographic extent of the issue, how long the issue is likely to be of interest, and the intensity of the level of interest or conflict generated by the issue.

The concepts of ecosystem-based management stress the integration and interrelationships of all parts and functions of an ecosystem, including the human component. The issue statements listed here therefore exhibit the integration and interdependence of all resources in each issue.

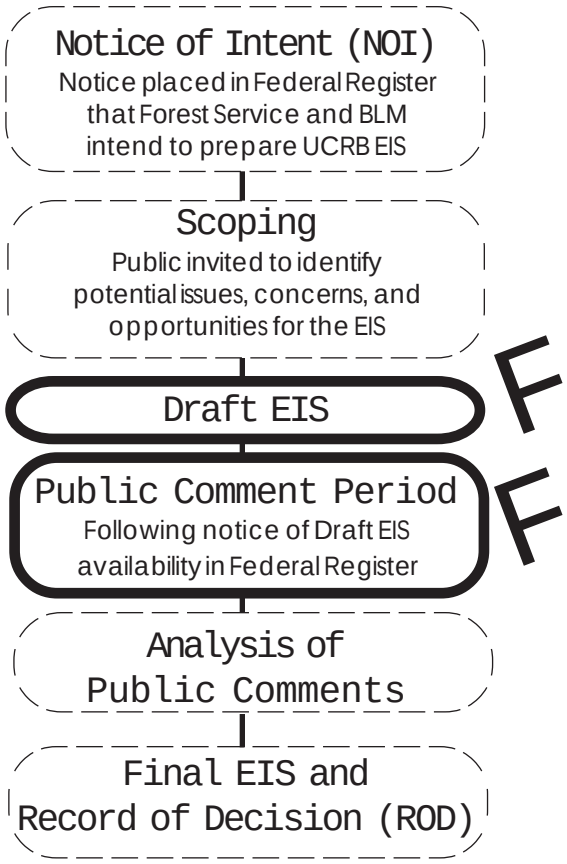


Figure 1-1 - Steps in the Planning Process

The following list of issues is the outcome of internal agency concerns and public input from scoping meetings in the upper Columbia River Basin in January and February 1995 and in eastern Oregon and Washington in May and June 1994. Both scoping sessions contributed to a preliminary set of issues, which were combined to make this final list (similar concerns were grouped where appropriate). Each issue addresses only those lands and resources administered by the BLM or Forest Service in the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project Area. All significant issues identified during scoping have been considered in the preparation of this Draft EIS.

1. **In what condition should ecosystems be maintained?**

   A wide range of opinions was expressed over the desired conditions to which ecosystems could or should be restored and maintained. Many comments reflected a belief in the importance of healthy, whole ecosystems and called for protection and restoration of all ecosystems and components as the desired condition. Many others questioned the desirability of achieving ecosystem "health" if it does not include humans and human uses of resources. Many comments questioned the validity, rationale, and science of using "historical range of variability" as a measure of desired condition, although some were of the opinion that the baseline of pre-European settlement is valid and useful as a baseline. Some people noted that certain changes cannot be reversed, such as human population size. Concerns were expressed over the ability to understand ecosystems and their resiliency, which would be needed to effectively restore the systems. Numerous comments focused on the dynamic nature of ecosystems and suggested that management can't be specified for any one static condition or point in time.

2. **To what degree, and under what circumstances, should restoration be "active" (with human intervention) or "passive" (letting nature take its course)?**

   Many comments favored actively managed ecosystems where we plan for active and intensive forest and range management to quickly restore environmental damage and/or to recover resources. Among these comments, several noted we can have healthy ecosystems with reduced risks (including fire and disease) with good active management. Many stated that proper management must mean long-term sustainability and must recognize the dynamic nature of ecosystems over time. Some felt that active management is desirable but only in currently roaded areas. Many other respondents felt that "human management should be minimal – the goal should be to eliminate it" and that we should let nature take its course, not interfering with natural processes. Some said to stop active management and "overmanaging" and instead manage the people who would damage public lands. Some stated it's impossible to generate a natural system by manipulation and that we should "adopt benign neglect as the preferred alternative." Many called for analysis of ecological damage due to past management activities. A number of comments called for neither active nor passive management alone, but rather holistic and adaptive management– approaching restoration slowly, using appropriate tools at appropriate times, and using extensive monitoring in order to deal with scientific uncertainty and changing conditions or knowledge.

3. **What emphasis will be assigned when trade-offs are necessary among resources, species, land areas, and uses?**

   A wide range of opinions was expressed over whether any single resource such as declining species or timber should be given top priority and focus for management actions, or whether the entire ecosystem should be managed with equal emphasis. Questions and comments included which if any resources or species should be given focus, and where or which part of the ecosystem is more or less important. Some comments favored giving priority to streams, watersheds, riparian areas, fisheries, and water quality. Other comments said the ecological importance of unroaded areas is key and should be given top priority. Some said economic, social, and cultural needs of people should be given more priority than other ecosystem needs. Others suggested the priority be given to areas highly affected by past management activities. Some favored priority for soils, others for clean air.

   With regard to wildlife, concerns ranged from requests to make the preservation or conservation of all native species a priority, to requests that no wildlife species receive priority over human needs. Some comments linked human health with the land and the organisms on it and suggested priority be given to conservation of all existing native species; some emphasized recovery of declining or threatened/endangered species such as salmon; some urged management of habitat and the ecosystem, not individual species. Some favored emphasis on core reserves and biological corridors.

4. **To what degree will ecosystem-based management support economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities?**

   A great many comments expressed concern that human needs have been underestimated and should be elevated in importance in the EIS and analyzed in depth in a meaningful way. Stability of human communities, social and economic concerns, human health and social needs, and availability of resources for public use and development were among the major concerns expressed. Some expressed a concern that a regional ecosystem approach will mask local economic and community impacts. In particular, many comments expressed a desire for management of public lands to meet current economic needs and sustain rural communities by: (1) managing for predictable or stable output levels; (2) maintaining traditional enterprises including timber, grazing, and mining; (3) helping to maintain the rural way of life, customs, and culture; and (4) finding ways to offset losses of local government revenue. Many respondents rejected suggestions that recreation, tourism, or restoration jobs could substitute for commodity-based jobs.

   A great many other comments expressed the opinion that resources and long-term sustainability should take precedence over human needs, agendas, commodity targets, and special interests, and they asked that the area "be protected from humans." Many comments favored shifting from traditional single-resource-based economies to more diverse economies, including amenity-based recreation and tourism and other businesses based on quality of life and aesthetic values; these were said to enhance long-term job and community stability. Some comments favored economic diversity but objected to an emphasis on recreation because of potential impacts to the environment.

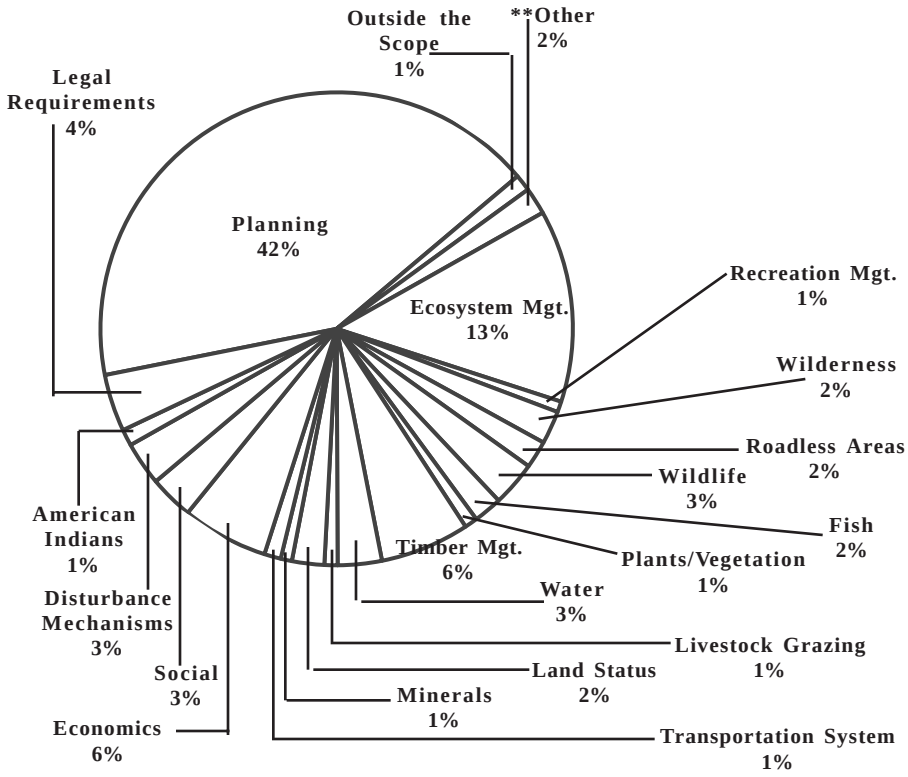
   Many comments stressed the idea of balance and cooperation to satisfy the needs of all users and to lessen the conflict between human needs and ecological integrity. Many tied ecosystem health and human health closely together. Many asked that the multiple-use vision of both agencies be maintained, but opinions of what "multiple-use" means differed among respondents.

5. **How will ecosystem-based management incorporate the interactions of disturbance processes across landscapes?**

   Many comments focused on natural disturbance mechanisms and regimes including fire, insects, disease, and climate change. Many said they recognized the role of natural disturbance but questioned how we could know historical levels of disturbance. While many expressed a desire to see natural disturbance regimes emphasized, others suggested that disturbances must be controlled to allow for crop yields, commodity production, biological diversity, or protection of human property. Numerous comments focused on the role of fire and fire management, ranging from "Leave the forests alone" to "We need to implement immediate active management."Much controversy was expressed regarding fire vs. logging as management techniques to mimic natural disturbance. Some comments asked for

A Piece of the Pie

During the official scoping period from January 28, 1995 through March 24, 1995, a total of 9,080 public comments were collected and recorded. The next phase was "Content Analysis;" your key issues were identified and grouped into general topics. The pie chart below illustrates those groups by percentage.



***The "Other" category represents the following: Air, Soil, Old Growth Areas, Special Uses, Energy, Hazardous Material, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Scenery and Visual Management, Special Interest Areas, Archeology, History/Cultural Reservations*

After grouping into general topics the next phase of "content analysis" is to further focus on your specific concerns. The UCRB EIS team searches for common themes. Those common themes within your specific concerns identify issues that apply across the Basin.

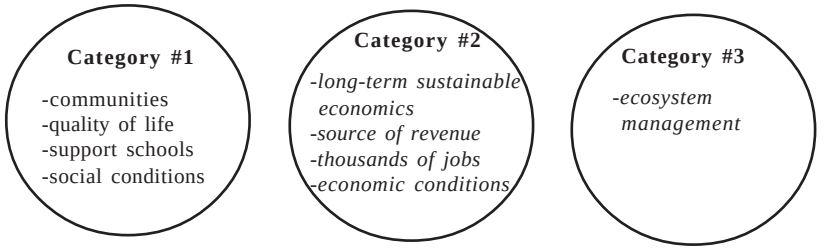
Examples from Your Comments

Below are three public comments taken from the general, "economics (6%)" topic. (Common themes have been highlighted.)

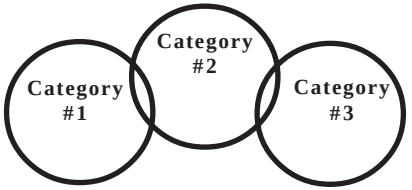
1. "A regional plan can help our ***communities*** envision the role of public lands in creating ***long-term, sustainable economies*** and maintaining our ***quality of life."***
2. "Timber sales are a good ***source of revenue*** for the federal and state governments. The salvage sale of dead trees ***creates thousands of jobs*** which in turn ***support schools*** and the rest of ***the community."***
3. "We believe that ***economic and social conditions*** are important parts of any ***ecosystem management*** and must therefore be included in the assessment and EIS project."

Next, the common themes were grouped into related categories. These categories are the foundation from which issues were developed.

Common Themes



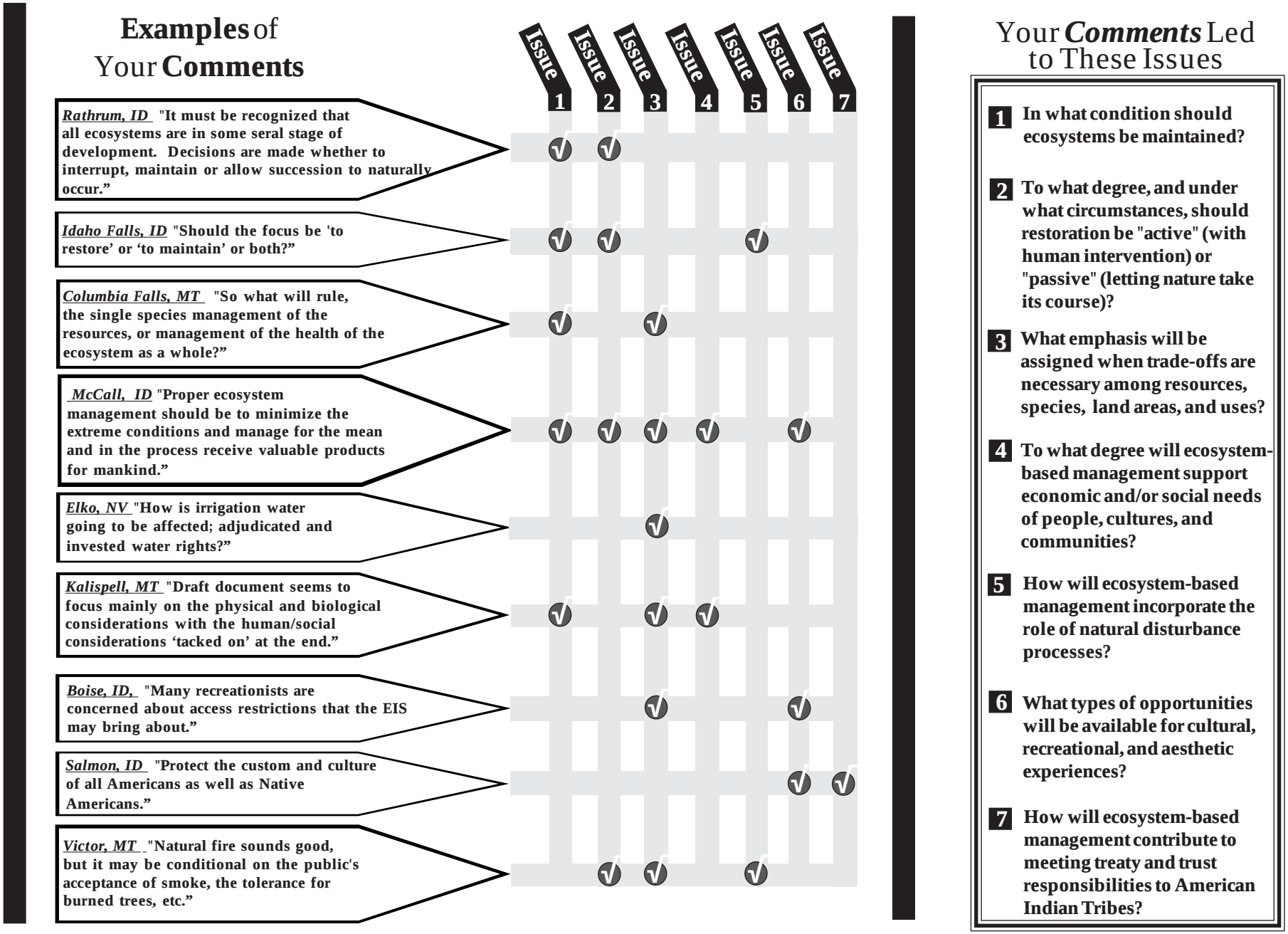
Lastly, the UCRB EIS team members combined the categories by common themes to develop issues.



The formulated issue is . . .

To what degree will ecosystem-based management support economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities?

Figure 1-2.


Examples of Your Comments
Issue 1
Issue 2
Issue 3
Issue 4
Issue 5
Issue 6
Issue 7
Rathrum, ID "It must be recognized that all ecosystems are in some seral stage of development. Decisions are made whether to interrupt, maintain or allow succession to naturally occur."
Idaho Falls, ID "Should the focus be 'to restore' or 'to maintain' or both?"
Columbia Falls, MT "So what will rule, the single species management of the resources, or management of the health of the ecosystem as a whole?"
McCall, ID "Proper ecosystem management should be to minimize the extreme conditions and manage for the mean and in the process receive valuable products for mankind."
Elko, NV "How is irrigation water going to be affected; adjudicated and invested water rights?"
Kalispell, MT "Draft document seems to focus mainly on the physical and biological considerations with the human/social considerations 'tacked on' at the end."
Boise, ID, "Many recreationists are concerned about access restrictions that the EIS may bring about."
Salmon, ID "Protect the custom and culture of all Americans as well as Native Americans."
Victor, MT "Natural fire sounds good, but it may be conditional on the public's acceptance of smoke, the tolerance for burned trees, etc."
Your Comments Led to These Issues
1 In what condition should ecosystems be maintained?
2 To what degree, and under what circumstances, should restoration be "active" (with human intervention) or "passive" (letting nature take its course)?
3 What emphasis will be assigned when trade-offs are necessary among resources, species, land areas, and uses?
4 To what degree will ecosystem-based management support economic and/or social needs of people, cultures, and communities?
5 How will ecosystem-based management incorporate the role of natural disturbance processes?
6 What types of opportunities will be available for cultural, recreational, and aesthetic experiences?
7 How will ecosystem-based management contribute to meeting treaty and trust responsibilities to American Indian Tribes?

identification of socially acceptable patterns of social, economic, and biophysical disturbances and a discussion of levels of risk.

6. **What types of opportunities will be available for cultural, recreational, and aesthetic experiences?**

   Considerable variety in cultural, recreational, and aesthetic uses of public lands was evident from the comments. Some people value public lands for elements of natural and scenic beauty, purity, and open spaces that provide aesthetic and spiritual experiences; others value the lands more for material outputs that help to sustain desired lifestyles and cultural practices. People also value public lands for the reservoir of natural conditions they wish to see maintained for the sake of future generations. General comments regarding recreation ranged from support for recreation and tourism as benefits of healthy forests, to requests that more emphasis be placed in the EIS on recreation and recreation values, to statements that there is too much push for recreation. Concerns were expressed about the loss of recreation opportunities both short and long term due to wildfire, that site-specific aspects of access be addressed, and that land as well as water recreation opportunities be analyzed. Some considered recreation to be a way to solve problems while others saw recreation as a management problem in itself based on potential damage to visuals, wildlife habitat, and other resources from recreation and tourism. Several comments questioned how visual management will be accommodated with other activities and needs such as fire management and forest health. Some asked for aesthetics to take priority over recreation and other activities. A great many comments supported the protection and/or creation of wilderness, roadless, and other core protected areas both for wildlife protection and for opportunities for wilderness recreation and aesthetic experiences; many others objected to setting aside unmanaged core reserves or roadless corridors.

   A key component of comments under this issue relate to access and roads for recreational, cultural, and aesthetic experiences as well as for economic and management activities. Some comments requested improved access to Wilderness and recreation areas, while others suggested that road densities be reduced especially in areas to be protected for wilderness or "roadless" values. Controversy exists over the damage roads have caused in the past and over the potential environmental risks from using or constructing roads to accomplish future restoration and management compared to the risks associated with lack of road access (for example, for fire fighting access).

7. **How will ecosystem-based management contribute to meeting trust responsibilities to American Indian tribes?**

   American Indian tribes retained rights and privileges under treaties and agreements negotiated with the U.S. Government, and the law made Federal agencies responsible for protecting off-reservation trust resources that occur on lands administered by those agencies. Tribal rights and interests in the management of resources sometimes conflict with the interests of groups with other cultural perspectives. Comments included concerns that ecosystem-based management adequately provide for rights and privileges reserved by tribal treaties and agreements, particularly hunting and fishing rights. Several comments stated a need for the EIS to analyze American Indian issues and concerns as well as to assess impacts to American Indians and reservations. Other comments expressed concerns that tribal input and consideration should be equal to but no more a priority than non-Indian considerations, and that non-Indian hunting and fishing rights also be addressed. Several comments questioned how the tribes would be tied into the EIS process.

Additional Concerns

Comments listed below represent concerns and questions raised during scoping that were considered but not used as driving issues in alternative development for one or more of the following reasons: their resolution falls outside the scope of this project, they have already been decided by law or regulation, they are not relevant to the decision, they are not supported by scientific evidence, or they are limited in extent, duration, or intensity.

Skepticism over basic assumptions and conditions of ecosystem health

Response: *The agencies have based their assumptions of ecosystem health problems and conditions in the Columbia River Basin on sound scientific information including the integrated assessment prepared by the Science Integration Team, professional observations and experience, and evidence of ecological, social,*

and economic changes that can be directly or indirectly linked to declining ecosystem conditions. The conditions are described at various scales, but it is recognized that site-specific conditions vary from location to location and there may be individual sites where ecosystem health problems are less prevalent than the overall picture portrays.

Mistrust of government, the agency, the individuals involved

Response: *The agencies recognize the existence of mistrust or disapproval of government agencies and employees among some individuals, groups, or organizations. General mistrust does not drive the development of the range of alternatives in an EIS process. However, responding to such feelings is a focus for public involvement efforts connected to this EIS, since one desired outcome for a successful ecosystem-based management strategy is a fully informed and participating public. Meaningful public involvement is a key component of all alternatives described in this EIS.*

Disapproval of ecosystem management as a concept

Response: *We believe that the Forest Service and the BLM can better address broad issues using a scientifically sound ecosystem-based management approach. Direction to develop a scientifically sound ecosystem-based strategy for lands in the interior Columbia River Basin that are administered by the Forest Service or the BLM came from the President as well as from the Chief of the Forest Service and Director of the BLM. Stopping the ecosystem-based management process is not an alternative that addresses the need for this project.*

Comments regarding video teleconference and scoping process

Response: *Individual comments suggesting improvements to the teleconference process have been noted and will be considered should a similar process be used in the future.*

Communications: terminology, language, presentation of concepts too complicated and unclear

Response: *Plain and clear language is an important feature of the EIS process. Efforts have been made to reduce technical terms, acronyms, and jargon. Efforts also have been made to express complex concepts in a clear and understandable fashion, both in the EIS and in other communications with the public. A readable glossary has been provided in the EIS.*

Scale, scope, and timing of the project are inappropriate (too large, too small, too slow, too fast)

Response: *The President of the U.S., the Chief of the Forest Service, and the Director of the Bureau of Land Management all acknowledged a need for a project of this scale and scope in order to more effectively manage agency lands in the interior Columbia River Basin. The project was divided into two similar and simultaneous EISs to enable adequate analysis and presentation of environmental consequences of alternatives, but a single comprehensive scientific assessment was prepared for the entire area to provide a consistent basin-wide foundation of information. Where appropriate, management options examined in the two EISs focus on basin-wide issues; in other places direction is more regional or local where conditions warrant different attention. For the most part, site-specific direction has been deferred to local decision-makers who are more familiar with individual site conditions and local needs.*

Impacts on private lands and private or States rights (such as water rights)

Response: *Regulation of private or State land is not within the decision makers' jurisdiction, and therefore was not considered in the UCRB EIS. Information about conditions and uses on private lands in the basin was included in the Scientific Assessment so that the EIS team could fully understand the entire landscape and adequately consider cumulative effects of the alternatives. Water rights and allocation fall under the jurisdiction of State governments and were not considered in the EIS. All decisions made as a result of this EIS apply only to applicable Forest Service- or BLM-administered lands.*

Concerns regarding local values, conditions, and control of management and decision making

Response: *Public involvement has occurred and will continue to occur at local, regional, and national levels, all of which are appropriate to federally managed public lands. The Forest*

Service and the BLM retain the authority to make decisions on use of the lands and resources they administer. These decisions are made in an open process using public input, including but not limited to local individuals, organizations, and governments. Local, county, and State government involvement in planning, decision-making, and implementation of programs is a key component of all action alternatives in this EIS.

Role of science in EIS and in management

Response: *It is important for Federal agencies to consider and respond to new scientific information in a timely and professional manner. Ecosystem health problems can be more successfully resolved by using the best available science to design plans dealing with issues that transcend agency boundaries, such as species population viability, forest health, aquatic health, and related cumulative effects. Science can help define what is possible and it can help people understand the estimated costs, benefits, and consequences of alternative courses. Important links also exist between legal requirements and the role of scientific information. For example, in the Pacific Northwest, the Forest Service and the BLM were found in violation of Federal laws and regulations in part for failure to consider new scientific information on the spotted owl. Consideration of new and relevant scientific information can be accomplished more easily and efficiently by incorporating science as an integral part of the EIS process, as has been done with this project.*

Impacts of dams and other activities off Federal lands affecting anadromous fish

Response: *The management of dams, ocean fish harvest, and other activities or conditions that occur off Forest Service System or BLM-administered lands is outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and the BLM. However, recognition and consideration were given in the EIS as to how those management activities and conditions off Federal lands affect the resources, particularly fish, that inhabit Forest Service- or BLM-administered lands. Consideration of these activities and conditions also played a role in evaluating the cumulative effects of the alternatives. Even though conditions or actions outside agency jurisdiction ~ such as dams ~ may be major contributors to ecosystem health problems throughout the basin, the agencies retain a responsibility to properly manage the lands they administer and to avoid contributing further to the problems.*

Need to reconsider existing land allocations, recognizing that current conditions will not support sustainable fish populations.

Response: *The project purpose to produce a scientifically sound, ecosystem based management strategy for BLM and National Forest System lands does not specifically require the agencies to re-analyze land allocations. Such analysis is more appropriate at the level of the land-use plan for the local administrative unit (BLM Resource Area, Forest). Furthermore, preliminary results from the Scientific Assessment do not indicate a need to re-analyze existing land allocation in this EIS at the broad scale. However, designating land as large terrestrial reserves will be analyzed in Alternative 7, and designating land as riparian conservation areas will be analyzed in Alternatives 2 through 7.*

Questions about how EIS will handle Roadless Areas and Wilderness considerations

Response*: All Roadless Areas and Wilderness Study Areas have already been evaluated and considered for recommendation as potential Wilderness Areas during the development of land-use plans. The scale for this EIS decision is inappropriate for individual Roadless Area evaluations for Wilderness potential. In addition, the purpose and need and Notice of Intent for this EIS focus on ecosystem-based management, without mention of Wilderness potential. Decisions are intended to be based on ecosystem function and not necessarily on political allocations.*

Need to reserve currently unroaded areas greater than 1,000 acres

Response*: The fundamental intent of this project is to maintain and restore ecosystem health and integrity and support the social and economic needs of people, not necessarily to preserve currently unroaded areas. For aquatic/riparian habitats, it is considered to be more important to address the needs of dependent species rather than the social issue of how much roadless area to preserve. Preservation of unroaded areas may be one way to maintain and restore ecosystem health and integrity and support people, but it is not the only way. Unroaded areas greater than 1,000 acres would be mostly left unroaded under Alternative 7.*

How does this Draft EIS address the topic of "old growth"?

Response: *The term "old growth" was not used as an ecological descriptor, and the Draft EIS does*

not state objectives for "old growth." Old-growth is a social value or issue, related to but separate from mature and old forest structure. The Draft EIS uses "mature" and "old"* multi-story and mature and old single story structural stages to refer to mature and old forest conditions. These conditions vary in terms of size, age, density, shade-tolerance, and overall habitat characteristics based on the species composition and the sites where they occur, as they are adapted primarily to distinct fire regimes.*

Mature and old multi-story forest refers to mature forest characterized by two or more canopy layers with generally mature and old trees in the upper canopy. Understory trees are also usually present. Old multi-story can include both shade-tolerant and shade-intolerant species and generally is adapted to a mixed fire regime of both lethal and nonlethal fires.

Mature and old single story forest refers to mature forest characterized by a single canopy layer consisting of mature and old trees. Understory trees are often absent, or present in randomly spaced patches. Old single story forest generally consists of widely spaced, shade-intolerant species such as ponderosa pine and western larch, adapted to a nonlethal, high frequency fire regime.

The Draft EIS discusses mature and old multi-story and single story structural stages by potential vegetation group (PVG) in terms of: past conditions and current trends, desired range of future conditions (DRFC), and objectives to reach the DRFC.

Because old multi-story and old single story structural stages may or may not contain the various characteristics sometimes identified with "old growth," there is not, nor was there intended to be, a direct correlation between the two in this Draft EIS.

["Mature" refers to ages and sizes of dominant trees that are at least at culmination of mean annual increment of tree stand volume growth. "Old" refers to ages and sizes of dominant trees that are significantly beyond what may be found at culmination of mean annual increment of tree stand volume growth.]*

Funding to implement the project: too much, too little, too political, where will it come from?

Response: *The alternatives in the EIS include various funding and implementation levels. The decision-makers do not have authority to ensure that funding is available; funding levels fall under the authority of the U.S. Congress.*

Government reorganization/reinvention and political influence on project

Response: *Government agency reorganization and reinvention efforts are beyond the scope of the decisions being made with this project. The UCRB EIS displays the consequences of any decisions that might be made in the Record(s) of Decision. To the extent that elected officials represent the people who are the owners of the public lands, politics has a role to play in the decision to be made. However, the level and nature of political influence on the funding or fate of the project is beyond the scope of analysis for the EIS.*

Questions regarding agency coordination, accountability, enforcement, implementation

Response: *The Forest Service and the BLM were directed to use a collaborative and coordinated approach in developing this EIS, consistent with the law and with agency planning regulations. Coordination was accomplished with numerous Federal, tribal, State, county, and local government agencies. The implementation plan associated with the Record(s) of Decision for this project will describe in detail the steps and expectations for continued agency coordination, accountability, enforcement, and implementation of the decision(s).*

Changing the amount of subsidies for recreation, timber, mining, and ranching

Response: *Resolution of this concern is outside the scope of the UCRB EIS and is more appropriately addressed by Congress.*

Laws: call for blanket review of laws (for example, Endangered Species Act)

Response: *Resolution of this concern is outside the scope of the UCRB EIS and is more appropriately addressed by Congress.*

Privatization of public lands: for privatization, against privatization

Response: *Resolution of this concern is outside the scope of the UCRB EIS.*

Availability of the Planning Record

The UCRB Planning Record documents the process of producing this EIS. Documents in the Planning Record are available by request under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) from the UCRB, 304 No. 8th St., Boise, ID 83702, tel. (208)334-1770, fax (208)334-1769. Local forest plans and resource management plans may be viewed at the appropriate Forest Service and BLM offices or at public libraries. Other referenced documents may be viewed at the UCRB office, or at the Eastside Ecosystem Management Project office, 112 E. Poplar St., Walla Walla, WA 99362; phone (509) 522-4030, fax (509) 522-4025; TTY (509) 522-4029.

More information may be obtained through the Internet at: http://www.icbemp.gov

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