United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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# Fallen Bear Project

# Decision Notice

**St. Joe Ranger District**

**Idaho Panhandle National Forests**

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# DECISION NOTICE
# FALLEN BEAR PROJECT

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
Idaho Panhandle National Forests, St. Joe Ranger District
Shoshone County, Idaho

## I. DECISION

After careful review of the Fallen Bear Environmental Assessment (EA), resource reports, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), comments from the public, and the project file I decided to implement a modified version of Alternative B. The selected alternative, referred to as Alternative B Modified, includes all the vegetation management activities of Alternative B except for timber harvest units 96, 151, 211, and most of 206. The new road construction for Units 198, 199, 226, 233, and 227 and the road management prescriptions will be the same as Alternative C. These changes result in fewer miles of required road construction. The amount of road reconstruction was refined based on additional field reconnaissance and eliminating harvest units, and it is now quite a bit less than previously disclosed (4.9 miles vs. 17.9 miles). See Table 1 for a comparison of activities by alternative.

I decided not to treat Units 96 and 151 (regeneration harvest) and Unit 211 (commercial thin) to address public concerns for maintaining stands that meet the minimum criteria for old growth even though I recognize that treating these units would have helped address the purpose and need. Allocating one of these stands (Unit 96) creates a larger old growth patch. Alternative B Modified does not include timber harvest in stands meeting the minimum criteria for old growth.

I removed most of Unit 206 to eliminate the need for major reconstruction of a switchback. This eliminated the need for some reconstruction and a small amount of new road construction at the top of Unit 206.

I decided to implement new road construction for Units 198, 199, 226, 233, and 227 as mapped for Alternative C (see DN Map 2). This reduces the amount of road construction required; but, like Alternative C, it does involve constructing approximately 169 feet or 0.03 miles of road through the edge of an allocated old growth stand (stand 23201017). This road location avoids road construction through the newly allocated old growth stand (Unit 211 in Alternative B) which would have been longer (.3 miles) and would have affected more acres (1.1 acres). It will not break up any existing corridors between old growth patches. In addition, approximately 2.6 miles of roads in Road Prescriptions A, B, and C will be decommissioned (Prescription D) in my decision. The decommissioning of these roads will reduce the amount of road going through and adjacent to allocated old growth, reducing fragmentation of three existing old growth patches. This modification is consistent with forest plan direction to minimize, to the extent feasible, impacts to old growth stands from roads.

**Table 1 – Comparison of Activities by Alternative**

| Proposed Activity | Estimated Dates | Alternative B Modified | Alternative B | Alternative C |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Commercial timber harvest | 2010-2014 | 417 acres | 483 acres | 293 acres |
| New road construction | 2010-2011 | 2.14 miles | 2.8 miles | 0.8 miles |
| Road reconstruction | 2010-2011 | 4.9 miles | 17.9 miles | 7.3 miles |
| Activity fuel treatments | 2012-2016 | 437 acres | 502 acres | 312 acres |
| Precommercial thinning | 2009-2010 | 775 | same | same |
| White pine pruning | 2009-2010 | 777 | same | same |
| Girdling existing larch seed trees to limit spread of dwarf mistletoe | 2009-2010 | 161 acres | same | same |
| Inoculating girdled trees with heart rot to create cavity habitat sooner | 2009-2010 | 50-100 trees | same | same |
| Planting conifer seedlings | 2013-2017 | 167 acres | 195 acres | 112 acres |
| Pocket gopher control on planted areas | 2014-2018 | 167 acres | 195 acres | 112 acres |
| Barriering roads that are currently open or gated (Rx B) | 2010-2015 | 5.4 miles | 7.7 miles | 5.4 miles |
| Putting roads into long-term storage (Rx C) | 2013-2015 | 30.4 | 24.8 | 30.4 |
| Decommissioning roads (Rx D) | 2010-2015 | 31.9 | 31.9 | 31.9 |

## A. Details of the Selected Alternative – Alternative B Modified

**Commercial Timber Harvest** (Table 2, Map 2) – Alternative B Modified includes timber stand improvement using commercial timber harvest on approximately 417 acres with skyline yarding on approximately 346 acres and tractor skidding on 71 acres. Commercial thinning will be used on 250 acres. Regeneration harvest will be used where stands have minimal amounts of western larch and white pine. Regeneration harvest is prescribed for a total of 167 acres consisting of the following silvicultural systems: 84 acres of a clearcut with reserves, 59 acres of shelterwood cuts, and 24 acres of seedtree cuts. Harvest methods described below are prescribed depending on individual stand conditions.

Commercial Thin (CT): This is an intermediate harvest that will be used in an immature stand in order to accelerate diameter increment and improve the average form of the trees that remain, without permanently breaking or opening the canopy. No site preparation or planting will be required. The purpose of the treatment is to regulate stand density to promote tree growth and vigor. Generally, smaller trees will be harvested and larger trees will be retained. This treatment can be applied to both even- and uneven-aged stand structures.

Clearcutwith Reserves (CCw/R): This is a stand-replacement activity that will remove nearly all the standing crop for the purpose of creating a new, even-aged stand. Reserves will be any tree or group of trees left uncut and kept for part of or the entire next rotation. Reserves will be safe snags; live culls; healthy, early-seral trees; and other individuals /groups of trees with specific resource value scattered throughout stand. This treatment will develop an even-aged stand structure and will include site preparation and reforestation. Reforestation will be accomplished by hand planting a mix of western larch and western white pine.

Seedtree Harvest (ST): This is a regeneration cut in a mature, or near mature, stand to open its canopy to provide conditions suitable for regeneration from the seed of trees retained for that purpose. The majority of the standing crop trees will be removed. Natural regeneration is often supplemented with artificial regeneration to assure rapid stocking of the site and to provide for a desirable species composition.

Shelterwood Harvest (SW): This is a regeneration system in which most of the trees are cut, leaving those needed to provide sufficient shade to produce a new age class in a moderated microenvironment. Additional harvest may be possible sometime in the future. The last or final removal cut would remove the remaining old age class after the new age class has established. This results in continuous coverage of large or small trees.

**Fuel Treatment** (Table 2) - Fuel treatments will include approximately 175 acres of underburning with hand fireline construction, 175 acres of lopping, 34 acres of yarding top within 200 feet of roads, and 53 acres of grapple piling slash followed by pile burning.

Underburn (UB): To facilitate fuel reduction and aid in reforestation, selected units will be underburned. Typically, either a broadcast or jackpot burn will be utilized depending on the amount of available fuel. Burning prescriptions will be designed to accomplish fuel reduction objectives while minimizing mortality to leave trees and probability of escape.

Fireline (FL): Hand fireline will be used on all underburn units around the entire perimeter except where a road will serve as a unit boundary. Firelines will include a fuel break with a hand fireline to mineral soil on the outside edge of the fuel break. Mineral soil will be exposed for a minimum of 12 inches and a maximum 24-inches along the entire length of the fireline. The fuel break is an area within the unit, adjacent to the fire line that is cleared of all vegetative debris larger than 1 inch in diameter and 3 feet long for a minimum width of 8 feet.

Grapple pile and burn piles (GP): To facilitate fuel reduction while protecting remaining trees, woody debris will be gathered and piled mechanically using an excavator. The piles will be burned in the late fall during periods of optimum smoke dispersal and soil moisture content. In order to protect leave trees or leave islands from possible ignition, the piles will not be placed next to them.

Lop: Lopped units will have limbs and unmerchantable tops of harvested trees left in units. These limbs and tops will be lopped to a maximum slash depth of 18 inches. The lopped limbs are more subject to compression by snow loads. This proximity to the ground increases the rate at which the slash decomposes.

Yard Tops within 200 feet of Road (YTR): The unmerchantable tops of all harvested trees will be yarded to the landing while still attached to the uppermost sawlog in the tree. This activity is designed to provide a zone of reduced post-harvest fuel loading that enhances the ability of the road to serve as a fuelbreak and reduces potential for man-caused fires along roads. This activity will reduce post harvest fuel loading in units that cannot be prescribed burned. Tops will only be yarded from the first 200 feet below the road. Not all slash is expected to be yarded, for example the limbs from yarded sawlogs will remain in the unit.

**Planting** - Early-seral western white pine and western larch seedlings will be planted on approximately 167 acres in areas proposed for regeneration harvest.

**Pocket Gopher Control** - Pocket gopher control baiting may be done to control pocket gophers on approximately 167 acres in areas proposed for regeneration harvests if needed to protect regeneration. The need for pocket gopher control will be evaluated with regeneration surveys for the first, third and fifth year after planting. Only planted areas that have high mortality due to pocket gophers will be treated. Plantations will be treated by hand application of grain treated with (2.0%) zinc phosphide or (0.5%) strychnine. This grain will be deposited into the gophers' underground burrows at a rate of 1/4 to 1/2 pound per acre. The project will comply with all registered label instructions for zinc phosphide and strychnine bait including application in accordance with Idaho State law. Follow-up treatments may be necessary in some areas to ensure adequate seedling stocking levels.

**Table 2 – Alternative B Modified Commercial Timber Harvest Units**

| Unit | Acres | Silvicultural Rx | Logging System | Fuel Treatment |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CCWR = clearcut w/reserves; CT = commercial thin; SW = shelterwood; ST = seed tree; S = skyline; T = tractor; UB = underburn; GP = grapple pile | | | | |
| 40 | 40 | CCWR | S | UB |
| 97 | 15 | CCWR | S | UB |
| 103 | 2 | CT | S | Lop |
| 109 | 19 | CT | S | Lop, Yard tops within 200 feet of road |
| 127A | 10 | SW | T | UB |
| 127B | 14 | SW | S | UB |
| 132 | 15 | CT | S | No fuel treatment |
| 148 | 19 | CT | S | Lop, Yard tops within 200 feet of road, UB |
| 150 | 15 | SW | S | UB |
| 159 | 20 | CCWR | S | UB |
| 165A | 4 | CT | T | GP |
| 165B | 8 | CT | S | Lop |
| 167 | 9 | CCWR | S | UB |
| 181 | 11 | ST | S | UB |
| 183A | 5 | CT | T | GP |
| 183B | 8 | CT | S | Lop, Yard tops within 200 feet of road |
| 189 | 28 | CT | S | Lop |
| 198A | 6 | SW | T | UB |
| 198B | 14 | SW | S | UB |
| 199A | 18 | CT | T | GP |
| 199B | 11 | CT | S | Lop, GP |
| 206 | 7 | CT | S | Lop |
| 226A | 1 | CT | T | Lop |
| 226B | 56 | CT | S | Lop, Yard tops within 200 feet of road |
| 227A | 7 | ST | T | UB |
| 227B | 6 | ST | S | UB |
| 233A | 1 | CT | T | Lop |
| 233B | 20 | CT | S | Lop, Yard tops within 200 feet of road |
| 271A | 19 | CT | T | GP |
| 271B | 9 | CT | S | Lop |
| Total | 417 | | | |

**New Road Construction and Road Reconstruction** (Map 2) - Approximately 2.1miles of new road construction, 4.9 miles of reconstruction, and spot reconstruction (culvert replacement, realignment, or removing earthen barriers) at 14 locations will be necessary to implement the envisioned timber harvesting systems. When timber harvest and associated activities are complete the newly constructed roads will be put into Road Management Prescription C (see discussion below).

**Precommercial Thinning & White Pine Pruning** (Map 3) – My decision includes approximately 775 acres of precommercial thinning and 777 acres of white pine pruning. Precommercial thinning will be conducted in stands where stocking levels are potentially limiting tree growth, health, and vigor. Where they are present western larch and western white pine will be the preferred species for release. White pine pruning will be conducted in plantations composed of white pine where pruning will reduce and slow down the spread of blister rust infection. Pruning involves removing the lower branches of a white pine so the white pine blister rust spores in the surrounding vegetation are not as likely to infect the tree. Slash will be lopped to a maximum depth of 24 inches. Approximately 267 acres of precommercial thinning will be done within the lynx analysis unit (LAU), and 168 acres of that provide lynx habitat. Precommercial thinning is consistent with the standards and guidelines in the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Record of Decision.

**Mistletoe Treatments** (Map 3) – Existing western larch seed trees infected with dwarf mistletoe would be girdled and would be left standing on 161 acres to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe to existing regeneration and to provide snags for wildlife. Work will be done with hand tools.

**Inoculation to Increase Cavity Nesting Habitat** – Fifty to 100 of the trees girdled to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe will be inoculated with heart rot fungus to increase amount and rate of decay in girdled trees to provide habitat for primary cavity excavators and secondary users sooner. Two fungal species will be used to improve the chances of successful inoculation with different tree conditions. Trees will be climbed to inoculate them at varying heights to increase the potential for use by cavity nesters.

**Road Management Prescriptions** (Map 4 and Tables 3, 4, 5) - Changing road management prescriptions on approximately 68 miles of existing road will be implemented as described below. Approximately 5.4 miles will be barriered (Road Management Prescription B), 30.4 will be put into long-term storage (Prescription C), and 31.9 will be decommissioned (Prescription D). Existing legal motorized vehicle use restrictions will not be changed, but physical work on the ground to implement Road Management Prescriptions C and D is intended to eliminate motorized vehicle use. Access changes are not proposed with Road Management Prescription B. Road management prescription changes include the following:

Open Roads: Open to all vehicles.

Road Management Prescription A: The use and need for the road is anticipated to occur at a higher frequency than a barriered road. Traffic is controlled with a locked gate. Culverts are not removed. The access management strategy during “closure” periods is to eliminate all vehicles ≥50” wide except for administrative use. Roads may or may not be designated for vehicles less than 50”.

Road Management Prescription B: The use and need for the road is anticipated to occur at a lower frequency. The road may remain “closed” for a period of 5 to 15 years between uses but remains on the transportation system for future use. Culverts assessed to have a higher risk of failure will be removed or replaced, and the road surface may be water barred and seeded. Traffic is usually controlled with a physical static barrier (such as a guardrail, concrete or earth barrier). The access management strategy during “closure” periods is to eliminate all vehicles ≥50” wide except for administrative use. Use by vehicles less than 50” wide will not change from the existing condition.

Road Management Prescription C: This is a long-term “storage” with no foreseeable use for the road in the next 15 to 25 years, but the road may be needed at some future date. Some low impact roads that do not have a reasonably foreseeable need in the future, may also be closed at this level. The road will be out-sloped and have the drainage structures removed. The intent of this prescription is to put the road into “long-term storage” where the road is not a sediment source and does not channel water. The road prism is basically left intact but in a condition that will not require any maintenance. All water courses and problem areas will be stabilized. The roadbed may require light scarification, water bars, and/or decompaction. The road will be seeded and/or planted to establish a vegetative cover in the road prism. Motorized vehicle use will be controlled by recontouring the beginning of the road. Roads will remain on the transportation system. Generally, the access management strategy is to eliminate or prohibit all motorized use while the road is in storage.

Road Management Prescription D. Roads "closed" at this level generally have a higher potential for failure than Prescription C roads, and they are not needed for management purposes. The road will be decompacted and major fills, embankments, and higher failure risk areas will be pulled up onto the roadbed and be stabilized. Drainage structures will be removed from stream channels, and the adjacent slopes will be restored to resemble natural conditions. The goal of this prescription is to restore site productivity, eliminate the potential of road failures, and reestablish natural water infiltration and drainage patterns. Recontouring or partial pullback is based on site-specific conditions and could range from about 20 to 100 percent of the roads length. Prescription D may require only partial recontouring, only pulling up the amount of fill necessary to stabilize the slope condition. Some cut and fill slopes or parts of cut and fill slopes may be evident in areas of recontouring. Following prescription implementation, roads will be removed from the National Forest Road System. The access management strategy is to eliminate all motorized use.

**Table 3 – Alternative B Modified Road Management Prescriptions**

| | Road Management Prescription | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Open** | **A Gate** | **B Barrier** | **C Long-term Storage** | **D Decommission** |
| **Existing Miles** | 15.8 | 21.4 | 40.4 | 14.2 | 3.6 |
| **Proposed Miles** | 5.4 | 6.2 | 10.9 | 37.5 | 35.5 |

** These numbers do not include Forest Highway 50*

**Table 4 – Existing and Proposed Road Management Rx – Alternative B Modified**

| Existing Road Management Rx | Alternative B Modified Road Management Rx | Miles |
|---|---|---|
| Open<br>Total existing open miles = 15.8 | Open | 5.4 |
| | Rx B - Barrier | 5.4 |
| | Rx C - Long-term Storage | 2.1 |
| | Rx D - Decommission | 2.9 |
| Rx A – Gate<br>Total existing gated miles = 21.4 | Rx A - Gate | 6.2 |
| | Rx C - Long-term Storage | 13.1 |
| | Rx D - Decommission | 2.1 |
| Rx B – Barrier<br>Total existing barriered miles = 40.4 | Rx B - Barrier | 5.5 |
| | Rx C - Long-term Storage | 15.2 |
| | Rx D - Decommission | 19.7 |
| Rx C – Long-term Storage<br>Total existing stored miles = 14.2 | Rx C - Long-term Storage | 7.0 |
| | Rx D - Decommission | 7.2 |
| Rx D – Decommission<br>Total existing decommissioned miles = 3.6 | Rx D - Decommission | 3.6 |

** These numbers do not include Forest Highway 50*

**Table 5 – Alternative B Modified Proposed Road Management Prescriptions Changes**

| Road # | Length | Road Management Prescription (Rx) | | Road # | Length | Road Management Prescription (Rx) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Existing | Proposed | | | Existing | Proposed |
| 1223 | 0.07 | Open | C | 1223UP | 0.31 | C | D |
| 1223 | 4.29 | A | C | 1223UQ | 0.32 | C | D |
| 1223 | 1.16 | B | C | 1223UR | 0.43 | B | D |
| 1224 | 0.78 | A | C | 1223US | 0.46 | B | D |
| 1224 | 0.69 | A | D | 1223UZ | 0.22 | C | D |
| 1228 | 2.21 | A | C | 1224UA | 1.07 | A | C |
| 3309 | 1.65 | B | C | 1224UA | 0.73 | A | D |
| 3310 | 0.35 | B | C | 1228A | 0.53 | C | D |
| 3310 | 0.94 | B | D | 1231UC | 1.34 | C | D |
| 3350 | 2.02 | Open | B | 214B | 0.41 | C | D |
| 3351 | 2.67 | A | C | 3309UA | 0.06 | A | C |
| 3368 | 0.92 | A | C | 3310A | 0.73 | B | C |
| 3368 | 0.64 | A | D | 3310UA | 0.66 | B | D |
| 3376 | 0.65 | B | C | 3310UB | 0.31 | B | D |
| 3376 | 1.40 | B | D | 3350AZ | 0.92 | Open | C |
| 3390 | 0.02 | B | D | 3350B | 0.51 | Open | C |
| 3398 | 1.44 | B | C | 3351A | 1.13 | A | C |
| 3398 | 0.20 | B | D | 3376A | 1.07 | B | D |
| 3399 | 3.33 | Open | B | 3376AUA | 0.43 | B | D |
| 3400 | 1.19 | Open | D | 3376UB | 1.35 | B | C |
| 3458 | 1.00 | B | C | 3387UC | 0.69 | B | C |
| 3466 | 0.98 | C | D | 3387UD | 0.03 | B | D |
| 3680 | 1.69 | B | D | 3387UE | 0.16 | D | C |
| 3695 | 1.42 | B | D | 3387UH | 0.26 | B | D |
| 3696 | 2.15 | B | C | 3393A | 0.26 | B | D |
| 3698 | 0.71 | B | C | 3398UA | 0.49 | B | D |
| 3698 | 1.48 | B | D | 3399UA | 0.42 | B | D |
| 3699 | 1.23 | B | D | 3399UC | 0.77 | B | D |
| 1223A | 0.32 | C | D | 3399UD | 1.79 | B | C |
| 1223UB | 0.6 | Open | C | 3399UD | 0.02 | Open | C |
| 1223UB | 0.54 | Open | D | 3399UE | 0.57 | C | D |
| 1223UC | 0.60 | Open | D | 3400UA | 0.56 | Open | D |
| 1223UD | 0.45 | C | D | 3681UA | 0.74 | B | D |
| 1223UE | 1.04 | B | D | 3681UB | 0.52 | B | D |
| 1223UF | 0.57 | B | C | 3681Z | 1.11 | B | D |
| 1223UF | 0.38 | B | D | 3695UA | 0.67 | B | D |
| 1223UG | 0.62 | C | D | 3696UA | 1.29 | B | D |
| 1223UJ | 0.39 | C | D | 3698A | 0.96 | B | C |
| 1223UN | 0.15 | C | D | 3698AUA | 0.37 | D | C |
| 1223UO | 0.54 | C | D | 1223US | 0.46 | B | D |

## B. Design Features

The following design and mitigation measures will be implemented in full as written. These measures represent all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental effects in the context of taking action to achieve the project's purpose and need.

### I. Design Features for All Proposed Activities

#### A. Aquatic Resources

1. All activities comply with standards identified in the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) EA Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, signed in July 1995.

2. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used to achieve water quality standards (revised Water Report Appendix A). The Forest Service Handbook 2509.22 (Soil and Water Conservation Handbook) outlines BMPs that meet the intent of the water quality protection elements of the Idaho Forest Practices Act, Forest Plan Standards and replaces the Forest Plan Appendix S – Best Management Practices. To ensure water quality protection additional site-specific BMPs may be identified and developed during layout, design or implementation of proposed activities.

3. All treatments will meet or exceed requirements and erosion control guidelines of the Rules and Regulations pertaining to the Idaho Forest Practices Act, Title 38, Chapter 13, Idaho Code.

#### B. Noxious Weeds

The following preventative measures will be taken to reduce the risk of noxious weed introduction and spread in accordance with the St. Joe Weed Control EIS (ROD 10/12/99).

1. All off-road logging and construction equipment (including machinery used in restoration projects) will be cleaned prior to entering the project area to remove dirt, plant parts, and material that may carry weed seeds. A provision will be included in contracts.

2. Mulching agents brought into the project area, such as hay or straw, will be certified weed-free prior to use. On-site slash could be used where roads are recontoured.

3. All seed used for revegetation and erosion-control purposes will be certified weed-free and will be from a native seed mix set by the IPNF.

4. After implementation, project areas will be reviewed for new populations of noxious weeds. If new populations are found more intensive surveys will be conducted, sites will be mapped, and treatment will be scheduled.

5. If new populations of noxious weeds are found, treatment will be implemented in accordance with priorities set by the noxious weed program. New invader species will be slated for eradication immediately upon discovery. Other weed infestations will be treated according to the direction in the St. Joe Noxious Weed Project EIS and district priorities.

6. All weed treatments will be monitored for effectiveness.

#### C. Plants (Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive)

If Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) plant species were discovered during project implementation, an agency Botanist will be notified so that measures could be taken to maintain species diversity. Measures to maintain species diversity and habitat for all known and newly discovered occurrences will include altering or dropping proposed units from activity, modifying the proposed activity, or implementing buffers around plant occurrences. Contract provisions for protection of Endangered Species, and settlement for environmental cancellation will be included in contracts.

No site-specific design features will be needed for plants because all the TES plant sites are outside treatment areas and away from road work.

### D. Recreation

1. A recreation specialist will be consulted to determine if additional project level assistance is needed during project implementation.
2. Temporary closures of recreation sites to public use will be set up to minimize public exposure to operational safety hazards. Closures may include roads, trails, dispersed camp sites, other recreation sites, or larger geographic areas depending on operational hazards.

### E. Wildlife

Canada Lynx: All project activities will follow standards and guidelines established in the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (USDA 2007). See project file for a list of applicable standards and guidelines.

## II. Design Features for Commercial Timber Harvest

Existing gates will remain in place. Temporary gates will be installed on any road that is not behind a gate and is currently barriered. During timber hauling the gate will be closed and locked at the end of each day. For other operations gates will be closed and locked after passage of each vehicle.

### A. Aquatic Resources

1. All alternatives will implement standard riparian habitat conservation area (RHCA) widths specified by Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) (Table 11). These buffer zones are no-entry for harvest and equipment. Exceptions are described in the Standards and Guidelines, General Riparian Area Management (RA-2) that states: "Trees may be felled in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas when they pose a safety risk". When necessary to fall trees for skyline/cable units, the sale administrator may approve the individual trees required to be felled and ensure that they remain where dropped.

**Table 6 - Standard Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCA) Widths**

| INFS Category | Description | RHCA Width |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Fish bearing streams | 300 feet from either side of channel |
| 2 | Permanent, flowing, non-fish bearing stream | 150 feet from either side of channel |
| 4 | Seasonally flowing or intermittent streams<br>Wetlands <1 acre<br>Landslide prone areas | 100 feet from either side of channel (priority watersheds) |

2. All treatments comply with objectives described in Appendix O of the IPNF Forest Plan, Stream Protection.
3. Areas of recent or historic landslides and landslide-prone areas constitute Category 4 – RHCA (INFS) buffers. Harvest activities will avoid landslides and landslide prone areas using INFS buffers.
4. Wetlands identified during field review or harvest preparation will be protected by INFS buffers (50 feet for those less than one acre and 150 feet for those greater than one acre). A resource protection provision in contracts will protect wetlands that may be discovered during operations.

### B. Soils

1. Ground-based equipment for harvest and site prep activities:
   a. Ground-based operations will be limited to slopes equal to or less than 35%.
   b. Only approved skid trail locations will be allowed.
   c. Where terrain is conducive, trails will be spaced at maximum distance, except where converging at intersections.
   d. Equipment will not be operated under saturated conditions and in moist or wet depression areas.

e. Only areas that are reasonably accessed by ground-based equipment will be treated, and no trails will be excavated to facilitate access.

f. To minimize disturbance (soil compaction or displacement), practices such as skidding and mechanical harvesting will occur on existing skid trails and over slash when available. Units will be designed to utilize directional falling.

g. The leading end of logs will be suspended during skidding.

2. Skyline Yarding: The leading end of logs will be suspended during yarding.
3. The Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrition Cooperative assembled data suggesting that nutrient levels may be conserved in treatment units by allowing logging slash to stay on site through a wet season of 4 to 6 months not including June through September. By leaving sufficient levels of wood on site, long-term soil productivity will be protected.
4. Nutrient sources such as needles and limbs will be maintained on site by allowing slash to over-winter prior to all slash disposal treatments (Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrition Cooperative, Garrison and Moore 1998) except where tops will be yarded.
5. Tops of trees will be removed only along a maximum buffer of 200 feet below roads in Units 109, 148, 183, 226 and 233.
6. *Managing Coarse Woody Debris in Forests of the Rocky Mountains* (Graham and others 1994) will be used to retain sufficient levels of coarse woody debris on site after slash disposal. Special attention to meet coarse woody debris levels will be given to Units183A and 183B that are currently low. The following recommendations will be used in prescriptions:

**Table 7 - Recommended Coarse Woody Debris Retention***

| Site Conditions | Coarse Woody Debris |
|---|---|
| Drier to dry end of moist sites | 7-14 tons/acre |
| Moist sites | 17-33 tons/acre |

**(Graham and others 1994)*

### C. Cultural Resources

1. All known cultural resource sites, eligible or potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, will be protected or mitigated as directed by the National Historic Preservation Act.
2. Any future discovery of cultural resources, archaeological sites or caves will be inventoried and protected if found to be of cultural significance. A provision will be included in all contracts to ensure protection of the sites. A discovery plan for the protection of cultural resources will be included in contracts in case of cultural resource discovery during project implementation.
3. Project activity will avoid any trails and/or portions of trails that contain historic or cultural characteristics. Any historic or culturally significant trail will be avoided through coordination with a qualified Zone or Forest level archaeologist to ensure that no significant cultural resources are adversely affected.

### D. Recreation

1. Dispersed recreation sites off of open roads e.g. Road 1223 at the junctions of Roads 1231, 1223UD, 1223UM, that will be temporarily eliminated during logging will be restored or rehabilitated including removing slash and logs. During operational use signs will be posted to inform forest users of the temporary closure of the site due to project implementation.
2. In areas where logging traffic may interfere with recreational traffic warning signs will be placed to inform visitors of logging activities.
3. Blackjack Trail 86 and Haggerty Trail 5 corridors will be protected where tread exists. The Trails Coordinator will flag the corridors of the trails where tread is not evident prior to harvesting or road construction. Slash and logs will be removed from the trail corridor and/or trail heads.
4. Avoid placing skid trails within 100 feet of recreation sites (e.g. dispersed sites, trails) where practical.

**E. Visual Quality**

1. Harvest unit preparation and silvicultural personnel will work closely with the District or Forest visual staff to determine that design criteria are adequate for each application.
2. Activities will remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape, repeating the form, line, color and texture common to the surrounding area with differences in qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction and pattern.
    a. Form, line color and textures not frequently found in the characteristic landscape might be introduced in these units. Changes will remain subordinate to the visual strength of the characteristic landscape.
    b. Openings in these areas will repeat natural openings frequently found in the characteristic landscape so completely they will not be evident.
    c. In seed tree units transition basal area density from unit boundary into harvest unit (seed tree units) to avoid hard unit boundary lines.

**F. White Pine Leave Tree Guidelines**

The White Pine Leave Tree Guidelines (Schwandt and Zack 1996) will be utilized in all silvicultural prescriptions for timber harvest. The objective of these guidelines is to retain and protect genetic resources which may contribute to long-term white pine restoration.

**G. Wildlife**

1. Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Wildlife Species Management: Contract provisions for protection of Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species, and settlement for environmental cancellation will be included. If TES species and/or significant habitat are discovered before or during project implementation the Sale Administrator and the District Wildlife Biologist will be notified so that if needed, measures could be taken to avoid impacts and meet Forest Plan Standards. Measures could include altering or dropping proposed units, modifying the proposed activity, or implementing buffers.
2. Goshawk:
    a. Nests: Existing nests and those found before and during project implementation will be protected with a 40-acre no-activity buffer (Brewer and others 2007).
    b. Post-Fledging Areas (PFA): Proposed project activities will be suspended in the PFA of active goshawk nests between April 15 and August 15. After August 15th, treatment-related activities may commence within the PFA but outside the nest area (Brewer et al. 2007). Restrictions may be removed after June 30 if the nest is determined by the district biologist to be inactive or unsuccessful. Vegetation treatments in the PFA are designed to meet guidelines for PFA (Reynolds and others1992; Brewer and others 2007):
        i. 20% or less in shrub/seedling/sapling class
        ii. 60% or more in immature and older/larger size classes
        iii. 50% canopy cover on 60% of pole and larger size classes
        iv. Created openings are less than two acres with a minimum of 300 feet between existing or other created openings, and snag guidelines are applied on each acre of created opening non-regeneration treatment in immature and older/larger stands is thinning from below using irregular spacing of leave trees
3. Townsend's Big-Eared Bat: Mine adits found in the project area with potential habitat for bats will have a no-harvest buffer of 500 feet around the entrance to the adits (Pierson and others 1999). No activity is proposed within ½ mile of the known mine adit, and it currently does not have breeding colonies.
4. Wildlife Travel and Movement Corridors: Maintenance of landscape-level connectivity and minimization of fragmentation was incorporated into the design of all alternatives with timber harvest. Travel cover along ridges and saddles was identified and considered in terms of connectivity (project

file). Site-specific mitigation measures for units with proposed vegetation removal in designated travel corridors are found in Table 9.

Openings on ridge tops within designated corridors: Travel cover will be maintained and vegetation management will avoid making openings (i.e. areas with <30% canopy cover) within 200 feet of the ridge top or 400 feet if the other side of the ridge does not provide cover. Where openings will be created on ridges designated as potential travel corridors they will meet the following criteria:

a. Less than 300 feet wide (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994)
b. Limited to one side of the ridge top (USDA 1995)
c. Minimum of 800 feet between openings (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984])
d. None to be situated in a saddle (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994)

5. Big Game Security: To provide big game security, timber harvest in adjacent drainages will have a ridgeline between the disturbance and security areas. In larger contracts, subdivisions or scheduling of harvest units will be utilized to maintain adequate security (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984]).

6. Cavity Nesting Species: Recommendations for snag numbers, size and species from the Northern Region Snag Management Protocol (NRSP) (January 2000) will be met where these or higher levels exist. The retention of snags and snag replacements will be applied at the stand scale of every 5 to 25 acres (Bull and others 1997). Live trees will be retained at five times the number of snags recommended in the NRSP for snag recruitment.

7. To meet the objectives listed above in Table 8 Snag Guidelines:
   a. Silvicultural and burning prescriptions will protect large diameter snags (unless deemed unsafe) and green tree replacement snags. They will also retain recommended levels and distribution of coarse woody debris during site preparation and fuels treatment.
   b. Snags that show signs of decay, lose bark, or broken tops will not be designated for harvest (Bull and others 1997). Exceptions may be made for safety, road construction, and log landings.
   c. Specific details on snag and leave tree selection from the Reserve Tree Guide (USDA Forest Service IPNF 1995) and the Snag and Woody Debris Guidelines (IPNF Forest Plan Appendix X) will be followed to reach objectives of the Northern Region Snag Management Protocol; and worker safety.
   d. The species priority for selection as snags or live leave trees is as follows: western larch, ponderosa pine, western redcedar, Douglas-fir, grand fir, hemlock, lodgepole pine, spruce, alpine fir, and white pine. After size and species, preferred wildlife leave trees will be selected based on showing signs of: wildlife use, decay, broken tops, hollows, rot, brooms, loose bark, and other defects. All hardwood trees will be retained. (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix X)
   e. Snags cut for safety reasons will be left in the unit, preferably where they fall.

**Table 8 - Snag Guidelines**

| Forest Type | Snags/Acre |
|---|---|
| Warm, dry ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir | 1-2 snags >20” diameter at breast height (dbh) |
| Cool Douglas-fir, warm grand fir, slope <30% | 4 snags >20”dbh |
| Cool Douglas-fir, warm grand fir, slope >30% | 6-12 total snags with 2-4 >20” dbh |
| Cool, wet, & dry spruce, grand fir, hemlock, & subalpine fir | 6-12 total snags with 2>20” dbh |
| Low elevation western redcedar, hemlock | 12 total snags with 4>20” dbh |
| High elevation spruce/fir/lodgepole pine | 5-10 snags >10” dbh |
| Whitebark pine/limber pine | All available |

8. Site-specific design features for wildlife

**Table 9 - Site Specific Mitigation Measures and Design Features for Wildlife**

| Objective | Site-Specific Mitigation Measure and Design Feature |
|---|---|
| Maintain Lynx Foraging Habitat | Stands that are lynx habitat proposed for daylight thinning of planted rust-resistant white pine will retain 80% of the winter snowshoe hare habitat. Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (USDA 2007). **This applies to the following stands: 231-1-35, 231-1-45, 231-3-17, 231-3-18, 232-1-09, 232-1-20, 232-1-28** |
| Maintain Connectivity and Minimize Fragmentation | Avoid placing skyline corridors on ridge tops designated as travel corridors. Maintain canopy cover of stands at > 30% for all designated corridors (Heinemeyer and Jones, 1994). The minimum wildlife corridor width will be 400 feet (USDA 1995). **This applies to proposed harvest units in designated travel corridors: 148,150,165,183,198,199, 206, 226, 227, 233, 271** |
| Maximize Habitat Use by Big Game (Elk) | **In Units: 40, 97, 159, 167, 181, and 227(A & B):** The units will be no greater than 1,000 feet wide and should be bordered on all sides by cover habitat that is a minimum of 800 feet wide. |
| Facilitate Big Game Movement | Slash depths on ridge tops within designated corridors will be less than 1½ feet depth within 400 feet of ridge top (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984]). **This applies to proposed harvest units in designated travel corridors: 148, 150, 165, 183, 198, 199, 206, 226, 227, 233, 271.**<br>**Slash depths along new and reconstructed roads** should not exceed 1.5 feet. If this level of slash disposal is not practical, 16-foot wide openings through the slash every 200 feet should be created, especially on ridges and game trail crossings (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984]). |

## III. Design Features for Fuel Treatment and Site Preparation

### A. Air Quality

1. Proposed burning activities follow procedures outlined by the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement. Currently, the period of air quality monitoring and restriction is March 1 to November 30.
    i. During this period, all burning by the Forest Service is regulated to prohibit or restrict burning where stagnant weather conditions result in poor smoke dispersion and by conducting prescribed burns when ventilation and air quality conditions are good.
    ii. The project is within Airshed 12, which contain no EPA designated non-attainment areas for pollutants. The project area does not contain any Class I Airsheds as designated by the Clean Air Act.
    iii. Burning during any time of the year is regulated by the Idaho State Department of Environmental Quality, which issues burning closures when necessary to protect air quality. The Forest Service cooperates with the State by requesting approval to burn through the Montana/Idaho Airshed Management System in compliance with the Idaho State Implementation Plan.
    iv. Particulate matter projections will be sent to the North Idaho Smoke Management Group one day prior to ignition.
2. Measures used to reduce effects of prescribed burning on air quality will include:
    i. Broadcast and understory burning will be accomplished as much as practical when on-site fuel and weather conditions are less conducive to total consumption of duff and larger fuels, with a resultant reduction in total emissions.
    ii. Scheduling ignitions when air quality is least likely to be threatened.
    iii. Slash piles will be constructed as clean as practical and be burned as dry as practical to enhance efficient combustion.

### B. Aquatics

To avoid adverse effects to fish and redds when using streams for prescribed burning control, water removal may not exceed 90 gallons per minute and pumping sites will be located away from spawning gravels. The intake hose will be screened to prevent accidental intake of small fish. An emergency spill clean up kit will be on site in the unlikely event of a fuel spill outside the containment system.

### C. Fire/Fuels

All firelines, whether constructed by machine or hand tools, will be waterbarred at time of construction to the standard IPNF fire rehab specifications. Firelines will not be constructed through any moist zones or riparian areas in which the micro-site conditions can be relied upon to check the spread of fire during normal prescribed fire conditions. Surface fuels may be removed from these areas as necessary, but fireline construction will not occur.

### D. Soils

1. Prescribed burning will be done when soil moisture in the upper surface inch of mineral soil has a moisture content of 25% or more by weight or 60 to 100 percent duff moisture (IPNF Updated Soil Guidelines 1998). This is particularly important in Units 40, 97, 103, 127A & B, 132, 148, 150, and 206 where soil productivity on the primarily west- and south-facing slopes is reduced and could be impacted through severe burning of the often shallow soils.
2. Grapple-piling will occur on existing skid trails and over slash when available. See additional design criteria for use of ground-based equipment during timber harvest operations above.
3. Silvicultural and burning prescriptions will retain sufficient levels of coarse woody debris on site after slash disposal (Graham and others 1994). See design features for soils during timber harvest above.

### E. Wildlife

1. Snags: Burning prescriptions will protect large diameter snags and live trees for snag recruitment. They will also retain recommended levels and distribution of coarse woody debris during site preparation and fuels treatment.
2. Small Mammal Habitat: In harvest units where slash piles are created, one pile unburned per five acres will be left to supply potential fisher rest sites, provide cover for small animals (prey habitat) and serve as potential lynx den sites (USDA 1995). Piles left should be those closest to standing timber, such as the unit edge or a large cluster of leave trees.

## IV. Design Features for Non-Commercial Vegetation Treatment

### A. Gopher Control

The following criteria will be followed during gopher baiting project implementation:

1. Product labels and manufacturer's recommendations for use will be followed.
2. No gopher baiting treatment:
    i. within INFS RHCA buffers;
    ii. in areas with saturated soil;
    iii. during periods of, or forecasted periods of heavy precipitation.
3. Treated bait will not be stored or transferred within 300 feet of any stream or live water.
4. Treated bait will not be directly applied to or discarded in open water bodies such as lakes, streams, ponds, and wetlands.
5. Treated bait will be applied by a licensed applicator in accordance with Idaho State law.
6. Initial setting of bait will usually occur after July 1.
7. A mandatory provision for bait spill cleanup and disposal will be included in the contract.
8. The application of bait will be monitored by a Forest Service employee, who has been trained in animal damage control.

9. Follow-up gopher control effectiveness surveys will be completed. Any evidence of non-target wildlife or fish mortality will be will be collected and be reported to the District Fisheries Biologist or Wildlife Biologist.
10. Existing closed gates used to access units will be locked after each entry and exit.
11. Activity behind closed gates and earth barriers will be scheduled for completion prior to August 30th. An extension may be allowed based on extenuating circumstances (fire, weather, etc.) after interdisciplinary review.
12. Earthen barriers removed to allow access for project activities will be replaced upon completion of the unit and before August 30th.
13. Roads that have naturally revegetated will not be cleared to improve access.

**B. Precommercial Thinning**

1. The maximum diameter of felled trees will be 7 inches. Cull trees that exceed the 7 inch diameter limit will be left to provide stand structure diversity.
2. Snags or dead trees will not be cut unless required for safety reasons. Snags cut for safety reasons will be left in the unit, preferably where they fall.
3. Directional felling will be used to minimize slash depths. Trees that cannot be directionally felled will be bucked in lengths not to exceed 6 feet.
4. Established game trails will be kept clear of slash by directional felling and/or slash pullbacks to maintain travel linkages.
5. Activity may occur within the 75-foot buffer after review by district fisheries biologist or hydrologist, and silviculturist to determine the width of the buffer need to achieve RMOs. Otherwise, a 75-foot no-activity buffer will be maintained along all wetted defined channels, springs, and seeps within and adjacent to thinning units.
6. Existing closed gates will be locked closed after each entry and exit.
7. Activity behind closed gates or other restrictive device will be completed by the opening of the any-weapon general elk season.
8. Earthen barriers or other access restriction devices removed to allow access for project activities will be replaced with an effective device of similar design upon completion of the unit – no longer than one week later - and before the opening of the any weapon general elk season.
9. Activity will be conducted using existing access – i.e. no brush will be cleared or other improvements made to roads/trails that would change existing access.

**C. Dwarf Mistletoe Treatments**

Dwarf mistletoe treatment units will be reviewed on the ground by the district fisheries biologist or hydrologist and the district silviculturist to determine the width of the buffer needed to achieve RMOs.

**D. Fungal Inoculation of Girdled Trees**

1. Mistletoe trees within riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) will not be girdled.
2. The maximum inoculation density will be 0.5 trees per acre

## V. Design Features for Road Treatments

A guardrail barrier will be placed on Road 1231 so that it will be more easily removed than an earthen barrier in case emergency access is required.

**A. Aquatics**

1. Road maintenance/reconstruction: Limb trees greater than 12” diameter at breast height (d. b. h.) unless tree removal is necessary for safety reasons. If trees are felled within the RHCA, they shall be left onsite unless their presence limits sight distance and poses a further safety hazard. Trees felled within the RHCA will require a review by a fisheries biologist.

2. Activities in and around streams: Activities such as culvert replacement, culvert removal associated to road removal, etc. will occur after July 15th and prior to September 1st.
3. Road Management Prescriptions C and D at a minimum will have: all culverts removed, all fill within the stream crossing sites removed, stream gradient and valley side-slopes returned to near natural conditions for 200 feet on both sides of stream, and road surfaces decompacted to a minimum of 18 inches where possible to facilitate and augment infiltration (See Road Management Prescriptions described previously).
4. Road Management Prescriptions C and D treatment areas will be fully recontoured for 300 feet, a sight-distance, or whatever distance is effective to eliminate motorized access (See Road Management Prescription described previously).
5. Areas of recent or historic landslides and landslide-prone areas constitute Category 4 – RHCA (INFS) buffers. Road construction activities will avoid landslides and landslide prone areas using INFS buffers.

**B. Noxious Weeds**

To the degree practicable gravel used for road maintenance will be certified from weed free-sources. Gravel sources will be inspected for the presence of noxious weeds prior to utilization of gravel in the project area as appropriate.

**C. Old Growth**

No timber harvest will occur in allocated old growth stands.

**D. Recreation**

Where new road construction or reconstruction crosses Trail 86, the trail will be reconstructed where the tread is destroyed and permanent signs will be installed to direct hikers to the trail location.

**E. Wildlife**

1. Goshawk
    a. Nests: Existing nests and those found before and during project implementation will be protected with a 40-acre no-activity buffer (Brewer and others 2007).
    b. Post-Fledging Areas (PFA): Proposed project activities will be suspended in the PFA of active goshawk nests between April 15 and August 15. After August 15th, treatment-related activities may commence within the PFA but outside the nest area (Brewer and others 2007). Restrictions may be removed after June 30 if the nest is determined by the district biologist to be inactive or unsuccessful.
2. Big Game Security: Road Management Prescription C may require obliteration for a distance of 300 feet, a sight-distance, or whatever distance is effective to eliminate motorized access. The amount and type of obliteration required will be the minimum needed to effectively prevent motorized vehicle use. This will vary depending on the slope and vegetation present.
3. Snags: To meet the objectives listed above in Table 13 Snag Guidelines, snags that show signs of decay, lose bark, or broken tops will not be designated for harvest (Bull and others 1997). Exceptions will be made for safety, road construction, and log landings.

# II. SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

District Ranger, Chuck Mark, met with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to discuss projects on the St. Joe Ranger District, including the Fallen Bear project, on March 18, 2008 (EA p. 4; project file PI-1). The representatives of the tribe did not express concerns about the project. On April 9, 2008 Chuck Mark sent a letter, scoping notice, map of the proposed action, and a comment form to the public concerning Fallen Bear (EA p. 4; PI-2, PI-3). The scoping notice explained how the proposal was developed, described the purpose and need for action, listed forest plan management area direction, described the proposed action, and identified preliminary issues. That information was posted on the IPNF website on April 10, 2008 (EA p. 4; PI-4). Fallen Bear was first listed on the IPNF's April 2008 Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (EA p. 4; PI-5). One individual, six groups, and two agencies provided input during this comment period. Their comments were addressed in the resource reports summarized in the Fallen Bear EA or in the Scoping Report (EA p. 4; PI-6). The proposed action (Alternative B) was altered to address concerns about impacts from roads, so it included less road construction and reconstruction than the original proposed action.

On November 25, 2008 Acting District Ranger Cornelia Hudson sent the EA accompanied by a letter to people who had commented during the scoping period or who had requested to be on the mailing list for this project (PI-16, PI-17, PI-18, PI-19). The following day the EA and cover letter, maps, and resource reports were posted on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests' NEPA website (PI-20). The legal notice for public comment was published in the newspaper of record, *The Coeur d'Alene Press*, on November 29, 2008. During the 30-day comment period the Forest Service received comment letters from The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Kootenai Environmental Alliance, and The Lands Council (PI-22, PI-24, PI-25). After the 30-day comment period we received a comment letter from the Idaho Conservation League (PI-26). These letters and the Forest Service responses to them are included as Appendix A of this decision notice. In order to respond to some of the comments, bring more explanation to the resource reports, and make some minor corrections the reports for noxious weeds, TES plants, soils, transportation, water resources, and wildlife were revised after the EA was published. I used these revised reports when reaching my decision.

# III. ALTERNATIVES

### A. Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Detailed Study

**No Road Construction:** An alternative with no road construction was considered, but it was not analyzed in detail because it would not be economically viable and it would not adequately address the purpose and need (EA p. 5). With no new roads the timber volume would not cover the costs of road reconstruction to access the remaining units (E-14). Temporary roads were considered, but we determined they should actually be engineered system roads that would remain for future use. The management areas and proposed silvicultural prescriptions indicate that access to these areas would be required in the future.

**Free Selection, Thinning From Below, and Pruning:** The suggested silvicultural prescriptions are covered under the description of the commercial thin (CT) including free selection and thinning from below (EA p. 12), and pruning is part of the decision (EA p. 6, 10, 13). Other silvicultural prescriptions were considered (project file document FV-5: Fallen Bear Diagnosis Matrix for the Proposed Action). Uneven-aged management would not meet the target objectives for some stands because they would have increased losses from insects and diseases; stands would continue to be dominated by shade-tolerant, late-seral species; or regeneration would continue to be predominantly susceptible species. Intermediate harvest would work for some stands, and those will be commercially thinned (FV-5).

### B. Alternatives Considered in Detail

#### No-Action Alternative

This alternative provides a baseline for comparison of environmental consequences of the proposed action to the existing condition and is a management option that could be selected by the Responsible Official. The results of taking no action would be the current condition as it changes over time due to natural forces and ongoing management. This alternative continues ongoing management activities such as fire suppression, access management, and road and trail maintenance. Natural processes such as insects and diseases in trees and vegetation succession with fire exclusion would continue their current trends. I did not select this

alternative for implementation because it would not address the identified purpose and need for management in the Fallen Bear Project (EA p. 25).

**Alternative B**

The IPNF proposed the activities in Alternative B, summarized in Table 1 (above) and described in detail in the EA on pages 6-9 and12-24, after consideration of comments received from the public during the scoping period. The original proposed action was modified to address concerns about the amount of road work, and it included less road construction and reconstruction than originally proposed in the Fallen Bear Scoping Notice. With the modifications I have previously discussed, this alternative is the selected alternative. My rationale for selecting this modified alternative is disclosed in the following Rationale For The Decision discussion.

**Alternative C**

Alternative C was developed to address concerns about impacts of roads and impacts to old growth. It addressed issues brought forward by the public during scoping by reducing new road construction, reducing the amount of road reconstruction, and not including timber harvest in three stands that meet minimum criteria for old growth (Units 96, 151, and 211). As a result of addressing these issues, Alternative C included less timber harvest, less road construction, and less road reconstruction than the proposed action. Road management prescriptions changes would be the same as Alternative B except for part of Road 1223 that would be Rx C instead of Rx B. Alternative C included activities summarized Table 1 (above) and described in detail in the EA on pages 9-24.

# IV. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION

I have made my decision to implement the proposed action based on:

- Limited environmental consequences as documented in the Finding of No Significant Impact, EA, and the project file documents;
- How well the management action addresses the project's purpose and need;
- Consideration of the Forest Plan standards and guidance;
- Consideration of issues.

**A. Environmental Consequences**

Alternative B Modified will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment based on the context and intensity of its impacts (see Appendix B of this decision notice: Fallen Bear FONSI). There will be some minor, short-term, adverse effects (see discussion on Issues above and FONSI pp. 3-4), but on the other hand, it will have beneficial effects that will improve conditions in the Fallen Bear Project Area (FONSI pp. 2-3).

**B. Achievement of Purpose and Need**

The interdisciplinary team used an Ecosystem Assessment at the Watershed Scale (EAWS) (project file PD-1) and the Roads Analysis Process (RAPS) (project file PD-2) to compare the existing conditions in the Fallen Bear Area with desired conditions. These analysis processes highlighted needs for management and identified management activities that will move the area closer to the desired conditions.

The St. Joe Ranger District first completed an EAWS and a RAPS for the Quartz Gold Analysis Area which encompasses the Fallen Bear Project Area. These assessments identified management opportunities that will bring the Quartz Gold Area closer to the Forest Plan desired condition. The RAPS identified alternatives for a minimum road system for the Quartz Gold Area. The Quartz Gold Project was not carried forward, and in 2007 an interdisciplinary team narrowed the scope of analysis and conducted an EAWS for the Fallen Bear Area. The team also reviewed the RAPS and concluded that the findings were still valid.

In addition to the EAWS and RAPS, the development of the purpose and need for this project was guided by goals, objectives, and standards in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Forest Plan as well as information in the “Integration of Forest Planning into Ecosystem Management Toward a Forest Ecosystem Approach: An Assessment for the St. Joe Area” known as the “St. Joe Geographic Assessment”. Information from the Upper Columbia River Basin Integrated Scientific Assessment was also used.

This project is consistent with the, “Region One Integrated Restoration and Protection Strategy” because it will maintain and establish early-seral, resilient tree species; improve watershed conditions through the

storage and decommissioning of roads; and improve elk security through changes in road prescriptions (EA p. 1).

The purpose and need for management include:

- ***Manage the vegetative resources to improve resilience to disturbances such as insects, disease, and fire***
  - *There is a need to accelerate or maintain the development of long-lived, early-seral, shade-intolerant species (western white pine and western larch). With the substantial increase in mid-to late-seral species dominance and decrease in early-seral species, forest resiliency following disturbance is decreasing; and the risk of stand loss to insects, disease and fire is increasing.*

    *Larch, ponderosa pine, and white pine are fire-adapted and relatively drought-tolerant tree species as compared to the mid to late successional species. In the northern Idaho climate these early seral tree species are potentially capable of dominating sites for centuries, and are capable of producing high biomass and large wood that serve important ecosystem functions. Conversely, hemlock and grand fir are two of the more moisture-demanding tree species in this ecosystem, and are highly stressed during drought periods. Historically unprecedented quantities of drought-sensitive species in an area subject to periodic droughts create increased risk of large-scale insect and disease outbreaks and mortality. Hemlock and grand fir are also more fire-intolerant than the species they replaced, creating a risk of high mortality in any fires that occur.*

    *Douglas-fir and grand fir are very susceptible to root pathogen mortality. Dominance by these species can convert root pathogens from thinning agents to landscape-scale major disturbance agents. Replacement of white pine/larch/ponderosa pine forest types by Douglas-fir/grand fir/hemlock forest types significantly accelerates successional rates, and decreases tall tree canopy cover, large tree and large wood production, and biomass productivity.*
  - *There is a need within the Fallen Bear Analysis Area to promote white pine and larch through active management, and accelerate or maintain large-diameter trees in stands with a high percentage of larch.*
  - *There is a need to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe, associated with western larch, in previously harvested seed tree stands. Existing stands with western larch seed trees infected with dwarf mistletoe are increasing the potential of infection to existing regeneration.*
  - *There is a need to reduce stand densities to enhance and encourage resilience to insects, disease, and other disturbances.*

  My decision positively addresses the purpose and need for action as presented in the Fallen Bear EA (pp. 1-2). I determined it is not appropriate to select Alternative A since it does not respond to the need for action, would not move towards achieving forest plan desired conditions, and would not meet management area goals. Alternative B Modified does address this part of the purpose and need, though not as well as Alternative B does, but I selected it because it better addresses the issues (see *Consideration of Issues* below). My decision meets the need to improve vegetative resiliency better than Alternative C would because an additional 111 acres would have a greater composition of western larch and western white pine and stand densities would be reduced on 106 more acres(Table 10).

  The “St. Joe Geographic Assessment” identified issues for each land analysis area (LAA). The summary findings of this assessment indicate that, when compared to historic conditions, there has been a decline in the amount of mature/old forest structure, especially in large, unfragmented blocks. The number of ecologically important large trees has also declined. There has been a major decline in potentially long-lived, shade-intolerant fire-adapted early seral tree species, such as western larch, that are very capable of reaching large size.

  Our field exams and surveys indicated that there is greater risk than indicated for the Quartz-Gold LAA to lose these potentially long-lived early seral dominate tree species that have the ability to grow into large, old trees (FV-1, FV-6). The assessment indicated the need to maintain the existing condition for western larch, and that is what I am doing through commercial thinning. Further loss of western white pine is extremely high due to the blister rust. This indicates regeneration, where appropriate, and planting with blister-rust resistant white pine trees is necessary. Large-scale landscape patterns and processes have homogenized and simplified. Exotic white pine blister rust has nearly eliminated western white pine from

the ecosystem. Fire suppression has greatly reduced the effects from mixed severity wildland fire that prolonged the dominance of early seral, shade intolerant, fire-adapted species (western larch), thinned stands, and promoted the development of large trees. Past regeneration timber harvesting created a fragmented patchwork of stands which were much smaller and more uniform than patches created through mixed severity fire regimes.

Alternative B Modified addresses these risks by implementing silvicultural treatments that are grouped to create larger patches, and regeneration harvests are only proposed where there is a lack of western white pine and/or western larch and large tree structure to be retained. Commercial thinning treatments are prescribed in stands of western larch to maintain their dominance and facilitate their development into mature, older stands of large trees more resilient to ecological disturbances such as insects, disease, and wildland fire (St. Joe Geographic Assessment, pages 15, 41-42, 106A-F).

My decision increases the project area's composition of western larch and white pine forest types, reduces stand densities, improves growing conditions for overstocked seedling/sapling stands, reduces the spread of dwarf mistletoe in previously harvest seedtree units, and increases the amount of allocated old growth. See Table 10.

**Table 10 - How Alternatives Improve Resilience of the Vegetative Resources to Disturbances**

| Measurement Parameters | Alternative A | | Alternative B | | Alternative C | | Alternative B Modified | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Composition in project area of western larch / white pine forest types | Acres | % | Acres | % | Acres | % | Acres | % |
| | 453 | 4 | 705 | 7 | 594 | 6 | 678 | 6 |
| Stand Structure in project area: | | | | | | | | |
| Brush-seedling sapling | 2056 | 20 | 2251 | 21 | 2155 | 21 | 2224 | 21 |
| Pole-small-medium | 3446 | 33 | 3380 | 32 | 3352 | 32 | 3394 | 32 |
| Mature-large | 2164 | 21 | 2035 | 19 | 2091 | 20 | 2048 | 19 |
| Allocated Old Growth | 2845 | 27 | 2845 | 27 | 2913 | 28 | 2913 | 28 |
| Stand Density: | | | | | | | | |
| Reduction in stand density through intermediate harvest | 0 | - | 288 | 3 | 182 | 2 | 265 | 3 |
| Improve growing conditions for overstocked seedling/sapling stands | 0 | - | 775 | 7 | 775 | 7 | 775 | 7 |
| Reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe in previously harvested seed tree units | 0 | | 161 acres | | 161 acres | | 161 acres | |

- ***Reduce management-related erosion and sedimentation***

  *Aquatic resources would benefit from a reduction in human-caused sediment. The existing road system reduces infiltration and generates sediment. The risk of mass failure is increased where stream-crossing culverts do not comply with the IPNF Forest Plan standard of accommodating a 100-year flood flow.*

  The St. Joe Geographic Assessment indicated a great departure from historic range of variation for the aquatic system in the Quartz-Gold LAA. This highly altered aquatic condition is mostly the result of road construction to support past timber harvests which disrupted the function of riparian areas and the streams flowing through them.

  Alternative B Modified will reduce management-related sediment by decommissioning and storing roads and replacing undersized or damaged culverts on roads that will not be stored or decommissioned. Sediment will be lowered after 64% of the road crossings and 58% of the road mileage within 50 feet of stream channels are removed (EA p. 31). Of the 168 existing culverts at stream crossings, 107 will be removed when roads are stored or decommissioned as my decision is implemented. Stored or decommissioned roads will have road surfaces decompacted to facilitate and augment infiltration (Design Feature V.A.3.). The intent is to ensure the roads are not sediment sources and do not channel water. This restoration work will increase sediment slightly at stream crossings for the short term, but over the long term, it will reduce sediment (EA pp. 25, 31, 33). Granted, new road construction will result in a

small, temporary increase in sediment, but those roads will be stored after use and the culverts will be removed. Best management practices will be used to limit sediment during road construction and subsequent culvert removal (revised Water Report Appendix A). The temporary sediment increase from crossing removals and new road construction is not expected to be appreciable or measurable in project area streams or in the St. Joe River (EA pp. 31-33). Alternative B Modified meets the need to reduce management-related erosion and sediment by storing or decommissioning as many roads as Alternative C would. See Table 11. In Alternative B the back end of Road 1223 would be barriered instead of stored. In Alternative B Modified, like Alternative C, that part of Road 1223 will be placed into long-term storage (Road Management Prescription C) (Map 4).

**Table 11 - How Alternatives Reduce Management-Related Sediment and Erosion**

| Measurement Parameters | Alternative A | Alternative B | | Alternative B Modified and Alternative C | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Existing production (tons/year) | Decrease in Sediment | | Decrease in Sediment | |
| Sediment | | % | Tons/year | % | Tons/year |
| Haggerty/Shady/face drainages | 52.8 | 22 | 11.6 | 22 | 11.6 |
| Tumbledown Creek | 2.1 | 11 | 2.1 | 11 | 2.1 |
| Bruin Creek | 17.2 | 53 | 17.2 | 53 | 17.2 |
| Stevens Creek | 0.3 | 1 | 0.3 | 2 | 0.6 |
| Miles of road decommissioned | 0 | 31.9 | | 31.9 | |
| Miles of road stored | 0 | 24.8 | | 30.4 | |
| Culverts removed or upgraded | 0 | 115 | | 115 | |
| Number of stream crossings removed | 0 | 107 | | 115 | |
| Number of stream crossings remaining | 168 | 61 | | 53 | |
| Miles of road removed w/in 50 feet of stream | 0 | 2.7 | | 2.9 | |

- ***Increase wildlife security***

  *Elk Habitat Potential (EHP) is currently below the Forest Plan target for Elk Habitat Unit 10 (Quartz Creek and Gold Creek Drainages). The amount of secure habitat (more than ½ mile from an open road or trail) is a key factor in determining EHP. To increase the amount of secure habitat and trend towards the EHU 10 target, motorized use on existing roads and trails would have to be reduced in the analysis area. To best meet the elk habitat potential, security areas should be well dispersed throughout the analysis area and road closures should be effective in eliminating motorized use on the road system.*

  Road density was identified as a key issue for providing refugia and/or large blocks of secure wildlife habitat that are sensitive to human disturbance or habitat fragmentation in and around the Fallen Bear Analysis Area (St. Joe Geographic Area Assessment, pg. 106-D).

  Alternative B Modified will improve wildlife security and therefore elk habitat potential as well as Alternative C. Alternative B would not provide as much security because motorized vehicles would still be able to use the back end of Road 1223 if it is only barriered. In Alternative B Modified, like Alternative C, that part of Road 1223 will be stored with the beginning of the stored section fully recontoured to eliminate motorized use, thereby providing for a higher increase in acres of secure habitat, than either alternatives A or B. See Table 12 on next page.

**Table 12 - How Alternatives Increase Wildlife Security**

| Measurement Parameters | Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative B Modified and Alternative C |
|---|---|---|---|
| Elk Habitat Potential | | | |
| Bruin Elk Analysis Unit | .37 | .47 | .50 |
| Tumbledown Elk Analysis Unit | .42 | .47 | .62 |
| Entire Quartz Gold Elk Habitat Unit 10 | .42 | .44 | .46 |
| Acres of secure habitat | | | |
| Bruin Elk Analysis Unit | 195 | 440 | 589 |
| Tumbledown Elk Analysis Unit | 0 | 284 | 1,119 |
| Entire Quartz Gold Elk Habitat Unit 10 | 1308 | 1950 | 2934 |
| Open Road Density (miles per square mile) | | | |
| Bruin Elk Analysis Unit | 4.0 | 2.6 | 2.5 |
| Tumbledown Elk Analysis Unit | 2.4 | 2.3 | 1.6 |
| Entire Quartz Gold Elk Habitat Unit 10 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.6 |

- ***Provide wood products for local communities***

  - *There is a need to contribute to local employment, income and lifestyles (Forest Plan II-11) through long-term growth and production of commercially viable wood products and cost-effective timber production (Forest Plan III-2, III-16).*
  - *The St. Joe Ranger District committed to providing biomass for the St. Maries Fuels to School Project. The Forest Service will initially supply biomass to get the Heyburn Elementary School biomass heating system going (St. Maries Joint School District #41, 2007, Heyburn Elementary Woody Biomass for Energy Application, Appendix C).*

Alternative B Modified will provide wood products for local communities almost as well as Alternative B and better than Alternative C. Biomass will be produced from removing the tops of trees in a 200-foot buffer adjacent to roads in Units 109, 148, 183, 226, and 223. Landing piles resulting from log processing will also be available for woody biomass utilization.

**Table 13 - How Alternatives Provide Wood Products for Local Communities**

| | Alternative A | Alternative B | Alternative C | Alternative B Modified |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Volume of timber produced (CCF) | 0 | 16,469 | 9,721 | 15,044 |
| Acres of yarding tops that will be piled and may be used for biomass utilization Fuels to Schools Projects | 0 | 34 acres | 28 acres | 34 acres |

### C. IPNF Forest Plan

Alternative B Modified is consistent with Forest Plan management area direction, does not require any forest plan amendments, and is consistent with direction for specific resources. Forest Plan consistency is discussed in detail below under *National Forest Management Act.*

### D. Consideration of Issues

An issue is a point of undesirable or unintended effect that would or may occur if the proposal were implemented. Design features were developed up front to anticipate and reduce the effects from the proposed action on the environment and address and resolve the main issues. The proposed action was designed to address issues with unit locations, riparian buffers, logging methods, silvicultural prescriptions, design features, and contract provisions for protection of resources. Issues resulting from the proposal

included:

- *Effects of Vegetative Management and Roads on Water Quality, Water Yield & Fish Habitat: Existing roads, new road construction and commercial timber harvest could produce sediment and increase water yield that may affect water quality and fisheries habitat.*

  Existing roads and the proposed timber harvest and new road construction will likely produce sediment and increase water yield; but the effects will not be appreciably, substantial, or measureable, and water quality and fish habitat will be maintained or improved because activities will not change stream temperature, the small predicted increase in water yield is not outside the range of natural variability and would not be appreciable in the peak flows the stream channels historically experienced, the short-term increase in sediment is not substantial and is not likely to affect stream channel form or process, sediment would decrease once all activities are completed, and potential pollutant entry points would be reduced with the removal of stream crossings and roads within 50 feet of streams (FONSI pp. 2-3; EA pp. 31-32, 35-39; revised Water Report). Road decommissioning (approximately 32 miles) and storage (approximately 30 miles) will reduce sediment production (FONSI pp. 2-3; EA pp. 31-35; revised Water Report).

  Timber harvest will result in no change to in-stream habitat in Tumbledown Creek, Bruin Creek, Stevens Creek, and the St. Joe River (EA p. 36-37). In the Tumbledown drainage road construction will be minimal, located near a ridge, and will not cross any streams (EA p. 36). The road construction in the Bruin Creek drainage will cause little sediment increase to stream channels except for one segment with the only stream crossing because otherwise the roads will be constructed near the ridge or midslope (EA p. 36). The road construction in face drainages will cause little sediment increase to stream channels because it will not include any stream crossings and will occur near a ridge (EA p. 37). All newly constructed roads will be stored after use. Decommissioning and storing roads will result in improved fish habitat conditions in Bruin Creek (EA p. 37), Stevens Creek (EA p. 38), in the St. Joe River, and face drainages (EA p. 38). Fish habitat conditions will be maintained in Tumbledown Creek (EA p. 37).

- *Effects of Vegetative Management on Soil Productivity: Soil productivity can be reduced by removal of organic material and associated nutrients or by detrimental impacts such as compaction, displacement, puddling, or severe burning.*

  The effects to soils are recognized (FONSI pp. 4, 6, 9, and 10; EA pp. 59-62; revised Soils Report), however, all activities comply with Forest Plan and Regional soil quality standards. All activity areas will be at or below soil quality limits for disturbance and will maintain the acceptable productivity potential for managed vegetation. Logging slash from tree limbs and unmerchantable pieces will remain within all harvest units that already contain satisfactory coarse woody debris levels. Coarse woody debris retention will follow the research guidelines of Graham and others (1994) to ensure the maintenance of site productivity. Coarse woody debris levels in Units 183A and 183B that currently have reduced amounts will be increased by logging residue to meet appropriate levels after harvest activities are completed. Provisions to maintain sufficient nutrient capital include leaving lopped limbs and branches from the remainder of the trees to be yarded with attached tops. Nutrients will also be provided from foliage and limbs that break from tops as they are moved to the landing. All yarding of roadside trees along a 200 foot buffer will occur in units proposed for commercial thinning that would retain 60 to 80 percent of the current stand volume. (FONSI pp. 9, 10; EA p. 62), and decommissioning approximately 31.9 miles of road will put 144 acres (like Alternative C) on the path to recovery and improved productivity (EA p. 59).

- *Effects of Timber Harvest and Road Construction on Wildlife Habitat: Commercial timber harvest and road building may fragment habitat for threatened, endangered, sensitive and other management indicator species; affect travel corridors for wildlife; affect interior forest habitat; and have cumulative effects on species and their habitat.*

  Timber harvesting and road building may affect wildlife species and their habitat; but effects will not be significant (FONSI pp. 2, 3-4, 6-7, 9-10). Habitat connectivity will be affected by the proposed activities, but alternative areas for movement by wildlife exist and opportunities for travel will be maintained (EA pp. 64-65). Cumulative effects are recognized (FONSI pp. 6-7; EA pp. 63-77); however, Alternative B Modified (like Alternatives B and C) is consistent with the Forest Plan, the Endangered Species Act, the National Forest Management Act, and other laws providing direction and requirements for the management of wildlife species and habitat. It also complies with applicable conservation strategies for

wildlife species and other direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat (FONSI p. 9; revised Wildlife Report p. 63).

- *Effects of Timber Harvest and Road Construction on Stands that Meet Minimum Criteria for Old Growth – Timber harvest in three stands (approximately 68 acres) that are mature or over mature and meet old growth criteria based on Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region (Green and others 2005) would reduce the amount of old growth. In addition to treatment, approximately 0.3 miles or 1.1 acres of new system road construction is proposed through one of the three stands (Unit 211).*

  Alternative B Modified does not include the three units (Units 96, 151, and 211) in stands that meet old growth criteria, and those stands have been allocated for old growth management (project file OG-3; OG-27, OG-28). With the allocation of these acres the total allocated old growth in OGMU 27 increased from 2,845 acres (27%) to 2,913 acres (28%) (FONSI p. 8; EA p. 56).

  Like Alternative C, Alternative B Modified does involve constructing approximately 169 feet or 0.03 miles of road through the edge of an allocated old growth stand (stand # 23201017). The road will be located on the southeast corner of the allocated old growth stand (Map 5) to have minimal effect on it (an estimated one tenth of an acre (0.1) or 0.2% of the old growth stand and approximately 0.003% of OGMU 27). After use this road will be placed into Road Management Prescription C (long-term storage) which will recontour the portion of the road through the allocated old growth stand. Locating the road along this route reduces the total amount of road construction needed to harvest Units 198, 199, 226, 233, and 227 and avoids road construction through the newly allocated old growth stand (Unit 211 in Alternative B).

  No other activity will occur in allocated old growth, and Forest Plan standards for old growth retention will continue to be met (EA p. 5; FONSI pp. 8-9; Old Growth Report pp. 5-7).

# V. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

After considering the environmental effects described in the Avery Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment and the associated documents, I have determined that the selected alternative will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment based on context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. The Finding of No Significant Impact is included as Appendix B of this decision notice.

# VI. FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

To the best of my knowledge, this decision is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies See discussions below.

### A. National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

The project does not require any Forest Plan amendments. Project activities are consistent with the NFMA and the Idaho Panhandle National Forests Forest Plan (16 USC 1604 (i)) and will provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives (16 USC 1604 (g)(3)(B).

**NFMA - Forest Plan Consistency:**

The EA and record document **consistency with the IPNF Forest Plan** as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| ***Air Quality*** | Prescribed burning will be monitored and controlled by airshed regulations to avoid violation of air quality standards, in compliance with the North Idaho Smoke Management Plan, as directed in the Forest Plan (EA p. 31). |
| ***Aquatics - Water Resources*** | Activities are consistent with the Forest Plan goals and standards because BMPs will be implemented; RHCA buffers will be implemented to protect water quality; and they will not appreciably change water quality or stream channel for or processes (EA p. 35; revised Water Report). |
| ***Aquatics - Fisheries*** | Viability of management indicator species will be maintained. Standard 1 and Standard 2 (as replaced by INFS) will be met. Standard 3 does not apply to this project because none of the streams identified in that standard are located in this project area. Standard 4 will be met. New |

road construction will provide for fish passage and known passage problems on Forest Service roads utilized by the timber sale will be corrected. Standard 5 was met. Information in Fallen Bear Fisheries Resources Report used fisheries surveys to coordinate activities with other resources. Road decommissioning and culvert replacement will benefit the fishery when they are implemented. The intent of Standard 6 is being met due to the extensive review of the stream systems and the implementation of standards described in INFS (EA p. 40).

***Botany - Noxious Weeds*** The project complies with the forest plan requirement for moderate control through use of design features to reduce the introduction & spread of noxious weeds (EA p. 42).

***Botany - TES Plants*** The activities will have no direct effect on threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species, however; indirectly, the potential risk of weeds to TES could increase (EA pp. 43-44).

***Cultural Resources*** All significant cultural resources in the project area will be preserved in accordance with the Forest Plan. The selected alternative includes design features that will protect and preserve all cultural resources in the project area from adverse effects (EA p. 45).

***Fire and Fuels*** Prescribed burning and mechanical treatment of activity fuels are consistent with direction in the Forest Plan (EA p. 49).

***Forest Vegetation*** All alternatives are consistent with Forest Plan goals, objectives and standards (EA p. 54). All proposed silvicultural practices comply with Forest Plan Appendix A, Summary of Timber Information and Vegetation Management, providing direction for silvicultural practices on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The activities in this decision are consistent with this direction. Proposed management activities are designed to improve stand health and vigor, and maintain or enhance species composition and stand structure. This will minimize risk of stand loss from forest insects and disease as well as reduce risk of stand loss to weather, fire or other disturbances.

***Old Growth*** Specific goals, objectives and standards for old growth management will be met with this project (EA p. 5; Old Growth Report pp. 5-7).

In compliance with Forest Plan old growth standard *10a*, the definitions of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force, documented in *Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region* (Green and others 2005) have been incorporated into Forest Plan standard *10a* and were used in the validation and analysis process of old growth in this project (Old Growth Report p. 5).

The 2005 and 2006 IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report shows approximately 11.8% of the forested lands on the IPNF met old growth criteria using the Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data. This estimate was derived after applying adjustments for years to grow to breast height (4.5 feet) to FIA data. Additionally, the monitoring report showed that the mapped allocated old growth stands were 12.3% of the forested acres on the IPNF. In May of 2007, an updated report of estimates of Old Growth in the Northern Region and the component National Forests disclosed that the IPNF had approximately 11.8% old growth. Although these studies were developed at different landscape scales, they demonstrate consistency in estimates of old growth on the IPNF and compliance with Forest Plan old growth standard *10b.* (Old Growth Report p. 5)

The Fallen Bear Project Old Growth Management Unit 27 (OGMU 27) has approximately 10,524 acres in National Forest System lands and currently meets Forest Plan old growth standard *10* with 2,845 acres (approximately 27%) allocated to old growth management. Alternative B Modified (like Alternative C) will increase allocated stands to 2,913 acres (approximately 28% of the OGMU). (Old Growth Report p. 5)

Timber harvest will not occur in any allocated old growth. Alternative B Modified, like Alternatives B and C, complies with Forest Plan old growth standard *10d* (Old Growth Report p. 6)

Compliance with old growth standard *10e* is disclosed in the Old Growth section of the 2005 and 2006 IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report (p. 84). The habitat type series for allocated old growth within OGMU 27 is generally represented by the habitat type series available within this project area (Forest Vegetation Report Table 1-1 p. 3). All alternatives comply with the Forest Plan Old Growth standard *10e* (Old Growth Report p. 6).

OGMU 27 currently complies with the Forest Plan Old Growth standard *10f* and will continue to do so with Alternative B Modified. In Alternative B Modified, like Alternative C, the allocated old growth in OGMU 27 will occur in ten patches. These patches range in size from 12 to 1,280 acres, and average approximately 291 acres. Nine of the ten patches are greater than 25 acres. All nine of those patches are greater than 80 acres. Of the patches greater than 80 acres, seven are greater than 100 acres. Of those seven patches greater than 100 acres, two are greater than 300 acres. The largest patch in this OGMU is 1,280 acres. (Old Growth Report p. 6)

Like Alternative C, Alternative B Modified does involve constructing approximately 169 feet or 0.03 miles of road through the edge of an allocated old growth stand (stand # 23201017). The road will

be located on the southeast corner of the allocated old growth stand (Map 5) to have minimal effect on the old growth stand (an estimated one tenth of an acre [0.1] or 0.2% of the old growth stand and approximately 0.003% of OGMU 27) (EA p. 56), and the old growth unit size criteria will be maintained (see discussion of *Standard 10f* above). After use this road will be placed into Road Management Prescription C (long-term storage) which will recontour the portion of the road through the allocated old growth stand. Locating the road along this route reduces the total amount of road construction needed to harvest Units 198, 199, 226, 233, and 227 and avoids road construction through the newly allocated old growth stand (Unit 211 in Alternative B). Avoiding road construction through allocated old growth (Unit 211), minimizing new road construction through allocated old growth (Stand 23201017) and decommissioning 2.6 miles of roads going through and adjacent to allocated old growth meets the intent of Forest Plan Old Growth standard 10g.. This road is proposed to meet other resource needs of the project. (Old Growth Report p. 7)

There are no grazing allotments within the Fallen Bear project area, and no new allotments are proposed; so the project complies with Forest Plan Old Growth standard *10h*.

Compliance with old growth standard *10i* is disclosed in the Old Growth chapter of the 2005 and 2006 IPNF Forest Plan Monitoring Report (p. 83). As disclosed in the Forest Plan Monitoring Report, the IPNF is not only meeting this stand, but it is exceeding it.

***Recreation*** The activities will not affect the spectrum of recreational experiences available on the St. Joe River and therefore comply with Management Area 12 (National Wild & Scenic River System) direction. The project complies with Forest Plan direction because design features for providing for public safety and protecting existing trails are incorporated in the alternatives, and the proposed units are within the Roaded Modified portion of the project area. The project area will continue to provide for variety of dispersed recreation and opportunities for the public to enjoy their National Forests. (EA p. 57)

***Soils*** The proposed activities comply with Forest Plan standards for maintaining soil productivity (EA p. 62; revised Soils Report). The project complies with forest plan standard #1 because all proposed activity areas will be at or below soil quality limits for disturbance and will maintain the acceptable productivity potential for managed vegetation. The project complies with forest plan standard #2 because logging slash from tree limbs and unmerchantable pieces will remain within all harvest units that already contain satisfactory coarse woody debris levels. Coarse woody debris retention will follow the research guidelines of Graham and others (1994) to ensure the maintenance of site productivity. Coarse woody debris levels in Units 183A and 183B that currently contain reduced amounts will be increased by logging residue to meet appropriate levels after harvest activities are completed. The project complies with forest plan soil standard #3 because provisions to maintain sufficient nutrient capital include leaving lopped limbs and branches from the remainder of the trees that will be yarded with attached tops. Nutrients will also be provided from foliage and limbs that break from tops as they are moved to the landing. All yarding of roadside trees along a 200 foot buffer will occur in units proposed for commercial thinning that will retain 60 to 80 percent of the current stand volume.

***Visual Quality*** All activities are designed to and will be implemented to meet Forest Plan VQOs (EA p. 63).

***Wildlife*** The activities are consistent with applicable Forest Plan goals, direction, standards, and guidelines for the management of wildlife habitat and species populations (revised Wildlife Report p. 63). The project complies with other direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat and with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species.

### NFMA - Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities:

The EA and record show the project will provide for **diversity of plant and animal communities** as follows:

***Plants*** No federally listed Endangered plant species are suspected to occur in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. Threatened species, water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis* A. Gray) and Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii* Wats.) may be present in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests and have the potential to occur on the St. Joe Ranger District, but to date neither have been found. The proposed activities will have no direct effect on Water howellia and Spalding's catchfly and no direct impact on any of the sensitive species that may occur in the project area. (EA p. 43)

***Forest Vegetation*** The management activities will result in improved resilience of the vegetative resources to disturbances such as insects, disease, and fire (EA p. 25, 54).

***Fish*** Viability of fish management indicator species (MIS) will be maintained. Activities will provide for diversity of fish communities and improve habitat for MIS species, bull trout and westslope cutthroat

trout. (EA p. 40)

***Wildlife*** The activities comply with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species (revised Wildlife Report p. 63). There will be no effect on known wolf den or rendezvous sites, potential wolverine natal denning habitat, woodland caribou, grizzly bear, bald eagle, black swift, Coeur d'Alene salamander, common loon, fringed myotis, harlequin duck, northern bog lemming, peregrine falcon, pygmy nuthatch, Townsend's big-eared bat, potential western toad breeding habitat, ability of the area to support pileated woodpeckers, or the ability of the project area to support at least four and up to ten pileated home ranges (EA pp. 68, 70, 72, 74-75; revised Wildlife Report). Alternative B Modified will result in improved conditions for wildlife related to access (fragmentation, security, vulnerability), improved conditions for lynx, improved conditions for wolves and wolf prey, improved riparian habitat conditions for fisher and marten, improved conditions for wolverines, improved elk habitat potential in the long-term, and increased big game forage levels in regeneration harvest units which will increase elk habitat quality (EA p. 63-64, 66-70, 76-77). Areas for travel and movement will be maintained (EA p. 64). Although the proposed activities may result in some potentially adverse effects, they will be limited in geographic and temporal scope (see previous discussion of potential adverse effects).

**NFMA - Other Consistency Requirements:**

***1. Suitability for Timber Production:*** Most of the timber harvest (414 acres out of 415 acres) will be done on Management Area 1 lands which are designated for timber production. As mapped, one acre of timber harvest in Unit 109 would occur in MA 12 – the St. Joe Wild and Scenic River Corridor. Timber harvest may occur in MA 12 (Forest Plan p. III-54; Forest Plan Appendix Z: St. Joe Wild & Scenic River Development & Management Plan pp. 9, 41-43), but MA 12 is not designated for timber production. As required by the St. Joe Wildland Scenic River Plan, timber harvest will be accomplished without adverse impact on the natural-like appearance of the river corridor and can be accomplished without degradation of river values (EA p. 56-57).

***2. Timber Harvest on National Forest Lands (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)): A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities to harvest timber on National Forest System lands only where:***

*a. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(i)):*

Soils, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damages. The proposed activities comply with Forest Plan Standards for maintaining soil productivity and Region 1 soil quality standards (EA p. 62). Watersheds will not be irreversibly harmed. The activities are consistent with the Forest Plan, the Clean Water Act, and Idaho water quality standards. The biological integrity of waters within the project area should improve once all activities are complete and the overall sediment yield is reduced. No change is expected to the chemical composition of waters within the project area (EA p. 35).

*b. There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(ii)):*

Openings will be naturally or artificially regenerated. Review of regeneration indices for the District and the project area display adequate ability to regenerate these openings within the five year period as directed in NFMA and the Forest Plan (EA p. 54; project file FV-2).

*c. Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment, where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iii)):*

Timber harvest is not likely to seriously or adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat. Proposed activities will not change stream temperature. The small predicted increase in water yield is not outside the range of natural variability and will not be appreciable compared with peak flows the stream channels historically experiences. The short-term increase in sediment is not substantial and is not likely to affect stream channel form or process (EA p. 31). Timber harvest activities will result in no change to in-stream fish habitat in Tumbledown Creek, Bruin Creek, Stevens Creek, the St. Joe River, or face drainages (EA pp. 36-37).

*d. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iv)):*

The silvicultural prescriptions were determined based on what is best suited for the conditions in treatment areas in order to accelerate or maintain the development of western white pine and western larch, accelerate or maintain large-diameter trees, and reduce stand densities. Commercial thinning will be used on 60% of the treatment acres. Generally, smaller trees will be harvested and larger (more valuable) trees will be retained on site (EA p. 12) with the less valuable species emphasized for harvest and the more valuable species emphasized for leave trees (EA p. 62).

***3. Clearcutting and Even-aged Management (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)): Insure that clearcutting, seed tree cutting, shelterwood cutting, and other cuts designed to regenerate an evenaged stand of timber will be used as a cutting method on National Forest System lands only where:***

*a. For clearcutting, it is determined to be the optimum method, and for other such cuts it is determined to be appropriate, to meet the objectives and requirements of the relevant land management plan (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(i)):*

Where it is proposed, clearcutting is the optimum method to work towards desired conditions and address the purpose and need in those stands (FV-5). All proposed silvicultural practices comply with Forest Plan Appendix A, Summary of Timber Information and Vegetation Management, providing direction for silvicultural practices on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The activities included in my decision are consistent with this direction. Proposed management activities are designed to improve stand health and vigor, and maintain or enhance species composition and stand structure. This will minimize risk of stand loss from forest insects and disease as well as reduce risk of stand loss to weather, fire or other disturbances.

*b. The interdisciplinary review as determined by the Secretary has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, esthetic, engineering, and economic impacts on each advertised sale area have been assessed, as well as the consistency of the sale with the multiple use of the general area (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(ii)):*

An interdisciplinary review has been completed and is summarized in the Fallen Bear EA on pages 25-77. The proposed timber harvest is consistent with Forest Plan direction.

*c. Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(iii)):*

Proposed timber harvest units are designed to and will be implemented to meet Forest Plan visual quality objectives (EA p. 63).

*d. Cuts are carried out according to the maximum size limit requirements for areas to be cut during one harvest operation, provided, that such limits shall not apply to the size of areas harvested as a result of natural catastrophic conditions such as fire, insect and disease attack, or windstorm (FSM R1 supplement 2400-2001-2 2471.1, 16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(iv)):*

All proposed openings are within size limitations directed by NFMA and Forest Service Manual (1921.12e).

*e. Such cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and esthetic resources, and the regeneration of the timber resource (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(v)).*

Timber harvest units are designed to protect soil (EA pp. 59-62), watershed (EA pp. 31-35), fish (EA pp. 36-40), wildlife (EA pp. 63-77), recreation (EA pp. 56-57), visual quality (EA pp. 63), and regeneration of the timber resource (EA p. 54).

***4. Stands of trees are harvested according to requirements for culmination of mean annual increment of growth (16 USC 1604(m)).*** Stands proposed for clearcutting have reached culmination of mean annual increment as defined in Forest Service Manual (1921.12f).

***5. Construction of temporary roadways in connection with timber contracts, and other permits or leases:*** No temporary roads are proposed.

***6. Standards of roadway construction: Roads constructed on National Forest System lands shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources (16 USC 1608(c)).*** All road construction plans, standards, and specifications will provide for minimum needed road width, drainage, and safe operation while incorporating measures for mitigating for resources disturbances. New roads will be single-lane facilities suitable for log truck and lowboy use (revised Transportation Report p. 5).

**B. The Clean Water Act and Idaho Water Quality Standards** (EA p. 35)

Alternative B Modified, like Alternatives B and C, is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Clean Water Act because management activities will not appreciably change the physical processes of storage and transport of material delivered to stream channels. Stream channel form and processes are not expected to appreciably change from management activities because of relatively stable cross-sections, riparian vegetation, amount of large woody debris and confined nature of the stream channels. The biological integrity of waters within the project area are not expected to appreciably change from management activities because temperature and organic inputs will not change because of RHCA buffers; the short-term small estimated sediment increase will not cause aggradation; and effects from proposed activities are not outside the range of natural variability. The biological integrity of waters within the project area should improve once all activities are complete and the overall sediment yield is reduced. No change is expected to the chemical composition of waters within the project area because no chemical additives are proposed. There will be no direct change in riparian vegetation within RHCAs. The risk of contamination will be reduced because of the reduction in the number of road/stream crossings and the reduction in the amount of road mileage within 50 feet of stream channels.

**C. Floodplain and Wetland Protection Executive Orders 11988 and 11990**

Activities are consistent with the Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 because management activities will not affect floodplains or wetlands (EA p. 35).

**D. Executive Order 12962 (June 7, 1995)**

The project will maintain habitat and thus will not affect the fishery potential, which in turn will not reduce the potential for recreational fishing opportunities. The decision includes culvert replacements/removals and road decommissioning. These activities will increase recreational fishing opportunities by improving habitat thus improving the carrying capacity of the streams. (EA p. 40)

**E. Clean Air Act** (EA p. 31)

Prescribed burning will be monitored and controlled by airshed regulations to avoid violation of air quality standards, in compliance with the North Idaho Smoke Management Plan, as directed in the forest plan. Requirements of the North Idaho/Montana State Airshed Group (notification of planned burning one day in advance) allows the Idaho DEQ to place restrictions on or prevent burning if it determines that air quality standards can not be met, which meets the Clean Air Act. The annual production of $PM_{2.5}$ and $PM_{10}$ for the Fallen Bear project is expected to be less than 100 tons, and the project is expected to meet the Clean Air Act.

**F. Endangered Species Act**

The project complies with the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The project meets the objectives of the National Fire Plan by improving fire prevention and suppression, reducing hazardous fuels, and improving resiliency to fire-adapted ecosystems; and it falls under the counterpart regulations to the ESA that provide alternative procedures to comply with the federal agency consultation responsibilities described in Section 7 of the ESA regulations.

The District Wildlife Biologist, Fisheries Biologists and Botanist evaluated the proposed activities with regard to threatened and endangered species and completed biological assessments. The biological assessments are included as Appendix C of this decision notice. They include the following determinations for threatened or endangered plant, fish, and wildlife species:

- The project **will have no effect** on endangered plant species because no federally listed Endangered plant species are known or suspected to occur in the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (EA p. 43).

- Based upon the evaluated effects, existing site conditions, and required conditions contained in the Fisheries Biological Evaluation (Appendix C), the project **may affect but is not likely to adversely affect** bull trout.
- The project **will have no effect** on woodland caribou because the St. Joe Ranger District is outside of the woodland caribou recovery area, the species does not occur on the St. Joe District, and the geographic location of the St. Joe Ranger District precludes the presence of caribou and therefore the potential for effects on the species.
- The project **will have no effect** on grizzly bear. The area is unlikely to be used, except incidentally, by grizzly bears due to the land management objectives for the area, including timber production and motorized road/trail access, and the resulting conditions (e.g. low amounts of secure habitat, higher road densities). The project area is not within any Bear Management Unit (BMU), linkage zone, or area of known grizzly bear use.
- The project **may affect but is not likely to adversely affect** Canada lynx. The proposed precommercial thinning will have no measurable effect on forest stand size class within or beyond the project area, and there will be no cumulative effects from the proposed precommercial thinning beyond those covered in the current Biological Opinion. The changes in lynx habitat as a result of the other proposed activities are not expected to adversely affect the ability of the project area to support lynx. None of the lynx habitat in the Stateline-Quartz LAU, and 91 acres (4 stands) in the Gold Creek LAU will be cut with the proposed timber harvest. The treatment of this small percentage of lynx habitat will have inconsequential effects on lynx habitat conditions. Most of the proposed logging is either not in lynx habitat (3 stands) or not in the LAUs (14 stands). The changes in lynx habitat are not expected to adversely affect the ability of the project area to support lynx. The arrangement and distribution of denning and stand initiation hare habitat will remain good across the project area and LAUs. Both LAUs will continue to meet the standards and guidelines of the NRLMD. The proposed activities will not reduce snowshoe hare habitat in multi-storied mature or late successional forest. The decreased open road density and increased amount of secure habitat in both LAUs should improve conditions for lynx in the project area. The maintenance of canopy cover in travel corridor stands will continue to allow movement throughout the project area. There are no reasonably foreseeable activities that will impact forest vegetation within the project area or the LAUs. No change in the amount of snowmobile use is anticipated as a result of project implementation, and there will be no change to the designated snowmobile route (which is outside of the LAUs), in the project area.
- The project **is not likely to jeopardize** the continued existence of the gray wolf or result in the destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat because the proposed activities are unlikely to affect wolves due to their wide ranging nature and the relative lack of preference for special habitat, the prey base will be maintained or improved, corridor/linkages will be maintained, known den or rendezvous sites will be avoided, the lack of critical habitat for wolves, and no consequential change in the likelihood of human-wolf interactions.

### G. Migratory Bird Act

The project is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act because it maintains a diversity of habitat conditions as represented by other species and habitat elements addressed in the wildlife analysis (revised Wildlife Report pp. 14, 63).

### H. National Historic Preservation Act

Qualified archaeologists systematically inventoried and analyzed the Fallen Bear Project Area. All appropriate design criteria and mitigation measures are in place. No cultural resources will be adversely affected by this project. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and Native American groups was completed in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act. (EA p. 45)

### I. Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898

No disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified through public involvement efforts over the course of this analysis. District Ranger, Chuck Mark, discussed the project with representatives of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe during a meeting on March 18, 2008, and they did not express concerns. Activities comply with Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 (EA p. 46).

### J. Idaho Roadless Rule (October 16, 2009)

The Idaho Roadless Rule does not apply because the project area does not fall within an Idaho Roadless Area, and no activities will occur in an Idaho Roadless Area (EA p. 55).

### K. Idaho Noxious Weed Act

The project meets the intent of controlling weeds as defined in the Idaho Code through yearly treatments and monitoring of weed populations (revised Noxious Weeds Report p. 17).

### L. Idaho Forest Practices Act

Treating fuels after timber harvest with prescribed burning and mechanical is consistent with the Idaho Forest Practices Act (EA p. 49).

## VII. APPEAL PROCEDURES AND IMPLEMENTATION

Only those individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the 30-day comment period for this project are eligible to appeal this decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations. The legal notice announcing availability of the EA and beginning of the 30-day comment period was published in the newspaper of record, *The Coeur d'Alene Press*, on November 29, 2008 (PI-21). During the comment period the Forest Service received letters from one state agency and two groups (see previous discussion on Public Involvement).

This decision is subject to administrative review (appeal) pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215. Appeals, including attachments, must be filed within 45 days from the publication date of this notice in the *Coeur d'Alene Press*, the newspaper of record. Attachments received after the 45-day appeal period will not be considered. I anticipate the notice of this decision will be published in *The Coeur d'Alene Press* on or about April 14, 2009, however, the actual publication date in the *Coeur d'Alene Press* is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Those wishing to appeal this decision should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period may appeal this decision. Paper appeals must be submitted to:

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

or

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

Office hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project being appealed, in this case: **Fallen Bear Project**. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word (.doc), plain text (.txt), or rich text format (RTF). In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215, and include the following information:

- The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;

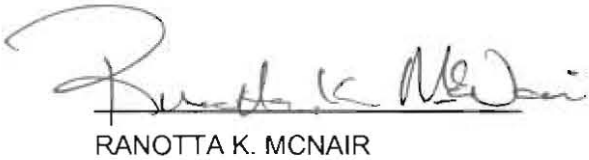
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official (In this case: Ranotta K. McNair, Forest Supervisor), and the date of the decision;
- The regulation under which the appeal is being filed (in this case 36 CFR 215);
- Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
- Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider comments; and
- How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

If an appeal is received on this project there may be informal resolution meetings and/or conference calls between the Responsible Official and the appellant. These discussions would take place within 15 days after the closing date for filing an appeal. All such meetings are open to the public. If you are interested in attending any informal resolution discussions, please contact the Responsible Official Forest Supervisor Ranotta K. McNair) or monitor the following website for postings about current appeals in the Northern Region of the Forest Service: http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/projects/appeal_index.shtml.

If no appeals are filed within the 45-day time period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

## VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION & RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL

Questions regarding this decision should be sent to Cornie Hudson, St. Joe District Ranger, 222 S 7th Street, Suite 1, St. Maries, Idaho 83861 (208)-245-2531. I, Forest Supervisor Ranotta K. McNair, am the Responsible Official for this decision.



RANOTTA K. MCNAIR

Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

4/09/09

Date