

# SMALL-SCALE SUCTION DREDGING IN LOLO CREEK AND MOOSE CREEK CLEARWATER AND IDAHO COUNTIES, IDAHO

## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



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U.S. Forest Service  
Clearwater National Forest



United States  
Department of Agriculture

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**SMALL-SCALE SUCTION DREDGING IN LOLO CREEK AND MOOSE CREEK  
CLEARWATER AND IDAHO COUNTIES, IDAHO**

**Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

**Clearwater National Forest  
North Fork Ranger District  
Orofino, Idaho**

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<b>Comments</b>	The Forest Service is seeking comments on this Draft EIS. Comments must be postmarked or received by May 17, 2004.

**Abstract:** This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act to identify and evaluate potential environmental impacts of a proposed action and reasonable and practical alternatives that meet the purpose and need for the project. Clearwater National Forest proposes to approve proposed plans of operation for small-scale suction dredge operations in Lolo Creek and Moose Creek (including Independence and Deadwood Creeks) that meet 30 specific terms and conditions that are designed to protect threatened and endangered fish species and their habitat.

Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, and bull trout are listed as threatened species in the Snake River Drainage under the Endangered Species Act. Chinook salmon and steelhead trout are found in Lolo Creek, and bull trout are found in both Lolo Creek and Moose Creek; steelhead and chinook are not found in Moose Creek due to the downstream Dworshak Dam. Following consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service determined that approval of proposed plans of operations would be considered a “major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment” and would therefore require the preparation of an EIS.

The Forest Service is analyzing three alternatives in this EIS:

- Alternative 1 – No Action: Forest Service would not approve proposed plans of operation
- Alternative 2 – Suction Dredging: Forest Service would approve plans of operations for small-scale suction dredges that meet specific terms and conditions
- Alternative 3 – Suction Dredging and Stream Improvement Projects: Forest Service would approve plans as under Alternative 2 and also would restore 290 meters of Lolo Creek previously affected by large-scale mining and install a fish-friendly ford where Forest Road 5440 crosses Independence Creek, a tributary of Moose Creek.

The Forest Service has selected Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative.

**Important Notice:**

Reviewers should provide the Forest Service with their comments during the review period of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. This will enable the Forest Service to analyze and respond to the comments at one time and to use information acquired in the preparation of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, thus avoiding undue delay in the decision-making process. Reviewers have an obligation to structure their participation in the National Environmental Policy Act process so that it is meaningful and alerts the agency to the reviewers' position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (*City of Angoon v. Hodel* (9<sup>th</sup> Circuit, 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980)). Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be specific and should address the adequacy of the statement and the merits of the alternatives discussed (40 CFR 1503.3).