✧SUMMARY✧

THE WEST GOLD PROJECT ✧ FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

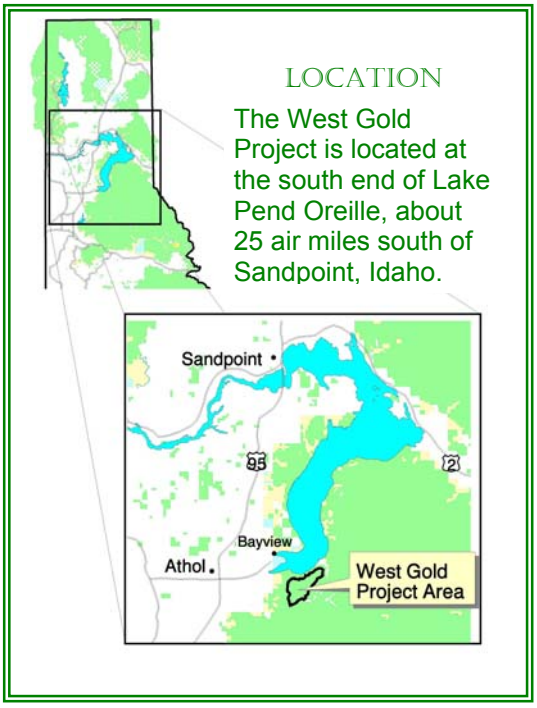
THE SETTING

West Gold Creek is located within the Gold Creek watershed; an area that has suffered effects from decades of fire suppression, historic mining practices and poorly designed roads. Yet remarkably, the Gold Creek watershed continues to be one of few strongholds for threatened bull trout in the Pend Oreille Lake subbasin.

WHAT IS THE WEST GOLD PROJECT?

Proposed by the Sandpoint Ranger District, the West Gold Project is one of three major efforts underway to improve the forested and aquatic habitats of the Gold Creek Watershed. Other efforts include cleanup and rehabilitation of abandoned mine sites in Chloride Gulch, and repair of the Kick Bush slide, a road cut that continually erodes sediment into the stream.

To best understand what ecological problems exist in the West Gold drainage, it helps to know the ecological history of the area.



This 1933 photo shows evidence of past wildfires that burned in and around the West Gold drainage. On the northwest face of Bernard Peak in the foreground, the vegetation is a patchy mosaic, which was created as fires burned at different times and intensities. In the middle ground and background, bare hillsides from large stand-replacing fires can be seen. These variations in fire intensities and patterns over the centuries played a key role in maintaining the diversity of this area. The West Gold drainage spans from left to right in the middle of the photo.

Historic Forest Conditions

The forests in this area, and in many areas of north Idaho and the Interior Columbia River Basin, were historically a varied mix of tree species of different sizes and ages, providing a diverse and healthy forest habitat for plants, animals, birds, and fish. Wildfires of different intensities helped maintain these forest conditions by thinning out species like Douglas-fir and grand fir, which can grow easily in the shade of other trees and compete with species that need more light. These fires created openings of different sizes and just the right soil conditions for seeds of larch and ponderosa pine to germinate in sunny conditions where they could grow productively. White pine grew in

abundance as well, and served as one of the more dominant tree species.

Past Wildfires

In the Gold Creek Watershed, of which West Gold is a part, evidence of past wildfires can be found in historic data, photos, and in the fire scars of many trees. Several very large wildfires burned between the 1850s and the 1930s. Some of these fires were "stand-replacing," which means most of the trees and vegetation were completely burned, elements of wildlife habitat were lost, and soils were exposed. With the lack of vegetation, especially in areas along the streams, water flows would increase substantially, flushing sediment and debris down the channels, and changing their shape. These fires may have killed fish in the streams, but they did not cause a permanent loss of habitat, as fish are still present today.

Human Uses

In the 1880s, settlements began in the Gold Creek Watershed, first with mining, then the building of homesteads and town sites, and eventually the construction of roads. With the expansion of these developments and the designation of surrounding lands as National Forest, fire protection became a priority.

In the West Gold drainage, the primary activities have been road construction and timber cutting (no mining). Although some of these projects put clearcuts in the headwaters before stream protection measures were used, the impacts to West Gold Creek were not severe enough to cause significant damage to the stream channel or fish habitat. Today, these cut areas are regenerating well with white pine, larch and ponderosa pine.

Insect Attacks and Root Disease - Douglas-fir bark beetles killed the red and gray trees in this picture. The brushy openings around them are caused by root disease. The increasing dominance of trees like Douglas-fir across landscapes has led to insect and disease levels that are way beyond native ranges.

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West Gold Creek Today: A Changing Ecosystem

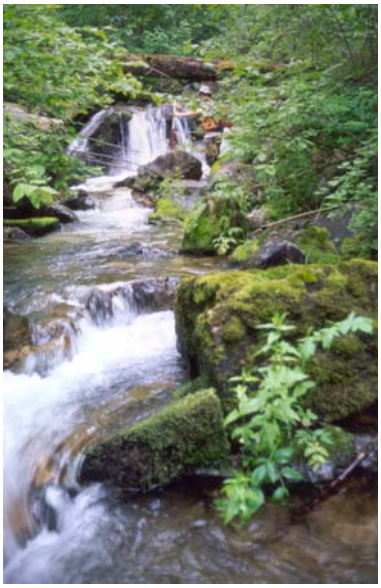
Increasing Human Use

Human developments now consist of a major powerline corridor through the West Gold drainage, about 28 miles of dirt roads, and the small, unincorporated community of Lakeview, Idaho just outside the drainage on the shore of Lake Pend Oreille. Snowmobile and off-road vehicle use in the area have been increasing steadily in the last 10 to 15 years, because other forested areas to the north are closed to such uses to protect endangered species habitat for grizzly bear and caribou.

Lakeview 1899

The Effects Of Fire Suppression On Forests And Streams

Since the 1930s, successful fire suppression efforts have caused the forest ecosystem to change from historic conditions by removing fire, which served as a key ecological process. Although fire suppression was publicly supported (and still is in many areas), it resulted in profound changes to many forest



West Gold Creek

ecosystems in the Intermountain west.

In general, many forest stands that used to have a mixture of tree sizes, ages, and species are now less diverse, denser, and dominated by Douglas-fir and other species that used to be kept at lower levels by fires. These tree species are not only competing for the light and growing space of more desirable species; they are also more susceptible to insects and diseases.

Insects and diseases have always been a part of the forest ecosystem. Yet today, some are at levels way beyond what was typical in the past because they have so many more susceptible trees to invade. One introduced disease, white pine blister rust, has decimated white pine populations in the area, and the growing space is now occupied by Douglas-fir and other species.

From an aquatic standpoint, the increased density of trees in the watershed has likely caused much lower stream flows over time, as more trees use up more water. Lower Gold and West Gold Creeks currently provide spawning habitat for fish like the threatened bull trout, and the diminishing westslope cutthroat trout.

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Why Is A Changing Ecosystem A Problem?

Declining Forest Health

Today, the amounts of species more susceptible to insects and diseases have increased across the landscape while those less susceptible and better adapted to fire-dependent ecosystems are decreasing. There is a tremendous loss of diversity and suitable wildlife habitat as these forests become more uniform in species, age and size. Where species such as ponderosa pine, larch and white pine used to be more common, providing longer-lived, large, old trees, they are now decreasing in numbers as they become crowded or shaded out.

More Dying Trees And Increasing Fuels

Root disease in Douglas-fir is rapidly expanding, killing trees before they reach maturity, making openings in the forest canopy for more Douglas-fir to regenerate in, which then repeat the disease cycle.

As the species vulnerable to insects and diseases die, they add fuel to the build-up that had already accumulated during the decades of fire suppression. If a wildfire were to start in these fuels on a hot summer day, our

Excessive Fuel Levels. Decades of fire suppression and the increase of dead and dying trees are creating fuel levels that could cause an uncontrollable, severe wildfire. In areas where we reduce fuel levels and use prescribed burning, we can increase our ability to suppress unwanted fire starts, and at the same time provide the ecological benefits of fire. This photo was taken in the project area in 2000.

ability to suppress it would be extremely difficult.

So why do we want to continue to suppress fires in an area where fire suppression has caused so many of the current problems? Because today, it is not socially acceptable to let wildfires burn in areas close to human developments.

Risks to Fish Habitat

West Gold Creek provides good habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Although these populations are stable, some road culverts in the West Gold drainage are at risk of contributing sediment to stream habitats. If a severe wildfire were to occur today, burning most of the vegetation, increased water flows from bared soils could cause these culverts to fail adding substantially more sediment during flood events.

Our Purpose and Need for Action

Given the information, described above, we believe it is important to actively pursue activities in the West Gold drainage that will improve and help restore ecosystem conditions and processes.

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THE WEST GOLD PROJECT PROPOSAL

To achieve the objectives of our Purpose and Need, we proposed some management activities. These include:

- **Thinning stands of trees** to provide more growing space for desired species and create less competition for light, water and nutrients. This is referred to as ***selective cutting*** (see next page).
- **Cutting and removing trees** susceptible to insect and disease attacks and reforesting the areas with desired, more resilient tree species that in the long term would provide more diverse forest habitats. This is referred to as ***regeneration cutting*** (see example, next page).

  Logging is the tool that we would use to accomplish these vegetation prescriptions.
- **Using prescribed burning and other fuel treatment methods** to regain the ecological benefits of fire, and to reduce the current high levels of forest fuels, as well as those temporarily created by our cutting activities.
- **Building temporary roads** to accomplish our cutting and burning activities.
- **Improving and repairing the drainage of existing roads** that may be causing sediment to leach into streams, potentially affecting fish habitat. Portions of some gated roads would be removed by restoring the ground to its natural shape benefiting both wildlife and stream habitats. This is referred to as **road decommissioning**.
- **Allowing off-road vehicle use** on roads 2707A and 2707AA to accommodate the increasing use of these recreational vehicles in this area. ***This "proposed action" is discussed in detail as Alternative B in Chapter II of the Final EIS.***

Our Purpose and Need

To improve the health and productivity of terrestrial and aquatic habitats by:

- *Initiating the restoration of desired forest cover, structure, pattern, and species composition across the landscape where they are outside natural or accepted ranges.*
- *Providing for wildlife habitat diversity.*
- *Restoring fire as an ecological process.*
- *Maintaining and improving West Gold Creek's aquatic habitat by reducing existing and potential sediment risks.*
- *Managing current and additional motorized recreation opportunities while protecting resource values such as wildlife and water.*

Selective cutting example. This dry site ponderosa pine stand was thinned in 1998 along Road 2707 in the West Gold drainage as part of the Gold Yeller project. The photo was taken the following year during prescribed burning of the understory.

Regeneration cutting example. This is a *very open* regeneration cut on Middle Mountain near Clark Fork, Idaho. The degree of canopy openings can vary depending on the type and amount of species present and their state of health. In areas of extensive root disease, openings will already be present. The goal in these areas is to remove most of the Douglas-fir trees and replace them with more resilient species of ponderosa pine, larch or white pine. Light dots in the center of the photo are elk.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act, we have prepared an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement) to scientifically analyze the potential effects of our proposed activities on the environment.

Public comments on our initial proposal helped us to develop a Draft EIS, which was released in May of 2002. The Draft EIS presented *issues* (concerns about the effect of the project on resource values) which led to the development of alternatives and the basis for our scientific analysis in the EIS. ***See Chapter II for a more detailed discussion on the issues we have analyzed.***

Table S-1. Amounts of activities proposed in Alternatives B, C and D. Alternative A is not shown since all values would be zero.

Proposed Activities	Alt. B	Alt. C	Alt. D
Vegetation Treatments (Acres)			
Selective Cutting	411	411	444
Regeneration Cutting	898	898	2
Underburn Only	29	29	29
Total Stand Treatment Acres	**1,338**	**1,338**	**475**
Logging Systems (Acres)			
Helicopter	625	891	245
Skyline	638	405	186
Tractor	46	13	15
Road Work in Miles			
Road Construction	3.0	0	0.5
Temporary Road Decommissioning	2.7	0	0.2
New Road Storage	0.3	0	0.3
Existing Road Decommissioning	1.7	1.7	1.7
Existing Unclassified Road Decommissioning	0.7	0.7	0.7
Existing Unclassified Road to Permanent Road	0.3	0.3	0.3
Existing Road Storage	1.7	1.7	1.7
Road Maintenance	27.9	27.9	27.9
Acres of Fuel Treatments			
Underburn (includes 29-acre burn above)	1,077	1,077	225
Limb and Lop	223	223	223
Grapple Pile	28	28	27
Whole Tree Yard	10	10	0
Burn helicopter landing debris	9	9	5

Total Watershed Acres = 4,543

Changes Between the Draft and Final EIS

Public comments we received on the Draft EIS did not generate any new alternatives. However, some comments, along with new information led us to make the following notable changes to the Final EIS:

- In response to public comments, a new analysis issue has been added: "The effects of proposed road construction and existing road management on public road access" (see Analysis Issues in Chapter II).
- In response to public comments, restrictions previously proposed on the OHV route have been changed to allow OHV use any time the road is accessible to OHVs except during soft road bed conditions (see Alternative Descriptions, Chapter II).
- Upon further field verification, the proposal to decommission 0.3 miles of unclassified Road 2707UF, was changed. The new proposal is to designate the 0.3-mile segment as a classified road in order to maintain a well-used dispersed campsite there. The remaining segment (0.7 mile) of road which narrows down into a trail and connects into Road 2707A, is proposed for decommissioning (see Chapter II, table 1).
- As a result of public comments, we have expanded and clarified much of our analysis in Chapter III.

Key Issues

These issues are ones that help us create "alternatives"--other ways of achieving our objectives. The key issues we identified are:

1) The effects of regeneration cutting and resulting canopy openings on water yield increases, sediment delivery to streams, and aquatic habitat in West Gold and Gold Creeks.

2) The effects of road construction, decommissioning and maintenance activities on water yield increases, sediment delivery to streams and aquatic habitat in West Gold and Gold Creeks.

3) The effects of project activities on the spread of existing weed infestations and introduction of new invaders.

Analysis Issues

Other issues that were raised help us to design specific protective measures for resource values and create the basis for measuring the effects of proposed activities on various resource values. These include:

- *Effects of project activities on forest vegetation*
- *Effects of project activities on sensitive and rare plants*
- *Effects of project activities and road management on wildlife habitat and big game security*
- *Effects of vegetation and fuels treatments on wildfire risk*
- *Effects of prescribed burning on air quality*
- *Effects of vegetation prescriptions on visual quality*
- *Effects of project activities on revenues generated from selling timber*
- *Effects of proposed road construction and existing road management on public road access*

Issues Eliminated

Several issues that were raised were eliminated from detailed analysis.

Issues are eliminated when we believe they are not relevant, they are outside the scope of what we are required to focus our analysis on, or the significance of the issue has been greatly reduced by designing the project to virtually eliminate any effects to the resource of concern. ***See Chapter II of the Final EIS for a listing and discussion of issues that were eliminated.***

Alternatives Considered

The project team developed the following alternatives based on the key issues and requirements for EISs. ***See Chapter II for specific details of activities proposed with each alternative.***

Alternative A – this is the "No Action" Alternative. As required by law, this alternative must always be analyzed in detail to provide the deciding official with a comparison of effects between selecting a proposal and doing nothing. It provides good information on what it means to not proceed with an action.

Alternative B – this is the "Proposed Action" for the West Gold project, as described earlier. It was **proposed initially as the way to achieve our objectives**.

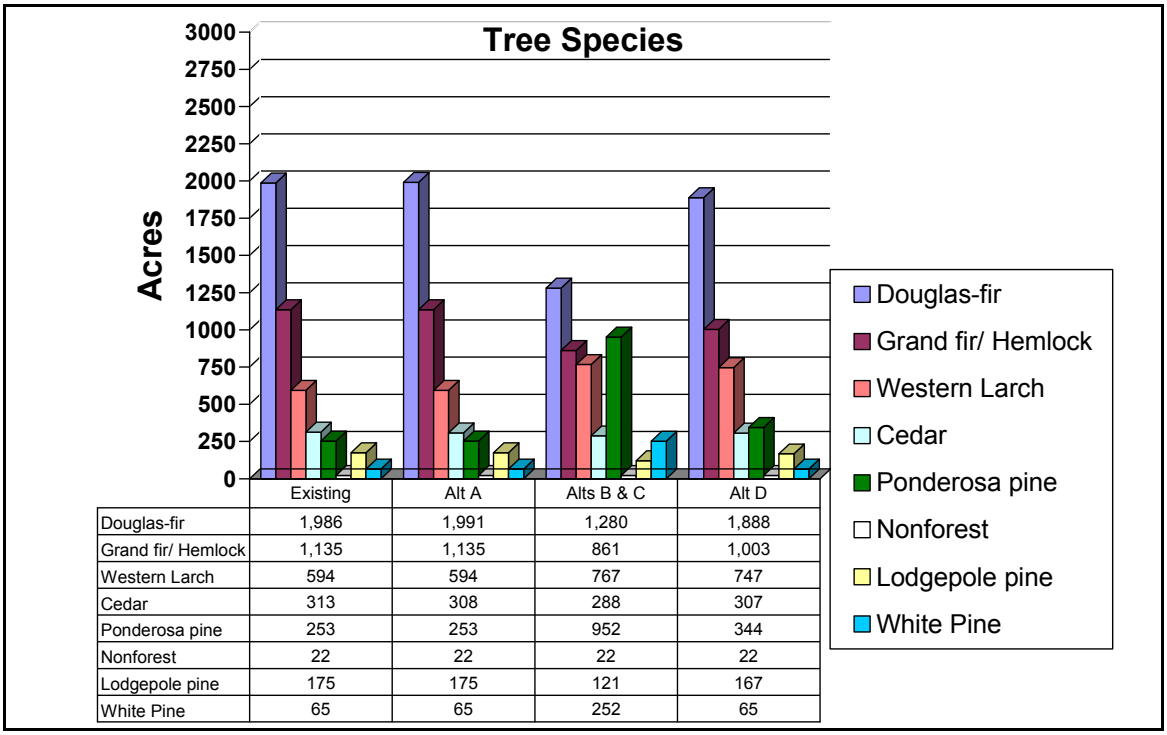
Alternative C – Alternative C is identical to B from a vegetation treatment standpoint, but it differs in that **there is no road construction**. By analyzing this alternative, we can compare effects of not constructing roads with effects of constructing roads on water yield, sediment, noxious weed spread and costs of the project.

Alternative D – this alternative **proposes mostly selective cutting,** but only in areas where it is an effective tool. Since there are fewer acres of activities, not as many roads are proposed for construction. By analyzing this alternative, we can compare the effects of fewer canopy openings and less road construction on water yield, sediment delivery, and noxious weed spread.

Designs Included to Protect the Environment

We believe our proposed activities would have many long-term beneficial effects. However, many people are concerned about short-term negative effects. Therefore, we have developed an extensive list of design features that are incorporated into proposed activities in every alternative specifically to avoid or minimize effects on the environment. The features include measures designed to:

- Minimize effects from temporary roads
- Reduce sediment, protect water and fish habitat
- Keep prescribed burns under control
- Protect air quality
- Protect wildlife habitat
- Protect soils and site productivity
- Protect heritage resources
- Manage roads and access
- Minimize effects of activities over time
- Protect rare plants and their habitat
- Prevent the spread of noxious weeds
- Protect scenery and visual quality



	Existing	Alt A	Alts B & C	Alt D
Douglas-fir	1,986	1,991	1,280	1,888
Grand fir/ Hemlock	1,135	1,135	861	1,003
Western Larch	594	594	767	747
Cedar	313	308	288	307
Ponderosa pine	253	253	952	344
Nonforest	22	22	22	22
Lodgepole pine	175	175	121	167
White Pine	65	65	252	65

Figure A. A comparison of each alternative's effect on the diversity of tree species. Note that Alternatives B and C would provide the greatest diversity of tree species, reducing those species most susceptible to insects and root disease, and increasing those better adapted to historic conditions.

Environmental Effects

In the EIS, Chapter III contains the detailed information about the current condition or "Affected Environment" of each resource we analyzed, and what we predict the effects or "Environmental Consequences" of each alternative will be.

Table 4 in Chapter II of the Final EIS provides a comparison of alternatives with more detailed information and data than what is described here. What follows is a generalized description of the Alternatives and highlights of their effects.

Alternative A: No Action

If this alternative were selected, only current management and uses would occur. The health and productivity of forest vegetation and habitats would continue to decrease in areas where Douglas-fir and grand fir are most common, and where insects and diseases are flourishing beyond native levels. The numbers of desirable species such as larch, and ponderosa pine would continue to decline as they become shaded out and as their seed sources are reduced.

Along with a decrease in desirable species that tend to live longer would be a decrease in quality habitat for bird species that prefer large old snags. There would be an abundance of smaller size snags from dying Douglas-fir, however these would tend to rot and fall over soon after the trees die.

Areas of dead and dying trees would continue to expand, adding more fuels to already dangerous levels. Without any way to reduce these fuels, the ability to suppress an unwanted fire in these areas would be very difficult.

Drainage structures on roads in the watershed would continue to pose a risk of delivering sediment into streams potentially affecting fish habitat. Road densities and uses would remain the same.

Winter snowmobile activities would continue to occur in the drainage on designated routes, but there would be no new motorized opportunities during the dry season.

Since there would be no activities other than current management and uses, there would be no potential for effects to soils, rare plants, noxious weed spread, or big game habitat.

This alternative would do nothing to achieve our objectives, and would not meet Forest Plan standards for promoting forest structures and species that reduce susceptibility to insects and diseases.

Alternative B: Our Proposed Action

If this alternative were selected, proposed cutting, planting and prescribed burning activities would help restore the ecological benefits of fire, increase the variety of tree species and sizes over the long term in the West Gold drainage (figure A), and improve the diversity of forest vegetation and habitats. This would achieve the first three objectives of our Purpose and Need very well.

Repairing or replacing drainage structures that are at risk of delivering sediment to streams and removing segments of existing roads would achieve the fourth objective of our Purpose and Need. These measures would reduce or eliminate the risks of sediment delivery in the watershed over the long term. *These activities are also proposed in Alternatives C and D.*

Allowing the use of off-road vehicles on two currently gated roads would provide a new route for the continuously increasing population of motorized vehicle recreationists. Limiting use to these two road segments and avoiding use during soft roadbed conditions would achieve the fifth objective of our Purpose and Need. *This activity is also proposed in Alternatives C and D.*

Our models predict that creating openings from cutting trees would cause a small increase in water yield (5% above existing levels). Considering the historic range of water yield fluctuations that occurred from large fires,

Effects to Water and Fish: Although there were many issues raised about our proposed activities, one of the more significant issues that we analyzed related to the effects of our activities on the watershed and to bull trout habitat in West Gold and Gold Creeks. The following table is an excerpt from the Alternative Comparison Table (Table 4 in Chapter II of the FEIS) displaying predicted effects of project activities on water and sediment yields.

	Alternative A	**Alternative B**	**Alternative C**	**Alternative D**
Water Yield	Peak flows would increase 1-2% due to the loss of vegetation from dead and dying trees. Peak flow changes would be localized and would not affect habitat in fish bearing streams.	Peak flows would increase to 5% above Alternative A for the first two years and gradually decline to current levels in 30 years. Peak flow changes would be localized and would not affect habitat in fish bearing streams.	Peak flows would increase to 4% above Alternative A for the first two years and gradually decline to current levels in 22 years. Peak flow changes would be localized and would not affect habitat in fish bearing streams.	Peak flows would increase to 2% above Alternative A for the first two years and gradually decline to current levels in 22 years. Peak flow changes would be localized and would not affect habitat in fish bearing streams.
Sediment Yield	No change from existing condition.	An estimated 11% increase in sediment yield would occur the first two years, then decline to current levels in 8 years for a total of 137 tons over 10 years. Sediment input is not expected to negatively affect stream channel, fish habitat, or populations. Overall estimated net sediment reduction: W. Gold Cr.=1,615 tons Gold Creek = 1,809 tons	An estimated 9% increase in sediment yield would occur the first year of the project, then decline to current levels in 5 years for a total of 52 tons over 6 years. Sediment input is not expected to negatively affect stream channel, fish habitat, or populations. Overall estimated net sediment reduction: W. Gold Cr.=1,700 tons Gold Cr. = 1,894 tons.	An estimated 3.5% increase in sediment yield would occur for the first two years of the project, and then decline to current levels in 4 years for a total of 20 tons over 6 years. Sediment input is not expected to negatively affect stream channel, fish habitat, or populations. Overall estimated net sediment reduction: W. Gold Cr.=1,722 tons Gold Creek = 1,926 tons.

we believe this increase would not be substantial enough to cause unnatural movement of existing materials in West Gold Creek or affect the shape of the main channel. In fact, it would be considerably less than what the stream experienced historically. Consequently, there would be no direct effects to fish habitat, or effects downstream to Gold Creek.

Our modeling also predicts that the combination of logging and constructing roads would cause a short-term increase in sediment delivery to West Gold Creek in the first two years but would decrease back to existing levels in about 8 years. The total sediment estimated to be produced during the project is 137 tons. This would not have detrimental impacts to the stream channel or fish habitat since much of the sediment would likely be transported out of the lower stream channel due to the bedrock-controlled nature of the channel.

With the reduction of sediment predicted from road and culvert work proposed, we estimate that there would be a net sediment reduction in the West Gold drainage of 1,615 tons, and cumulatively, a net reduction in the Gold Creek watershed of 1,809 tons.

While project activities are underway, there would be a decrease in elk security below the minimum standard as road miles and use increase during the life of the project. However, after project activities elk security would return to a level above the minimum standard but below the current level.

There would be a low to moderate potential for noxious weed spread from ground-disturbing activities and canopy openings. There would be no anticipated effects to rare plants or their habitat.

Logging systems are planned and designed to have little impacts to soils. Tractor logging, which tends to be the most impactive, would be used with protection measures that would keep detrimental impacts within required limits. The construction of roads and helicopter landings would result in some irretrievable effects to soil productivity on those sites.

Effects from burning would include some smoke emissions and damage to individual trees. To comply with state air quality laws and regulations, all burning activities are conducted only when dispersion levels are acceptable and state approval is granted.

Road construction is proposed in this alternative because roads reduce the costs of logging and fuel treatments, and they provide control points for equipment during prescribed burning activities. The reduced costs to accomplish the project result in higher revenues from selling the trees that are cut.

Alternative C: No Road Construction

If this alternative were selected, it would be identical to B in terms of our prescriptions for cutting, burning and planting, but we would not construct any roads to accomplish this work.

So, like Alternative B, it would achieve all of our objectives very well. Its primary differences are apparent in some

Elk in the West Gold drainage. This herd of elk was photographed during a spring 2000 snow storm. They were feeding on browse stimulated by a selective cut and prescribed fire in the Gold Yeller project the previous year.

of its effects and costs.

Without road construction, our models show that creating openings from cutting trees would cause a smaller increase in water yield than Alternative B (4% above existing levels). Like Alternative B, this increase is well within the historic range of water yield fluctuations so there should be no direct effects to the stream channel, fish habitat, or effects downstream to Gold Creek.

Since there is no road construction, Alternative C is predicted to produce less sediment to the stream than B and expected to have no detrimental impacts. Sediment levels would decrease back to existing levels in about 5 years. Total sediment estimated to be produced during the project is 52 tons. Like Alternative B, we predict a net sediment reduction in the West Gold drainage of 1,700 tons, and cumulatively, a net reduction in the Gold Creek watershed of 1,894 tons.

Like B, project activities in Alternative C would decrease elk security below minimum standards in the short term. However, after project activities are completed, elk security would return to a level above the minimum standard but below the current level.

Without road construction there would be less of a chance of weed spread than in Alternative B, but still a risk. There would also be fewer impacts to soils.

Without road construction, the amount of helicopter logging is greatly increased. This increases the cost of logging and decreases revenues generated from the project in comparison to Alternative B.

All other effects would be the same as Alternative B.

Based on our analysis and the public comments we received on the Draft EIS, Alternative C has become our preferred Alternative.

Alternative D: Selective Harvest

If this alternative were selected, selective cutting would be the primary method of vegetation treatment. With the exception of one two-acre area, none of the areas proposed for regeneration cutting are included in this Alternative because selective cutting would not effectively achieve our objectives in those stands.

Consequently, only 36% of the cutting prescriptions proposed in Alternatives B and C would occur.

This alternative would weakly achieve the first three objectives of our Purpose and Need in those areas that are treated. It would not treat the areas where our worst insect and disease infestations are, where fuels are the heaviest, and where Douglas-fir and grand fir are perpetuating these conditions. The health and productivity of forest vegetation and habitats would only be improved in a small portion of the watershed.

Efforts to reduce sediment risks from roads, and adding a new off-road vehicle route would still occur as in Alternatives B and C, so the fourth and fifth objectives of the Purpose and Need would be achieved at the same level.

There would be substantially less canopy opening and very little road construction. Consequently, effects from proposed activities to most resources would be substantially less than Alternatives B and C.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis shows that any activity we do will have some level of effects during the short term. Using a vast array of protection measures we estimate that negative effects would be negligible. In combination with road work to fix drainage problems and improvements planned in other areas of the Gold Creek watershed, we believe our actions would result in long-term beneficial effects to the West Gold and Gold Creek drainages.

THE DECISION

The deciding official for this project is **Ranotta McNair**, the Forest Supervisor for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. She has reviewed all the comments and analysis in this EIS. **Her decision is documented in the Record of Decision** and is based on how well the preferred alternative achieves the Purpose and Need, addresses public issues, and complies with applicable laws, policies, and regulations.