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Executive Summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Revised Land Management Plans

Angeles National Forest Cleveland National Forest Los Padres National Forest San Bernardino National Forest



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Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

This is a summary of the draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) that was prepared for the revision of the land management plans for the southern California National Forests (Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, San Bernardino). This summary includes the results of the analysis done in the DEIS. The companion documents to the DEIS are the four independent draft land management plans. The draft revised land management plans are based on the 'preferred alternative' identified for each of the Forests. It is important to remember that the 'preferred alternative(s)' are not a decision at this draft stage. Rather, the 'preferred alternatives' are the agency position for the 90 day comment period. At this draft stage, these alternatives offer the best mix of management options relative to the issues that are addressed. The draft land management plans and the DEIS should be reviewed concurrently. Together these documents represent the analytical basis for the strategic, forestwide direction that would be employed over the next 10 to 15 years.

The summary is a synopsis of a complex technical document that describes the analysis and conclusions for a programmatic forest plan. The summary is intended to help the reviewer clearly see what we did, why we did it, the conclusions reached, and finally, where we go from here. Our goal is to clearly display the information that will help generate constructive, informed comments on these draft environmental documents. The comments will be used as the basis for developing the final environmental impact statement and revised forest plans.

Purpose Of and Need For Action

The purpose of this proposed action is to develop revised land management plans for the four southern California National Forests that will:

1. guide all natural resource management activities on the forests,
2. address changed conditions and direction that have occurred since the original plans were adopted, and
3. meet the objectives of federal law, regulation, and policy.

Specifically, the revised land management plans will provide forest-wide strategic direction for each of the southern California National Forests.

The development of the revised land management plans and this draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) are required in order to satisfy the regulatory requirements and to address new and changing information regarding the forests and the uses of them.

The land management plans include the provisions of the National Forest Management Act, the implementing regulations, and other guiding documents. Multiple-use desired conditions and objectives, land use zoning, and design criteria (standards) all work together to define the management direction for the four forests. However, successful implementation of the direction included in the four land management plans depends on the congressional budget process and other factors.

In 1982, instructions to revise land management plans and the basis for revision were described in the Code of Federal Regulations at 36 CFR 219.10(g):

"A forest plan shall ordinarily be revised on a 10-year cycle or at least every 15 years. It also may be revised whenever the Forest Supervisor determines that conditions or demands in the area covered by the plan have changed significantly or when changes in Resource Policy Act policies, goals or objectives would have a significant effect on forest level programs."

Not only have conditions and expectations changed significantly on the forests, all of the current land management plans are at least 14 years old. The current plans for the four forests were approved between 1986 and 1989.

Proposed Action

The Forest Service proposes to revise the land and resource management plans (land management plans) for the Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests. The strategic direction included in the revised plans will be used to guide all natural resource management activities on the four southern California National Forests to meet the objectives of federal law, regulation, policy, and the Forest Service mission:

"To sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's Forests and Grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

Issues

The interdisciplinary planning team identified the following five issues after a review of the comments that were received in response to the public meetings and the Notice of Intent. The public comments touched on virtually every aspect of forest management. The comments were reviewed and grouped into issues. Finally, the issues were separated into two groups: significant issues and non-significant issues. Significant issues are defined as those directly or indirectly caused by implementing the proposed action. A significant issue is one that suggests

different actions among the alternatives. These different ways of addressing an issue are reflected in the six alternatives. Non-significant issues are characterized as those that:

- require a solution that is outside the scope of decisions made in a land management plan or is the responsibility of another agency,
- already decided by law, regulation, or other higher level decision,
- are not relevant to the decision to be made, or
- are conjectural and not supported by scientific or factual evidence.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) NEPA regulations explain this delineation in Sec.1501.17: "... identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not significant or which have been covered by prior environmental review... (Sec. 1506.3)."

The significant issues identified by the Forest Service are discussed in the following sections. The phrases in parentheses following the title of the issue refer the reader to one or more functional areas of operation. These terms describe the areas of business for which the forests are responsible and are described in Part 2 of the land management plans.

Issue 1: Public Values and Uses (Public Use and Enjoyment, Facility Operation and Maintenance)

Public use and enjoyment of the National Forests is affected by intense competition among an increasing number of people for a finite amount of resources.

This issue is focused on the ability of the four southern California National Forests to continue to offer a variety of opportunities, experiences, uses, and forest access to an expanding and increasingly diverse population, while at the same time providing appropriate resource protection.

The rugged, wildland landscapes of southern California are valued for the visual contrast they provide in this rapidly urbanizing region. As the population continues to increase, so too does the desire of people to conserve these remaining vestiges of regional open space and scenic heritage in a natural-appearing condition.

The public expects management of forest heritage resources in a manner that will protect and enhance those resources. The public also has an interest in increased cooperation between the forests and Native Americans in management issues of mutual concern. These issues include the use of the forests for traditional, ceremonial or cultural concerns, and that access to resources remains available to American Indians and other cultural groups.

The transportation system is valued for providing forest access, delivering goods and services, wildfire protection, and recreation opportunities. Forest road managers recognize that additional segments may be needed to increase the system's effectiveness, that other segments may require attention to resolve resource concerns, and that urbanization of lands along the forest boundaries has closed off customary points of access to the forests. The condition of existing recreation and administrative facilities has continued to decline due to diminishing budgets, which greatly increases the facility maintenance backlog. At the same time, additional facility improvements are needed to address increased visitor demand.

These challenges require new considerations in our land-management role, the manner in which we communicate with forest visitors, and the uses they desire.

Issue 2: Ecosystem Elements and Function (Resource Management)

The trend toward increased listings of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species and the consequences of management actions on these species must be addressed.

This issue focuses on restoring and maintaining habitats for all native species, particularly the habitats needed for

the conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered plant and animal species. Habitats for species considered sensitive must also be protected, so that these species are not elevated to the threatened or endangered categories. The four southern California National Forests include areas that have been described as 'hotspots' of biological diversity. Approximately 3,400 species of plants and animals are known to occur on or adjacent to the four forests. Of these, over 470 species are identified as threatened, endangered, sensitive, or as species of concern. When the last of the four land management plans was approved in 1989, 18 federally listed endangered or threatened species (under the Endangered Species Act) were known or had the potential to occur on the four forests. Since then, an additional 45 plants and animals with known presence or potential to occur on or near the southern California National Forests have been listed or are candidates for listing. Some of the factors influencing this trend include historical and ongoing activities on the forests, rapid urbanization and habitat loss outside the forests' boundaries, and increased attention to the issue due to higher public interest in biodiversity.

The present fire regime is out of balance, and the threat of wildfire and risks to humans are increasing.

Wildfire is a critical issue on the four forests. We agree with the public that community protection needs should be a priority. As demonstrated by the wildfires of October 2003, the risk of wildfire has increased dramatically due to the bark beetle epidemic occurring on portions of the San Bernardino, Cleveland, and Angeles National Forests. Over 100 years of fire suppression has resulted in dense stands of trees. The past four years of unprecedented drought in these dense stands stressed the trees which then became very susceptible to bark beetle attack. There are over 500,000 acres with beetle killed trees and many more acres are still at risk to bark beetle attack.

Fuel reduction treatments are needed not only to protect human communities but also to minimize or prevent catastrophic wildfire effects on listed species and their habitat. Fire suppression has modified the structure and composition of some stands, and in some cases, has changed the stand from one vegetative type to another. Frequent burning is also causing impacts, especially along urban interface areas in coastal sage scrub and chaparral habitats.

A balance needs to be defined between the quantity of water extracted from forest lands for human uses and the amount retained for ecosystem sustainability.

The four forests include watersheds that are critical to providing the quality and quantity of water needed for the support of trees, plants, and wildlife, as well as for drinking water. The relationship between ground water extraction, water diversions, and instream flow requirements to support aquatic species and riparian habitat is critical to the proper functioning of sustainable forest ecosystems and the recovery of listed species. The challenge is balancing the needs of water users with resource needs for the maintenance or improvement of riparian and wetland habitat.

Invasive nonnative animal and plant species are threatening ecosystems.

The infestation and spread of invasive nonnative animal and plant species threatens the health of many forest ecosystems, particularly riparian habitats, reduces biological diversity, and affects TEPCS species on the forests.

Issue 3: Commodity Values and Uses (Commercial Uses, Facility Operation and Maintenance)

The increased demand for uses and products such as water extraction, oil and gas development, and special forest products has intensified human pressure on the forests.

This issue focuses on traditional, current, and future commodity values, uses, and levels of outputs of goods and services from the forests. These products or uses include livestock forage, gathering forest products for personal, traditional, or commercial uses, collecting fuelwood, hunting and fishing, mineral exploration and development, oil and gas production, extraction of groundwater, and surface water diversion. The challenge for the forests is meeting local and national demand while protecting other forest resources.

Issue 4: Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages (Resource Management, Commercial Uses, Fire)

Growing populations and expanding urban development are increasing pressure on forest resources.

This issue looks at the effects of urbanization on the forests. Maintaining open space and the natural setting of the forests while accommodating urban infrastructure needs is a challenge. More than 20 million people live in southern California and this number is expected to increase over the life of the revised land management plans. The forests routinely receive requests to locate special use sites, communication facilities, and urban infrastructure including highway corridors, communication sites, and utility routes on National Forest System lands. The trend toward development of private land within the forest boundaries also creates a need for increased infrastructure across the forests.

Private land development both within and outside the forest boundaries is steadily reducing the habitat linkages that wildlife species need to connect large blocks of forest lands with other public and private open space and habitat reserves. In the last decade, the forests acquired about 30,000 acres of private land. Continued acquisitions of private land within the forest boundaries would be beneficial, especially given the effect that development of these lands has on the surrounding forest land. In addition, some people would like the forests to pursue acquisition of lands outside the National Forest boundaries that are important for species habitat linkages.

There is a need for increased coordination with adjacent community, county, state, and tribal governments and other federal agencies to help ensure coordinated land management.

Issue 5: Special Area Designations (Public Use and Enjoyment, Resource Management)

The designation of 'Special Areas' offers protection of resources, but can result in the reduction of current opportunities, experiences, or uses.

Some areas of the forests may be given formal recognition as special areas based on their unique or outstanding physical features, environmental values, or social significance. The designations impart long-term protection of these special resources. The special areas include recommendations to Congress for Wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and administrative designations that include Research Natural Areas and Special Interest Areas. Compatible uses are retained to the maximum extent possible; however, the designations can result in the reduction of some level of opportunity, experience, or use that may have been occurring in the area.

Alternatives Considered

Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables

Eight land use zones are used in different combinations for each of the alternatives. Each zone includes a range of uses that are suitable, giving a clear indication of management emphasis. The zones include:

Urban and Rural Interface (URI): This zone includes area that is adjacent to communities with consolidated infrastructure. There is a high intensity of human use and a high level of dependence on roads. Resource use and development are expected.

Developed Areas Intermix (DAI): This zone includes area that is adjacent to communities or concentrated areas with more scattered or isolated community infrastructures. Although there is a high level of human use and roads, the environment is more natural-appearing and motorized use is less intensive than in the URI zone. Resource uses and development may generally occur.

Backcountry Motorized (BCM): This zone includes largely undeveloped, natural or natural appearing areas where motorized use may occur. The intensity of human use is low to moderate. Facilities may exist.

Backcountry Non-Motorized (BCNM): This zone includes the same backcountry environment as BCM, but motorized use is not allowed. The intensity of human use is lower than in BCM, with expectations for more user challenge and solitude. Facilities, if any, are primitive. This zone varies the most by alternative.

Critical Biological (CB): This zone includes the most important areas on the four southern California National Forests to manage for the protection of many imperiled species. Facilities are minimal to discourage human use. Activities and modification to existing infrastructure are allowed if they are beneficial or neutral to the species. Dispersed use such as hiking and hunting is generally allowed. Use of adjacent National Forest System roads is allowed.

Existing Wilderness (EW): This zone includes existing Wilderness.

Recommended Wilderness (RW): This zone includes land that the Forest Service is recommending to Congress for Wilderness designation.

Experimental Forest (EF): This zone includes land that serves as a research and demonstration area, and is generally closed to the public except by permit. This zone includes only the San Dimas Experimental Forest on the Angeles National Forest.

The following tables give an overall comparison by alternative of the varying acres offered in each land use zone. Note that the number of experimental forest (EF) acres decreases in alternatives 2 and 3 because recommended wilderness (RW) overlaps EF in these two alternatives, and the overlap acres were put into the RW land use zone.

Table-333. Comparison of Alternative Acres by Land Use Zone .

Table-334. Percent of Each Land Use Zone by Alternative .

Description of Alternatives

Alternative 1

No Action

Alternative 1, an updated form of the no-action alternative, reflects current forest-wide management direction and emphasis. It meets the NEPA requirement (36 CFR 219.12(f)(7)) specifying that a no-action alternative be

considered. "No Action" means that current management allocations, activities, and management direction found in the existing land management plans would continue, as amended, with certain exceptions as discussed in the 2001 programmatic biological opinion from the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). In addition, the terms and conditions of the programmatic and other "high priority" consultations done with the USFWS would continue. The management areas in the 1980 plans have been translated to the land use zones being used now for comparison with the other alternatives, using the same terms and outputs.

The primary theme of this alternative is providing a mix of recreational opportunities and commodities while maintaining biological diversity and ecological integrity. The current mix of motorized/non-motorized land use zones is maintained. Compared to other alternatives, there is a higher level of investment in:

- Intensive control strategies at a few key locations, including closure and/or removal of sites and reconstruction of others, to protect sensitive environmental resources. The existing facilities would continue. The current level of minimal conservation education programs and partnerships would continue.
- Actions needed to avoid and minimize effects to species-at-risk. Current conservation efforts would continue.

Roads and Trails: The emphasis for roads is on deferred maintenance. The miles of current open roads decrease slightly. Motorized trail mileages and 4WD opportunities remain the same. The current level of non-motorized trails, unclassified trails and mileage available for mechanized use remains the same.

Unclassified roads are decommissioned or converted to trails. All others are decommissioned over time as budget allows.

Community Protection and Vegetation Management: In all six alternatives, implementation of the National Fire Plan in the wildland urban interface areas is emphasized. Mechanical treatments are used in combination with prescribed fire to reduce the fire hazard in the urban and rural interface land use zone and the developed area intermix land use zone. All wildfires are suppressed because they are either a direct or future threat to communities.

In alternatives 1-5, the vegetation management program consists of mortality (dead tree) removal, buffers, fuelbreak maintenance, fuelbreak construction, tree thinning, and prescribed fire. Mortality removal is planned on National Forest System lands within one mile of threatened communities and also along evacuation routes, within 1/3 of a mile of government and permitted facilities, and at developed recreation sites. Dense stands of mixed conifer forests would be thinned and then fire would be reintroduced. Prescribed burns in chaparral would be designed to treat areas up to 5,000 acres in size, both in high hazard areas and as a strategic tool to limit wildfire spread in other areas of the forest.

Watersheds: The emphasis is on the prevention of watershed degradation and maintenance of water quality and quantity by continuing to avoid aquatic environments and mitigation of potential effects from proposed projects.

Commodity Values and Uses: All active grazing areas are retained. The acres suitable for grazing and vacant grazing areas decreases slightly to protect critical habitats and bighorn sheep.

Most areas remain available for mineral and energy development.

Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages: Existing designated communication sites and utility corridors would continue. Land use zoning provides the opportunity for new utility corridors after site-specific analysis and environmental review. The area suitable for consideration of land special uses is unchanged from existing land management plans.

The land adjustment strategy would continue to focus on consolidation, habitat improvement, better access, acceptance of donations, and publicly initiated cases. Nearly all rights-of-way would be acquired through land adjustment.

Special Area Designations: No inventoried roadless areas are recommended for wilderness. No new wild and scenic rivers are recommended for designation. Research natural areas that were proposed under the existing plans and have establishment records prepared for them become established. No new special interest areas are created.

The summary and comparison of the percentages of land use zones under alternative 1 can be found in the Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables portion of the Executive Summary.

Alternative 2 (Preferred Alternative: Cleveland NF)

Alternative 2 was originally developed as the "Proposed Action" for the land management plan revisions and was available for public comment in 2001. Alternative 2 has been modified from earlier versions to provide additional protection for species-at-risk through species management strategies and land management plan design criteria (standards).

The primary theme of this alternative is maintaining biological diversity and ecological integrity while providing a gradual increase in recreation opportunities. Land use zones are similar to alternative 1, with the addition of some special area designations. Compared to other alternatives, there is a higher level of investment in:

- The reconstruction of existing degraded facilities and the construction of new facilities to accommodate projected recreation demand in an environmentally sustainable way. More intensive user controls are employed that are designed to minimize conflicts between users and with sensitive environmental resources. Investments increase in mitigation that allows use levels to continue. The effective use of conservation education and partnerships occurs, and Forest Staff would enlist the support of local communities, partners, and volunteers to promote a stewardship ethic and enhance visitor services.
- Avoiding and minimizing effects to species-at-risk with little focus on restoration of habitats. A conservation strategy is employed that focuses on using an adaptive management approach to meet conservation objectives in species-at-risk habitat.

Roads and Trails: The emphasis for roads is on deferred maintenance. The current road system decreases slightly. The motorized trail system is improved in some locations through the designation of maintenance level (ML) 2 roads that provide additional off-highway vehicle (OHV) experiences. Disconnected trails and ML 2 roads are linked in some cases to form loop trails. Four wheel drive (4WD) opportunities remain at current use levels. A system of environmentally sustainable non-motorized system trails is retained.

Some of the unclassified roads that are environmentally sustainable may be converted to non-motorized or motorized trails. All others are decommissioned over time as budgets allow.

Community Protection and Vegetation Management: Same as alternative 1.

Watersheds: The emphasis is on the prevention of watershed degradation and the sustainability of water quality and quantity. An adaptive management approach is used to protect watershed resources. These resources receive additional protection through the designation or recommendation of some special areas. Conservation education and the development of partnerships that are focused on understanding and protecting watershed dynamics and functions are emphasized.

Commodity Values and Uses: All active grazing areas are retained but the acres suitable for grazing is reduced. Portions of or entire vacant grazing areas are recommended for closure.

A moderate amount of land remains available for mineral and energy development.

Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages: Existing designated communication sites and utility corridors would continue to be used. Land use zoning provides the opportunity for some new utility corridors, after site-specific analysis and environmental review. The area suitable for consideration of land special uses is less than existing land management plans.

Existing land adjustment strategies would continue at present levels with an increased focus on adjustment for species habitat protection and preservation of wildlife corridors.

Special Area Designations: Key inventoried roadless areas that offer a balance of recreation and scenery values and the need to protect open areas for the conservation of biodiversity are recommended for wilderness designation. Additionally, key wild and scenic rivers that provide the best balance of recreation and scenery values with the need to protect and enhance the rivers' resource values are recommended for designation. Some research natural areas are established to conserve a broad range of areas with unmodified conditions and natural processes for research needs. A few new special interest areas are created to conserve those areas of unique special values.

The summary and comparison of the percentages of land use zones under alternative 2 can be found in the Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables portion of the Executive Summary.

Alternative 3

The primary theme of this alternative is an increased emphasis on maintaining and protecting biological diversity and ecological integrity and maximizing special area designations. Recreation and other uses of the forests are continued but at a lower level, with increased controls. There is more area added in the recommended wilderness and backcountry non-motorized land use zones than any alternative except for alternative 6. Compared to other alternatives, there is a higher level of investment in:

- The modification of existing facilities to better protect sensitive resources with an emphasis on decommissioning recreation facilities and individual sites that are affecting sensitive resources. In order to minimize impact, maximum visitor capacity controls and proactive environmental designs are implemented. Alternative 3 maximizes the use of conservation education and partnerships, and Forest Staff promote a stewardship ethic focused on biodiversity. There is no construction of new recreation facilities planned to replace those decommissioned.
- Proactive habitat improvement and surveys. There is a strong focus on habitat restoration versus the avoidance of habitat degradation. There is a greater emphasis on the protection of biodiversity.

Roads and Trails: Motorized and mechanized travel is limited to designated routes. The road emphasis is on deferred maintenance. The current road system decreases slightly. Motorized trail mileage and four wheel drive (4WD) opportunities are reduced. A system of environmentally sustainable non-motorized trails is retained. Some unclassified trails may be rehabilitated and converted to system trails.

Some of the unclassified roads that are environmentally sustainable may be converted to non-motorized trails. The others are decommissioned over time as budgets allow.

Community Protection and Vegetation Management: Same as alternative 1.

Watersheds: There is a continued emphasis on the prevention of watershed degradation and an increased emphasis on watershed restoration and improvement. Improving water quality and maintaining or increasing water quantity in support of TEPCS species and their habitats is a priority.

Commodity Values and Uses: All active grazing areas are retained but the acres suitable for grazing decrease. Portions of or entire vacant grazing areas are recommended for closure.

Large areas are recommended to be withdrawn from future mineral entry due to wilderness recommendation.

Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages: Existing designated communication sites and utility corridors would continue. New utility corridors are not emphasized. The area suitable for consideration of land special uses is much less than under existing land management plans.

This alternative continues existing land adjustment strategies with highest priority toward adjustment for species habitat protection and preservation of wildlife corridors to better protect sensitive resources. The acquisition of parcels within wilderness, wild and scenic river corridors, and important biological areas is emphasized. There is some emphasis, but less than alternative 6 on consideration of lands that fall outside of National Forest System boundaries for acquisition.

Special Area Designations: A large number of inventoried roadless areas are recommended for wilderness designation, focusing on the values of conservation for a wide range of wildlife and plant species (especially threatened, endangered and sensitive) and habitats, biodiversity, linkages and corridors. Those areas that require active management with motorized or mechanized tools to sustain species are not recommended for wilderness. All of the wild and scenic rivers are recommended for designation. All of the proposed research natural areas are established to conserve the widest possible range of areas with unmodified conditions and natural processes, for research needs. All of the special interest areas are created to conserve the widest possible range of areas with special values.

The summary and comparison of the percentages of land use zones under alternative 3 can be found in the Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables portion of the Executive Summary.

Alternative 4 (Preferred Alternative: Angeles, Los Padres, San Bernardino NF)

The primary theme of this alternative is an increased emphasis on recreation with intensive levels of management controls, and a focused emphasis on offsetting effects to the biological diversity and ecological integrity of the forests. A wide range of recreation opportunities is emphasized. There are fewer areas added for recommended wilderness than under alternatives 2, 3, and 5. This alternative includes the most backcountry motorized acres, except for alternative 2, and more backcountry non-motorized acres than alternatives 2 and 5. Compared to other alternatives, there is a higher level of investment in:

- Reconstruction or replacement of facilities where problems exist. New facilities are designed to endure the projected heavy levels of use. There is a more intensive level of recreation management and enforcement and users are directed away from sensitive areas. There are increased investments in mitigation to allow use levels to remain high. There is an increased focus on and investment in monitoring to ensure that mitigation measures are working. Alternative 4 would substantially increase the effective use of public conservation education programs and partnerships, and the forests would enhance visitor services while also promoting a stewardship ethic.
- The management of natural resources at a sustainable level is emphasized including proactive management for biodiversity through surveys and implementation of federally listed species recovery plans.

Roads and Trails: Motorized and mechanical travel would be restricted to designated routes. The emphasis for roads is on upgrading recreation roads that are primary access routes to recreation facilities and popular dispersed recreation destinations. Some increase in the current road system mileage is expected. Motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities are well balanced. An environmentally sustainable off-highway vehicle (OHV) system is developed to improve overall riding opportunities. There is an emphasis on providing additional OHV experiences by linking disconnected trails and maintenance level (ML) 2 roads together to form loop trails. 4WD opportunities increase slightly. Environmentally sustainable non-motorized system trails are retained and may be expanded.

Most of the unclassified roads and trails that are outside of environmentally sensitive areas are candidates for conversion to National Forest system roads or motorized or non-motorized trail systems. Others will be decommissioned over time as budgets allow.

Community Protection and Vegetation Management: Same as alternative 1.

Watersheds: Watershed management focuses on maintaining water quality and quantity and protecting watershed health from the effects of increased recreation uses, with a priority given to those areas where detrimental effects are occurring or could occur. Similar to alternative 2, an adaptive management approach is used to protect watershed resources. Restoration activities are primarily accomplished at prioritized recreational use areas in association with environmental education and interpretation, hardening of recreation sites, increased Forest Service presence, and restriction of unauthorized uses.

Commodity Values and Uses: All active grazing areas are retained but the acres suitable for grazing decrease. Portions of or entire vacant grazing areas are recommended for closure.

A moderate amount of land remains available for minerals and energy development.

Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages: Existing designated communication sites and utility corridors would continue. Land use zoning provides the opportunity for new utility corridors, after site-specific analysis and environmental review. The area suitable for consideration of land special uses is slightly less than under existing land management plans.

This alternative emphasizes road and trail rights-of-way acquisition for public access to existing National Forest System land over acquisition of additional parcels. Land adjustment strategies support recreation use and visitor access to accommodate recreation demand. Wilderness, lands with high scenic integrity, important heritage resources, and lands with dispersed recreation opportunities are priorities for acquisition.

Special Area Designations: A few inventoried roadless areas are recommended for wilderness, focusing on

those areas that emphasize recreation and scenic values. A few wild and scenic rivers with an emphasis on those areas that provide protection from development while providing scenery and recreational uses are recommended for designation. Research natural areas that were proposed under the existing plans and have establishment records prepared for them become established. A few special interest areas are created focusing on only those with special recreational and cultural values.

The summary and comparison of the percentages of land use zones under alternative 4 can be found in the Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables portion of the Executive Summary.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 was developed in response to public comments from groups and individuals who would like increased motorized access to the forests with fewer user restrictions.

The primary theme of this alternative is an increased emphasis on land use zones compatible with forest resource development. There is a large increase in acres in the backcountry motorized land use zones and no acres in the recommended wilderness or backcountry non-motorized land use zones. Compared to other alternatives, there is a higher level of investment in:

- Retaining and improving access for all users including motorized uses, mountain bikes, equestrian, and commodity uses. The investments would be made reactively to allow recreation use to continue as fully as possible with few restrictions. The reconstruction of existing degraded campgrounds and picnic areas and the construction of new campgrounds and picnic areas are featured to fully accommodate the projected demand for motorized recreation use. There is little new road construction planned, but the use of more roads, including incorporation of some unclassified roads into the National Forest transportation system, is anticipated. There is minimal use of conservation education with an emphasis on reaching visitors participating in motorized recreation.
- Intensive monitoring of resource impacts. Conservation efforts consist of mitigating impacts, including off-site mitigation. Habitat restoration, proactive surveys, and recovery objectives are not emphasized.

Roads and Trails: The emphasis is on motorized use of all system and unclassified roads, except those in locations of extreme environmental risk. Some increase in the current road system mileage is expected. Four wheel drive opportunities would increase. There is an emphasis on providing additional OHV experiences by linking disconnected trails and maintenance level (ML) 2 roads to form loop trails. A system of environmentally sustainable non-motorized system trails is retained.

Use is accepted on unclassified roads outside of environmentally sensitive areas. Unclassified roads and trails are available for consideration of potential addition to the classified road or trail systems. The reconstruction of some unclassified roads to meet minimum Forest Service standards may occur.

Community Protection and Vegetation: Same as alternative 1.

Watersheds: Watershed management focuses on reactively protecting watershed health from the effects of increased motorized recreation uses and commodity developments such as water diversions. Maintaining water quality and quantity for recreation and commodity uses is a priority.

Commodity Values and Uses: All active grazing areas are retained but some acres suitable for grazing decrease. Portions of or entire vacant grazing areas are recommended for closure, but there are fewer than in alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6.

The most amount of land would be available for mineral and energy development, and the least restrictions and stipulations would apply to existing and proposed developments.

Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages: Existing designated communication sites and utility corridors would continue to be used. Land use zoning provides the opportunity for new utility corridors, after site-specific analysis and environmental review. The area suitable for consideration of land special uses is greatest in this alternative. It is anticipated that more applications for urban infrastructure would be accepted.

Land adjustments are not emphasized. Lands acquired would be encouraged to be accepted without attached use restrictions. The emphasis for acquisitions that are made is to accommodate projected demand for motorized

recreation and remote area camping.

Special Area Designations: There are no inventoried roadless areas recommended for wilderness. There are no wild and scenic rivers recommended for designation. One research natural areas is established and no special interest areas are established.

The summary and comparison of the percentages of land use zones under alternative 5 can be found in the Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables portion of the Executive Summary.

Alternative 6

Alternative 6 was developed in response to public comments from groups and individuals who would like increased protection of all forest resources.

The primary theme is a strong emphasis on the protection and restoration of biological diversity and ecological function, and mitigation of existing impacts from all uses on National Forest System land. The most acres of backcountry non-motorized land use zones are added, as well as the second highest acres of recommended wilderness. Compared to other alternatives, there is a higher level of investment in:

- Low impact recreation and a transportation system that is reduced to a core system of highly maintained roads. Unclassified roads are closed and then decommissioned over time as budgets allow.
- No new facilities are constructed and existing facilities are modified and/or decommissioned to better protect sensitive resources. There is a maximum use of visitor capacity controls and proactive environmental designs to minimize impacts. Conservation education and partnerships would create an effective and wide-ranging program, including an expansion of partnerships, targeted youth programs, a promotion of multilingual environmental education.
- Habitat restoration. There is also a focus on increasing the knowledge base about species through surveys and studies, and then utilizing this knowledge to benefit wildlife with proactive wildlife management.

Roads and Trails: The emphasis is on a high level of maintenance of the maintenance level (ML) 3-5 roads. Environmentally sustainable ML 1 and 2 roads are either converted to non-motorized trails or closed and rehabilitated. ML 2 roads that access communication sites, recreation residences, and special use sites are closed to the public but open to the permittee. The current road system decreases by approximately 67% over time. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) and four wheel drive (4WD) opportunities decrease. An environmentally sustainable non-motorized trails system is retained.

Most unclassified roads and trails are decommissioned and obliterated over time.

Community Protection and Vegetation Management: Alternative 6 differs from the other five alternatives by restoring fire's role in the ecosystem through the creation of a mosaic of wildfires and prescribed burns. Prescribed burns are used more frequently to maintain a younger age class in order to help stop the spread of wildfires. Tree thinning and buffers are also used more than in alternatives 1-5, while dead tree removal and fuelbreak maintenance and construction are used on fewer acres.

Watersheds: There is a strong emphasis on preventing the causes of watershed degradation. Three key goals are to protect the remaining high quality areas, prevent further degradation of any area on the forests, and over time, restore the ecological condition and function of the watersheds. Improving water quality and maintaining or increasing water quantity to support TEPCS species and overall ecosystem health is a high priority.

Commodity Values and Uses: Using grazing criteria used for alternative 6 all grazing areas are unsuitable and are expected to be closed over time.

There are less lands available for commodity products due to more lands being recommended for congressional designations such as wilderness. Alternative 6 has the lowest level of commodities development among the range of alternatives because of the decreased road system miles.

Urban Development and Forest Habitat Linkages: Existing designated communication sites and utility corridors would continue to be used. The area suitable for consideration of new utility corridors and special uses is lower than in the other alternatives. Stringent requirements and restrictions would be applied for new uses.

This alternative emphasizes land adjustment strategies with a high priority on the acquisition of land for species habitat protection and the preservation of wildlife corridors needed to better protect sensitive resources. Lands needed to protect environmentally sensitive species and riparian ecosystems are a focus. Emphasis on the acquisition of parcels within wilderness areas, wild and scenic river corridors, and land important for ecosystem protection is stressed. There is more emphasis than the other alternatives on consideration of lands that fall outside of National Forest System boundaries for acquisition. These lands would generally benefit species and their habitat.

Special Area Designations: All of the inventoried roadless areas are recommended for wilderness to protect and enhance species conservation, biodiversity, open space, natural beauty, recreation, and research. All of the wild and scenic rivers are recommended for designation to protect and enhance a similar wide range of values and features. All of the proposed research natural areas are established to conserve the widest possible range of areas with unmodified conditions and natural processes for research needs. All of the special interest areas are created to conserve the broadest possible range of areas with special values.

The summary and comparison of the percentages of land use zones under alternative 6 can be found in the Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables portion of the Executive Summary.

The Preferred Alternative

At this draft stage of the process, the preferred alternative for the Angeles, Los Padres, and San Bernardino National Forests is **alternative 4**. The preferred alternative for the Cleveland National Forest is **alternative 2**. The preferred alternatives are not legally binding. After public comments on the draft environmental impact statement are received and analyzed, the selected alternative will be identified in the final environmental impact statement and the reasons for this choice explained in a record of decision that accompanies its release. The preferred alternative at this stage, represents the agency position for the 90-day DEIS comment period, and is NOT a decision.

Alternative 4 is the preferred alternative for three of the forests because it gives management the flexibility to respond to the variety and level of recreation expected from a growing urban and culturally diverse population. It retains the option for motorized access in many locations, thus allowing flexibility in fire suppression, community protection, and forest health projects. It also gives management the choice of retaining nonmotorized areas in motorized land use zones. Although recreation use is emphasized, alternative 4 includes a commitment that activities be conducted in an environmentally sustainable way to continue the protection and recovery of species-at-risk. There is also a greater focus on education and interpretation to help prevent fire starts and to protect species, habitats, and recreation facilities.

Alternative 2 is the preferred alternative for the Cleveland National Forest because it provides multiple use benefits through balanced land use zoning. It retains the healthy natural environments that are valued for habitats, biodiversity, and special ecosystems. The forest's open space is valued as development continues to move closer towards the forest. It also retains the option for motorized access in many locations where it is needed for fire suppression, community protection, and forest health projects. Alternative 2 provides some opportunity for increased recreation to complement the extensive public recreation opportunities found on other public lands near the forest. Alternative 2 also gives management flexibility for prioritizing program funding.

Comparison of Alternatives

The summary of the environmental and economic effects reviews the differences among alternatives and should aid in the comparison of the effects each alternative is expected to have on the environment. The summary is presented by issue in order of the business management categories. For a complete disclosure of environmental effects, consult chapter 3 of the draft environmental impact statement (Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences). Tables that list the acres by land use zone for each alternative may be found in the beginning of this chapter in the "Land Use Zone Definitions and Comparison Tables" section.

Resource Management

Species-at-Risk. Fifty-six animal species and 88 plant species face substantial threats from Forest Service activities and are referred to as "species-at-risk." With its emphasis on access and recreation, alternative 5 presents the greatest threat to species-at-risk. This alternative would result in the greatest amount of area being susceptible to disturbance, and the frequency and intensity of disturbance would often be moderate to high. Alternative 4 is similar to alternative 5 in the degree of threat that would result, although the threat is slightly lower due to less emphasis being given to motorized recreation opportunities and an increased emphasis on managing developed recreation in a sustainable manner. Properly located and designed, new developed recreation facilities could result in directing recreation use to areas that are less likely to impact species-at-risk.

Alternative 6 would create the least threat to species-at-risk. The smallest area would be disturbed under this alternative, and the frequency and intensity of disturbance would be low in most areas though areas of concentrated use would be highly disturbed. The threats that would occur under alternative 3 are less than what would occur under alternative 1, 2, 4, and 5 but are higher than in alternative 6. Alternatives 1 and 2 are both intermediate in the degree of threat that they present to species-at-risk.

Insects and Diseases. The historically unprecedented drought in southern California has weakened trees, increasing their vulnerability to attack by insects and disease. In alternatives 1-5, there are opportunities to prevent future outbreaks by thinning overstocked stands, but the current infestation is not likely to abate until there have been several years of abundant moisture to allow the trees natural defenses to recover. Less preventive thinning is likely to occur in alternative 6, because 67% of the forest road system is eliminated.

Vegetation Management. Tree and chaparral mortality currently is affecting over 500,000 acres on the San Bernardino, Angeles and Cleveland National Forests. Alternatives 1-5 treat the same number of acres through mortality treatments, buffers, fuelbreak maintenance, fuelbreak construction, tree thinning, and prescribed fire. Alternative 6 treats fewer acres through mortality treatments and fuelbreak maintenance and construction, and treats more acres than alternatives 1-5 in buffers, tree thinning, and prescribed fire projects.

Alternatives 1-5 address the vegetative condition of chaparral at a higher degree than alternative 6. Alternative 6 addresses the vegetative condition in forested areas at a higher degree than alternatives 1-5 at current budget levels, and at the same degree at the enhanced budget level.

Invasive Nonnative Species. Alternatives 1 and 5 have the most potential for the spread of invasive nonnatives, while alternatives 3 and 6 have the least. Alternatives 1-3 focus on early detection to contain and control weeds in TEPCS and riparian habitat. Alternative 4 focuses on early detection to contain and control weeds in developed and dispersed sites. Alternative 5 focuses on early detection to contain and control weeds along roads, trails, and grazing allotments. Alternative 6 focuses on early detection to contain and control weeds in wilderness and other large blocks of pristine land.

Watersheds. The watershed resource consists of surface water, groundwater, and riparian areas. Generally, adverse impacts to watersheds can be minimized or eliminated when all applicable measures as described under the resource protection measures are effectively applied. Alternative 6 has the lowest risk to watershed resources and involves the most diverse types of restoration efforts. Watershed resources quantity and quality are also expected to increase under alternative 3. Because alternative 4 is proactive in response to possible detrimental effects through mitigation and an adaptive management approach, watershed resources are at less risk than under alternatives 1, 2, and 5. Under alternative 2, watershed resources are sustained at slightly above the current level that is found in alternative 1. Alternative 1 would not substantially change the current risk to watershed resources. Alternative 5 has the highest risk to water resources quantity, quality, and aquifer integrity due to increased land disturbance and increased pressure to develop water sources on the forests.

Soils. The disturbance to soils was estimated by analyzing the potential disturbance under each alternative. Alternative 5 estimates about 25% increase in disturbance due to more access and use. Alternative 4 would have the next greatest amount of estimated disturbance with about 20% increase in disturbance. In contrast, alternative 6 would have the least amount of estimated disturbance with about a 20% decrease in activity. The level of estimated disturbance for alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would fall in-between, with no change, an estimated increase of 5%, and an estimated decrease of 10%, respectively.

Air. Management activities would not significantly change the existing air quality at the forestwide scale in any alternative.

Geologic Resources and Hazards. Alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6, which emphasize watershed restoration and lower

surface disturbance, and increase special area designation and environmental education, would increase protection and interpretation of geologic resources, and decrease risks to humans, facilities, and other resources from geologic hazards. When visitor use is increased, which is more likely to occur in alternatives 4 and 5, risk of damage to geologic resources and exacerbation of geologic hazards is increased.

Lands (Real Estate). The mixed ownership pattern of the forests presents many opportunities for land ownership adjustment to improve administrative efficiency and the function of forest programs. The emphasis of each alternative influences which parcels are selected for adjustment. The total acres adjusted are not expected to vary much by alternative. In all alternatives, the overall National Forest System land base would increase and consolidate.

Special Designations

Inventoried Roadless Areas. There were 118 roadless areas inventoried within the southern California National Forests for the forest plan revision, totaling approximately 1.1 million acres. This is about 32% of the total National Forest System lands or 47% of the total non-wilderness National Forest System lands. Areas recommended to Congress for wilderness designation in the Record of Decision (ROD) would be managed to maintain their existing wilderness character until final congressional action on the recommendations. Any recommendation for wilderness designation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that would receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation.

The number of acres of recommended wilderness varies depending on the theme of each alternative. Alternative 3 recommends the largest number of wilderness acres for the Cleveland and San Bernardino National Forests. Alternative 6 recommends the largest number of wilderness acres for the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests, as well as the largest new wilderness acreage overall. Alternatives 1 and 5 recommend no roadless areas for wilderness designation. If an area is not recommended for wilderness designation, it would be allocated to one of the other available land use zones.

Existing Wilderness. There are 21 designated wilderness areas on the southern California National Forests, totaling over 1 million acres. Visitation in most existing wilderness areas is expected to increase regardless of alternative, mostly in the form of day hiking, backpacking, and equestrian use. Corresponding increases in recreation-associated impacts to sensitive wilderness resources at popular trail and camping areas can be expected, especially in the more heavily visited, urban-proximate wildernesses. Most of the wilderness backcountry would remain unvisited due to steep terrain and dense vegetation.

Wilderness education is emphasized in alternatives 2, 3, 4 and 6 in an effort to protect wilderness values. In all of the alternatives, information, management, and regulation enforcement are also expected to help protect wilderness values.

Wild and Scenic Rivers. The National Wild and Scenic River (WSR) system is a network of free-flowing rivers designated by Congress. There are currently three rivers on the Los Padres National Forest designated as WSR. National Forests are directed to evaluate their rivers during plan revision for inclusion in the WSR system. The forests evaluated all of their rivers, including 48 in detail, and found 26 rivers, totaling 344 miles to be eligible as WSR. The 19 eligible rivers on the Angeles, Cleveland and San Bernardino National Forests would be managed to maintain their eligibility until a detailed suitability study is completed at a later date. The seven rivers on the Los Padres National Forest were further evaluated for suitability under the alternatives developed for this plan revision. This study resulted in varying miles of river recommended for designation by alternative. WSR designations are similar to wilderness designations and Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on the designations.

Research Natural Areas (RNAs). RNAs are established to maintain areas of natural ecosystems and areas of special ecological significance. RNAs are established by the Regional Forester. There are currently 14 RNAs on the southern California National Forests, totaling 14,330 acres. Fifteen potential RNAs have been identified for possible inclusion in the system. The number of proposed RNAs varies depending on the theme of each alternative.

Special Interest Areas (SIAs). Special Interest Areas may be designated by the Regional Forester to protect and

manage for public use and enjoyment those special recreation areas with scenic, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, archaeological, or other special characteristics or unique values. There are currently 17 SIAs totaling 27,809 acres on the southern California National Forests. Twenty-eight additional areas with special and unique resources are proposed for designation under some alternatives. The number of proposed SIAs varies depending on the theme of each alternative.

Heritage Resources. The alternatives with the potential to cause ground disturbance would have the greatest effects on heritage resources. Heritage resources would tend to constrain activities in alternative 5 more than the other alternatives. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6 provide for an increase of sites managed to standard, public involvement programs, and research opportunities. Alternative 4 also provides for an emphasis in heritage resource interpretation and education.

In alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6 there is an increase in Special Interest Areas focusing on heritage resources, which would increase the opportunities for the protection, enhancement, and public enjoyment of heritage resources.

Public Use and Enjoyment

Recreation Use. Recreation visitation and use is expected to increase in all alternatives; however, the location, type, rate, and intensity would vary. Some peak season visitors would be displaced or would be unable to find their desired recreation setting or opportunity, especially in the popular high use places. Because desired uses vary considerably, each alternative has general advantages for certain groups of users while being less desirable for other groups. Conflicts between uses and natural resources protected by existing legislation (i.e. Endangered Species Act) is expected to occur. Alternatives vary in the potential for these conflicts depending on where and when activities are allowed.

Most visitors now participate in recreation activities that involve driving for pleasure, viewing natural features and wildlife, walking, and general relaxation. These activities will generally remain the same for alternative 1, with a greater emphasis on motorized recreation in alternative 5, and a greater emphasis on non-motorized recreation in alternatives 3 and 6. Alternative 4 provides the most emphasis on all types of recreation, and alternative 2 emphasizes a mixture of recreation opportunities. Some motorized and developed recreation opportunities would be lost or forgone in alternatives 3 and 6 if road systems are reduced and/or if campgrounds and picnic areas are closed to reduce resource impacts. Satisfaction throughout all alternatives would be mixed, mostly depending upon which activities are available to which user groups and how well the forests accommodate increased visitation. The broadest range of recreation opportunities is expected in alternatives 4 and 5, and to some degree, alternative 2. The range of opportunities is less in alternatives 3 and 6.

Developed Recreation. Operational capacities are being reached and exceeded at some popular facilities now. Many more facilities (especially large, urban-proximate, more developed sites during the summer season, weekends, and holidays in the hot spot forests and places) would reach and exceed this limit over the next 15 years, especially in alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 6. Alternative 4 is the only alternative that is projected to meet most future recreation demands, and is the most costly alternative. Alternative 5 focuses primarily on accommodating the increased demand for motorized uses.

Dispersed Vehicle Camping. Dispersed vehicle camping offers a unique recreation opportunity to visitors from heavily urbanized areas in southern California. Resource impacts result not only from the dispersed campsite location and associated activities but also from off-road driving and road creation to the campsite. This is a major threat to the viability of a number of plant and wildlife species and their habitats, riparian areas, and water quality. These concerns are the greatest in alternatives 4 and 5, and the least in alternatives 3 and 6.

The total acreage amount of potential dispersed vehicle camping does not vary much by alternative or by forest. What does vary is where those acres are located in land use zones. Specific forest policies would continue to differ in each alternative.

Conservation Education and Partnerships. Conservation education and partnership programs and projects would continue to be an emphasis in all alternatives at varying levels. These programs and projects remain very beneficial to the Forest Service, partners, and the public, varying by alternative theme.

Alternative 1 continues the current minimal level of programs and projects. Alternatives 2 and 4 would substantially increase conservation education and partnerships. Alternatives 3 and 6 will develop a maximum use of conservation education and partnerships. Alternative 5 would minimally use conservation education.

Landscape Management. Currently, forest landscapes are largely natural or natural appearing, except for a few areas that have been noticeably altered. The most obvious general effects on scenic resources are derived from unplanned and natural occurrences, such as wildfire, and from vegetation and landform alterations associated with management activities to address tree mortality, forest health, fire suppression, road construction, utility, and communication-site infrastructure. Landscape management strives to meet the public's scenery expectations for the management of national forest landscapes.

The Scenery Management System recognizes the interdependence of aesthetics and ecological systems, and promotes natural appearing landscapes. In most alternatives, landscapes would be managed to maintain a natural appearance, characterized with Scenic Integrity Objectives of High and Very High.

Percentage of Land Area Where Change from a Natural Evolving Landscape is Allowed. *

Alternative	1	2	3	4	5	6
Percentage	50%	95%	99%	95%	71% - 90%	99%

** Note: The above figures indicate the allowable change in scenic conditions under each alternative, **not** the existing condition.*

Landscape restoration, which creates movement toward the Desired Landscape Character, would change depending upon the theme of the alternative.

Approximate Acres of Landscape Restoration by Alternative

Alternative	1	2	3	4	5	6
Acres	Minor	2,600	2,700	1,400	0	12,000

Management and Administration

Tribal Relations. All alternatives accommodate traditional and contemporary uses of the Forests but alternatives 1 and 2 would be more reactive compared to other alternatives, because alternatives 3 through 6 would focus on the conservation, protection, and restoration of resources of concern. Alternative 5 would also focus on resolving conflicts between other forest users and those practicing traditional uses. Opportunities for contribution to sustainable forest management would increase under alternative 6. Government-to-government relations are expected to increase in alternatives 2 through 6.

Alternatives 3 and 6 have the least backcountry motorized acres and would therefore have the least direct effect on Native American values, while alternative 5 would potentially have the greatest direct effect. The differences between alternatives 1, 2, and 4 are negligible. In alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 6 there will be an increase of special interest areas focusing on heritage resources values, which will increase the opportunities for the protection, enhancement, and public enjoyment of values of concern to the Native American community.

Facility Operations and Maintenance

Nonmotorized Trails. Under alternatives 2 through 6, existing environmentally sustainable non-motorized

system trails are retained. All system trails are retained under alternative 1. The trail mileage varies by the alternative theme.

Mechanized trail-based opportunities remain the same under alternatives 1 and 5, decrease slightly under alternative 4, and decrease the most under alternatives 3 and 6. Alternative 2 falls between 4 and 3, 6.

National Trails. The southern California National Forests manage 324 miles of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail and 109 miles of national recreation trails. Other trails of national or regional significance either cross or are proposed to cross the forests. All of these trails play a role in providing trail-related recreation in systems that reach beyond the forest boundaries. Effects on national trails are expected to be minimal and do not vary significantly among alternatives.

Motorized Trails. Off-highway vehicle (OHV) and 4WD opportunities increase slightly in alternative 2, with more opportunities in alternative 4, and the most opportunities available in alternative 5. Trail design in alternatives 4 and 5 emphasize the linkage of existing trails and creation of loop trails. OHV and 4WD opportunities decrease to about the same degree in alternatives 3 and 6.

Roads. There are less road miles overall in alternatives 3 and 6. Alternatives 1 and 2 have about the same mileage of open roads, and is greater than alternatives 3 and 6 mileage. Alternatives 4 and 5 make unclassified roads available for conversion to National Forest System roads and therefore have the most road mileage.

Rights-of-Way Acquisition. Legal access to National Forest System land increases from the acquisition of additional rights-of-way as the result of land ownership adjustment. However, overall loss of access may still occur due to rapid development along the forest boundaries. Alternatives 4 and 5 emphasize rights-of-way acquisition to be able to offer more miles for public use.

Commodity and Commercial Uses

Livestock Grazing. All grazing areas were determined to be unsuitable in alternative 6. All grazing areas were determined to be suitable in alternatives 1-5, although the number of suitable grazing acres vary by alternative, as illustrated below.

All alternatives recommend closure of some vacant grazing areas or portions of some vacant grazing areas. Alternative 6 recommends closure of all vacant grazing areas. The following chart shows the relative number of vacant grazing areas retained.

Mineral and Energy Resources. In all alternatives 51,200 acres are identified as available for oil and gas (leasable) development on the Angeles; suitability for development has not been determined. Activities in the area may be restricted under alternatives 2 through 6 because the 51,200 available acres include a portion of river eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation. Suitability of the river has not been determined. There are no available areas for oil and gas development identified on the Cleveland or San Bernardino in any alternative. The available and suitable areas on the Los Padres are identified in the DEIS for forest-wide leasing analysis (2004).

The level of mineral activity is driven by public demand and administered with available funds. The amount of land available for mineral and energy development is highest in alternative 5, followed by alternative 1. The least amount of land available is in alternative 6, followed by alternative 3. Alternatives 2 and 4 have a moderate amount of land available for mineral and energy development.

Mineral Withdrawals. Reserving and withdrawing lands from mineral entry affects locatable, leasable, and mineral materials management. Because designated wilderness areas and other special land use reservations (Research Natural Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and critical biological zones) are generally considered unsuitable or unavailable for mineral uses, alternatives 3 and 6 consistently anticipate larger acreages of mineral withdrawals, and alternatives 1 and 5 anticipate the least mineral withdrawals.

Special Forest Products. Fuelwood and non-convertible products such as foods, herbs, medicinals, decorative products, and specialty items are the major sources of special forest products (SFP) revenue. American Indians collect SFPs for their subsistence, trade, tools, and ceremonies. The continuation of the fuelwood program is critical to aid in the removal of beetle-killed trees in fire hazard areas.

In all alternatives, those that promote activities resulting in ground disturbance have the potential to affect the availability of SFP. However, those are also the same alternatives that promote greater access to larger areas.

Alternatives 3 and 6 have the potential to limit the amount of ground disturbing activities that could directly affect SFPs but these alternatives are the most restrictive with regard to motorized access. This restrictive characteristic has the potential to not meet the demand. Alternative 5 has the highest potential to allow activities that directly affect SFPs but has the potential for the most motorized access, which would help contribute to having a supply of SFPs to meet the demand. Alternatives 1, 2, and 4 fall between the other alternatives, and are similar.

Lands Special Uses. The southern California National Forests currently have approximately 2,250 land special uses authorized to use and occupy nearly 37,000 acres of National Forest System land. The acreage suitable for consideration of land special uses remains unchanged under alternative 1, decreases slightly under alternatives 2 and 4, and decreases by an estimated 43% and 62% under alternatives 3 and 6 respectively. Alternative 5 anticipates 27% more acreage available for land special use authorizations.

Utility and Transportation Corridors and Communication Sites. In all alternatives, the utility and transportation corridors and communication sites designated in the current land management plans would continue. New utility corridors, transportation corridors, and communication sites are limited to suitable land use zones and can be designated only after specific analysis and environmental review is completed.

The Western Regional Corridor Planning Partnership (WRCPP) has identified two new unoccupied utility corridor segments on the Cleveland National Forest: the Elsinore Mountain to San Mateo corridor, and the El Cajon Mountain corridor. They would be zoned as suitable and may be designated in the future under some alternatives as shown in the chart below.

Suitability of WRCPP Corridors Not Identified in Land Management Plan, Cleveland National Forest

WRCPP Priority Utility Corridor	Suitable Alternatives	Approximate Length (Miles)	Approximate Area (Acres)
Elsinore/San Mateo	1,4,5	23.0	8,495
El Cajon Mountain	1,2,4,5	6.0	1,920

Source: GIS Database, Forest Plan Revision

Social and Economic Environment

Forest Contributions to Area Economy. The regional economic activity of southern California is immense and dwarfs the economic activity generated by the forests. Total jobs supported by the Forest Service amount to 0.12% of the area total and annual labor income is 0.10% of the area total. Another measure of economic impact is the Forest Service contribution to county tax revenues. While these payments are used for worthy purposes, they are small in comparison to total county tax collections and are less than 0.10% for both the central and south coast counties.

However, local impacts can be quite profound. The community of Big Bear on the San Bernardino National Forest is quite dependent on forest management of the surrounding landscape to maintain the ambience that supports a predominantly recreational destination economy. The aquifers of the area around Arrowhead, also on the San Bernardino, are a source of commercially valuable bottled spring water. The National Forest budget expenditures, the special uses and fees collected, and the forest visits to recreate and to hunt and fish all contribute to regional employment and personal income. The forests also figure prominently in southern California as a source of undeveloped land, plant and animal species habitat, and a place for people to enjoy the outdoors.

On all four forests, alternative 4 results in the highest number of jobs and labor income, with alternative 5 running a close second. Recreation is a major output of the forests of southern California and contributes value to the area economy in the form of both primary (direct fees paid for the experience) and secondary (related expenses such as food) expenditures.

Effects on Economic Efficiency. Economic efficiency measures the cost effectiveness of the alternatives via the computation of net present worth. Data inputs include projected costs as represented by the projected forest budgets for each alternative. The budgets vary by alternative relative to program emphasis as related to the

alternative theme. The total present net value of alternative 4 is highest, followed closely by alternative 5, with a larger gap between the rest of the alternatives. Alternative 4 has greater economic benefits to the local economies in terms of personal income and jobs supported by the National Forests of southern California and is most efficient in terms of the value of its commodities relative to its costs.

Fire and Aviation Management

Fire and Vegetation Management. All alternatives emphasize implementation of the National Fire Plan in wildland urban interface areas. It is anticipated that community protection effectiveness will increase as a result.

Fire suppression effectiveness and firefighter access to roads and fuelbreaks is similar in alternatives 1 through 5. Fire suppression effectiveness and firefighter access to roads and fuelbreaks is decreased in alternative 6 due to road closures. All alternatives will result in at least a temporary increase in acres burned due to the mortality situation.

How to Comment on the Draft Documents

Release of the Draft Revision Documents

Printed copies of this summary, a CD-ROM, or a printed set of the documents will be mailed to those who requested them during the request period (sixty days during July and August of 2003). News releases will be issued to let the public know the documents are available and that public comments are being accepted.

Open Houses

Open houses will be held in representative local communities near the National Forests. The objective of these meetings will be to share what is in the draft documents; to provide an opportunity for the public to visit one-on-one with specialists, the planning staff and Forest staff; and to receive written comments. Please contact your local Forest Service office for dates and locations of these open houses, or call 1-866-252-8846, or visit our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr>.

Meeting with Groups

The planning staff and specialists will be available to meet with groups and organizations upon request to discuss the draft documents.

Comments

We prefer to receive comments electronically via our interactive document, located at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/scfpr>.

Written comments on the draft documents must be postmarked no later than 90 days after publication of the legal notice for the comment period and should be sent to:

Southern California Forest Plan Revisions
Name of National Forest (if applicable)
USDA Forest Service Content Analysis Center
PO Box 22777
Salt Lake City, UT 84122

or FAX to: 801-517-1015

When submitting your comments on the draft Forest Plans and draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), your feedback will be most helpful if you:

- are as specific as possible with your comments,
- indicate the section of the Forest Plan(s) or DEIS where your comment applies,
- describe the location(s) where your comment applies (e.g., if applicable, it is helpful if you note the National Forest(s), Planning Place(s), or name of natural or manmade feature you are commenting on),

- indicate where clarification is needed, and
- suggest alternative management approaches or solutions to the specific problem.

We will read and organize all comments received by subject matter through a content analysis process. Significant comments will be addressed through revisions made in the final environmental impact statement (FEIS). All comments and the forests' responses to these comments will be published as an appendix to the FEIS.

Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Revised Land Management Plans

The final documents consisting of the FEIS, revised land management plans and the accompanying Record of Decision will be released in the spring or summer of 2005.

For More Information

More information is available on the website, located at <http://www.fs.fed.us/scfpr>. Answers to specific questions related to one or more of the four southern California National Forests may be obtained by calling the closest Forest Service administrative office.