



North Lochsa Face



Bimerick Meadows is in the east central part of the North Lochsa Face area. In the summer grasses and flowers thrive there.



Lochsa Ranger District
Clearwater National Forest

North Lochsa Face



Clearwater National Forest

December 2002

Timeline

January 1995

- Scientific assessment initiated

May 1996

- Scientific assessment completed

August 1996

- Notice of Intent to publish Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) printed in Federal Register

June 1997

- Draft EIS released

June 1999

- Final EIS released

April 2000

- Record of Decision (ROD) for Recreation, Access Management issued
- ROD for Vegetation, Aquatic Management issued

July 2000

- ROD for Recreation, Access appealed; Forest's decision affirmed
- ROD for Vegetation, Aquatic Management appealed; Forest's decision reversed
- Forest directed to prepare Supplemental EIS to clarify analysis of effects of road obliteration

January 2002

- Draft Supplemental EIS issued

December 2002

- Final Supplemental EIS and ROD released

Ecosystem Restoration Project Approved

Clearwater National Forest Supervisor Larry Dawson brought eight years of analysis and public involvement to a close recently with the release of the North Lochsa Face Record of Decision for Vegetation and Aquatic Management.

“We believe this decision is one that will be supported by the general public,” Dawson stated. “It was shaped by extensive analysis and public input.”

The project area, located east of Lowell, Idaho, covers approximately 128,000 acres in the Lochsa River drainage. It is nestled between the Lolo Motorway (Forest Road No. 500) and U.S. Highway 12. The Pete King drainage forms the southwestern border while the Fish Creek drainage forms the eastern boundary.

Why Did the Forest Service Choose to Analyze this Area?

The character of this area has been changed by sixty years of fire suppression as well as past road building and timber management practices. The Clearwater National Forest has studied these changes and analyzed options to:

- Manage vegetation to restore a more natural mix of native species of diverse age classes
- Improve growing conditions for vegetation
- Return natural processes (such as fire) to the area
- Reduce the threat of intense wildfire
- Control noxious weeds
- Improve watersheds and riparian (streamside) areas
- Contribute timber products to the local economy

An “ecosystem management” approach was used to develop this project. In other words, Forest managers took a holistic look at the area, considering forest organisms as well as the natural forces that shape their environment. Biological, physical, social and economic issues were blended into a decision designed to protect and restore ecosystems and provide goods and services to people.

It has taken eight years of analysis, public involvement, and adjustments to changing issues to decide how to restore vegetative and aquatic conditions in the North Lochsa Face analysis area. The decision reflects state-of-the-art scientific analysis and responds to continual public input.

Clearwater National Forest Supervisor Larry Dawson believes that “this decision strikes the right balance, restoring the environment while providing contracting opportunities that will benefit local communities.”

Highlights of the Selected Alternative

A different alternative was selected this time than was selected in April 2000. This choice, Alternative 5 Modified, is based on improved scientific analysis. It responds to public comment by eliminating all timber harvest in the North Lochsa Slope Roadless Area, eliminating all harvest of old growth, and dropping precommercial thinning in lynx habitat.

All actions included in the selected alternative are designed to improve vegetative and aquatic conditions in the North Lochsa Face area.

To restore vegetation in the North Lochsa Face analysis area, the Clearwater National Forest has decided on the following activities:

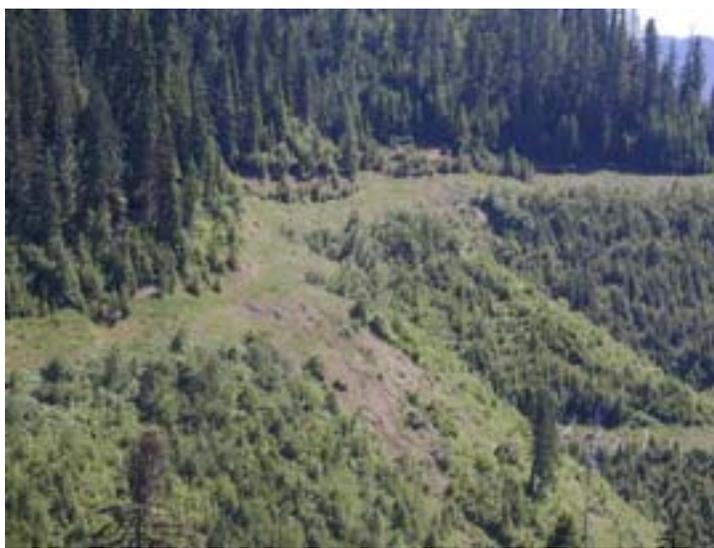
- **Prescribed fire** on approximately 12,530 acres, or 10% of the project area. The decision amends the Forest Plan so fire managers have more options than suppression when fires start in the North Lochsa Face locale.
- **Timber harvest** from 4,032 acres (3% of the area). This will yield an estimated 42 million board feet of timber. There will be no clearcutting, no harvest of old growth, and no harvest within the North Lochsa Slope Roadless Area.
- **Precommercial thinning** on 995 acres.
- **Weed control** activities will be implemented along area roads and trails. Physical/mechanical, chemical and biological methods will be used.

To improve the condition of watersheds within the North Lochsa Face area, the Clearwater National Forest has decided on the following activities:

- **Road decommissioning** – Sixty-six miles of roads that are no longer needed for management activities will be obliterated. Another 54 miles of roads that might be needed in the future will be stabilized and closed to motorized traffic so they are in a state of “long-term maintenance.” This will minimize erosion, reduce maintenance costs, and provide for future access.
- **Riparian (streamside) planting** – Cottonwoods will be planted on 450 acres in a six-mile strip along Fish Creek. Conifers and deciduous trees will be planted in a 150-acre strip along two miles of Pete King Creek.

Lochsa District Ranger Cindy Lane has overseen the North Lochsa Face project from its initiation in 1995. “It’s taken a long time to reach a decision because of the huge size of the area, the complex issues, and changing public sentiment,” she explained. “We are pleased to have a decision so we can begin moving projects forward.”

People have played a major role in shaping the North Lochsa Face decision. In addition to the required comment periods, forest managers have held numerous meetings, facilitated work groups, conducted private interviews, held a formal hearing, and sponsored field trips. The Clearwater National Forest appreciates the involvement of so many people over the eight years. The final decision responds to information and thoughts that were expressed.



A section of Higgins Hump Road No. 460 was decommissioned a few years ago. Road failures had repeatedly threatened Walde Creek, an anadromous fisheries stream.

[For more information: www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater](http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/clearwater)