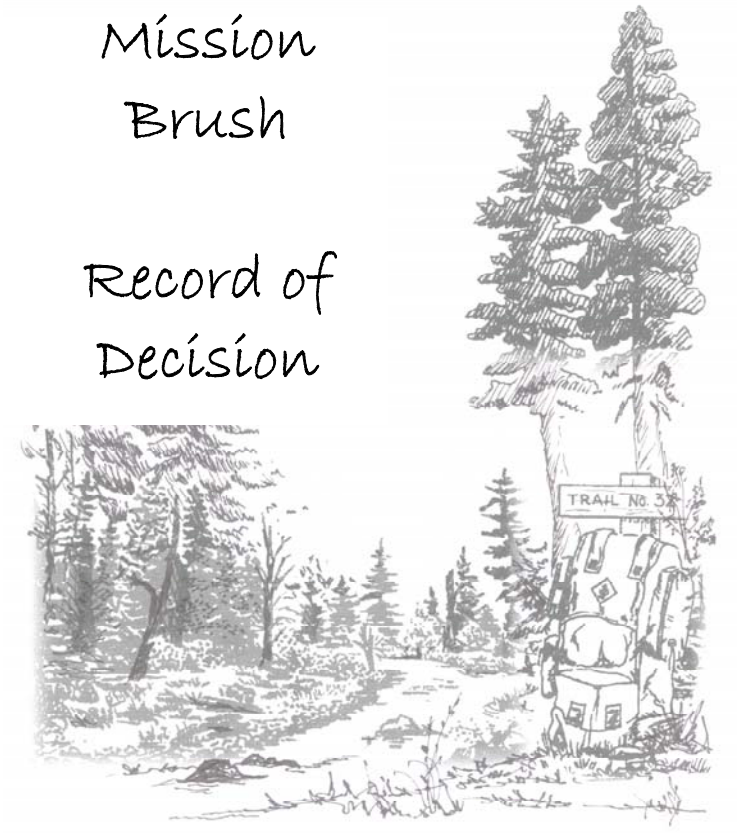
United States
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service
Northern Region
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

Mission Brush

Record of Decision



May 2004

Bonners Ferry Ranger District

Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Boundary County, Idaho

Mission Brush
Record of Decision

May 2004

Lead Agency: USDA Forest Service
Responsible Official: Ranotta McNair, Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forests
815 Schreiber Way
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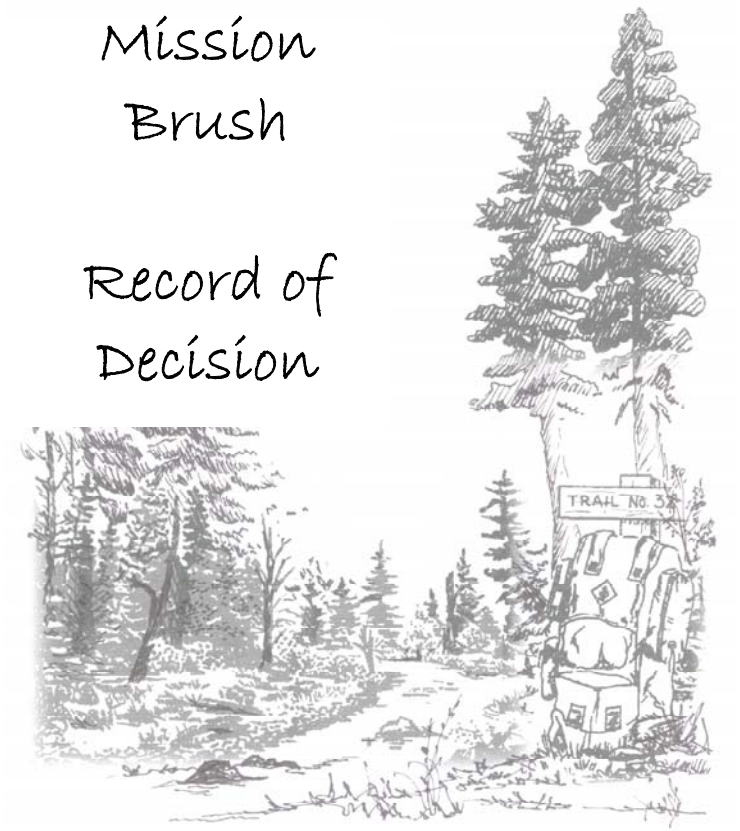

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Mission Brush
Record of Decision

Bonners Ferry Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Boundary County, Idaho

The Mission Brush project will provide resource management on National Forest lands in the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. This decision is the culmination of efforts to address vegetation, aquatics, wildlife habitat, and recreation needs in the Mission Creek, Hall Mountain and Brush Creek areas, identified as the Mission Brush project area.

Management activities will:

- Begin restoration of forest health and wildlife habitat
- Improve water quality and overall aquatic habitat by reducing sediment production and the risk of sediment reaching streams
- Provide recreation opportunities that meet the varied desires of the public and the agency while reducing negative effects to the ecosystem

1. Description of My Decision

As Forest Supervisor for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, I have been delegated authority as the Responsible Official for the decisions outlined in this Record of Decision.

I have selected Alternative 2, as described in this Record of Decision, to achieve the goals for this project. Throughout this document, information provided for the Selected Alternative refers to Alternative 2 unless specifically stated otherwise. Table 1 (page 4) summarizes the activities under the Selected Alternative; Figure 2 (page 5) displays a map of the Selected Alternative.

Through the Selected Alternative, I am authorizing the following activities:

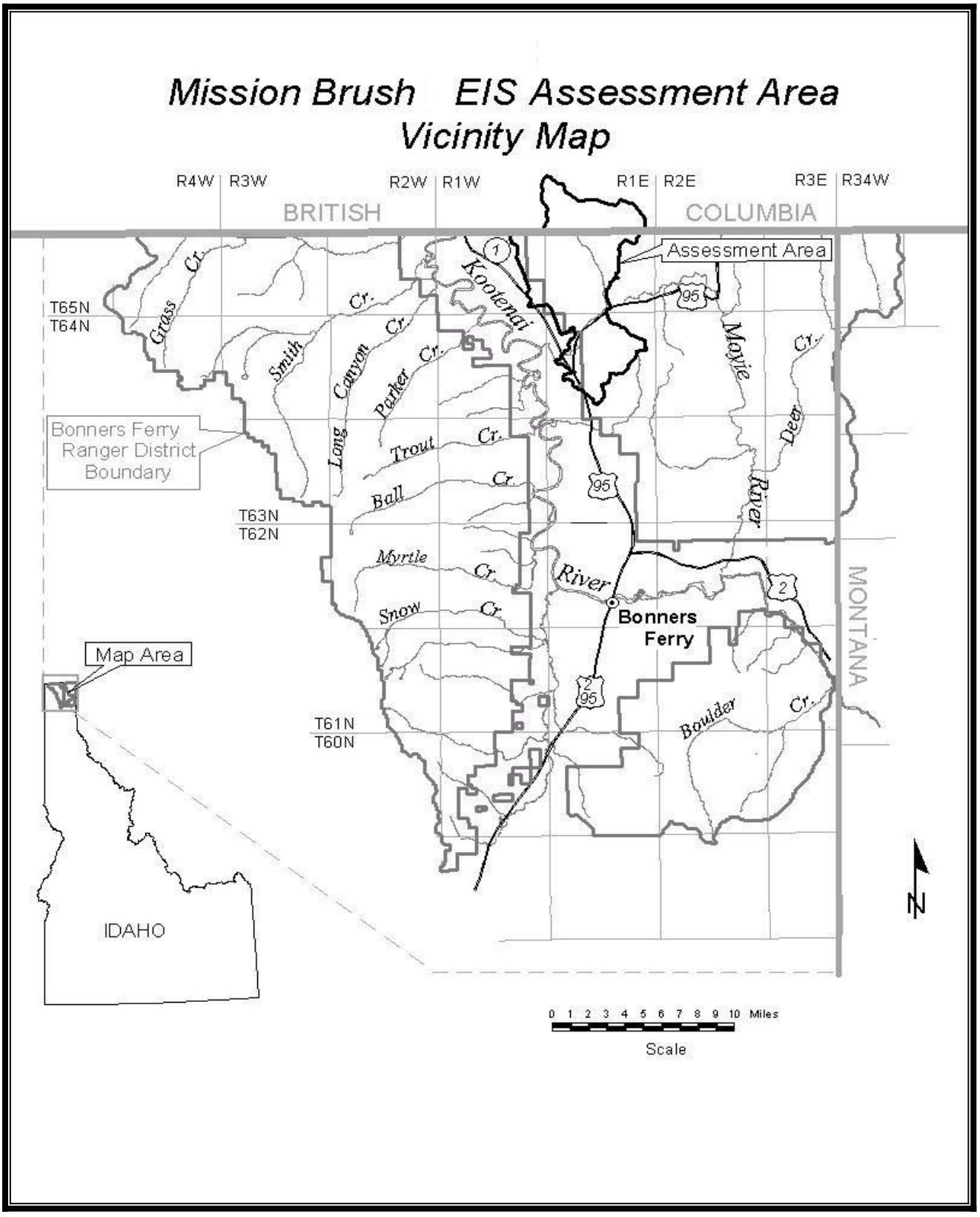
- Vegetation Treatments:

Implement restoration treatments designed to trend the vegetation composition, structure, and diversity toward desired future conditions. For acres to be treated and their location, refer to Table 1 and Figure 2.

- Aquatic Improvements:

Improve, decommission, or store roads that are currently contributing (or at a high risk of contributing) sediment to the aquatic systems in the project area. The total amount of roadwork and location of the roads are shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3 and Figures 2, 6 and 7, respectively.

Figure 1. Mission Brush Vicinity Map



- Wildlife Restoration:

Wildlife habitat restoration has been incorporated into design of the vegetation treatments. Also, two ecosystem burns to improve wildlife forage are part of the selected alternative. For location and size of the wildlife habitat restoration / treatments, see Table 1 (page 4) and Figure 2 (page 5).

- Recreation Improvements:

Upgrade Brush Lake Campground facilities to meet safety and universal accessibility standards as well as meeting projected future needs. Designate motorized and non-motorized recreation areas and provide signs and markers to clearly identify the trail networks on the ground (Figures 3, 4 and 5 on pages 6, 7, and 8).

- Common Features and Required Design Criteria

The features and required mitigation measures listed on page 2-42 through 2-55 of the FEIS, as well as conservation measures discussed in the BE/BAs are incorporated as part of my decision.

- Monitoring

The Forest Service will conduct monitoring to ensure we have implemented activities as we said we will (*implementation monitoring*), that the activities are having the level of effects that we predicted (*effectiveness monitoring*), and that the long-term effects are as anticipated (*trend monitoring*).

The 1987 IPNF Forest Plan identified 22 monitoring items and the time schedules for frequency of monitoring various types of activities. Because of the nature of some of the monitoring items and the diversity of forest management projects, not all these items are monitored on any one project. (Forest Plan, pp. 4-9 through 4-12)

For the Mission Brush project, various elements of the following Forest Plan items would be monitored: timber management, wildlife, watershed and fisheries, threatened and endangered plants, soil productivity, and visual quality objectives. The methods used to monitor them are described in the Final EIS on pages 2-56 through 2-61.

Table 1 - Alternative 2, the Selected Alternative
Vegetation and Transportation System Activities

Management Activities
Even-Aged Regeneration cuts on a total of about 1634 acres, including: 1232 acres of Irregular Shelterwood with reserves (ISW) 402 acres of Seed tree with reserves (ST) Uneven-Aged Regeneration cuts 388 acres of Group Selection / Commercial Thinning (GS/CT)
Partial Cuts on a total of approximately 2266 acres, including: 927 acres of Commercial Thin / Sanitation Salvage (CT/SS) 951 acres of Improvement Cut (IC)
136 acres of girdling larch/Douglas-fir with Mistletoe
Silvicultural Treatments total 4036 acres * The silvicultural prescriptions will be applied on a unit basis as described in the FEIS on pages 2-21 through 2-25 and in Appendix D of the FEIS. A map of the treatments is located on page 5 of this document.
Logging Systems (approximate acres) 1213 acres Ground-based 451 acres Skyline 1306 acres Helicopter 930 acres Combination of Methods Fuels Treatments total approximately 3900 acres, including: 763 acres Grapple Piling 1737 acres Underburn 1400 acres Underburn with grapple piling 238 acres (approximately) of Ecosystem Burns without harvest Transportation System (approximate miles) 5 miles of Temporary Road Construction (decommission after use) 13 miles of Existing Roads Decommissioned 39 miles of Existing Roads Improved 5 miles of Existing Roads Placed in Storage

Acres and miles shown in the table are estimates based on GIS coverages, computer calculations, and field visits.

Figure 2. Silvicultural Treatments

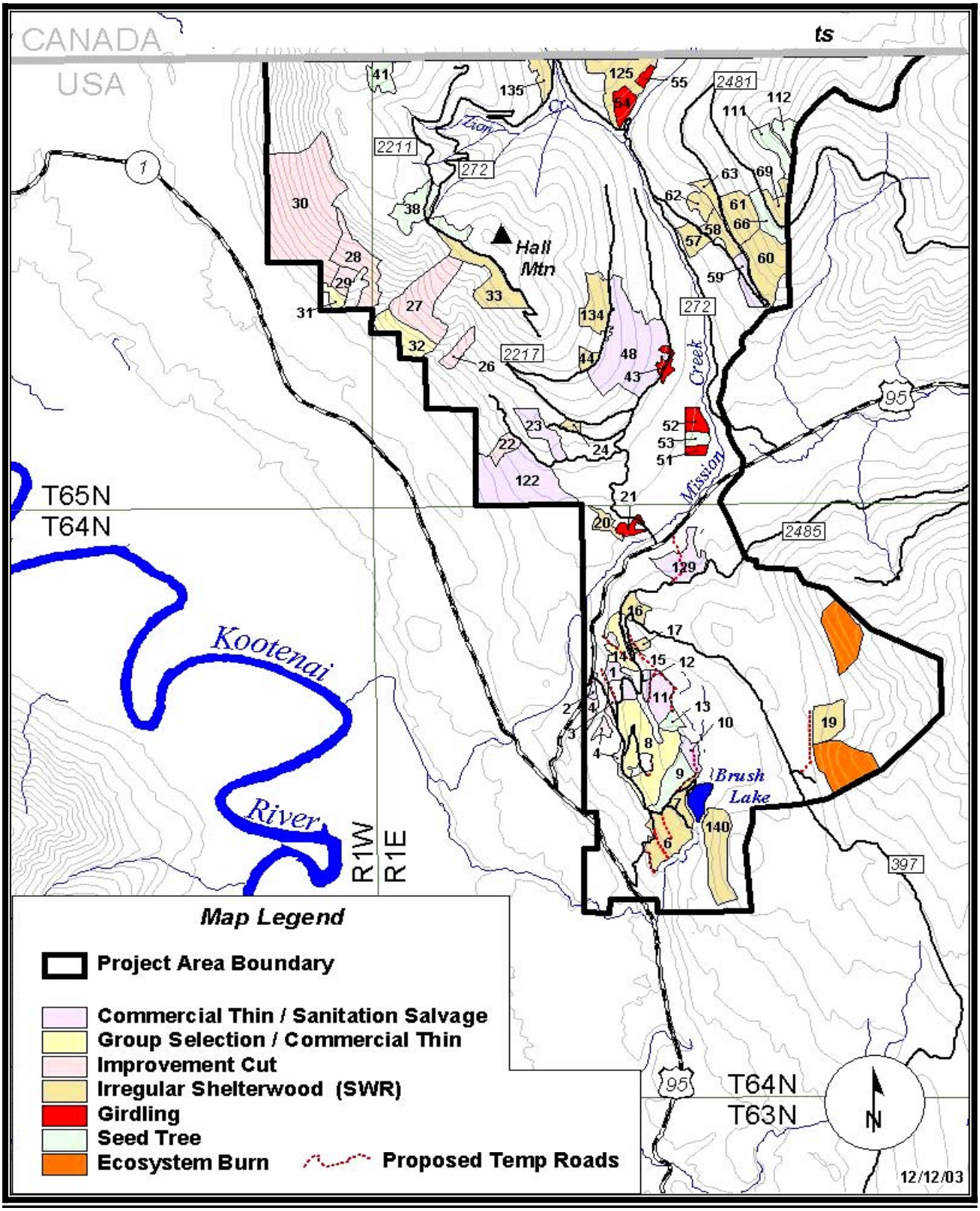


Figure 3. Brush Lake Area Closure

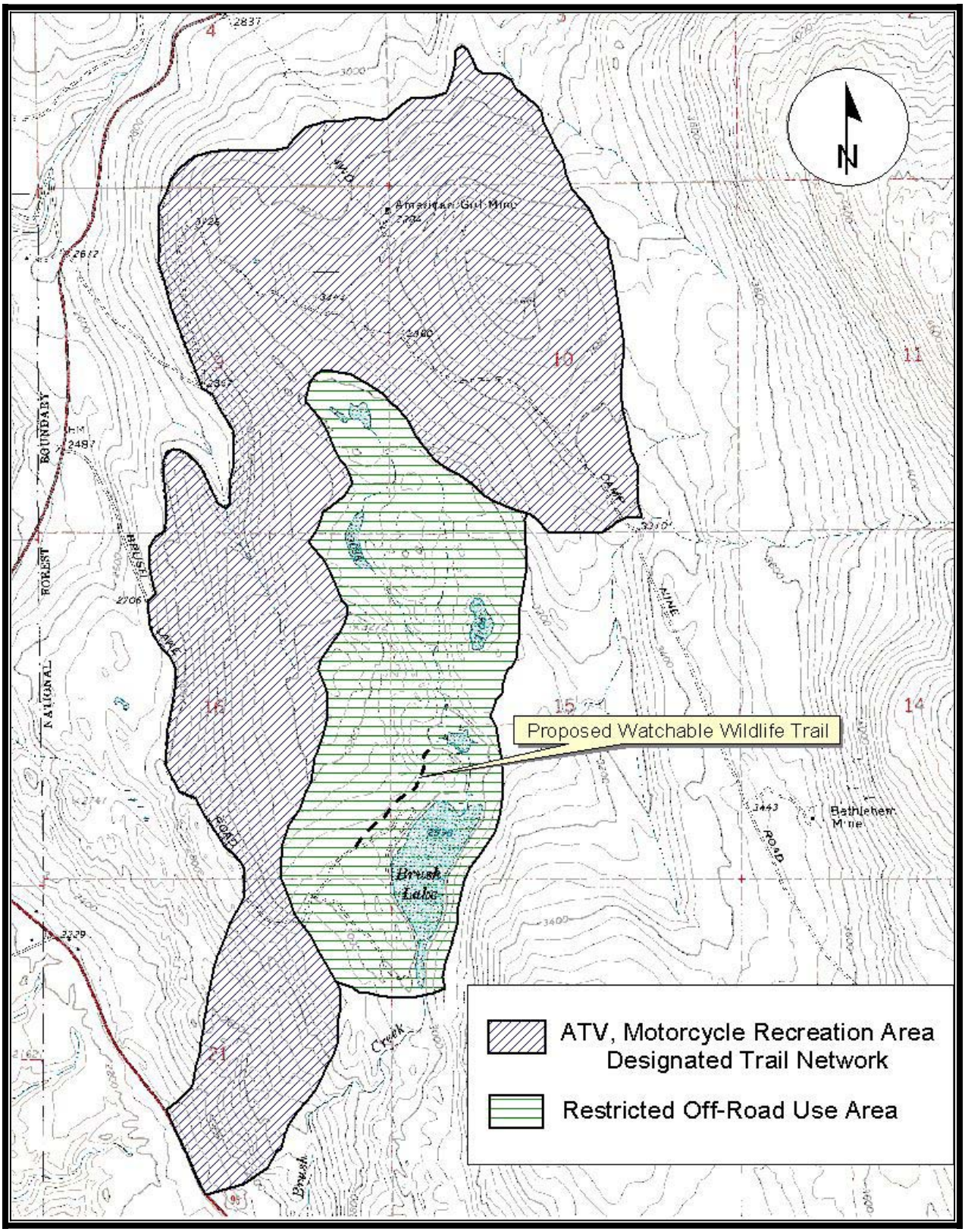
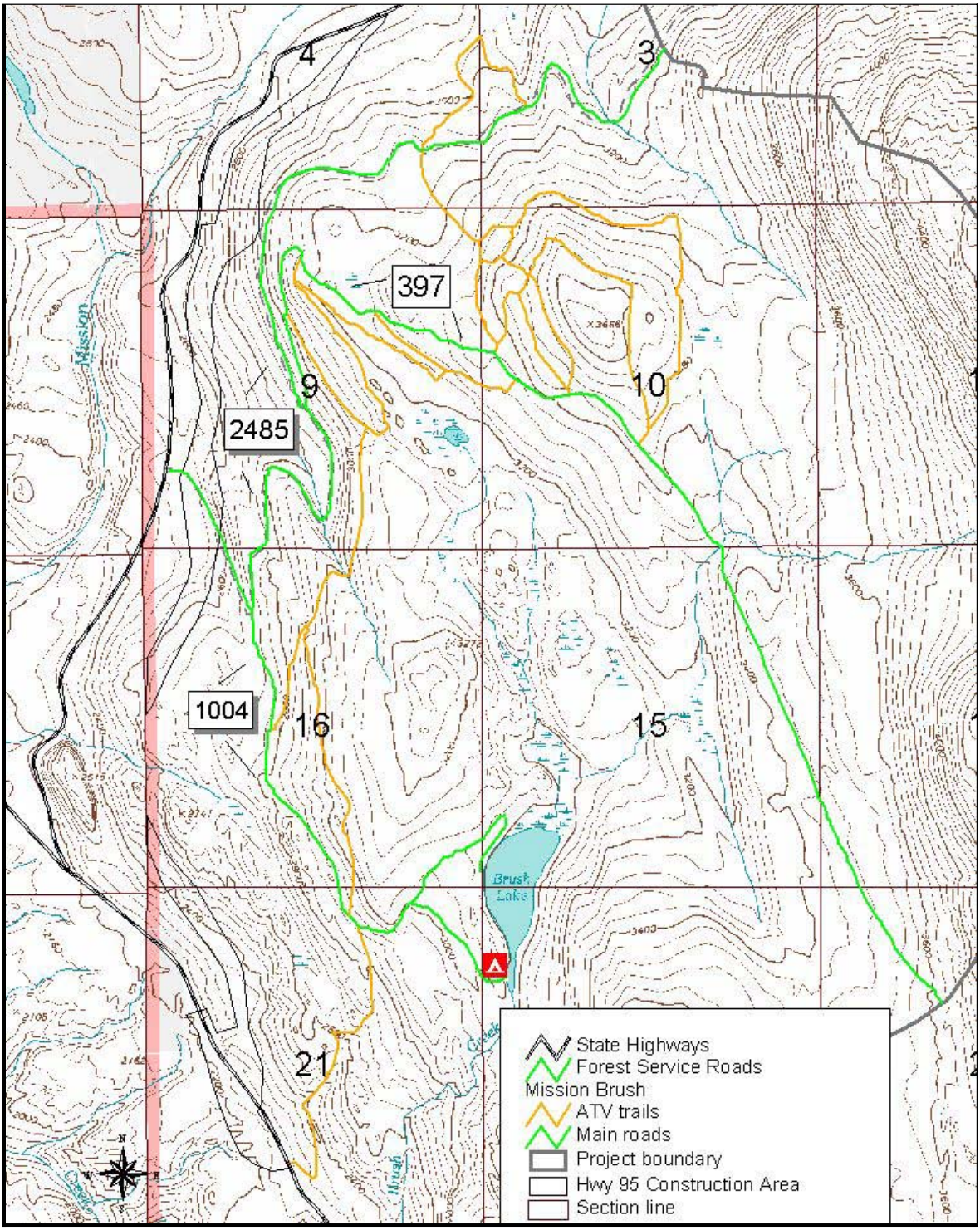
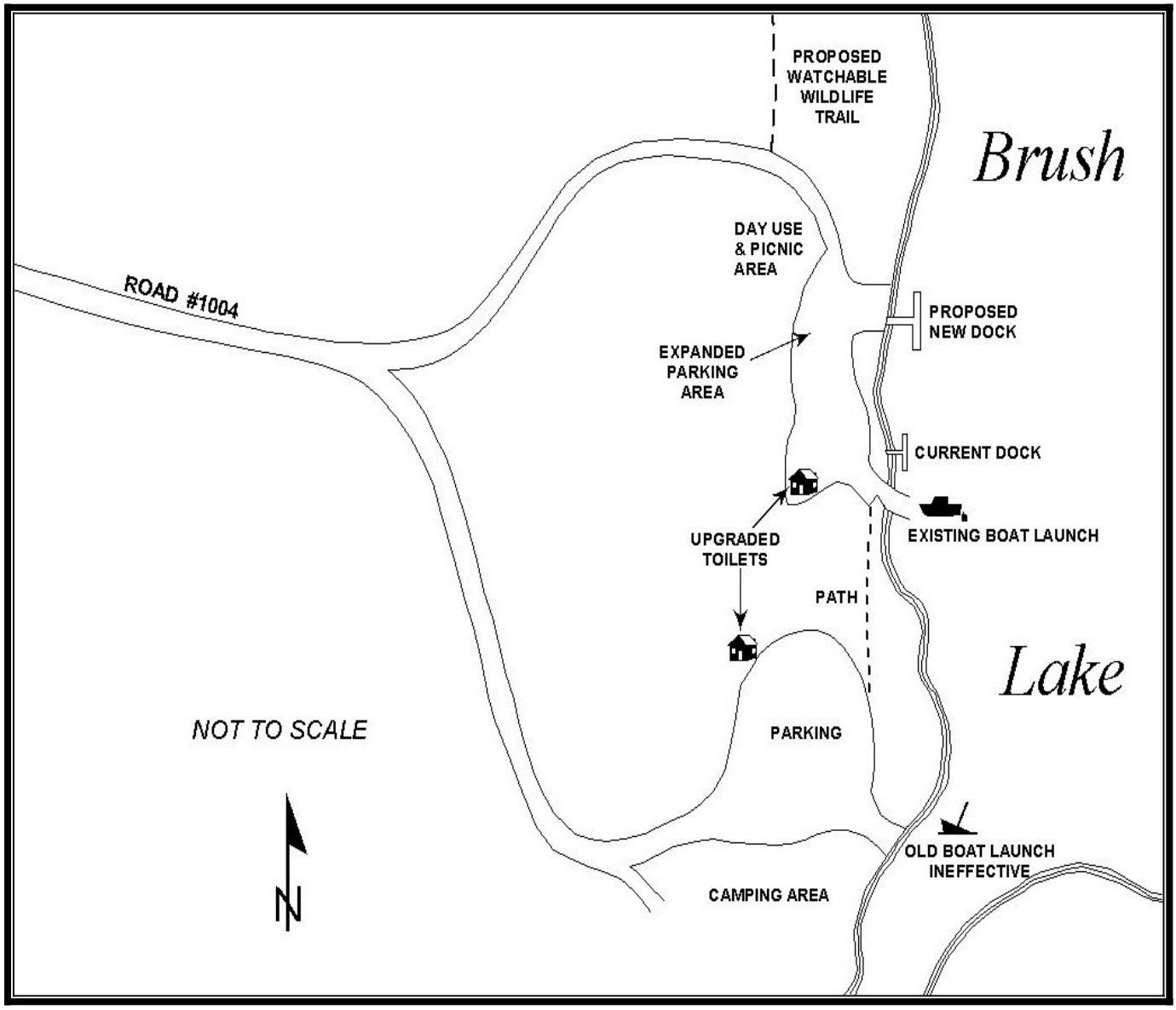


Figure 4. Brush Lake Area ATV Trail Network



This map displays the overall layout of the Brush Lake Campground and the improvements that will be made. The ATV trail network utilizes approximately 10 miles of Forest Service road system on Roads #397, #1004, and #2485; and 10 miles of motorized ATV trails.

Figure 5. Brush Lake Campground Improvements



This map displays the overall layout of the Brush Lake Campground and the improvements that will be made.

Table 2 - Proposed Road Treatments Mission Creek and Hall Mtn areas

Road	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
267-FDR	Improve for use. Place in storage after use.	Improve for use. Place in storage after use.	--------
267-UA	Place in storage at same time as 267-FDR	Place in storage at same time as 267-FDR	--------
267-UB	Place in storage at same time as 267-FDR	Place in storage at same time as 267-FDR	--------
272-FDR	Improve - See footnote #1	Improve - See footnote #1	Maintain - See note #2
272-A	Improve - See footnote #3	Improve - See footnote #3	--------
2206-FDR	Improve See footnote #4	Improve See footnote 4	--------
2211-FDR	Improve for use. Place in storage after use.	----------	--------
2211-UA	Decommission	----------	--------
2217-FDR	Improve portion used as haul route	Improve portion used as haul route	Improve haul route
2217-C	Decommission last 1/2 mile	Decommission last 1/2 mile	Decom. last 1/2 mi
2219-A	Improve for use	Improve for use	Improve for use
2481-H	Place in storage. See footnote #5.	Place in storage. See footnote #5	--------

#1 – Resurface first 1 mile and in area of East Fork bridge. General maintenance. Upgrade culvert near intersection with Road 2481.
#2 – Basic maintenance only, upgrade culvert near intersection with Road 2481.
#3 – Improve. Resurface approximately 0.5 miles. Upgrade culvert at MP 0.83.
#4 – Improve; resurface first switchback.
#5 – Storage. Pull culverts; recontour drainage. Install non-drivable waterbars connected to ditchline. Seed and close with a berm.

Roads displayed on the map that are not listed in the table (such as #2209-UE-FDR) have been analyzed for future management needs and opportunities. However, they are not included in any of the current alternatives.

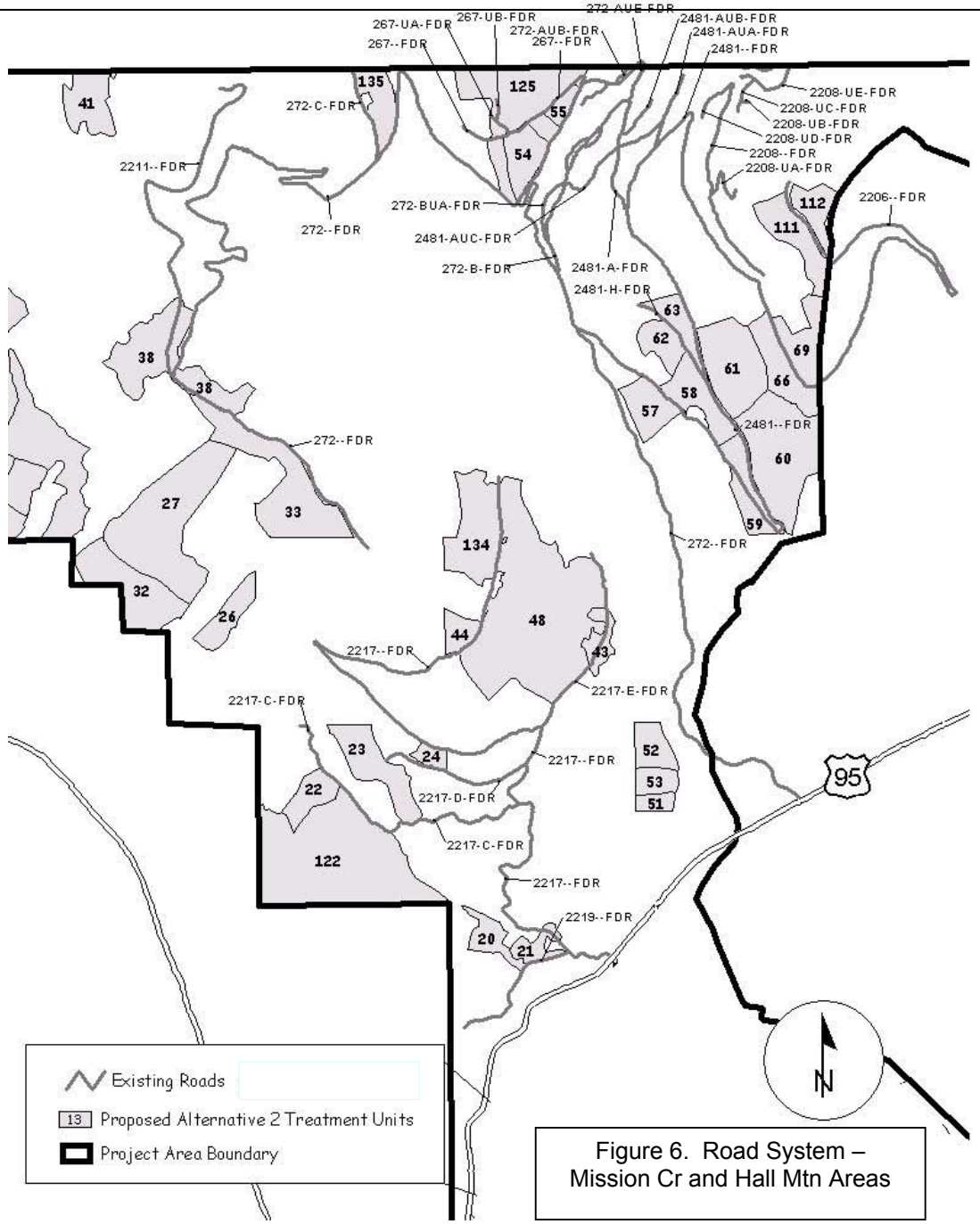


Figure 6. Road System – Mission Cr and Hall Mtn Areas

Figure 7. Road System – Brush Lake Area

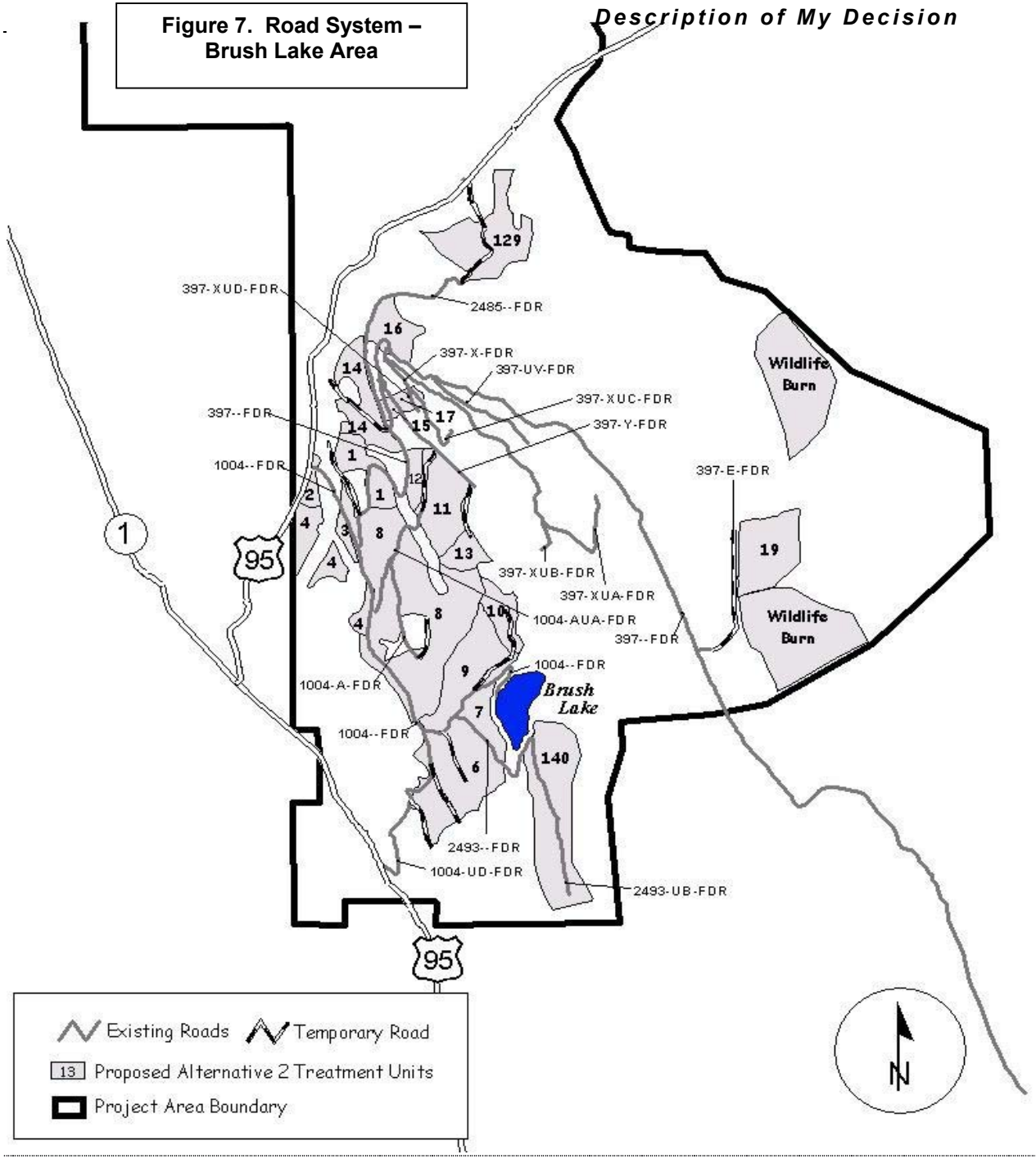


Table 3 - Proposed Road Treatments Brush Lake Area

Road	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
397-Y	Decommission after use	Decommission after use	Decommission after use
397-E	Construct temporary road Decommission after use	--------	Construct temporary road Decommission after use
397-XUC	Decommission after use	Decommission after use	Decommission after use
397-XUD	Decommission after use	Decommission after use	Decommission after use

Roads displayed on the map but not listed in the table (such as #397-UV-FDR) have been analyzed for future needs and opportunities. However, they are not included in any of the current alternatives.

2. Project Background

The Mission Brush area, located in the northeastern portion of the Bonners Ferry Ranger District, includes Mission Creek and Brush Creek drainages - totaling about 31,350 acres. The center of the project area is about 16 miles north of Bonners Ferry, Idaho, and 8 miles west of Eastport, Idaho. Hall, Tungsten, and Bethlehem Mountains are prominent peaks in the area. Approximately 16,550 acres are National Forest lands and 7490 acres are private land; about 7300 acres of the Mission Creek watershed in Canada were included in the aquatics cumulative effects analysis area. (See Figure 1)

The scope of the Mission Brush Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was determined through public involvement and agency analysis, in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act requirements at 40 CFR 1508.25. The scope of the actions includes only those site-specific, on-the-ground activities addressed by the EIS and this decision document. The EIS is not a general management plan for the Mission Brush project area.

3. Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose and need for this project was based on existing and desired future conditions of the vegetation, aquatic environment, wildlife habitat, and recreation facilities and opportunities. The project provides site-specific implementation of Forest Plan goals and objectives (Forest Plan, Chapter II; and FEIS, pp. 1-16 through 1-18).

- Vegetation Need (Forest Plan, pp. II-8, II-31, II-32)
  Trend the vegetation composition, structure, and diversity of landscape patterns toward desired future conditions across the landscape by providing for tree species and stocking levels similar to historic levels that resist insects, diseases, and stand-replacing wildfire(s). Improve landscape patterns by creating openings that more closely resemble those that occurred historically. (FEIS, page 1-4)

- Aquatic Need (Forest Plan, pp. II-6, II-7, II-9, II-29 through II-33)
  Maintain and improve the aquatic ecosystems (watershed and fisheries) in the Mission Creek and Brush Creek drainages. (FEIS, page 1-4)

- Wildlife Habitat Need (Forest Plan, pp. II-5, II-6, II-26 through II-29)
  Promote the long-term persistence and stability of wildlife habitat and biodiversity by trending toward an ecosystem composed of vegetation that more closely resembles the historic range of variability. Improve the diversity of forest structures in the area, including larger patch sizes with less fragmentation. (FEIS, page1-4)

- Recreation Need (Forest Plan, p. II-3, II-24, II-25)
  Provide recreation facilities that are safe, meet universal accessibility requirements, accommodate future needs while retaining the rustic nature of the area and improve the quality and diversity of the recreation sites around Brush Lake. Delineate recreational

areas for motorized and non-motorized use. Designate motorcycle / ATV trails to limit impacts to other resources. (FEIS, page 1-5)

Broad scale assessments were used along with the above factors to help identify needs and objectives in this area. The first was the Integrated Scientific Assessment for Ecosystem Management in the Interior Columbia Basin (ICBEMP Quigley, Haynes and Graham 1996). The ICBEMP assessment evaluated the public lands administered by the USDA Forest Service and USDI Bureau of Land Management in a 63 million-acre area within eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, most of Idaho, and westernmost Montana.

The Mission Brush project area lies within lands classified as Forest Cluster 4 in the Scientific Assessment (p. 111). These lands are characterized as moist forest types with moderate hydrologic integrity and low forest, aquatic, and composite integrity and are likely to be heavily roaded.

In Forest Cluster 4, " Forest structure has likely been altered by past management and forests generally show moderate to strong shifts in fire severity, but less change in fire frequency. Forest structure shows: decreases in late-seral structures in all elevation settings, large increases in mid-seral, decreases in early-seral, and a more homogeneous structure overall. ...Fuel management is a priority for maintenance of hydrologic function in these subbasins. ...Recovery of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems requires active and intensive restoration efforts. These subbasins have high restoration potential with much to gain and relatively little to lose." (pp. 115-116).

The Scientific Assessment findings for Forest Cluster 4 identify three primary risks to ecological integrity:

- Risks to late and old forest structures in managed areas
- Forest compositions are susceptible to insects, disease and fire
- Risks to hydrologic and aquatic systems from fire potential

The second broad scale assessment used to guide project development was the Northern Region Overview (USDA, 1998) which focused on priorities for restoring ecosystem health and availability of recreation opportunities. Overview findings conclude that there are multiple areas of concern in the Region, including forest health, aquatic health, and both terrestrial and plant species at risk (Overview Summary, p. 7). The Overview identified subregions for discussions of those concerns and to compare opportunities and potential conflicts between various objectives. The Bonners Ferry Ranger District is within the Northwest Zone. The Overview describes the Northwest Zone as follows:

> *"This subregion holds the greatest opportunity for vegetation treatments and restoration with timber sales. From a social and economic standpoint, using timber harvest for ecological restoration would be of benefit to the many communities which still have a strong economic dependency, more so than other zones in the Region. Aquatic restoration should be focused on specific needs based on zone aquatic strategy. ...Conflicts exist within the above*

> *generalizations, but could be addressed through further "step-down" or refinement at a subbasin scale."* (Overview Summary, pp. 9-10)

The Overview goes on to state, "The timber management (timber harvest) tool best fits with the forest types in northern Idaho and is essential, for example, to achieve the openings needed to restore white pine and larch, and maintain upland grass/shrub communities. It can enhance terrestrial/watershed objectives where timber funds are used to close and improve roads. Aquatic restoration could tie with assessing road access needs and obliteration of nonessential [roads]" (Overview Summary, p. 33).

Terrestrial considerations and opportunities include the following: develop a multiple species approach to viability; avoid conflict with other resource objectives (recreation); where species habitat restoration would be a benefit, utilize vegetation restoration treatments (Overview Summary, p. 21).

Aquatic opportunities include the following: maintain and restore watershed integrity, and design management activities to protect hydrologic function (Overview Summary, p. 22).

The second focus in the Northern Region Overview is recreation.

As noted in the Natural Resource Agenda, National Forests are number one provider of outdoor recreation in America. ... Among the valued characteristics of developed recreation in the Northern Region is the opportunity to camp or picnic in a natural setting with lots of "elbow room" and relatively easy access to outstanding opportunities for solitude in wilderness and other primitive settings. With increasing use and changing customer expectations, the Northern Region has for the past several years changed the level of services provided at some developed sites. ... These recreation sites provide visitors an opportunity to enjoy the comforts of developed camping while at the same time being relatively close to "wild" settings (Northern Region Overview, p 141).

Recreation opportunities include the following: link recreation opportunities to ecological restoration initiatives; identify roads to be kept open for recreation; if roads are to be rehabilitated for aquatic [needs] keep open for recreation, identify OHV opportunities; consider closure or restriction of OHV use off roads and trails in some areas (Overview Summary, pp. 25-26). The Region needs to repair its aging developed site infrastructure. Maintaining quality sites may lessen impacts in the dispersed recreation setting and maintain the "wild character" of the Region (Overview Summary, p. 9).

4. Identification of Driving Issues

The first public notice of proposed management activities in this area was made in 1997 for a project identified as the Mission Round Prairie Environmental Assessment. In late 2002, the decision was made to center this project on the Mission and Brush Creek areas – watersheds identified during the initial Mission Round Prairie assessment as high priority for restoration treatments.

Activities during Scoping	Timing
Initial interdisciplinary project team meeting for the Mission Round Prairie Assessment	January, 1997
First publication of proposal in the quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions for the IPNF	February, 1997
Development of Public Involvement Plan	June, 1997
Scoping letter and request for comments was sent to 126 entities on the contact list, including adjacent landowners. The letter included the Purpose and Need for the proposal, description of the proposed activities, description of the issues identified by the project team, plans for the transportation system, a table summarizing the silvicultural treatments, a map of the project area, and a comment form.	July, 1997
Open House at local school near the project area. The Open House was announced through a letter to the contact list and an article in the local newspaper.	September, 1997
Public Field Trip to Mission Round Prairie area	Fall, 1997
District Ranger attended a meeting of Moyie River Property Owners Association	October, 1997
Project update letter and request for comments mailed to entities on the contact list.	November, 2001
Open House at local school near the project area.	December, 2001
IPNF Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions was revised to show the decision to separate the Mission Round Prairie assessment into two proposals identified as Mission Brush EIS and Northern Prairie EIS.	January, 2003
Notice of Intent for the Mission Brush EIS was published in the Federal Register	March, 2003
Stakeholders listing updated	May, 2003

The activities outlined above identified issues pertinent to this proposal and highlighted environmental concerns, thus helping drive the development of alternatives. For additional information, see the following sections on Alternative Development, and the Comparison of Activities and Effects for the Selected Alternative. Issues and other resource concerns are discussed in detail on pages 2-3 through 2-9 of the FEIS.

Comments received on the Draft EIS emphasized concern about the following resources (see FEIS Appendix F, Response to Comments for detailed information):

- Aquatics
- ATV/OHV use
- Finance/economics
- Fire
- Insects and diseases,
- Invasive species (noxious weeds, blister rust)
- Wildlife
- Old growth vegetation
- Openings
- Recreation
- Road management
- Soils
- Restoration and historic conditions of vegetation

Some of these concerns are included in the rationale for my decision (pages 21 – 26) as parts of larger issues. For instance, fire is included in the vegetation discussion. The

invasive species, road management/access, and soils concerns are covered in separate portions of my rationale (pages 27 - 29).

4a. Issue Indicators

The following issues and their indicators were analyzed in detail (FEIS, pages 2-3 through 2-9) and documented in the FEIS (pages 2-62 through 2-76):

Table 3 Issue Indicators

Vegetation Issues	Issue Indicators
Forest Composition	Acres reforested with seral species
Forest Structure	Acres of restoration within dry forest types, and Increase in size of forest openings compared to historic estimates
Risk of Stand Replacing Fire in dry forest types	Change in risk within treatment units
Air Quality	Total tons of projected emissions
Risk of Insect and Root Disease	Change in risk within treatment units
Restoration Costs	Net Value, based on costs and benefits

Aquatic Issues	Issue Indicators
Effects of harvesting and resulting canopy openings on water yield, sediment delivery to streams, and aquatic habitat.	1) Percent change in the magnitude, intensity and duration of water yield from the existing condition. 2) Percent change in magnitude, intensity and duration of sediment delivery in Mission Creek and Brush Creek watersheds. 3) Total estimated sediment delivered in tons over the duration of the project in Mission Creek and Brush Creek watersheds. .
Effects of road construction, decommissioning, and maintenance on sediment delivery to streams and aquatic habitat.	1) Change in magnitude of sediment yields from the existing condition. 2) Change in road density of sensitive landtypes. 3) Change/improvement in miles of roads encroaching on riparian areas. 4) Change in miles of decommissioned roads and the associated benefits.
Effects of timber harvesting on mass failure potential on west- facing slopes of Hall Mountain	Risk of mass failure potential and resulting effects on soil erosion and sediment delivery.

Wildlife Issues	Issue Indicators
Canada Lynx	Changes to denning and unsuitable habitat
Grizzly bear	Changes in road density
Black-backed woodpecker	Changes in distribution and quality of snag habitat
Flammulated owl	Trends in suitable habitat
Northern goshawk	Trends in suitable nesting habitat
Fisher	Changes to habitat suitability
Pileated woodpecker	Changes to large snag habitat & old growth habitat
White-tailed deer	Changes to critical mid-winter range
Forest Land birds	Changes to priority habitats and vegetative diversity

Recreation Analysis Issues	Issue Indicators
Safety & Universal Accessibility	Changes in safety and universal accessibility features of developed facilities.
Meeting Future Needs	Change in the number of Persons at One Time
Vegetation Management at Brush Lake Campground	Acres of off-site Ponderosa Pine that are removed and resulting change in the scenery
Trail Management	Changes in amount and types of trails
Dispersed Recreation Facilities	Changes in rustic and private nature of dispersed recreation areas.

4b. Other Resource Concerns

The following concerns are addressed in the EIS. They were used to refine the alternatives and to clarify areas or types of activities that should be avoided (Appendices A and B.)

a. Noxious Weeds
b. Wildlife – TES and MIS not discussed in Chapters, 2, 3 or 4
c. Fish – TES and MIS not discussed in Chapters, 2, 3 or 4
d. Plants – TES not discussed in Chapters, 2, 3 or 4
e. Wildlife Linkages/Corridors
f. Range
g. Cultural Resources
h. Economics – Community Stability
i. Visual Quality – Scenery Management
j. Public Health and Safety
k. Effects on Minority or Low-Income Populations
l. Roadless Areas
m. Minerals

5. Alternative Development

Alternative driving, or key, issues identified through public involvement and interdisciplinary team discussions contain both external and internal concerns. The alternative driving issues, information about the current and historic conditions of the Mission Brush area and information from the broad-scale studies discussed in section 3 - Purpose and Need (pages 11-13) were used to develop five alternatives in addition to the proposed action and taking no action at this time. Three of these alternatives were considered, but not analyzed in detail for various reasons (FEIS, pp. 2-10 through 2-11).

Four alternatives were considered and analyzed in detail (FEIS, pp. 2-12 through 2-69, and Chapter 4); they are identified as:

Alternative 1 - taking no action at this time
Alternative 2 - the proposed action
Alternative 3 - developed in response to comments regarding effects of roads and road construction (road density, level of road maintenance, sources of sediment)
Alternative 4 - developed in response to comments and agency considerations for wildlife Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive (TES) species (northern goshawk and flammulated owl in particular)

Alternative 2 is described in greater detail in “My Decision” on pages 1 through 10.

5a. Alternative 1

No Action (FEIS page 2-12): This alternative provides a means for evaluating current conditions and levels of management, which can then be used as a baseline to compare the projected effects of each management alternative. The decision-maker and the public can use No Action to look at the differences that would occur on the ground if any of the other alternatives were selected. It also displays the anticipated consequences of continuing current levels of management if the No Action alternative is selected.

This alternative would defer all proposed management activities. The current level of management would continue, such as fire suppression, projects analyzed in earlier environmental analysis and decisions, and routine road and trail maintenance. (See the listing of ongoing activities and reasonably foreseeable activities, FEIS pages 1-14, 1-15.) None of the proposed actions would be taken at this time to restore vegetative composition and structure, improve wildlife habitat, or maintain hydrologic function, improve the aquatic resources, or improve recreation facilities or opportunities.

5b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 was developed through modification of the original proposal (identified as Alternative 5) in recognition of concerns that Alternative 5 would not meet water yield and sediment yield standards in Mission Creek. Alternative 2 considers public comments

received during scoping and internal concerns regarding aquatics in the Mission Creek drainage and addressed those concerns by making the following changes:

- Several treatment units, totaling just over 1400 acres, were dropped
- Silvicultural treatments, logging systems, or both in some cases, were modified in selected treatment areas
- Construction of temporary roads was reduced by approximately 2 miles
- Reconstruction of identified segments of existing roads was reduced by about 3 miles

Detailed information about the features of Alternative 2 is displayed on pages 4 through 10. Additional discussion of the ways this alternative is responsive to public comments is located on pages 24 through 29, and its effects on the resources are described on pages 34 through 35 and within Appendix 1.

5c. Alternative 3

This alternative responded to public concerns about the road density in the project area, the levels of road maintenance, and roads as sources of sediment (FEIS pp. 2-26 through 2-33). No road construction was included -- temporary or permanent; some existing roads would have been placed in storage, and other existing roads would have been decommissioned. Since temporary roads would not be constructed for access to some of the proposed vegetation treatment areas, the logging systems were changed to helicopter yarding on four units totaling 231 acres. Another 20 units totaling about 618 acres were not included in this alternative. The restoration of forest composition and structure would be met through a combination of silvicultural treatments and prescribed burning.

Alternative 3 features:

- There would be no road construction – temporary or permanent.
- Ecosystem burns to improve wildlife habitat would not be conducted.
- Improvements (roadside brushing, surface maintenance, etc.) on 37 miles of roads designated as haul routes.
- Existing roads placed in storage total 5 miles.
- Existing roads decommissioned total 13 miles.
- Vegetation treatments in 37 units, totaling 3325 acres.
- Logging systems: ground-based systems on 11 treatment units totaling 855 acres, a combination of tractor and skyline on four units totaling 795 acres, skyline only on 9 units totaling 420 acres, helicopter yarding on four units totaling 1235 acres.
- Fuels treatments in 37 units totaling 3325 acres.
- Recreation activities are the same as Alternative 2.

(Acres and miles shown above are estimates based on GIS coverages, computer calculations, and field visits.)

5d. Alternative 4

This alternative responded to public involvement and project team considerations for wildlife species that are listed as threatened, endangered or sensitive (FEIS pp. 2-34 through 2-41). It was designed specifically to improve habitat quality and/or quantity for flammulated owl, and northern goshawk while considering habitat needs for Canada lynx, grizzly bear, black-backed woodpecker, fisher, pileated woodpecker, white-tailed deer and forest land birds. Proposed vegetation treatments located in lynx habitat were not included; silvicultural prescriptions for two treatment areas were changed.

Alternative 4 Features:

- Ecosystem burns to benefit wildlife in two areas totaling 238 acres.
- About 5 miles of temporary road construction followed by decommissioning when sale-related activities are completed.
- Improvements (*roadside brushing, surface maintenance, etc.*) on 26 miles of roads designated as timber sale haul routes.
- Existing roads placed in storage total 5 miles.
- Existing roads decommissioned total 13 miles.
- Vegetation treatment in 37 units, totaling 3073 acres.
- Logging systems: ground-based systems on 830 acres, a combination of ground-based and skyline on 896 acres, skyline only on 111 acres, and helicopter on 1098 acres.
- Fuels treatment on 2936 acres.
- Recreation activities are the same as Alternative 2.

(Acres and miles shown above are estimates based on GIS coverages, computer calculations, and field visits.)

6. Development of Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Further Study

Based on internal and external scoping three other alternatives were identified by the interdisciplinary team but dismissed from detailed analysis (FEIS, pages 2-10, 2-11), as discussed below.

Alternative 5 - the original proposed action, included approximately 5550 acres of vegetation treatments. It would have reconstructed about 42 miles of roads with an emphasis on improving drainage structures, constructed roughly 7 miles of temporary roads that would have been closed or decommissioned following project-related activities, decommissioned or closed about 21 miles of existing roads. It was eliminated from further study because it was projected to exceed Forest Plan standards for water yield and sediment yield in Mission Creek.

Alternative 6 - was based on the IPNFs Forest Plan timber management goals and Allowable Sale Quantity of 280 million board feet per year. This alternative featured even-aged silviculture (clearcut, seed tree and shelterwood) and use of capital investment funding to construct new roads to access timber stands. It would have treated more than 7000 acres, mostly through even-age regeneration harvests, and required construction of about 10 miles of new road. From an overall multiple resource objective and in consideration of changes in management philosophy, this did not appear to be a reasonable alternative for the Mission Brush project.

Alternative 7 - developed in response to public comment, evaluated the potential for treatments that did not utilize commercial timber harvest to meet the vegetation objectives. Two methods were considered. One technique involved using prescribed fire, without preparing the sites in advance, with burning conditions hot enough to kill the majority of the seedling and sapling size trees and about one-fourth of the pole and sawlog size trees. For such a burn to be effective, weather and fuel conditions would both have to be very dry. Consequently, the risk of an escaped fire next to private lands would be high. The other procedure would have pretreated the areas by falling some of the unwanted trees and then using prescribed burns to meet the objectives. Although this could be done with wetter weather and fuel conditions than the first method, the number of acres involved and the proximity to private lands still presented an inappropriate level of risk.

7. Release of the Draft EIS

The Draft EIS (DEIS) documented the current conditions in the project area. These conditions represent the effects of past activities, both natural and human-caused. The DEIS also described the purpose and need for proposed management actions in the project area; and disclosed the direct effects, indirect effects, and cumulative effects of the proposal. Those findings were presented to the public for review in the Draft EIS. Based on comments from the public and other agencies, some changes were made between the Draft EIS and Final EIS and this Record of Decision (Final EIS pages 2-2 and 2-3).

Table 4 - Summary of public involvement activities following completion of the DEIS.

Activity	Timing
Mission Brush Draft EIS released to the public	August, 2003
Notice of Availability for DEIS published by Federal Register	September, 2003
Legal Notice of Availability and Request for Comments on DEIS published in Spokesman-Review	September, 2003
End of Comment Period	October 27, 2003

8. Response to comments on the DEIS

Comments on the Draft EIS were primarily a review of previous concerns; some provided additional detail or discussion. No new concerns were brought forward. The summarized comments and our responses are provided in FEIS Appendix F.

9. Rationale for My Decision

I have made this decision based on the following criteria:

- How well the selected alternative meets the purpose and need for action.
- How well the alternative responds to environmental and social issues and concerns identified by the public, other agencies, and Forest Service resource specialists.
- The activities/effects of the selected alternative and the other alternatives considered.
- Consistency with goals of the IPNF Forest Plan.
- Consistency with Forest Service policy and other legal mandates.

9a. Meeting the purpose and need for action

Alternative 1 (No Action) would not meet my goals and objectives for the project area. The vegetation would continue to move away from the desired composition, structure and diversity. Risks from insects, disease, and stand-replacing wildfires would continue to be of concern. Activities to improve and maintain the aquatic ecosystems in the Mission Creek and Brush Creek drainages would not be undertaken at this time. Deferring vegetation treatments would not promote wildlife habitat diversity, stability or long-term persistence. Recreation facilities at Brush Lake Campground would not be upgraded to standards or to meet predicted future needs. Resource protection through designation of All Terrain Vehicle trails (ATV trails) and other access management would be deferred. Dispersed recreation experiences could change as a consequence of insects or disease damage in the vegetation, or wildfire events.

For the **vegetation** on drier sites, Douglas-fir would continue to dominate; larch and ponderosa pine would become displaced as growing conditions become less favorable. As the stands become ever more dense, competition for water and nutrients would stress the trees and limit their productivity. Without use of prescribed fire and other silvicultural treatments, the risk of insects, disease, and wildfire would increase over time. Wildfires would burn with much greater intensity than they did historically. Old growth veteran ponderosa pine that would have survived the historically light intensity burns would probably be killed and the risk of permanent site damage and alteration of species would continue. Fire intensity would be high enough in some areas that soil productivity would be lost. Fires would be more costly, more difficult to suppress, and pose greater risk to adjacent private lands (FEIS, pp. 4-2, 4-4, 4-5).

The **aquatic ecosystem** would not benefit from improvements on roads, decommissioning or storage of other roads such as on Road 272, which currently poses the greatest risk of sediment from roads in the Mission Creek drainage. Spur Road 272-C would not be obliterated and the risk of mass failure would not be lessened. Without improvements to culverts and surfacing on other roads, sediment-associated risks would continue. No roads would be decommissioned or placed in storage. Wetland degradation would continue (FEIS, pages 4-34 through 4-36). (FEIS Appendices A, B, C, and F contain additional information on road management for aquatic benefits.)

The effects on **wildlife** vary by species:

Denning opportunities for the **Canada lynx** in dead and dying timber stands would improve as the vegetation structure changes. The population of snowshoe hares, their principal prey, may well decline to a point the food supply would not support lynx occupation of the area. A large stand-replacing wildfire would make denning stands unsuitable and result in conditions that would not support high densities of snowshoe hares for another 20 to 30 years (FEIS, page 4-56).

Openings that are providing forage for **grizzly bears** will close in; without silvicultural treatments and use of prescribed fire, grizzly bear habitat would probably decline. Without management of the transportation system and access to the area, open road density would remain at its current high level. (FEIS, page 4-59, 4-60)

Black-backed woodpecker individuals or habitat may be impacted (FEIS, p. 4-62). Habitat suitability for **flammulated owls** would decline (FEIS, p. 4-66). Suitable **northern goshawk** habitat would be lost over time (FEIS, p. 4-70, 4-71). In the short-term, this alternative would provide better **fisher** habitat; however, depending on future wildfire occurrence, some of these areas might be converted to an unsuitable condition (FEIS, p. 4-76). Habitat for species associated with large snags, such as the **pileated woodpecker**, would continue to decline (FEIS, p. 4-80). Forage habitat for the **white-tailed deer** would continue to decline with no disturbance to the vegetation patterns (FEIS, p. 4-84). For **forestland birds**, the long-term viability of the dry ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir habitats is at risk and would continue to decline (FEIS, p. 4-86, 4-87).

The **recreation** facilities and opportunities would continue under current management levels. The Brush Lake Campground and boating facilities would not be improved for safety, universal accessibility or to meet future needs. Scenery management would not be undertaken, resource protection through designation of ATV trails and access management would not occur. Trails would not be upgraded to meet safety concerns. Dispersed recreation areas could change as a consequence of insects, disease, or wildfire events in the vegetation. (FEIS pages 4-90, 4-91)

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative), an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to management of the project area; fully meets my goals and objectives. It does more to meet the vegetation needs than the other alternatives by treating approximately 4,036 acres. The aquatic needs are met by reducing impacts of about 39 miles of existing roads by

improving drainage structures and road surfaces, and putting approximately 5 miles of roads into storage, and decommissioning about 13 miles of existing roads. New roads will be temporary (approximately 5 miles) and will be closed or decommissioned following use. The selected alternative does the most to promote long-term persistence and stability of wildlife habitat through vegetation treatments, and ecosystem burning on about 238 acres. Recreation objectives would also be fully met by:

- Upgrading the facilities at Brush Lake campground,
- Providing footpaths and overlooks with interpretive signs describing the local wildlife and other landscape features.
- Designating well-signed trail networks for ATV use as well as area closures where ATVs would be prohibited in order to protect wetland habitat.

Alternative 3 would partially meet the purpose and need (FEIS, page 4-6). It does less for vegetation needs than either Alternative 2 or 4. It would treat vegetation on only about 3325 acres, and treat fuels on 15% less than the area treated in Alternative 2. It does not address insect and disease concerns as fully because approximately 136 acres of trees infested with mistletoe would not be treated by girdling. While there would be less potential impact to the aquatic ecosystem because no temporary roads would be constructed, only 26 miles of roads would be improved, compared to 39 miles in Alternative 2, and the long-term goals for the aquatic ecosystem would fall short. Wildlife habitat needs are not met as fully because there are no plans to conduct the ecosystem burns on approximately 238 acres and other vegetation and fuels treatments are substantially reduced compared to Alternative 2. It would meet the same recreation objectives as Alternative 2.

Alternative 4 would partially meet the purpose and need (FEIS, page 4-6), although to a higher degree than Alternative 3. Vegetation treatments would include the 136 acres of tree girdling to lessen impacts from mistletoe in larch and Douglas-fir, but there would be about 960 fewer acres of other vegetation treatments than in Alternative 2. Fuels treatments are reduced by about 8% less than the area taken care of in Alternative 2. Benefits to aquatic ecosystems are not as great as Alternative 2 because 26 miles of existing roads would be improved rather than 39 miles. This alternative would construct approximately 5 miles of temporary road to be decommissioned after use, and decommission about 13 miles of existing roads - the same as Alternative 2. It would also meet the same recreation objectives as Alternative 2.

Table 4, page 31, summarizes the activities analyzed and considered in each alternative.

9b. Responding to Environmental and Social Issues and Concerns

The alternative driving issues and concerns, and how they were identified through public involvement and discussions by the interdisciplinary team, are discussed in the FEIS (pages 2-3 through 2-9) and in section 4 of this ROD (pages 13 - 16). The alternatives respond to them in the following ways.

1. Vegetation issues

(See issue indicators on page 15 and Summary of Effects in Table 4, page 31)

Alternative 1 (No Action) does not respond to the vegetation issues (FEIS, pp. 4-1 through 4-4). All proposed management activities would be deferred. The forest ecosystem would continue to develop conditions that are outside the sustainable historic composition and structure. The level of risk from insect and disease damage as well as risk of stand-replacing wildfire would become more unacceptable. Dry site old growth will not be treated in a manner that will help the stands be more sustainable over time. Wildfires are likely to burn with much greater intensity than they did historically and would have the potential to impact air quality and remove nutrients from the site in the smoke column. Fires would be more costly, more difficult to suppress, and pose greater risk to adjacent private lands. No funds would be generated for restoration activities and no jobs or forest products would be generated for the local/regional economies. The size of forest openings would not change (FEIS, pages 4-13, 4-14).

See the vegetation paragraph of section 9a Meeting the Purpose and Need, for additional information on this alternative.

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative) responds to the vegetation issues to a higher degree than either Alternative 3 or 4, or the No Action alternative (FEIS, pages 4-5, 4-13, 4-14, and 4-16 through 4-22). Forest composition and structure and will move toward sustainable historic levels as the percentage of long-lived seral species increases, with a corresponding decrease in the short-lived species. Risk of stand-replacing fire will be reduced by about 50% within the treated areas, and by about 20% overall within the entire project area (FEIS, page 2-66). The risk of root disease damage will decrease by 35% (FEIS, page 2-66) and continue to be at lower levels as the vegetation is converted to open grown stands of the less susceptible species, see FEIS for details. Over 500 acres of dry site old growth and potential old growth will be treated with the objective of restoring the historic integrity of the stands while meeting current old growth forest plan standards. Air quality will be affected to a limited amount by smoke during prescribed burning; however burning will be conducted in accordance with the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement, recognized by the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality as the best available control technology for prescribed burning (FEIS, page 2-47.) To trend toward the historic patterns on the landscape, openings will be created as a result of active forest management.

Alternative 3 does not respond to the vegetation issues as well as Alternative 2 (FEIS pages 2-62, 4-5, 4-13, 4-14, and 4-16 through 4-22). This alternative would treat about 700 acres less than the Selected Alternative. It does not include tree girdling in roughly 136 acres of larch and Douglas-fir infected with mistletoe; nor does it include about 238 acres of ecosystem prescribed burns. The amount of fuels treatment is about 15% less than the Selected Alternative. This alternative would have created fewer forest openings.

Alternative 4 would respond to the vegetation issue to a higher level than Alternative 3, but would treat about 963 acres less than Alternative 2 (FEIS pages 4-6, 4-13, 4-14 and 4-16 through 4-22). While it does include tree girdling on approximately 136 acres of larch and Douglas-fir infected with mistletoe and about 238 acres of ecosystem prescribed burns, it would treat fuels on about 8% less of the area than the Selected Alternative. It would have created the fewest forest openings. (FEIS, page 2-26.)

2. Old Growth Issues

Old growth forests have a unique structure and composition that provides critical habitat for a wide range of plants, animals, and other biota. Forest Plan direction is to maintain at least 10 percent of the forested portion of the IPNF as old growth. For distribution purposes at least 5% of each old growth management unit (OGMU) must be maintained as old growth. As part of the IPNF Forest Plan (1987) strategy, 10% of the total forested area, (roughly 51,000 acres) on Bonners Ferry Ranger District was allocated for old growth management, as directed in a letter from the Forest Supervisor on May 7, 1991. The Mission Brush assessment area intersects OGMU 19 and 20. More information on old growth can be found in the FEIS (pages 4-31 through 4-33.)

The selected alternative includes entry into 344 acres of dry site old growth stands with. treatments designed to restore the historic integrity of this type of old growth. Silvicultural prescriptions and treatment unit marking guides will ensure that old growth trees will not be harvested. Silvicultural prescriptions including periodic underburning will retain the old growth ponderosa pine, western larch, and even the scattered old growth Douglas-fir, in the treated stands. Additionally, trees from smaller size classes will be retained to provide additional structural diversity and replacement old growth for the future. In the long-term, these conditions will be more sustainable.

This alternative will result in no net loss of allocated old growth. Consequently, Forest Plan standards for old growth maintenance and distribution would be met.

3. Aquatic issues

(See issue indicators on page 15 and Summary of Effects in Table 4, pages 31 - 32)

Alternative 1 (No Action) does not respond to the aquatic ecosystem issues related to water yield, sediment production, and aquatic habitat. There would be no improvements on roads and other roads would not be decommissioned or placed in storage; thus those benefits would not be seen. Sediment risks associated with roads would continue and failure of drainage structures could occur under certain conditions. Wetland degradation would continue. (FEIS, pp. 4-35, 4-36) See the aquatics paragraph of section 9a Meeting the Purpose and Need, for more information on this alternative.

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative, FEIS pages 4-36 through 5-51) addresses the aquatics issues in ways that are similar to Alternatives 3 and 4, but does include some particularly important features that make it more responsive. It will improve/maintain more miles of road than the other alternatives (39 miles versus 37 or 26 miles). This will reduce the risk of

failing drainage structures, and sediment delivery in the project area. Alternative 2 will construct about 5 miles of temporary road, versus 0 in Alternative 3, but the same 5 miles as Alternative 4 (FEIS, page 2-62). Decommissioning existing roads will restore slope stability, eliminate surface erosion, and eliminate the requirement for future road maintenance. Research has shown recovery of decommissioned roads within three to five years following the work (Hickenbottom 2001, USDA 2001, and Redente et al, 1994 – FEIS, page 4-38). Monitoring of previous road decommissioning on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District has shown recovery within this time frame (IPNF Monitoring Report, 2002 – DEIS page 4-35.) Fish habitat will be improved or maintained; long-term benefits will be provided (FEIS, pages 4-41 through 4-46.)

Alternative 3 (FEIS pages 4-36 through 4-51) would not construct any temporary roads, but did not respond as well to concerns with the existing road system. There would have been slightly less benefit to the watershed because there would have been fewer miles of road maintenance and improvement than the Selected Alternative (37 miles rather than 39 miles and no temporary road construction). The other road decommissioning, and storage activities were the same as Alternatives 2 and 4 (FEIS, page 2-62). Fish habitat would have been improved or maintained; long-term benefits would have been provided.

Alternative 4 (FEIS 4-36 through 4-51) would also have similar effects on the aquatic ecosystem, but did the least to respond to concerns with the existing road system. It would have improved or maintained approximately 26 miles of roads – about 13 miles less than the Selected Alternative. It included the same 5 miles of temporary road construction, 13 miles of road decommissioning and 4.5 miles of road storage as the Selected Alternative (FEIS, page 2-62.) Fish habitat would have been improved or maintained; long-term benefits would have been provided.

4. Wildlife issues

(See issue indicators on page a6 and Summary of Effects in Table 4, page 32 through 34)

See Table 3, pages 28 through 30, 32, 33 and Appendix 1, as well as FEIS pages 4-52 through 4-89, and FEIS Appendices B and F.

Alternative 1 (No Action) would affect wildlife in varying ways, depending on the particular species' habitat needs. This alternative defers vegetation treatments and thus does not respond to potentially negative changes in wildlife habitat. No roads would be decommissioned or placed in storage, so the open road density would remain the same. (FEIS, pages 2-67 and Chapter 4 Wildlife.)

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative) would affect wildlife in varying ways, depending on the particular species' habitat needs. This alternative includes the greatest amount of vegetation treatments and thus does the most to respond to potentially negative changes in habitat components for the following species: Canada lynx, grizzly bear, black-backed woodpecker, flammulated owl, northern goshawk, fisher, pileated woodpecker, and forest land birds (comparison of effects - No Action Alternative, FEIS, pages 2-67.) Roads will be

decommissioned or placed in storage, reducing the open road density. (FEIS, pages 4-52 through 4-89)

Alternative 3 would affect wildlife in varying ways, depending on the particular species' habitat needs. This alternative would have treated substantially less of the vegetation needs and thus does less to respond to potentially negative changes in wildlife habitat. The same roads would have been decommissioned or placed in storage, reducing the open road density in an amount equal to the Selected Alternative. (FEIS pages 4-52 through 4-89)

Alternative 4 was designed to avoid vegetation treatments in lynx habitat and to improve habitat for flammulated owl, pileated woodpecker, and northern goshawk. It would have resulted in less forage for white-tailed deer and would have had less benefit for forest land birds. Ecosystem burns would have been conducted on about 238 acres. Roads would have been decommissioned or placed in storage in the same ways as Alternative 2, reducing the open road density in an amount equal to the Selected Alternative. (FEIS, pages 4-52 through 4-89)

5. Introduction of Invasive Species (Noxious Weeds)

Alternative 1 (No Action) in general, would have less potential for introduction of noxious weeds into new areas because all proposed management activities would be deferred. However, there would be no timber sale contract to guarantee treatment of weeds along roads used as haul routes. Without designation of the motorized/non-motorized trails and restricted off-road use area adjacent to Brush Lake, the current potential for weed infestation/spread in these areas would not be lessened. See FEIS Appendix A, page A-1, for more information.

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 are all designed to avoid or mitigate introduction of noxious weeds (FEIS pages 2-44, 2-46, and 2-61 - Design Features.) Because of features designed to detect and eradicate new invaders, no new invaders are expected to become established. Cumulative effects from existing weed infestations are expected to be low to moderate. (FEIS, Appendix B, page B-34) Preventive seeding, monitoring and weed treatment would reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of weed spread (FEIS, Appendix B, page B-36)

6. Road/Access Management

The environmental analysis for this project included a formal Roads Analysis by the interdisciplinary team (DEIS, p. 3-37) to prioritize road improvement, decommissioning, or storage needs. The analysis also determined which routes are needed long-term and those that would be short-term (temporary) needs within the project area. Public comments vary from those wanting increased access to those preferring no change in current status, to those who believe there should be fewer roads and additional restrictions on motorized use within National Forest lands.

Alternative 1 (No Action) addresses the portion of the access management issue that favors no change from current conditions. It does not address the aquatic or wildlife concerns associated with roads, or the recreation concerns associated with access and motorized uses of trails and off-road areas. Within the grizzly bear Deer Ridge Occupancy Area, there are about 145 miles of drivable roads and motorized trail, including 136 miles of open roads. This creates a total road density of 3.32 miles/mile^2, and an open road density of 3.12 miles/mile^2 (FEIS, page 4-59). On USFS-managed lands within the analysis area, open road density is currently 2.64 miles/mile^2, and total road density is 2.90 mi/mile^2. Without access management, open road density in the occupied grizzly bear area would remain at its current high level.

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative) addresses recreation/social, aquatic and wildlife concerns associated with roads When post-harvest decommissioning activities are completed, total road densities in the grizzly bear Deer Ridge Occupancy Area would be reduced to 3.20 miles/mile^2, and open road densities would be 2.98 miles/mile^2 (FEIS, page 4-59). In the Brush Lake area, a system of trails will be designated for motorcycle/ATV use and the area adjacent to the wetlands and Brush Lake will designated as restricted from off-road motorized use (see Figures 3 and 4). Alternative 2 is the most balanced approach between social and environmental needs for access, and the aquatic, wildlife and other resource concerns associated with roads.

Alternative 3 was developed in response to comments and concerns regarding the environmental effects of roads and road construction. No temporary roads would have been constructed. Without this access, four harvest units totaling about 190 acres in the Brush Lake area were dropped, and logging systems were changed for portions of other units. Miles of existing road to be decommissioned or put into storage would have been the same as Alternatives 2 and 4. However, 2 miles less of maintenance/improvement work would have been accomplished. When post-harvest road decommissioning is completed, total road densities would be reduced to 3.20 miles/mile^2, and open road densities would be 2.98 miles/mile^2 (FEIS, page 4-60). The recreation access features would have been the same as Alternative 2.

Alternative 4 responds to most of the road management and access issues in the same manner as Alternative 2. The key difference is that Alternative 4 would improve/maintain 13 miles less of the existing roads than Alternative 2 (26 miles rather than 39.) Road decommissioning, storage, and construction of temporary roads are the same as Alternative 2. When post-harvest road decommissioning is completed, road densities would be reduced to 2.98 miles/mile^2 (FEIS, page 4-60). The recreation access features would have been the same as Alternative 2.

F. Soil Resource

Alternative 1 (No Action) would defer proposed management activities; thus limiting any soil resources issues from new activities in the project area. However, it would also take no

action at this time to rehabilitate the detrimental soil conditions found in a small portion of the project area (unit 16, about 34 acres).

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative) responds to soils and productivity issues in many ways. Development of project activities included the design features and criteria outlined in the FEIS (FEIS, pp. 2-45-46, 2-47, 2-49.) Field surveys were conducted to verify existing condition of the soils in the proposed units, which were analyzed with techniques outlined in the Region One Soil Quality Standards. Only one proposed treatment area, Unit 16 (34 acres in size), surpassed the R-1 soil standard of 15% due to detrimental rutting in old skid trails (FEIS, p. 2-45, item c.) In Unit 16, old skid trails will be rehabilitated in order to trend the amount of detrimentally impacted area toward Region One soil standards (FEIS pages 4-45 through 4-47 and 4-49).

The roads scheduled for decommissioning will be made hydrologically inert where applicable and the road footprint would recover over the long term, benefiting the soil resource in the project area (project file). Additional soils information is located in FEIS Appendix F - Response to Public Comments.

Alternatives 3 and 4 were developed with the same soils design features and criteria as Alternative 2. Alternative 3 did not include Unit 16, thus there would be no rehabilitation for the soil resource in that unit. Alternative 4 does include Unit 16 and would have treated it in the same ways as Alternative 2.

8. Recreation Facilities and Uses

(See issues on page 16 and Summary of Effects in Table 4, page 34)

Recreation opportunities and facilities include both natural resource and social concerns. This portion of my rationale deals with the social aspects of recreation within the project area. The natural resources side of recreation is included in the discussions of vegetation, aquatics and wildlife.

Alternative 1 (No Action) addresses the portion of the social/recreation issue that prefers no change from the current conditions. It does not address Brush Lake Campground concerns with safety, universal accessibility, future needs, and vegetation/scenery management; or trail management, ATV use and dispersed recreation facilities outside the campground.

Alternative 2 (Selected Alternative) and Alternatives 3 and 4 respond to the social/recreation issues in the same ways. The Brush Lake Campground will be upgraded to meet safety and universal accessibility needs, meet projected future needs, and vegetation/scenery management in and adjacent to the facilities. These alternatives respond to opportunities for dispersed recreation and motorized uses as shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5. (FEIS, pages 4-90and 4-91)

9c. Effects of the Selected Alternative and Comparison to other Alternatives

The effects of the selected alternative are described in the following table, with references to pages in the FEIS for more detailed information. Effects of Alternative 2 and the other alternatives are compared in Section 9d – Summary of Effects by Resource Objectives - on pages 34 through 39. More information is included in Appendix 1 and in response to comments on the DEIS in Appendix F of the FEIS.

Table 5 - Summary of Effects of Alternative 2

Issue	Indicator	Effects
Vegetation		
Forest Composition and Structure (FEIS, p 4-1 thru 4-12)	Acres reforested with seral species and acres of reforestation within dry forest types	In the long term, there will be an increase in the percentage of long-lived seral species, and a decrease in the percentage of short-lived species. Conditions will be moving toward sustainable historic forest composition and structure.
Openings (FEIS, p. 4-13 thru 4-14		Openings greater than 40 acres would blend into the existing openings. These openings would more closely resemble those created historically through historic fires. The average opening size would increase from 34 to 61 acres, which represents an increase of nearly 80%. Limiting treatment units to 40 acres or less would not effectively address the long-term vegetation needs in the project area. A list of the openings greater than 40 acres for Alternative 2 is provided in Table 4-2 (FEIS page 4-14).
Risk of Stand-Replacing Fire (FEIS, p 4-14 thru 4-19)	Change in risk within treatment units and the project area	Within the treatment units, the risk will be reduced by about 50%. Within the project area overall, it will be reduced by 20%.
Air Quality (FEIS, p 4-21 thru 4-27)	Total tons of projected emissions	The specific days and conditions under which prescribed burning activities will be conducted will be determined in accordance with the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement. Prescribed burning is also coordinated through the Idaho/Montana airshed group, further ensuring that federal air quality standards will be met.
Insects and Root Disease (FEIS, p 4-20	Change in risk within treatment units	Insects - Alternative 2 would treat an estimated 260 acres that are rated either moderate or high hazard for mountain pine beetle (Randall and Tensmeyer

thru 4-21)		2000) and another 610 acres that are rated moderate or high hazard for Douglas-fir beetle (Randall and Tensmeyer 1999). An estimated 200 acres of mountain pine beetle hazard stands and another 215 acres of Douglas-fir beetle hazard stands would be treated with units larger than 40 acres Root Disease - The risk of root disease will be reduced by an estimated 35%.
Restoration Costs (FEIS, p 4-27 thru 4-28)	Net Value, based on costs & benefits	The selected alternative is expected to generate more revenue than will be needed to conduct the activities to meet the desired ecosystem objectives. The Net Value is estimated to range from $688,000 to $1,484,000.
Aquatic (FEIS, p 4-34 thru 4-51) **Effects on water yield, sediment delivery, and aquatic habitat**	- Change in water & sediment yields and period of recovery to baseline. - Stream channel dynamics/bank erosion. - Acres of activity on sensitive landtypes.	Water & sediment yields would increase, but remain within the natural range of variation and are not expected to effect stream morphology. Improvements to Road 272 would reduce sediment inputs. In the Hall Mtn area, treatments include 34 acres of sensitive landtypes; however there is no predicted increase in risk of landslides due to the project's design criteria. Aquatic (fish) habitat would be improved or maintained.
Effects of road management on sediment delivery and aquatic habitat	- Change in sediment yields - Change in road density on sensitive landtypes - Improvement in miles of road encroaching on riparian areas - Miles of roads decommissioned and associated benefits	Culvert replacements would reduce the risk of drainage structure failure and culvert removal would eliminate this risk; thus reducing sediment yields. This would result in a long-term benefit to aquatic habitat and fisheries. There would be no increase in road density in the sensitive landtypes in the Hall Mtn area. Decommissioning of roads will result in recovery/reduction of sediment yields within 3 to 5 years following completion of work.
Effects of timber harvesting in areas with mass failure potential on Hall Mtn	Risk of mass failure potential & effects on soil erosion & sediment delivery.	Treatments include 34 acres of sensitive landtypes in the Hall Mtn area; however the project has been designed in such a way that there is no predicted increase in risk of landslides.

Wildlife (FEIS, 4-52 through 4-89)		
Potential effects to TES		
Canada lynx (FEIS, pp. 4-54 – 4-58)	Changes to denning & suitable habitat	There will be some impact to approximately 307 acres of existing habitat, including loss of modeled denning habitat; at the same time, about 990 acres of recruitment stands will be provided for future high quality snowshoe hare habitat. Using INFS standards in riparian areas will preserve important lynx travel corridors for the Hall-Mission Lynx Analysis Unit. Lynx habitat conditions will meet LCAS standards and be consistent with the Forest Plan.
Grizzly bear (FEIS, pp. 4-59 – 4-61)	Changes in road density	When post-harvest road decommissioning is finished, road densities will be reduced from the current 3.0 miles per sq mile to 2.5 miles per sq mile. Regeneration of about 889 acres should enhance future foraging opportunities for bear. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan.
Black-backed woodpecker (FEIS, pp. 4-62 – 4-65)	Changes in distribution & quality of snag habitat	Long-term increase in quality snags. In the short-term the quantity of snag habitat will be reduced, but will remain sufficient to maintain populations at low endemic levels and current distribution. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan.
Flammulated owl (FEIS, pp. 4-65 – 4-70)	Trends in suitability habitat	Active management through regeneration and selective cutting can help restore natural processes; Alternative 2 will promote the long-term viability of flammulated owl habitat. In the short-term there will be no decrease in suitable habitat acres. Flammulated owls will maintain their same general distribution, thus maintaining species viability. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan.
Northern goshawk (FEIS, pp. 4-70 – 4-76)	Trends in suitable nesting habitat	Selective cutting will sustain suitable nesting habitat, or in some cases create suitable habitat by removing dense understory vegetation. Regeneration harvests will covert about 155 acres of currently suitable habitat to unsuitable. However; overall there will be long-term improvements in habitat, offsetting possible short-term impacts. Goshawks will maintain their same general distribution, thus maintaining species viability. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan.

Fisher (FEIS, pp. 4-76 – 4-79)	Changes to habitat suitability	Across the landscape, habitat is maturing faster than it is being lost; resulting in a net increase in denning habitat and a decrease in foraging habitat. Maintaining and improving old growth stands, using INFS buffers for riparian areas, and meeting large woody debris standards will provide long-term habitat improvement that should be maintained on the landscape level. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan.
Pileated woodpecker FEIS, pp. 4-80 – 4-84)	Changes to large snag habitat & old growth habitat	Snag habitat is considered more limiting than foraging habitat. Vegetation treatments will accelerate the trend toward suitable nesting habitat. In the long-term, treatments will convert tree species to longer-lived species and encourage persistence and sustainability of large snag habitat. Fuel reduction treatments will also benefit pileated woodpeckers in the long-term. There will be no reduction in old growth structure or integrity. Population viability will be maintained. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan for both old growth and snag management.
White-tailed deer (FEIS, pp. 4-84 – 4-86)	Changes to critical mid-winter range	Although timber harvest will eliminate about 45 acres of critical mid-winter range, regeneration harvest on approximately 221 acres of winter range will improve forage quality and quantity on traditional winter range. Vegetation treatments plus the ecosystem burning will improve overall habitat conditions. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan.
Forest Land Birds (FEIS, p. 4-86 – 4-88)	Changes to priority habitats and vegetative diversity	Priority habitat will not be adversely impacted. Use of BMPs and INFS guidelines will protect and maintain riparian habitats. Restoration or enhancement of dry forests, snag management, and increased forest diversity will increase habitat richness and diversity, thus providing more niches to support land birds. Activities and effects are consistent with the Forest Plan for both old growth and snag management and NFMA requirements for population viability.

Recreation (FEIS, pp. 2-13 – 2-16, and 4-90, 4-91)		
Safety & Universal Accessibility	Changes in safety and universal accessibility features of developed facilities	Road access and parking will be improved. Removing off-site Ponderosa pine will lessen safety hazards associated with the risks dead/dying trees. Toilets and pathways will be upgraded and improved to standards. (See Figure 5) A new boat launch and fishing dock will be installed.
Meeting Future Needs	Change in the number of Persons at One Time	Brush Lake Campground will increase from 34 to a maximum of 48.5 Persons at One Time. The day use picnic area will increase from 27.5 to a maximum of 33. Dispersed sites along the access road will be a maximum of 17.5 Persons at One Time.
Vegetation Management at Brush Lake Campground	Treatment of off-site Ponderosa Pine and resulting change in scenery	The landscape will be more open with longer views where boulders and rocks will tend to predominate
Trail Management	Changes in amount and types of trails	The existing old road and skid trails near Brush Lake will be designated and clearly marked as open or closed to motorized uses. (See Figures 3 and 4) Mission Mtn Trail #156, the Wildhorse Trail, and other historic trails will be protected. The trailhead for Mission Mtn Trail #156 will accommodate an adequate turnaround and parking for 2 to 3 passenger vehicles; truck parking will be provided nearby. The trail will be refurbished to moderate difficulty for hikers and stock.
Dispersed Recreation Facilities	Changes in rustic and private nature of dispersed recreation areas	Dispersed camping areas will remain rustic and generally private.

9d. Summary of Effects by Resource Objectives

All action alternatives respond in various ways to the purpose and need for this project, Forest Plan goals, objectives and standards. The following table compares the degrees to which the alternatives address the resource issues, which helped me evaluate how well each alternative implements the Forest Plan.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 identify activities included in each alternative. Following each table, a summary of effects is provided for each resource (additional comparison is provided on pages 2-66 through 2-69 of the FEIS).

Table 6 - Comparison of Alternatives by Silvicultural Objective

Objective	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Vegetation Management and Wildlife Habitat				
Even-Aged Regeneration Cuts	0	1634	1358	643
Irregular shelterwood with reserves, seed tree with reserves	0	388	388	415
Uneven-Aged Regeneration Cuts				
Group selection / commercial thinning				
Partial Cuts	0	1878	1579	1879
Improvement cut, commercial thin / sanitation salvage				
Girdling of Larch/Douglas-fir infected with mistletoe	0	136	0	136
Total acres of vegetation management	**0**	**4036**	**3325**	**3072**
Acres of Fuels Treatment				
Grapple Pile	0	763	417	764
Underburn	0	1737	1760	1315
Underburn with grapple piling	0	1400	1148	857
Total Acres of Fuels Treated	0	**3900**	**3325**	**2936**
Reduction in Risk of Stand-replacing Wildfire within treated areas	0	52%	40%	40%
Reduction in Risk of Root Disease within treated areas	0	35%	5%	5%
Two Ecosystem Burns (total acres)	0	238	0	238

(All acreages are estimates based on GIS data, photo interpretation, TSMRS database information and field visits.)

Vegetation Resource: As illustrated above, Alternative 1 (No Action) does not treat any acres in the project area. Alternative 2 treats the most acres, followed by Alternatives 3 and 4, respectively. The acres treated meet the Purpose and Need by trending the vegetation composition and structure toward the historical values, resulting in a more stable and resilient ecosystem over the long term (FEIS, pages 1-6, 1-7).

Table 7 - Comparison of Alternatives by Aquatics Objective

Objective	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4
Aquatic Ecosystems (watershed and fisheries) Improve, decommission, place roads in storage that are currently contributing, or have a high risk of contributing, sediment to the aquatic systems in the project area.				
Improve existing roads (miles)	0	39	37	26
Decommission existing roads (miles)	0	13	13	13
Place existing roads in storage (miles)	0	5	5	5
Utilize construction of temporary roads (miles) (To be decommissioned after use.)	0	5	0	5

Aquatic Resource: As illustrated above, Alternative 1 (No Action) does not upgrade or treat any roads in the project area, allowing sediment delivery to continue into the stream systems. Changes in sediment yields would be affected by natural events such as flooding or fire. Under Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, the road improvements and culvert upgrades are considered to meet the Purpose and Need by reducing the risk and the amount of sediment entering the aquatic ecosystem in the project area (FEIS, 4-34 through 4-51).

Comparison of Alternatives by Wildlife Objectives

Wildlife Resource: As illustrated in Tables 4, 5, and 6, Alternative 1 (No Action) does not implement new activities in the project area; Alternative 2 treats the most miles of road and moves the greatest amount of vegetation toward the desired conditions; followed by Alternatives 4 and 3. In general, the alternatives are expected to affect the following species in the ways listed below. Specific effects are described in the Record of Decision's Appendix 1. Effects of the Alternatives are discussed in the FEIS (pp. 4-55 through 4-92) Appendices A and B, and in response to comments in Appendix F.

> Canada Lynx – Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would continue to meet standards for lynx habitat conditions and would preserve habitat connectivity. Alternative 4 would have the least effect because most of the proposed units that were located in lynx habitat are not included in Alternative 4.
>
> Grizzly Bear – Within the Deer Ridge Occupancy Area, there are about 145 miles of drivable roads and motorized trail, including 136 miles of open roads. This creates a total road density of 3.32 miles/mile^2, and an open road density of 3.12 miles/mile^2. On USFS-managed lands within the analysis area, open road density is currently 2.64 miles/mile^2, and total road density is 2.90 mi/mile^2. Without access management, open road density in the occupied grizzly bear area would remain at its current high level. Artificial openings that are presently providing forage will close in as forest succession advances. In the absence of fire, grizzly bear habitat would probably decline in this area.

Alternatives 2 and 3 would temporarily raise the road density to 3.1 miles/square mile because they would temporarily open a currently undriveable stretch of Road 2481H. When post-harvest decommissioning activities are completed, total road densities in the Deer Ridge Occupancy Area would be reduced to 3.20 miles/mile^2, and open road densities would be 2.98 miles/mile^2.

Alternative 4 would not have a temporary increase because Road 2481H would not be temporarily opened. All alternatives include timing restrictions on harvest activities to minimize potential disturbance to grizzly bears. . When post-harvest decommissioning activities are completed, total road densities in the Deer Ridge Occupancy Area would be reduced to 3.20 miles/mile^2, and open road densities would be 2.98 miles/mile^2.

Flammulated Owl --Alternatives 2 and 4 would be similar in effects and would both promote long-term viability of suitable habitat. Ultimately, Alternative 4 would trend a comparable number of acres toward desired conditions as Alternatives 2. Alternative 3 would cause less temporary disruption of possible suitable habitat than Alternative 2, but would treat fewer acres that could be directly converted to suitable habitat. This alternative would also forgo treatment in several stands that are not likely to achieve suitable habitat conditions without a stand-replacing event. Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would reduce wildfire risk and move habitat toward suitable condition more quickly than no action (Alternative 1) would. There would be no decrease in acres of suitable habitat as a result of these alternatives.

Northern Goshawk -- In reversing the general trend toward understory congestion and increased fire risk, Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would result in increased suitable habitat over time. Possible short-term (10 years or less) impacts to habitat will be offset by long-term (10 years or more) improvements. The cumulative effects analysis area would continue to provide at least three suitable 30-acre nest areas per 5,000-6,000 acres in all alternatives. Goshawks would maintain their same general distribution, thus maintaining species viability.

Black-backed Woodpeckers -- Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would potentially reduce the quantity of available snag habitat within harvest units. However, tree mortality would continue to persist throughout the analysis area, allowing black-backed woodpeckers to maintain populations at low endemic levels. Snag retention guidelines would assure that minimum numbers of snags in all size classes would be retained in harvest units.

Fisher – Alternative 2 would have the greatest impact on suitable fisher habitat, and Alternative 4 would have the least. All action alternatives would temporarily reduce fisher habitat at the local scale. However, elsewhere in the project area fisher habitat is maturing at a faster rate than it is being lost. Within treatment areas, snag retention guidelines, riparian buffers, and Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy standards will provide adequate amounts of suitable habitat.

Pileated Woodpecker -- All alternatives would favor retention of desired tree species and trend stands toward older size classes and promote larger snags. Alternative 2 would shift more acres toward suitable habitat than the other alternatives, and in the long-term encourage persistence and sustainability of large snag habitat. Design features would maintain minimum numbers of snags within the harvest units, and reduction in fuel loads should provide suitable habitat for a longer duration.

White-tailed Deer -- All alternatives would reduce critical midwinter range by approximately 45 acres, but would also result in improved forage quantity and quality on traditional winter range. Alternative 2 would regenerate more habitat than Alternative 4. Alternative 3 would lead to less forage habitat than Alternatives 2 and 4, but otherwise would have similar effects.

Forest Land Birds – All alternatives would increase habitat richness and diversity; thus, providing more niches for birds. Treatments would encourage structural enhancement and long-term stability of priority habitats, particularly dry ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir forests.

Table 8 - Comparison of Alternatives by Recreation Objective

Objective	Alt 1	Alt 2 (selected), Alt 3, Alt 4
Recreation Resource (FEIS pages 4-90, 4-91) Provide safe, universally accessible facilities Accommodate anticipated future needs Improve quality & diversity of Brush Lake Campground and dispersed recreation sites	No change	Toilets and pathways will be upgraded to standards. Accommodations for Persons at One Time will increase from 61.5 to 99. Parking lot will be upgraded and a standard design boat dock will be installed. The fishing dock will be enlarged. Road surfaces will be improved. Visual objectives will be considered during removal of off-site ponderosa pine adjacent to the campground.
Delineate areas for motorized and non-motorized recreational uses. Designate motorcycle/ATV trails to limit impacts to other resources.	No change	Old road and skid trail networks will be designated and clearly marked for use as motorized or non-motorized trails. Non-system paths, roads, & campsites will be rehabilitated and protected.

Recreation Resource: Even though Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 address the recreation objectives in the same manner, this resource was part of my reasoning for not selecting Alternative 1, No Action. More information about recreation activities is discussed in the FEIS pages 2-13 through 2-16, 2-69, 4-90, and 4-91. Trail networks and campground improvements are shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5 in this ROD.

9e. Consistency with Goals of the IPNF Forest Plan

Consistency with Forest Plan objectives and standards for each resource is discussed in detail in Appendix I, and Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

The Selected Alternative meets my objective for consistency in the following ways.

Vegetation (Forest Plan, pp. II-8, II-31, II-32) – by moving the structure and composition of the forest toward the desired future condition of a more sustainable ecosystem with reduced risks of insect and disease damage and catastrophic wildfire, and greater diversity to benefit wildlife habitat. Forest products and jobs will be provided as a result of the vegetation treatments, consistent with the multiple-use goals for the area. (FEIS pages 4-31 – 4-33)

Aquatic (Forest Plan, pp. II-6, II-7, II-9, II-29 through II-33) – by maintaining or improving the watershed and fisheries in the Mission Creek and Brush Creek drainages. Fish habitat will be maintained or improved and riparian areas will be protected through the Inland Native Fish Strategy. Best Management Practices will be implemented so that activities and effects will comply with state water quality standards. Activities meet the requirements of the Forest Plan (FEIS, pg. 4-50, 4-51).

Wildlife (Forest Plan, pp. II-5, II-6, II-26 through II-29) – by trending the vegetation toward desired conditions that will promote long-term persistence, diversity and stability of wildlife habitat. Project design features and criteria assure that activities are consistent with Forest Plan direction to manage the habitat of TES and MIS species, old growth, and snag management (FEIS, pages 4-58, 4-61, 4-65, 4-70, 4-76, 4-79, 4-84, 4-86, 4-88).

Recreation (Forest Plan, pp. II-3, II-24, II-25) – by providing safe, accessible facilities that meet the future needs of the public in consideration of the natural resources and meet the multiple-use goals for the area. Activities meet Forest Plan guidelines (FEIS, pg. 4-90)

9f. Consistency with Forest Service Policy and Other Legal Mandates

Forest Service policy and other legal mandates that are part of the framework for my decision are listed in the FEIS (pages I-15 through 1-18.) Additional information on policy, laws and legal mandates is located in Appendix I and discussed in detail for the various resources in Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

The Selected Alternative meets my objective for consistency in the following ways.

Vegetation – The selected alternative is consistent with the Natural Resource Agenda, the National Fire Plan, and the Final Rule for Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System (FEIS, pp. 1-16). The EIS and this ROD have been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The selected alternative meets the requirements of the Clean Air Act (FEIS, pages 2-47, 2-59 and 2-60) and disclosures for Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice, and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (FEIS, pages 4-96).

It complies with the National Forest Management Act as follows:

- Forest Plan Consistency – see discussion in section 8 above.
- Resource Protection – see discussions in sections 1 through 7 above.
- Vegetation Manipulation – All proposals that involve manipulation of tree cover must comply with seven requirements found in 36 CFR 219.27(b). See detailed discussion of Vegetation Management practices in Appendix I.

Aquatic – The selected alternative meets watershed requirements of the Clean Water Act (including State of Idaho Implementation), and the Idaho Forest Practices Act. It meets fisheries requirements of the Endangered Species Act, National Forests Management Act for species viability, Executive Order 12962 regarding aquatic systems and recreational fisheries, and the State of Idaho Governor's Bull Trout Plan (FEIS, pages 4-51).

Wildlife – The selected alternative meets wildlife requirements of the Endangered Species Act and the population viability portions of the National Forest Management Act (FEIS, pp. 4-58, 4-61, 4-65, 4-70, 4-76, 4-79, 4-84, 4-86, and 4-88; FEIS Appendix F and ROD Appendix 1.) The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurs with the biological findings for this project (project file letter dated 04/09/04).

Other Policies, Laws and Regulations

The following policies, laws and regulations are discussed in detail in Appendix 1 and in Chapter 4 of the FEIS:

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
Endangered Species Act (ESA)
Clean Water Act
Clean Air Act
Environmental Justice Executive Order
Natural Resources Agenda
Roadless Area Conservation Rule
Forest Service Road Management and Transportation System Rule
National Historic Preservation Act
National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

10. Identification of Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Previously in this ROD, I have described the Selected Alternative and given my rationale for choosing to implement Alternative 2. The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA also specifies that the alternative considered to be environmentally preferable be identified (40 CFR Part 1505.2b). Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological, physical and cultural environment; it is not necessarily the alternative that will be implemented. As documented by this ROD, we have determined that Alternative 2 can be implemented with minimal impacts to the biological, physical, and cultural environment and meet the ecological needs of the area. In the long-term, is it the environmentally preferred alternative.

Review and Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the Spokesman Review, Spokane, Washington. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Paper appeals must be submitted to:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

Or, if hand delivered, during office hours 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
200 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Electronic appeals must be submitted to:
appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word, Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF).

It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and include the following information:

- The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
- The regulation under which the appeal is being filed, when there is an option to appeal under either 36 CFR 215 or 36 CFR 251, subpart C;
- Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
- Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the substantive comments; and
- How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

REVIEWED AND
APPROVED BY: _____ Forest Supervisor 5/17/04
Date

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:
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Appendix 1

Table of Contents

Appendix 1

1. Activities & Effects of Implementing Alternative 2, by Resource Issue

This discussion is presented by resource and provides the following information:

Issues and Public Concerns: Specific issues and concerns related to the resource are briefly described. Additional information is contained in FEIS Appendix F, Public Comments and Responses.
Activities: Brief description of the specific activities that will occur under the selected alternative to address issues related to this resource.
Features: The criteria and features used to protect or enhance the resource.
Mitigation: Specific features (if any) that will be required during project implementation to reduce potential impacts to the resource. They have been incorporated into the project design. As noted in the EIS, some of them will be included in the timber sale contract; other features will be part of other contracts or worked performed by the agency.
Effects: Effects on the resource are summarized; detailed information is included in the ROD, Chapter 4 and Appendix F of the FEIS.
Consistency with Forest Plan Standards: Discussion of consistency with applicable standards of the Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan.

1-A. Vegetation Resource

1-A 1 Issues and Public Concerns

During scoping, concerns were identified by the Forest Service, other agencies (Idaho Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service), three environmental organizations (The Ecology Center, Boundary Backpackers/Idaho Conservation League), and more than 20 individuals (Fahlgren, Knapp, Lindgren, Tesar, Smith, Bainbridge, Walkley, Dante, Pharris, Perkins, Luedtke, Malmquist, Hays, Butters, Gause, Payne, Baker, Mealito, Cook, Sheppard, Huff, Crane, Ellsworth), two local organizations (Bonners Ferry Sportsmen, Deer Park Water Association) and one commercial business (Northern Lights, Inc). Detailed information is located in the project file – Scoping Comments.

Formal comments on the Draft EIS were received from four environmental organizations (American Wildlands, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, The Lands Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies). Environmental organizations often list several groups under one primary letterhead, such as Upper Columbia River of the Sierra Club, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, The Ecology Center and National Forest Protection Alliance. Two agencies (US Dept of Interior and US EPA) also provided formal comments (see Appendix F).
.

Informal correspondence with individuals, such as e-mails and phone conversations, are documented in the project file

The following alternative-driving issues and indicators were selected by the ID Team through the scoping process (FEIS, p. 2-4).

Principle Issue	Issue Indicators
Forest Composition……..	Acres trended toward restoration of historic forest composition.
Forest Structure…….	Acres trended toward restoration of historic forest structure.
Forest Openings…….	Increase in the size of forest openings compared to historic estimates (acres).
Risk of stand-replacing fire…..	Changes in fire risk in dry forest types.
Impacts to Air Quality……..	Level of emissions from prescribed burning activities.
Risk of Insect and Diseases……	Changes in risk levels compared to no action.
Restoration Costs…….	Comparison of projected cost and revenue.

1-A 2 Vegetation Management and Related Activities

Table 1. Vegetation Related Activities--Selected Alternative

(Acres and miles are estimates based on GIS data, TSMRS database information, field visits and photo interpretation.)

Management Activities	Acres	Management Activities	Acres
Regeneration Cuts		**Logging Systems**	
Irregular Shelterwood with reserves (ISW)	1232	Ground-based	1213
Seed tree with reserves (ST)	402	Skyline	451
		Helicopter	1306
Total Even-Aged Cuts	**1634**	Combination of Methods	930
Partial Cuts		**Fuels Treatments**	
Commercial Thin / Sanitation Salvage (CT/SS)	927	Grapple Pile	763
		Underburn	1737
Improvement Cut (IC)	951	Underburn with grapple piling	1400
Uneven-aged Group Selection / Commercial thin (GS/CT)	388	**Total Fuels Treated**	**3900**
Total Partial Cuts	**2266**		
Girdling of Larch/Douglas-fir with Mistletoe	**136**	**Ecosystem Burns without harvesting**	**238**
Total Acres of Silvicultural Treatments The silvicultural prescriptions will be applied on a Unit basis and are described in the EIS on pages 2-23 through 2-25 and in Appendix D of the EIS. A map of the treatments is located on page 5 of the ROD.	**4036**		

Road Management Activities*	
Transportation System	**Miles**
Temporary Road Construction	5
Existing Roads Decommissioned	13
Existing Roads Improved	39
Existing Roads Placed in Storage	5

*Details of the road management activities are listed in the Aquatics discussion, page 7.

1-A 3 Vegetation Design Features and Criteria

Design Features are discussed in the Final EIS, including the estimated effectiveness of each measure (FEIS p. 2-42 through 2-55). Many of the features are included in, and implemented through, timber sale and road management contracts. Contract provisions include, but are not limited to, the following items.

- Cultural resources
- Improvements and survey monuments
- Public health and safety measures
- Road reconstruction and maintenance
- Soil productivity measures
- Protection of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas

Features not included in standard contract packages include:

- Noxious Weed criterion
- Air Quality
- Slash disposal considerations for soil productivity
- Timber harvest systems
- Reforestation preparation and planting

See the Aquatic, Wildlife, and Recreation sections of this appendix for additional information.

Mitigation Measures: My decision includes the measures identified to avoid, or to the fullest extent possible, reduce potential adverse effects to the following resources as a result of timber harvest and associated activities (FEIS pages 2-46 through 2-55):

- Noxious Weeds
- Wildlife – TES and MIS not discussed in Chapters, 2, 3 or 4
- Fish – TES and MIS not discussed in Chapters, 2, 3 or 4; see Final EIS Appendix B
- Plants – TES not discussed in Chapters, 2, 3 or 4; see FEIS Appendix B
- Wildlife Linkages/Corridors
- Range
- Cultural Resources
- Economics – Community Stability

Visual Quality – Scenery Management
Public Health and Safety
Effects on Minority or Low-Income Populations
Roadless Areas
Minerals

1-A 4 Effects on the Vegetation Resources by issue indicator

Risk of Root Disease/Insects (FEIS, p. 4-20 - 4-21): Treating the vegetation to reduce the amount of susceptible Douglas-fir and grand fir trees will reduce the risk by an estimated 35%. In the long-term, conversion to open-grown stands of ponderosa pine, larch, and white pine (species less susceptible to root disease) also reduces competition for limited water and nutrients.

Air Quality (FEIS, p. 4-21 through 4-27): Air quality will be affected by emissions during prescribed underburning and pile burning. The decisions for the particular units to burn and days to conduct the burning will be made in accordance with the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement and will be coordinated through the Idaho / Montana Airshed group to ensure compliance with federal air quality standards.

Restoration Costs (FEIS, p. 4-27, 4-28): Alternative 2 is expected to generate more revenue than it will cost to conduct the activities to meet the desired ecosystem objectives. The timber sale appraisal for this project projected an advertised rate of $117 per thousand board feet. It is not at all unusual for sales of this type on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District to be bid to amounts twice the advertised rate, or in the neighborhood of $234 per thousand board feet. It is estimated that the Selected Alternative will remove about 23,500,000 board feet of timber (23.5 MMBF). The sale of timber is expected to generate the following:

Projected Timber Sale Receipts $2,746,000
(With the potential for as much as $3.5 million if the bidding follows historic rates.)

Brush Disposal deposits $1,228,000
(Collected from timber sale purchasers to cover costs of brush disposal performed by the Forest Service.)

Cost of restoration activities (Forest Service responsibility) are projected to be

Underburning	$1,851,000
Pile & Landing burning	$ 111,000
Grapple piling – fuel breaks	$ 252,000
Slashing understory fuels	$ 25,000
Reforestation	$1,047,000
Total restoration costs	**$3,125,000**

Additional work performed by timber sale purchasers at their own expense will also add the following value to the ecosystem restoration:

Construction of firelines	$ 81,000
Pile slash at landings	$ 11,000
Yarding tops (helicopter units)	$ 96,000
Limbing and lopping tops	$ 47,000
Road improvements	$161,500
Total additional benefits	**$396,500**

After the cost of restoration work, the value of the selected alternative ranges from $688,000 to $1,484,000 depending on the bid price.

Forest Composition and Structure (FEIS, p. 4-1 through 4-14): In the long-term, there will be an increase in the percentage of long-lived seral species, such as ponderosa pine, western larch, and white pine, and a decrease in the percentage of short-lived species like lodgepole pine, Douglas-fir and grand fir -- conditions that will be moving toward sustainable historic levels.

Risk of Stand-Replacing Fire (FEIS, p. 4-14 through 4-18): Treatments would trend forest structure toward more open conditions with large-diameter fire-resistant trees; resembling historic conditions when low-severity fires were the primary fire regime. Within the project area, the probability of stand-replacing fire in the dry forest types will be reduced by about 20%, and within the proposed treated units, it will be reduced by about 50%.

1-A 5 Vegetation Resources - Consistency with Forest Plan Standards

Old Growth - The Mission Brush FEIS mentions old growth standards and consistency with the Forest Plan on pages 3-27 through 3-34, and 4-31 through 4-33. Current old growth acres and their allocation on the forest can be found on the IPNF Monitoring Report 2002. For the Mission Brush project, about 440 acres of dry site old growth will be entered with the objective of restoring the historic integrity of this type of old growth. Silvicultural prescriptions include periodic underburning to retain old growth ponderosa pine, larch, and scattered Douglas-fir trees. Trees of smaller size will also be retained to provide additional structural diversity and to serve as replacement old growth. These conditions will be more sustainable over time. There will be no net loss of old growth; standards for old growth maintenance and distribution will be met.

Old growth management is consistent with the Forest Plan standards (Forest Plan, p. II-29, as applicable):

10 (a) – Forest Plan Standard 10a. incorporates the definition of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force, documented in: *Green, and others. 1992. Old Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region. USDA, Forest Service, Northern Region*.

- 10 (b), (c), (d) – Maintenance, selection and potential harvest in old growth (FEIS 4-31 through 4-33).

- 10 (e), (f) – Old growth stand characteristics and size (FEIS 3-27 through 3-34).

- 10 (g) – Road locations. No Forest Service roads (permanent or temporary) are proposed in old growth stands (FEIS 2-20).

- 10 (h) – Issuance/continuance of grazing allotments. There are no grazing allotments within the Mission Brush project area.

  10 (i) – Management area prescriptions and goals for old growth. (FEIS 1-17 through 1-19, 4-31 through 4-33, and the 2002 Forest Plan Monitoring Report, Table 24, page 69.)

Reforestation - (EIS, p. 4-33): Regeneration harvests will be used on about 1715 acres; uneven-aged harvests will be used on about 338 acres (Standard 1, Forest Plan, p. II-31). To reduce the risk of insect and disease problems, the best quality ponderosa pine, western larch, and white pine trees will be retained as a natural seed source, resulting in trees grown from seed that is well adapted to the specific site conditions and includes a variety of species (Standard 4, Forest Plan, p. II-32). All stands that will be regenerated are on lands suitable for timber production and can be adequately restocked within five years of the final harvest (Standard 3, Forest Plan, p. II-32 and planting success listed in the 2002 Forest Monitoring Report -Table 1). Site preparation and slash reduction practices will meet the reforestation needs (Standard 5, Forest Plan, p. II-32).

Reforestation activities are consistent with the Forest Plan.

Lands Suitable for Timber Production - (EIS, p. 4-33): All or portions of treatment units 4, 6, 8, 19, and 60 have been reviewed on the ground for the suitability of their locations to produce timber (project file). The review was conducted according to Timberland Suitability Adjustment requirements in the Forest Plan (Appendix M, page M-1). Based on the analysis documented within the Vegetation section of the EIS, these lands are recommended for classification as Suitable for Timber Production.

This recommendation is consistent with the Forest Plan.

1-B. Aquatic Resources - Issues and Public Concerns

During scoping, concerns were identified by the Forest Service, other agencies (Idaho Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service) , three environmental organizations (The Ecology Center, Boundary Backpackers/Idaho Conservation League), and more than 20 individuals (Fahlgren, Knapp, Lindgren, Tesar, Smith, Bainbridge, Walkley, Dante, Pharris, Perkins, Luedtke, Malmquist, Hays, Butters, Gause, Payne, Baker, Mealito, Cook, Sheppard, Huff, Crane, Ellsworth), two local organizations (Bonners Ferry Sportsmen, Deer Park Water Association) and one commercial business (Northern Lights, Inc). Detailed information is located in the project file – Scoping Comments.

Comments on the Draft EIS were received from four environmental organizations (American Wildlands, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, The Lands Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies). Environmental organizations often list several groups under one primary letterhead, such as Upper Columbia River of the Sierra Club, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, The Ecology Center and National Forest Protection Alliance. Two agencies (US Dept of Interior and US EPA) also provided comments (see Appendix 2).

The aquatic issues and indicators were derived from the scoping process and documented in the FEIS on page 2-5. They are also displayed on page 13 of this ROD.

1-B 1 Aquatics Related Activities in the Selected Alternative

The following road management activities will reduce sediment delivery into stream systems. For details, see the FEIS page 2-68.

Transportation System Activities
FEIS (pg 2-64 and 2-65)

Temporary Road Construction - totals approximately 5 miles

Existing Roads Decommissioned, as follows: totals approximately 13 miles
Routes to be decommissioned following use for project activities (4 mi)
397-E, 397-Y, 397-XUC, 397-XUD
Other routes to be decommissioned (9 mi)
Portions of 2211-UA, 2217-C

Existing Roads Improved totals approximately 39 miles
Roads 272 and 272-A, 2206, 2211, 2219-A, portions of 272 and 272-A, 1004, and 397

Existing Roads Placed in Storage totals approximately 5 miles
Roads 267, 267-UA, 267-UB, 2211, 2481-H

1-B 2 Aquatic Resources - Design Features and Criteria

Several of the criteria developed for protection of the watershed and fisheries (FEIS, p. 2-42 through 2-55) will be included in timber sale contracts; other criteria will be included in implementation guidelines, contracts for portions of the work such as slash disposal or watershed improvement projects, and guidelines for work performed directly by Forest Service personnel. The estimated effectiveness of each measure is discussed in the FEIS (p. 2-42 through 2-55).

Hazardous materials, sanitation and equipment servicing require contractors to take all reasonable precautions to prevent pollution of air and water by the purchaser's operations.

Best Management Practices (FEIS, Appendix C) will be required for timber sale units, roads and landings. The BMPs are designed to meet or surpass the Clean Water Standards Act and Idaho State Best Management Practices for watershed protection.

Road reconstruction and maintenance contracts will include site-specific BMPs as described in FEIS Appendix C.

Public health & safety -- Dust abatement on roads will follow requirements to meet water quality specifications.

Soils are protected by several criteria. Specific features for aquatic resources are: 1) a requirement that firelines will be waterbarred, as needed, with a maximum 50-foot spacing to minimize potential for erosion and concentration of water; 2) skid trail and landing locations will be pre-approved and will be rehabilitated as necessary to minimize the potential for sediment production and delivery. (See additional discussion in the Soils section of this appendix.)

Logging operations require a pre-work meeting to discuss special conditions of the contract (pre-reviewed by Idaho Dept of Lands for BMP compliance) to assure the resource protection objectives are clearly communicated and understood. Active operations will be monitored at least weekly by the Forest Service Sale Administrator, or other designated personnel when necessary.

Temporary Road Design and Construction and Road Decommissioning: A road design and construction package will be prepared by a Forest Service Engineer for any temporary road (expected lifespan of 5 to 8 years) that is generally more than 300 feet long. The road specifications will be included in the timber sale contract. An Engineering Representative will monitor construction of temporary roads. At the end of project activities, all temporary roads will be decommissioned with appropriate techniques and removed from the transportation system.

Within critical areas such as wet areas or stream crossings, sites of disturbed soils will be treated with hydro-mulch immediately after construction of the temporary road is completed.

Decommissioning will occur within these timelines: 1) for roads not needed for post-harvest activities, decommission no later than one season following cutting activities; 2) roads needed for post-harvest activities will be decommissioned no later than five years following cutting activities.

Sediment Reduction will be increased by spot-gravelling roads at all stream crossings, rolling dips, and any wet areas.

Inland Native Fish Strategy requirements will be followed, including no-harvest zones for Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas. Some hazard tree removal may occur within the Brush Lake Campground area for public safety; although the campground is within a Riparian Habitat Conservation Area, such hazard tree removal is consistent with INFS direction (FEIS, p. 2-50, 2-52).

Wetlands, seeps, bogs, wallows and springs will be protected with a no-activity buffer approximately 100 feet in diameter.

Road Surface and Drainage Crossing Maintenance will focus on reducing sediment by improving road surface drainage and decreasing sediment delivery to stream channels.

Protection of Fisheries during Prescribed Burning When natural water sources are used by prescribed fire personnel, water usage (removal) may not exceed 90 gallons per minute and pumping sites will be located away from spawning gravels. Pump intake hoses will be screened to prevent accidental intake of small fish. An emergency spill kit will be on site in the unlikely event of a fuel spill outside the containment system. These measures are consistent with INFS direction.

1-B 3 Aquatic Resource - Mitigation Measures

My decision includes the measures identified to avoid, or to the fullest extent possible, reduce potential adverse effects to the following resources as a result of aquatic restoration and associated activities (FEIS pages 2-42 through 2-55):

- Cultural resources
- Survey Monuments and Improvements
- Risks from Hazardous Materials
- Air and Water Quality
- Public Health and Safety
- Noxious Weeds

- Road reconstruction and Maintenance
- Soil Character and Productivity
- Watershed and Fisheries
- Wildlife Habitat

1-B 4 Aquatic Resources - Effects of the Selected Alternative

a) *Mission Creek Watershed*
Sediment Yield -- Computer models show an increase of eight percent over existing conditions with recovery to existing levels by 2010. The model does not calculate reductions in sediment as a result of decommissioning and appears to overestimate sediment increases from timber harvesting, ecosystem prescribed burning, and temporary road construction. Improving roads and stabilizing cut banks have been shown to reduce sediment significantly (FEIS 4-38).

Effects of Sediment Yield Changes on Fisheries – Since ground-disturbing logging activities are only allowed outside Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs), the risk of any sediment reaching live streams is very low. By using timing restrictions, on-site direction and BMPs during culvert removal and replacement, sediment delivery to occupied fish habitat would be minimized (FEIS 2-50). Culvert upgrades will immediately reduce risk of sediment delivery and sediment levels will shift back toward baseline.

Water Yield – is projected to increase 5 percent over existing conditions, which is within the historic range of variability for this watershed. Estimates of the maximum historic increase are higher than anticipated increases under the Selected Alternative. Studies have shown that for increases in water yield to be measurable, more than 30% of an entire watershed would have to be cut; this project will treat no more than 13% of the drainage (FEIS, p. 4-38). For these reasons, it is unlikely that any change in water yield would be detectable in Mission Creek.

Stream Channel Morphology – Based on the stream channel and landtype characteristics of Mission Creek and its tributaries, the estimated changes in peak flows, sediment yields and potential increases in flows from a rain-on-snow event would not increase changes in stream channel morphology.

b) *Brush Lake Area*
No activities will occur on sensitive landtypes. Due to the soils, landtypes and landforms in the basin and the fact that streamflow is partially controlled by a dam, any increases in water yield will be difficult to measure (FEIS, p. 4-41). No negative effects are anticipated for fisheries habitat.

Hall Mountain Area Landslide Potential -- All landtypes with high mass failure potential will be buffered as required by INFS. Helicopter logging will be used. Harvest prescriptions are also tailored to site conditions; on slopes greater than

60%, treatments are limited to no more than 20% stem removal. On slopes between 55% and 60%, treatments are limited to no more than 50% stem removal. As a result of these design criteria, there is no predicted increase of landslide risk on the west-facing slopes of Hall Mountain due to harvest activities.

Effects from Rain-On-Snow Events -- In the Hall Mountain area, the same features discussed under the landslide potential will also reduce potential impacts during a rain-on-snow event. In Mission Creek, the amount of cover left in treatment areas will reduce impacts to the extent that any increase in water yields during a rain-on-snow would be difficult to attribute to harvest activities. Due to landtypes and topography in the Brush Lake area, it would also be difficult to attribute increases to harvest activities.

Effects from Recreation Activities -- Improvements of recreation facilities and designation of trails and areas closed to motorized uses often decreases impacts. Any short-term increase in sediment from construction activities will be mitigated with Best Management Practices. No long-term adverse effects are expected for Brush Lake or Brush Creek.

c) Effects to Fisheries from Recreation Activities

There will be no effect on white sturgeon or bull trout (sturgeon are not present outside the mainstem Kootenai River and bull trout are not known to inhabit the cumulative effects area). In the short-term, west slope cutthroat individuals may be impacted, but activities are not likely to result in a trend toward federal listing or reduced viability. In the long-term, restoration activities are expected to benefit individuals by revegetating disturbed sites within the RHCAs and reducing sediment delivery.

Table 2. FEIS conclusions for Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive Fish

White sturgeon (endangered)	No effect – species or habitat not present nor potentially affected
Bull trout (threatened)	No effect – species or habitat not present nor potentially affected
Burbot (sensitive)	No effect
Interior redband trout (sensitive)	No effect
Westslope cutthroat trout (sensitive)	May impact individuals, but will not likely result in a trend toward federal listing or reduce viability for the population or species.**
Torrent sculpin (sensitive)	May impact individuals, but will not likely result in a trend toward federal listing or reduce viability for the population or species.**

** See FEIS, pages B-14, B-15 for additional information.

1-B 5 Aquatics Consistency with Forest Plan Standards, Regulations, and Laws

Forest Plan
The actions described in this decision are consistent with the IPNF's Forest Plan and Record of Decision, dated September 17, 1987, as amended by the Inland Native Fish Strategy, dated July 28, 1995. It will help achieve the desired future condition for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests.

Endangered Species Act requirements for fisheries are met. The selected alternative will have no effect on endangered white sturgeon, their critical habitat, or the threatened bull trout, and would not jeopardize their continued existence. Critical habitat has not been designated for bull trout (see EIS, Appendix B).

National Forest Management Act – Fish Species Viability requirements will be met. Based on the distribution of species across the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, the lack of connectivity between large watersheds, and the limited cumulative effects area for this project, there is no anticipated affect to the viability of any threatened, endangered, sensitive or Management Indicator Species fish on the IPNF.

The selected alternative is consistent with requirements of the Clean Water Act and State of Idaho Implementation regulations. There are no streams within the project area currently listed on the Idaho 303(d) list of water quality limited stream segments. Brush Creek and Mission Creek and its tributaries will be listed for temperature on the upcoming 2004 TMDL list (Dave Mosier, Idaho DEQ draft 303-d list, 2003). The INFS requirements and other specific design features will prevent or mitigate any activity that could potentially increase stream temperatures (FEIS, p. 2-43, 2-46, and 2-48 through 2-52).

The selected alternative complies with the Idaho Forest Practices Act through use of Best Management Practices or Soil and Water Conservation Practices that follow guidelines in the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FEIS, Appendix C).

The selected alternative is consistent with Executive Order 12962 concerning aquatic ecosystems and recreational fisheries. Long-term net reductions in sediment are expected to benefit

The selected alternative is also consistent with the State of Idaho Governor's Bull Trout Plan and long-tern effects are expected to benefit bull trout and their habitat.

1-C. Wildlife Resources

1-C 1 Issues and Public Concerns

During scoping, concerns were identified by the Forest Service, other agencies (Idaho Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service) , three environmental organizations (The Ecology Center, Boundary Backpackers/Idaho Conservation League), and more than 20 individuals (Fahlgren, Knapp, Lindgren, Tesar, Smith, Bainbridge, Walkley, Dante, Pharris, Perkins, Luedtke, Malmquist, Hays, Butters, Gause, Payne, Baker, Mealito, Cook, Sheppard, Huff, Crane, Ellsworth), two local organizations (Bonners Ferry Sportsmen, Deer Park Water Association) and one commercial business (Northern Lights, Inc). Detailed information is located in the project file – Scoping Comments.

Comments on the Draft EIS were received from four environmental organizations (American Wildlands, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, The Lands Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies). Environmental organizations often list several groups under one primary letterhead, such as Upper Columbia River of the Sierra Club, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, The Ecology Center and National Forest Protection Alliance. Two agencies (US Dept of Interior and US EPA) also provided comments (see Appendix F).

A list of threatened, endangered, Forest Service sensitive species, Management Indicator Species, and other species and habitats of special interest was developed from the Forest Service Region 1 list and from known species occurrence on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. The species list was reviewed to determine each species' relevance to the project, based on known species distribution and habitat availability. The following species (or their habitats) are considered present and possibly affected in a measurable way by the proposed actions and were analyzed in Chapter 4 of the FEIS:

- Grizzly Bear
- Canada Lynx
- Black-backed woodpecker
- Northern goshawk
- Fisher
- Pileated woodpecker
- White-tailed deer
- Forest land birds
- Flammulated owl (includes white-headed woodpecker as a guild)

The following issues were used to develop alternatives (FEIS, p.2-6):

Table 3. Wildlife Issues and Indicators

Species	Indicator
Canada lynx	Changes to key habitat components (denning, unsuitable habitat)
Grizzly bear	Changes in road densities
Black-backed woodpecker	Changes in distribution and quality of snag habitat
Flammulated owl	Trends in habitat suitability
Northern goshawk	Trends in suitable nesting habitat
Fisher	Changes to habitat suitability
Pileated woodpecker	Changes to large snag habitat and old growth habitat
White-tailed deer	Changes to critical mid-winter range
Forest land birds	Changes to priority habitats and vegetative diversity

1-C 2 Wildlife Activities in the Selected Alternative

For ease of reading and understanding of the management activities and the potential consequences to wildlife, this section is organized by wildlife species. Vegetation treatments and road management are described in the context of their potential effects on the habitat for the given species. Because this section describes only activities within applicable habitat areas, such as Lynx Analysis Units, the amounts of timber harvest and miles of road activities shown below may be less than listed in the other portions of this document.

Activities Related to Threatened and Endangered Species
(FEIS, p. 4-54 through 4-62)

a) Canada lynx

The following features of my decision apply to Canada lynx habitat (FEIS, p. 4-54 – 4-58):

The Hall Mountain Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) contains an ample supply of well-distributed denning stands and several relatively large blocks of high quality forage habitat (FEIS, p. 3-60).

Vegetation treatments (FEIS, page 4-56) will be conducted in 1410 acres of currently suitable habitat, including 307 acres identified as denning habitat. The denning habitat is located in less desirable cedar/hemlock stands and stands that are less than ideal for denning because they are not near high quality forage. Unit 41 will remove 39 acres of potential denning habitat and zero acres of high quality forage. This project will meet standards for lynx denning habitat.

Regeneration harvest will be used on approximately 990 acres within lynx habitat, providing recruitment foraging stands in the long-term. The units involve mainly low quality forage areas that provide occasional foraging opportunities. Given the apparent surplus of denning habitat in the area and that these stands supply marginal denning and foraging habitat, this treatment will provide high quality forage in the future and probably be more beneficial to Canada lynx.

The LAU is somewhat isolated from other lynx habitat on the district but several connectivity corridors have been identified on the east and west sides of the LAU. Applying INFS standards in riparian areas will preserve the important lynx travel corridors leading into this LAU.

Conclusion: As described above, the Selected Alternative will have some impact to existing habitat; however, it will also provide recruitment stands for future quality snowshoe hare habitat. It may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, Canada lynx or its habitat.

Consistency: The Selected Alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan direction to manage habitat of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (Forest Plan, p. II-6).

b) Grizzly bear

Since the Mission Brush area is outside the designated grizzly bear recovery zone, there were no standards guiding control of motorized access or manipulation of habitat at the time the DEIS was published. However, because the northern end of the project area has a historic pattern of grizzly use, the emphasis was to manage this area for improved habitat conditions for bears. Specifically, motorized access would be controlled so that there would be no net increase in open or total drivable road density as a result of projects on federal land.

In March, 2004, the USFS issued the ROD for the Forest Plan Amendments regarding motorized access in the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zones (USFS 2004), which codified the previous management emphasis of no net increase of open or total road densities in the Deer Ridge Occupancy Area. Since the Mission Brush project was designed to tier to this document in advance, there was no need to modify alternatives to be compliant with the new Forest direction. (FEIS, page 4-61)

The following features of my decision apply to this grizzly bear use area:

- construction of temporary roads,
- clearing roadside brush on currently undriveable roads to provide access to treatment units,
- decommissioning existing roads,
- upgrading facilities at Brush Lake Campground,

- trail improvements and access,
- designation of a motorcycle/ATV recreation area trail network and
- designation of an area where off-road use is restricted.

Alternative 2 proposes brushing of 0.55 miles of currently undrivable road (Road 2481H), which which would raise the total road density during project implementation from 3.32 miles/mile^2 to 3.34 miles/mile^2. Access on this road would be restricted to the purchaser and subcontractors through the use of a temporary gate or other barrier, so there would be no changes in open road density. After timber harvest and post-harvest activities are completed, this road would be placed in storage (bermed and culverts removed). An additional 5.3 miles of currently open road would be closed (decommissioned or stored) as a result of this proposal, as well as some 11.7 miles of undrivable roads. When post-harvest decommissioning activities are completed, total road densities in the Deer Ridge Occupancy Area would be reduced to 3.20 miles/mile^2, and open road densities would be 2.98 miles/mile^2.

This alternative proposes timber harvest of 1,333 acres within the bear use area. Prohibiting off-road mechanical activities during spring would reduce potential disturbance to grizzly bears. If winter logging is utilized, disturbance would be negligible. The proposal calls for girdling on 74 acres of existing seedtree units that may have forage value for grizzly bears. The remaining acres are forested stands with 70% or more overstory canopy cover. While these stands may provide cover, they probably have a lesser forage value to bears. Regeneration harvest of 889 acres of currently forested habitat should enhance future foraging opportunities for bears.

Conclusion The Selected Alternative may temporarily disturb grizzly bears if these activities take place during the bear activity season. However, these alternatives would also enhance foraging opportunities in the future. There would be no permanent increase of road miles in the bear use area as a result of this action. The proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, grizzly bear or its habitat (FEIS, page 4-61)

Consistency with Forest Plan and other Regulations The selected alternative is consistent with Forest Plan direction to manage the habitat of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (Forest Plan, p. II-6). It is also consistent with Forest Plan direction for managing habitat for species on the Regional Sensitive Species List to prevent further declines in populations, which could lead to Federal listing under the Endangered Species Act. It is consistent with National Forest Management Act requirements for population viability (FEIS, p. 4-61).

1-C 3 Summary of Effects to Other Wildlife Species

(FEIS page 4-62 through 4-89)

Flammulated Owl --Alternative 2 would promote long-term viability of suitable habitat, reduce wildfire risk and move habitat toward suitable condition more quickly than no action (Alternative 1) would. There would be no decrease in acres of suitable habitat.

Black-backed Woodpeckers -- Alternative 2 would potentially reduce the quantity of available snag habitat within harvest; however, tree mortality would continue to persist throughout the analysis area, allowing black-backed woodpeckers to maintain populations at low endemic levels. Snag retention guidelines would assure that minimum numbers of snags in all size classes would be retained in harvest units.

Fisher – Alternative 2 would have the greatest impact on suitable fisher habitat, temporarily reducing fisher habitat at the local scale. However, elsewhere in the project area fisher habitat is maturing at a faster rate than it is being lost. Within treatment areas, snag retention guidelines, riparian buffers, and Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy standards will provide adequate amounts of suitable habitat.

Pileated Woodpecker -- Alternative 2 shifts more acres toward suitable habitat than the other alternatives, and in the long-term encourages persistence and sustainability of large snag habitat. Design features maintain minimum numbers of snags within the harvest units, and reduction in fuel loads should provide suitable habitat for a longer duration.

White-tailed Deer -- All alternatives would reduce critical midwinter range by approximately 45 acres, but would also result in improved forage quantity and quality on traditional winter range. Alternative 2 would regenerate the most habitat.

Forest Land Birds – All alternatives would increase habitat richness and diversity; thus, providing more niches for birds. Treatments would encourage structural enhancement and long-term stability of priority habitats, particularly dry ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir forests.

1-C 4 Wildlife Effects from Recreation Activities

a) *Threatened and Endangered Species:*
(FEIS pages 4-90, 4-91)

Enhancements to Mission Mtn Trail #156 are the only activities with potential to effect grizzly bear or Canada lynx. Changes in motorized accessibility for Mission Mtn Trail #156 and Arndt Trail #409 would be offset by decommissioning and storage of drivable roads elsewhere, resulting in a net decrease of open motorized road density. No significant increases in non-motorized use are anticipated. There would be no increase of over-snow vehicles in the area.

It is unlikely that trailhead improvement or trail refurbishment would result in significant increases in non-motorized trail use, and subsequently would have little effect on these species. These improvements would not result in any increase of over-snow vehicle use in the area.

The projects to upgrade facilities at Brush Lake Campground may provide an indirect benefit to grizzly bear by concentrating recreation in an area infrequently used by grizzly bears in recent years.

b) *Sensitive and Management Indicator Species:*

It is possible that improvements to recreational facilities in the Brush Lake area may negatively impact wildlife species that are particularly sensitive to human disturbance. However, while these upgrades would likely increase the number of visitors this area receives, the footprint of the recreation area at the lake would not be significantly larger. It is unlikely that wildlife acclimated to the present amount of disturbance at developed facilities along the lake would be displaced by increased use.

Development of a system of motorized trails north and west of Brush Lake represents, on paper, an increase in motorized use. In reality, the old roads that would be converted to ATV trails are presently being used for this purpose. This action would merely legitimize present use patterns in an area that is ecologically better able to withstand these impacts than other parts of the District. Trail systems would not provide entry to currently inaccessible areas. Winter use of the area would not be substantially increased, so recreation would not cause undue disturbance to wintering big game. Wildlife species that rely upon riparian and wetland habitats would be protected by the restricted off-road use area. The proposed Watchable Wildlife Trail would represent a relatively small disturbance, and most users would likely stay on the trail itself.

All together, the proposals would likely increase the number of visitors but would not change the footprint or types of recreation at the campground and would

focus the motorized activities to areas that are more suitable. Restrictions to off-road activities would provide protection for riparian and wetland habitats.

1-C 5 Wildlife Design Features and Criteria

Features designed to protect wildlife habitat are discussed in detail in the FEIS (pp. 2-52 through 2-56). They include the following wildlife habitat components:

a) Wildlife Tree Retention
Features will ensure retention and selection of snags at a level and distribution that have been shown to support viable populations of species that use such trees. For dry forest habitats these minimum amounts will be retained within applicable harvest areas: 4 snags and 8 live tree replacements per acre, selected from the largest trees. For moist forest habitats these minimum will be: 6 snags and 12 live tree replacements per acre, selected from the largest trees.

Snags greater than 15 inches dbh that are felled for safety reasons will be kept on site for large woody debris and long-term site productivity. Slash will be pulled away from veteran/relic ponderosa pine and western larch live trees and snags to protect them during prescribed burning. Grapple piling prior to burning will be considered in locations where snags would be at risk from broadcast burning.

b) Hardwood Tree Retention
Retention of aspen and birch will maintain forest diversity and wildlife habitat. Trees cut for safety reasons will be kept on site for woody debris and long-term site productivity.

c) Grapple Piling
Where grapple piling/burning is used for fuels reduction, an average of two slash piles per acre will not be burned in order to provide habitat for small forest animals such as snowshoe hare.

d) Maintain Persistence of Mature ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir Community
To achieve suitable habitat conditions for species associated with drier habitats (e.g. flammulated owls) harvest prescriptions have been designed to maintain a mature ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir community by 1) retaining an overstory canopy closure of 35 to 65 percent, 2) achieve a relatively open landscape that is structurally complex (non-uniform spacing of trees with patchy microhabitats on understory trees), 3) retain a minimum of one patch approximately 1/10-acre in size of densely vegetated understory per five acres across all mature dry-site harvest units. Where possible, these patches will be in the vicinity of large residual snags or snag recruitment trees.

e) Goshawk Nest Site(s)
Locations of known or discovered nest sites will be protected by suspending logging operations and related activities within approximately 1/2-mile of nest locations between March 15 and August 15. If the nest is determined to be inactive or unsuccessful, restrictions can be lifted after June 30.

f) Vegetation Screens
Vegetation screens, designed to provide security screening and to minimize off road access, will be left along open roads and next to treatment units where there is a realistic chance of protecting the screens from logging and fuel treatments. The buffers will transition from a no-cut zone into harvest units.

g) TES Wildlife Management
If any TES species is located during project layout or implementation, management activities will be altered, if necessary, to ensure that proper protection measures are taken. The appropriate timber sale clause will be included in the contract. (FEIS, page 2-42)

h) Timing of Operations
Off-road mechanical activities related to this project will not be allowed within the area of historic bear use from April 1 to June 14. Where feasible, units in this area will be logged during the winter (units 38, 41, 43, 44, 48, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 66, 69, 111, 112, 125, 134 and 135). This measure is designed to minimize disturbance to grizzly bears that make seasonal use of the project area, particularly during the spring.

1-C 6 Wildlife Summary of Effects

No detailed discussion and analysis is necessary for species or habitat presumed not to be present within the affected area. The rationale for no further analysis for those species can be found in the project file.

Table 4. Species not Requiring Detailed Analysis & Discussion

No detailed discussion and analysis is necessary for species or habitat presumed not to be present within the affected area. The rationale for no further analysis for these species can be found in the project file.	TES: Bald Eagle and Woodland Caribou Sensitive: Harlequin duck, Peregrine falcon, Northern bog lemming
Supporting rationale is presented in this section for those species that are presumed to be present but not necessarily affected by the proposed actions. No detailed discussion and analysis is necessary.	TES: Northern gray wolf Sensitive: White-headed woodpecker, common loon, wolverine, Townsend's big-eared bat, Coeur d'Alene salamander, northern leopard frog, boreal toad MIS and other: Rocky Mtn. elk, American marten, snag habitat

Species considered present and potentially affected by the proposed actions are carried forward into a detailed discussion and analysis in Environmental Consequences Section.	TES: grizzly bear, Canada lynx Sensitive: flammulated owl, black-backed woodpecker, northern goshawk, fisher MIS & Other: pileated woodpecker, white-tailed deer, forest land birds

Species that may be affected (including beneficial effects) are tracked through Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of the FEIS. Species that are not present within the project area or those that would not be affected by the proposed activities are discussed in Appendix B of the FEIS.

Table 5. Other Species Analyzed or Discussed in the FEIS

No Effect to Threatened or Endangered species	Northern gray wolf, woodland caribou, bald eagle
No Impact to Sensitive Species	Common loon, Harlequin duck, Northern goshawk, peregrine falcon, northern bog lemming, Townsend's big-eared bat, Coeur d'Alene salamander, Northern leopard frog, Boreal toad
No Impact to Management Indicator Species	Rocky Mountain elk
May measurably impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.[1]	Sensitive species: Black-backed woodpecker[1], Fisher, Wolverine Management Indicator species: Pileated woodpecker, American marten, white-tailed deer
Beneficial Impact	Sensitive species: Flammulated owl, White-headed woodpecker

Determinations are based on the known distribution of the species, the habitat conditions required of the species, and the current habitat conditions within the evaluation area. The rationale for the conclusion of effects is contained in the FEIS document and project file.

[1]The preferred alternative would reduce the likelihood of severe fire and disease outbreaks, and thereby would reduce the possibility of an influx of high-quality black-backed woodpecker habitat, compared to the no-action alternative.

1-D. Recreation Resources

1-D 1 Issues and Public Concerns

During scoping, concerns were identified by the Forest Service, other agencies (Idaho Fish & Game, US Fish & Wildlife Service), three environmental organizations (The Ecology Center, Boundary Backpackers/Idaho Conservation League), and more than 20 individuals listed previously. Detailed information is located in the project file – Scoping Comments.

Formal comments on the Draft EIS were received from environmental organizations (American Wildlands, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, The Lands Council, Alliance for the Wild Rockies). Environmental organizations often list several groups under one primary letterhead, such as Upper Columbia River of the Sierra Club, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, Alliance for the Wild Rockies, The Ecology Center and National Forest Protection Alliance. Two agencies (US Dept of Interior and US EPA) also provided comments (see FEIS Appendix F).

The following issues and indicators were brought up during scoping and used to develop alternatives in the FEIS (page 2-9):

Recreation activities would have little to no variation between the alternatives and did not drive development of a separate alternative, as did vegetation, wildlife and aquatics.

Table 6. Issues and Issue Indicators

Issues	Issue Indicator
Safety / Universal Accessibility	Changes in safety and accessibility features of developed facilities.
Meeting Future Needs	Change in the number of Persons At One Time
Vegetation Management	Removal of dying off-site ponderosa pine stands in the vicinity of the Brush Lake Campground (measured in acres)
Trail Management	Change in amount and types of trails
Dispersed Recreation Facilities	Retaining the rustic and private nature of dispersed recreation areas

1-D 2 Recreation Features and Design Criteria

(FEIS page 2-55)

- Limit restoration treatments around Brush Lake to the off-recreation season.
- Near Brush Lake facilities and along access roads, utilize timber sale contract provisions to reduce slash from operations; thus reducing fire hazards.
- Protect Brush Lake Campground facilities and improvements.
- Develop and install informational signs at the campground.

1-D 3 Recreation Activities and Effects

a) Roads

Proposed road decommissioning will be done primarily on roads that have been brushed in and not useable for motorized access for many years. Therefore, there will not be an increase in the amount of land offering a non-motorized recreational experience. In addition, there are no facilities upgrades or road improvement proposals that would change the current Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) on drivable roads.

Although in some areas around Brush Lake there will be a dramatic change in the forest composition from the removal of the offsite ponderosa pine, the physical (ROS) will not change permanently in either the summer or winter season. The disturbance would be temporary and the recreation environment would return to its current state at the end of project work. All treatment activities and outcomes are appropriate in the Roaded Natural environment.

b) Trails

The currently unregulated ATV use near Brush Lake will be confined to a designated trail system of old skid roads further from the wetlands and the campground. Interpretive signs, maps, and area closure boundaries will be clearly posted at trailheads. See Figures 3 and 4 in this document for details.

The Brush Lake Campground facilities and the wildlife interpretive trail will be improved as described in the Purpose and Need section (EIS pg 2-9) and in Figures 3, 4, and 5.

1-D 4 Consistency with Forest Plan Standards, Other Regulations, Laws

All proposed recreation area activities meet Forest Plan Recreation guidelines. (Forest Plan, pp. II-3, II-24, II-25)

2. Findings and Consistency with Laws, Regulations and Policy Not Discussed Earlier

In addition to the laws, regulations and agency directives included in earlier resource discussions; my decision must also be consistent with the following requirements. I have determined that my decision is consistent with applicable laws, regulations and agency policy. Findings required by major environmental laws are summarized below.

a) National Environmental Policy Act

As described in the FEIS (page 1-15), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires analysis of projects to ensure the anticipated effects upon all resources within the project area are considered prior to project implementation (40 CFR 1502.16). The analysis for the Mission Brush project followed the guidelines of NEPA as provided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). Alternatives were developed based on existing conditions, Forest Plan goals and objectives, and public concerns and recommendations.

We considered a total of four alternatives in detail, including a No Action alternative as required by NEPA and NFMA (FEIS, pages 2-12 through 2-41); an additional four alternatives were considered but eliminated from further study because they either did not meet the project's purpose and need or were infeasible (FEIS, page 2-10 through 2-11). I find the range of alternatives is appropriate given the scope of the proposal and the purpose and need for action (FEIS, Chapter 1).

b) Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The IPNF North Zone wildlife biologist, fisheries biologist, and botanist evaluated the effect of the Selected Alternative with regard to threatened and endangered wildlife, fish and plant species. Findings and the rationale are disclosed in the FEIS (Chapter 4) and summarized in the Biological Assessments and Biological Evaluations (project files).

- Wildlife (BA/BE in FEIS App. B; concurrence letter dated April 9, 2004, project file)

Project activities will not affect the northern gray wolf, woodland caribou or the bald eagle and may affect but are not likely to adversely affect the Canada lynx and the grizzly bear.

For the Canada lynx, the Selected Alternative would have some impact to existing habitat, including the loss of modeled denning habitat. Lynx habitat conditions would meet standards set forth in the LCAS in all alternatives. The activity will also provide recruitment stands for future high quality snowshoe hare habitat over time. While harvest activities may provide a temporary disturbance to resident lynx, there is a low probability that this disturbance would result in lynx mortality. There will be no increase of open road miles in lynx habitat as a result of this action.

For the grizzly bear, the selected alternative may temporarily disturb grizzly bears if these activities take place during the bear activity season. However, this alternative would also enhance foraging opportunities in the future. There would be no permanent increase of road miles in the bear use area as a result of this action. The selected action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, grizzly bear or its habitat.

- Fish (BA/BE in FEIS App. B; concurrence letter dated April 9, 2004, project file)

The project would have no effect on White sturgeon or Bull trout. White sturgeon are not found outside of the main stem of the Kootenai River, which is outside of the cumulative effects area for this project.

No Bull trout have been found in streams within the cumulative effects area of this project, including Mission, Zion, or Brush Creeks. The habitat is connected to the Kootenai River; however, the lower 3 km of Mission Creek has been channelized, likely resulting in a thermal barrier to fluvial bull trout migration from the Kootenai River (FEIS, B-15).

- Plants (BA/BE in FEIS App. B)

There are no federally listed Threatened or Endangered plant species suspected to occur in the project area. Surveys and searches of records included Water howellia, Ute ladies'-tresses and Spalding's catchfly.

Findings

The Selected Alternative complies with IPNF Forest Plan standards for Threatened and Endangered wildlife, fish, and plants. Specific requirements and how this project meets them have previously been discussed in sections 9b, 9c, 9d and 9e of this ROD. Water quality will be maintained through implementation

of BMPs, site-specific mitigation measures, and monitoring (see ROD, section 9e).

Based on these determinations, we find that the Selected Alternative is consistent with the Endangered Species Act. As required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, we have consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the activities and anticipated effects of this project. They have concurred with our findings (letter dated April 9, 2004; project file).

c) Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (as amended, 33 U.S.C. 1323) directs the Forest Service to meet state, interstate and local substantive as well as procedural requirements with respect to control and abatement of pollution in the same manner and to the same extent as any non-governmental entity. The Forest Service has the statutory authority to regulate, permit and enforce land-use activities on the National Forest System lands that affect water quality.

There are no streams within the project area currently on Idaho's 303d listing of water quality limited stream segments (FEIS, p. 3-34). Sediment impacts to water quality from soil-disturbing activities listed in the Vegetation discussion are predicted to be short-term and minor due to the use of BMPs and site-specific mitigation practices. Existing sediment sources would be reduced or eliminated through road management activities shown in section 1-B1 Transportation System Activities.

Finding

All alternatives would be consistent with the requirements of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1251. There are no streams within the project area currently listed on the Idaho 303(d) list of water quality limited stream segments (FEIS, p. 3-34). Brush Creek and Mission Creek and its tributaries will be listed for temperature on the upcoming 2004 TMDL list (Dave Mosier, Idaho DEQ draft 303-d list, 2003). The requirements of the INFISH amendment to the 1987 IPNF Forest Plan, as well as other specific design features of this project would prevent or mitigate any activity that could potentially increase stream temperatures (see Chapter 2). In addition, based on no cumulative effects to fisheries and their habitats within all streams in the project area, beneficial uses will be maintained. (FEI, page 4-50)

d) Clean Air Act

The Forest-wide standard for air quality is to coordinate all Forest Service management activities to meet the requirements of the State Implementation Plans, Smoke Management Plan and Federal air quality standards. This will be

done with the Selected Alternative. Burning will be conducted by the Forest Service in a manner that will meet air quality requirements. We find that this project meets the Clean Air Act and state monitoring requirements through coordination with the State prior to burning, and the use of burning techniques that minimize smoke emissions (FEIS, pages 4-21 - 4-23; Appendix F, Response to Comments).

e) Environmental Justice Executive Order

In February 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, requiring federal agencies to conduct activities related to human health and the environment in a manner that does not discriminate or have the effect of discriminating against minority and low-income populations (Project Files, Environmental Justice).

Although low-income and minority populations live and recreate in the vicinity, activities under the Mission Brush project will not discriminate against these groups. Based on the composition of the affected communities and the cultural and economic factors, I find that the Selected Alternative will have no adverse effects to human health and safety or unequally effect minority, low-income, or any other segments of the population. (FEIS, page 4-97)

f) Natural Resources Agenda

On March 2, 1998, Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck announced the Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda. The Agenda provides the Chief's focus for the Forest Service, and identifies specific areas where there will be added emphasis. The following discussions briefly describe consistency of the Mission Brush project with those specific areas.

- Watershed health and restoration

Addressed through road maintenance and by decommissioning unneeded roads or putting into storage roads intended for potential future uses. Any constructed temporary roads would be decommissioned after access is no longer needed in order to mitigate any potential effects from sediment and water yield. (FEIS, page 1-15)

- Sustainable forest ecosystem management

Addressed by converting stands to desired, long-lived species, which are less susceptible to disease, and by improving growth and productivity of those species where they exist. Thereby, reducing potential fire severity and the continuing mortality of insect and disease infested stands. (FEIS, page 1-16)

- Recreation

Addressed by managing existing and future recreation opportunities in ways that enhance and protect the quality of the natural resources in the Mission Brush project area (FEIS, 1-16).

- Forest road policy

The Selected Alternative is consistent with the Forest Service Road Management and Transportation System Rule (see section h on the following page). (FEIS, page 1-16)

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g) Roadless Area Conservation Rule

There are no lands in or adjacent to the Mission Brush project identified as roadless under the IPNF Forest Plan. Therefore, there would be no change to road access in relation to inventoried roadless areas under any alternative (FEIS, Appendix A).

Unroaded Areas were not identified as an issue for this project. Although no comments were received from the public or other agencies concerning potential impacts to unroaded areas, potential effects were analyzed and summarized in Appendix A

h) Forest Service Road Management and Transportation System Rule

In January 2001, the Forest Service issued a Final Rule regarding specific revisions to the road system rules (at 36 CFR part 212) and to Forest Service administrative directives governing transportation analysis and management. The roads policy provides basic procedural protection for inventoried roadless areas and contiguous unroaded areas from road building until the Roadless Area Conservation Rule becomes effective, and the Forest completes a forest-scale roads analysis and incorporates it into the Forest Plan.

A Roads Analysis was completed for the Mission Brush project (project file).

- No changes are made to existing road management policies under the proposed project.
- No new permanent forest system roads will be developed.
- The forest system roads used to accommodate timber hauling from the project sites will have their surface improved and drainage systems upgraded as necessary to reduce sediment delivery into local stream systems.

i) National Historic Preservation Act

The entire project area has been surveyed for cultural resources. This project has identified and mitigated potential effects to cultural resources (FEIS, Appendix A, pp. A-2, A-3).

Recognizing the potential for unidentified sites to be encountered and disturbed during project activity, any future discovery of heritage resource sites or caves will be inventoried and protected if found to be of cultural significance. These sites will be avoided, protected, or potential effects will be mitigated in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Based on the successful protection of cultural resources on the IPNF through cooperation with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, these measures have been found to be effective (IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report for 1999, page 17).

j) National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The National Forest Management Act and accompanying regulations require that several other specific findings be documented at the project level.

- Forest Plan Consistency

Management activities are to be consistent with the Forest Plan [16 USC 1604 (i)]. The Forest Plan guides management activities [36 CFR 219.1(b)]. Standards and guidelines for the Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan, (Chapter 1, p.1-15) apply within the project area. Forest Plan consistency has been discussed throughout this document.

We have evaluated features of the Selected Alternative against IPNF Forest Plan goals and objectives, as well as the resource standards for consistency with the Forest Plan. The Forest Plan is discussed in Chapter 1 of the EIS (pages 1-16 to 1-19), with disclosure of Forest Plan consistency for each resource in Chapter 4 of the EIS. Upon review of the information disclosed in the Mission Brush EIS, Chapter 4 effects analysis for each resource, we find that our decision is consistent with the IPNF Forest Plan.

- Resource Protection (36 CFR 219.27(a)

The following statements address resource protection requirements of the National Forest Management Act:

Activities will conserve soil and water resources and will not allow significant or permanent impairment of the productivity of the land. Please refer to the EIS discussions of effects to Water Resources (pgs. 4-34 through 4-51), Soils (pg 2-12-47, 2-48) and the project file.

Activities will either not affect or will maintain sufficient habitat for viable populations of existing native vertebrate species and management indicator species consistent with the multiple-use objectives established in the Forest

Plan. The 1982 regulations implementing the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) require National Forests to provide habitat in order "to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area." (36CFR219.19). The regulations direct that "habitat must be provided to support, at least, a minimum number of reproductive individuals, and that habitat must be well distributed so that those individuals can interact with others in the planning area." The planning area is defined as the Forest Service lands included in the Forest Plan.

Documentation of viability analysis for Threatened and Endangered Species, Sensitive Species, and Management Indicator Species that may be affected by the proposed project is located in Chapter 4 and Appendix B of the FEIS. The analysis revealed that expected impacts would not likely contribute towards federal listing or a loss of viability to a population for any of the above species.

Implementation of the Selected Alternative will not affect critical habitat for Threatened and Endangered species (FEIS Appendix B; ROD, pp. 27-28).

The EIS assesses potential physical, biological, aesthetic, cultural, engineering, and economic impacts of the Selected Alternative and is consistent with multiple uses planned for the area. (EIS Environmental Consequences discussions in Chapter 4, and project files.)

There are no right-of-way grants being issued as part of the activities.

The road construction associated with this project is designed according to standards appropriate to the planned uses, considering safety, costs of transportation and effects upon lands and resources. (ROD, p. 25-35 FEIS pages 2-45, 2-49, 2-51).

Applicable Federal, State, and local air quality standards will be met (ROD, p. 35; FEIS, p. 4-21 – 4-22).

k) 36 CFR 219.27 (b) Vegetation Manipulation
(ROD, pp. 4, 5, 25, 26)

1. Be best suited to the goals stated in the Forest Plan.
The Forest Plan allocated National Forest system lands in the project areas to eight different Management Areas. Goals for each management area are briefly described in Chapter I of the EIS and in detail in the IPNF Forest Plan. After review of the expected environmental consequences of the various alternatives (EIS Chapter 4) I believe the selected alternative is well suited to implement Idaho Panhandle National Forest Plan direction and meet the multiple use goals established for the area.

2. *Assure that technology and knowledge exists to adequately restock lands within five years after final harvest.*

Technology and knowledge does exist to comply with this requirement. The IPNF have traditionally had high success rates for both artificial and natural regeneration. The vegetation analysis is provided in Chapter 4 of the EIS and in the project file documents this assurance.

3. *Not be chosen primarily because they will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber (although these factors shall be considered).*

Economic factors were considered in my decision, and the selected alternative does have a high economic value. However, the alternative was chosen primarily for the reasons documented in this Record of Decision (i.e. meeting Forest Plan goals and responsiveness to alternative driving issues and public comment) and not because of economic value.

4. *Be chosen after considering potential effects on residual trees and adjacent stands.*

The analysis considered the effects on residual trees and adjacent stands (EIS Chapter 4, Vegetation and Project File) and these were considered in my decision. I find the treatments in the selected alternative are designed to protect the reserve trees and adjacent stands, including riparian areas, to the extent possible.

5. *Be selected to avoid permanent impairment of site productivity and to ensure conservation of soil and water resources.*

The use of Best Management Practices (BMPs), avoidance of problem soil areas, regulation of yarding and site preparation operations, and the application of improvement and mitigation measures, as documented in Chapters 2 and 4 of the FEIS, will assure that site productivity is maintained and soil and water resources are protected.

6. *Be selected to provide the desired effects on water quality and quantity, wildlife and fish habitat, regeneration of desired tree species, forage production, recreation uses, aesthetic values, and other resource yields.*

After review of the FEIS, I find that the selected alternative will provide the desired effects on water, fish, vegetation, scenery and other resources within the project area. It will also have acceptable effects on soil and wildlife resources within the project area, as discussed in Chapter 4, of the FEIS.

7. *Be practical in terms of transportation and harvesting requirements and total costs of preparation, logging and administration.*

Data presented in the FEIS and project file relative to transportation, economics, and harvesting requirements indicate to me that the selected alternative is feasible and practical.

36 CFR 219.27 (c) Silvicultural Practices

No timber harvest, other than salvage sales or sales to protect other multiple-use values, shall occur on lands not suitable for timber production [16 U.S.C. 1604 (k)].

Guidelines for determining suitability are found in Forest Plan timber standard 3 (p. II-32). The FEIS discusses suitability for timber production as it applies to this project (FEIS, p. 4-33). Proposed harvest units are within productive habitat types as described in the Forest Plan. Timber harvest will occur within Management Areas (MA) 1 and 4, which comprise about 76% of the project area, MA9, and on a very selective basis in MA16 in the Brush Lake Campground. MAs 1 and 4 are suitable for timber production as described in the Forest Plan (pp. III-2, and III-17).

All or portions of treatment units 4, 6, 8, 19, and 60, which are in areas designated as MA9 in the Forest Plan, have been reviewed on the ground for the suitability of their locations to produce timber. The review was conducted according to Timberland Suitability Adjustment requirements in the Forest Plan (Appendix M, page M-1). Based on the analysis documented within the Vegetation section of the DEIS, these lands are recommended for classification as Suitable for Timber Production. (FEIS, p. 4-33)

Units 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, and 32, also in MA9, contain dry-site old growth at risk from insect, disease and risk of stand-replacing fire. It is appropriate to treat these areas to reduce these threats, thus meeting the desired future conditions and the purpose and need for this project.

Within the Brush Lake Campground vicinity hazard trees will be removed within MA16 riparian areas; this is appropriate to meet the campground management goals for vegetation management, safety/accessibility, scenery management, and overall enhancement of the facility (FEIS, p. 2-13, 2-14). Activities meet Forest Plan requirements for water resources and fisheries (FEIS, p. 4-50).

l) 36 CFR 219.27 (d) Even-aged Management

The location and shape of openings that will be created by timber harvest included in the selected alternatives will achieve the desired combination of multiple-use objectives as described in the FEIS (Appendix A and the Visuals Report – project file).

The openings that will be created shall be 40 acres or less unless approval is granted by the Regional Forester to exceed this size limit.

Region One Supplement 2400-2001-2 provides direction on how to proceed when openings larger than 40 acres will be created. Twenty-one units will result

in openings larger than 40 acres in size. The public was notified of the larger opening size via public scoping and in the FEIS (FEIS, p. 2-2). The Regional Forester has given approval to exceed this limit (project file letter dated May 11, 2004).

Clearcutting and Even-aged Management

When timber is to be harvested using an even-aged management system, a determination that the system is appropriate to meet the objectives and requirements of the Forest Plan must be made. Where clearcutting is to be used, it must be determined to be the optimum harvest method [16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(F)(i)].

Alternative 2 will employ the use of the irregular shelterwood with reserves method, which is an even-aged harvest system. A description of this system is provided in the FEIS, Chapter 2. All of the units where this harvest system is applied will include reforestation. None of these timber harvest units will be clearcut.

Of the estimated 4036 acres to be harvested with my decision, 1634 acres will be harvested with even-aged regeneration systems (irregular shelterwood with reserves or seed tree with reserves) and about 1878 acres will be harvested using partial cutting systems (commercial thin/sanitation salvage, improvement cut) and 388 acres will be harvested using uneven-aged regeneration systems (ROD, p. 4).

Further Forest Plan direction (Forest Plan Appendix I, Vegetation Management Practices) for the specific habitat types identified for regeneration treatment indicates that even-aged treatments ranging from clearcutting to shelterwood cutting may be appropriate for these sites. The Mission Brush FEIS (Chapter 3, pp. 3-1 through 3-33) and the silvicultural diagnosis (project file) describe current stand conditions, including age, species, stocking, growth, insects and diseases; ecological data, such as habitat types; and physical data such as topography and slope.

Together, these documents provide the information necessary to make site-specific prescription determinations that are consistent with the Summary of Timber Information and Vegetation Management Practices (Forest Plan, Appendix A) and the Northern Region requirements.

Finding

I have reviewed the silvicultural information in the Final EIS, project record and the site-specific management objectives within the IPNF Forest Plan and have determined that even-aged management practices are appropriate (with reserve trees) as the selected method to achieve the multiple resource objectives on the sites selected for harvest.