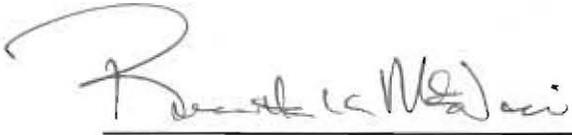


FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

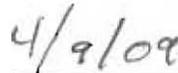
FALLEN BEAR PROJECT

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

After considering the environmental effects described in the Fallen Bear Environmental Assessment (EA) and the associated resource reports, I have determined that the proposed management activities will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment based on the context and intensity of its impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.



RANOTTA K. MCNAIR
Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forests



Date

I base my finding on the following:

A. Context:

The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27).

The project would improve resiliency of the vegetative resources to disturbances such as insects, disease, and fire; reduce management-related erosion and sediment; increase wildlife security; and provide wood products for local communities. Commercial timber harvest and activity fuel treatments would be used on approximately 417 acres, requiring approximately 2.14 miles of new system road construction and 4.9 miles of road reconstruction. Western white pine and western larch seedlings would be planted on approximately 167 of the harvested acres. This may be followed by pocket gopher control if needed. Approximately 775 additional acres of densely stocked stands would be precommercially thinned and 777 acres with western white pine would be pruned to reduce and slow down the spread of white pine blister rust. On 161 acres existing western larch seed trees infected with dwarf mistletoe in previously harvested units would be girdled and be left standing to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe. Between 50 and 100 of these trees would be inoculated with heart rot fungus to increase the amount and rate of decay to provide habitat for primary cavity excavators and secondary users. Road management prescriptions would be changed on approximately 68 miles of road. This would result in approximately ten fewer miles of open roads, 15 fewer miles of gated roads, 30 fewer miles of barriered roads, 23 more miles of stored roads, and 35 miles of decommissioned roads.

Activities would occur on approximately 422 acres (4%) of previously untreated stands in the 10,500-acre project area. These activities include the commercial timber harvest and related activities including new road construction. The other activities (precommercial thinning, white pine pruning, girdling mistletoe-infected larch trees, and inoculating girdled trees) would occur on approximately 800 acres of previously managed stands or on existing roads (road reconstruction, storage, decommissioning).

trees, and inoculating girdled trees) would occur on approximately 800 acres of previously managed stands or on existing roads (road reconstruction, storage, decommissioning).

The activities are of limited scope and duration and would affect only the immediate area around the proposed treatment areas. The project would be implemented over a period of eight to nine years and was designed to minimize environmental effects through harvest unit location, riparian buffers, logging methods, silvicultural prescriptions, and design features (EA pp. 15-23). The project will improve conditions within the project area, but the benefits and the possible adverse effects are not likely to be noticed outside the project area.

B. Intensity:

This refers to the severity of impact. The following are considered in evaluating intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse:

I considered beneficial and adverse impacts associated with activities as presented in the Fallen Bear EA (pp. 25-77). These impacts are within the range of effects identified in the IPNF Forest Plan. I conclude that the specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the selected alternative (a modified version of Alternative B) are not significant, and this action does not rely on beneficial effects to balance adverse environmental effects.

No Effects

Project design and design features effectively eliminated or reduced to negligible most of the potential impacts; therefore, implementation of the proposed activities will result in **no effect** to:

- Stream channel form, pattern, or processes; stream bank vegetation; stream temperatures; longitudinal hydrologic connectivity; wetlands, chemical composition of waters (EA pp. 32, 35)
- Fish habitat conditions in Tumbledown Creek (EA p. 37)
- Federally listed threatened or endangered plant species: water howellia and Spalding's catchfly, sensitive plant species (EA p. 43)
- Minority or low-income populations (EA p. 46)
- Roadless areas (EA p. 55)
- Wild and Scenic St. Joe River Corridor, recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) classes or Trail 5 (like Alternative C) (EA pp.56-57, 62)
- Parklands, prime farmlands, or ecologically critical areas (EA p. 62)
- 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, 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 pp. 6-14)

Beneficial Effects

The proposed management activities will result in the following **beneficial effects**:

- Improved resilience of the vegetative resources to disturbances such as insects, disease, and fire (EA p. 25 Table 16)
- Reduced management-related erosion and sediment (EA p. 25 Table 16)
- Increased wildlife security (EA p. 25 Table 16)
- Wood products available for local communities (EA p. 25 Table 16)
- Sediment decrease after completion of activities (EA p. 26 Table 17)
- Improving fish habitat function (EA p. 26 Table 17)
- Decreased effects of disturbance and access on wildlife (EA p. 26 Table 17)

- Increased amounts of secure habitat (EA pp. 27-28 Table 17)
- Increased elk habitat potential (EA pp 27-28 Table 17)
- Increased beneficial use support, decreased sediment, reduced potential pollutant entry points, improved biological integrity (EA pp. 31-35)
- Decreased road densities (EA pp. 25-28, 36-37)
- Improved habitat for management indicator fish species and increased recreational fishing opportunities (EA p. 40)
- Improved conditions for safe and effective wildland fire management, effective fuel breaks, reduced ability of treated areas to sustain crown fire, reduced probability of torching in treated areas for 10-30 years, reduced fuel loads and subsequent reduction in fire hazard in treated areas, reduced potential for roadside human-caused ignitions, reduced potential for ignitions from any source to result in undesirable effects (EA pp. 47-49)
- Increased acres of long-lived, early-seral tree species; reduced impacts of root and stem decays in treated stands; improved tree growth and in treated stand; and lowered risk of white pine blister rust infections (EA pp. 51-52)
- Reduced stand densities, increased tree growth and vigor, faster development of mature and large-sized trees, reduced impacts of blister rust on western white pine, reduced risk or spread of dwarf mistletoe in western larch, reduced effects of root rots (EA pp. 52-53)
- 159 acres (like Alternative C) of existing roads would be on the path to recovery (EA p. 59). Approximately 2.6 miles of roads in currently in Road Prescription A, B, and C that are within or adjacent to allocated old growth stands will be decommissioned (Prescription D). The decommissioning of these roads will reduce the amount of road going through and adjacent to allocated old growth.
- 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, increased big game forage levels in regeneration harvest units which will increase elk habitat quality (EA pp. 63-64, 66-70, 76-77)

Potential Adverse Effects

The proposed management activities will result in the following potential **adverse effects**:

- The smoke emissions from prescribed burning activities could adversely affect air quality for short periods. Dust may increase from road construction, maintenance, and stabilization as well as project-associated vehicular traffic. (EA p. 30)
- Road construction, timber harvest and prescribed burning would temporarily produce additional sediment. (EA pp. 31 and 33)
- Fish migration barriers would remain where FH50 crosses streams. Removing stream crossings would result in some sediment addition to streams (EA pp. 36-40).
- The proposed activities are expected to result in a static trend or in a slight increase in weed numbers in the project area over time (EA pp. 41–43).
- Indirectly, the potential risk of weeds to TES plants could increase (EA p. 44).
- Timber harvest would have the potential to adversely affect one cultural site (EA pp. 44-45, 62).
- Timber harvest would immediately increase fuel loading, and regeneration harvests create a short-term increase in fire hazard. As regeneration becomes tall the probability of torching increases. Areas that are commercially thinned and only have lopping prescribed would initially have greater surface flame lengths than they had prior to harvesting due to increased surface fuel loading, increased solar insolation, and decreased wind sheltering due to decreased canopy cover. Slash resulting from precommercial thinning activities increases fire hazard within thinned stands until it is incorporated into the forest floor by snow compaction and decomposition. (EA pp. 47-49)
- The proposed road decommissioning may result in an increase of the average cost per acre for fire suppression (EA p. 49).

- Some mortality in reserve trees would be expected. The proposed stand treatments have a potential to increase the current incidence of root and stem decays in susceptible species within the treatment areas. Root and stem decays are expected to still be present in treatment stands after treatment. (EA pp. 51-53).
- Like Alternative C, approximately 169 feet or 0.03 miles of new system road would be constructed on the southeast edge of an allocated old growth stand (EA p. 55).
- Like Alternative C, the selected alternative would temporarily displace three popular dispersed camp sites. It also includes harvest units, road reconstruction and new road construction that would affect the Blackjack Trail 86 corridor. Motorized vehicle access would be reduced. (EA pp. 56 and 57).
- Potential detrimental soil disturbance could affect up to 23 acres. The residual logging debris would increase potential fire intensity and severity which could result in severe burning and ground disturbance that could create bare soils and encourage noxious weed infestations. Harvesting tree boles would remove about 43 percent of the trees' potassium which may cause indirect effects to vegetation as nutrient sources are removed from site. On an unpredictable site-specific basis, some drier sites may underburn at a severity level that removes all of the protective duff and litter layers. Direct effects of prescribed underburning and pile burning could potentially remove woody debris that would otherwise provide long-term nutrients. Yarding tops would remove nutrients, resulting in about twice as much potassium loss as bole-only yarding, so areas where tops would be yarded for 200 feet below the road may sustain a greater nutrient loss than the remaining activity areas. (EA pp. 59-60)
- Opening gates on Roads 3723 and 1223 would result in a temporary increase in open road density. (EA pp. 63-64)
- Thinning would result in less available forage for snowshoe hare for a short period. In the Gold Creek Lynx Analysis Unit 26 acres that would be commercially thinned would still qualify as lynx habitat, but the quality would be reduced. Denning habitat would be reduced by the proposed regeneration harvest. (EA pp. 66-67)
- Travel corridors would be maintained, however there would be a reduction in their effectiveness in a few spots (EA p. 68).
- Approximately 437 acres of suitable fisher habitat would become unsuitable. This is a 4.8% reduction from existing conditions. Despite the improved conditions from reduced open road densities, the trapping-vulnerability risk would remain high. The 13% reduction in the amount of suitable fisher and marten habitat could slightly reduce the ability of the project area to support fisher and marten. Suitable, *mature* marten and fisher habitat would be reduced 1.2% to 0.6%. However, habitat would be improved because riparian conditions would move closer to desired conditions. (EA pp. 69)
- The selected alternative would harvest timber from eight capable flammulated owl habitat stands, but none of them are suitable habitat (EA p. 71).
- Clearcut and seed tree units would likely reduce upland timbered habitat quality for western toads due to the drier, more open conditions. One new road crossing would be near potential breeding habitat, and could affect breeding toads. Some mortality may occur, but it is unlikely to be significant to the populations because of the low level of traffic on forest roads and the high number of other opportunities for breeding habitat throughout the forest. (EA p. 72)
- Two potential northern goshawk nest areas would become unsuitable. Approximately 119 acres of potential goshawk nesting habitat would become unsuitable in the Bruin Creek drainage, and approximately 66 acres of potential nesting habitat would be made unsuitable in the Tumbledown Creek drainage. The activities would move foraging habitat in the Tumbledown Creek Area further from its desired condition for goshawk. Clearcut and seedtree units would affect goshawk foraging suitability. Goshawk foraging habitat quality would decrease in some stands. Clearcut and seedtree units would affect goshawk foraging habitat suitability. However, most treated stands will either retain at least 40% cover or have an untreated portion of the stand that will remain suitable nesting habitat, and foraging habitat suitability would be relatively unchanged. (EA pp. 73-74)
- Stands that become openings after treatment would no longer be considered able to provide foraging habitat for pileated woodpeckers. They would remain unsuitable for pileated woodpecker winter foraging for decades. Canopy cover and basal area reductions, along with incidental removal of snags for safety, would reduce the quality of pileated winter forage habitat by 0.6% to 1.2%. Approximately 96 acres that

would become openings after treatment and no longer provide pileated nesting habitat would remain unsuitable for pileated woodpecker nesting for decades. Optimal nesting habitat would be reduced. Even with these changes, overall, the ability of the project area to support pileated woodpeckers would be maintained. (EA pp. 74-76)

- Proposed activities would decrease habitat conditions for elk in the project area over the short term, and reductions in canopy are likely to decrease the habitat quality for elk over the short term; but following completion of all activities the elk habitat potential would improve in the two elk analysis areas within the project area (EA pp. 76-77).

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety: It is my determination that the proposed activities will have no significant effects on public health and safety. Temporary closures of recreation sites to public use would be used to minimize public exposure to operational safety hazards (Design Feature I.D.2.). During operations signs would be posted at dispersed camping sites located on Road 1223 near existing gates to inform users of the temporary closure of the site due to project implementation (Design Feature II.D.1), and warning signs would be placed in areas where logging traffic may interfere with recreational traffic to inform visitors of logging activities (Design Feature II.D.2.). Conducting prescribed burning activities according to the Memorandum of Understanding established between the states of Idaho and Montana and burning only when weather and air conditions are favorable for smoke dispersal will protect air quality (Design Feature III.A.2. & 3.) and public health. I recognize the value of snags for wildlife habitat, and they will remain standing wherever possible; but I also recognize they may need to be felled for the safety of workers during operations (Design Feature II.G.7.e.).

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farms, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical area: One timber harvest unit would be located adjacent to a historic trail, but design features were developed to avoid the trail by implementing a buffer that will retain the trail's historic character (EA p. 44 and Design Feature II.C.3.). The project area does not contain any parklands, prime farmlands, or ecologically critical areas (EA p. 62). The activities would not result in negative effects to the St. Joe Wild and Scenic River Corridor (EA pp. 57, 62). There are no known wetlands in the project area (EA pp. 32 and 62), and design features would protect wetlands found during implementation (Design Feature II.A.4.).

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: The term "controversial" refers to whether substantial dispute exists as to the *size, nature or effect of the major federal action* rather than to the existence of opposition to a use (Perry 1991). Monitoring shows that actual effects of similar projects are consistent with estimated effects of the proposed activities (IPNF Monitoring Reports). Effects of the proposed activities on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. This conclusion is based on the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. Resource reports document the use of the best available science for each resource. The documents include lists of literature used in the analysis, as appropriate. The analysis and decision process for this project are based on the consideration of the best available science. The project file includes relevant literature citations, references to science, biological assessments, and monitoring results that were used in the project analysis to support this decision (Response to Comments; Air Quality Report pp. 2-8; revised Botany Report pp. 3-21; Fire and Fuels Report pp. 2-18; Fisheries Report pp. 2-33; Forest Vegetation Report pp. 2-20; Noxious Weeds Report pp. 4-18; Old Growth Report pp. 2-7; Recreation Report pp. 5-10; revised Soils Report pp. 4-27; Visual Quality Report pp. 1-7; revised Water Resources Report pp. 3-43 and Appendix A; revised Wildlife Report pp. 2-69; and project file documents PI-6, PI-15, PI-27).

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk: The proposed management actions are similar to actions implemented without significant impacts in the project area, in other areas on the St. Joe Ranger District, and on other districts of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. Past successes with similar projects are documented in the IPNF's annual monitoring reports and in monitoring reports specifically for projects on the St. Joe Ranger District (USDA Forest Service, IPNF Monitoring Reports). Analysis of the proposed management actions considered the effects of past actions, as a frame of reference in conjunction with best available science, available information, and best professional experience and judgment to estimate effects to the human environment. It

is my conclusion that there are no uncertain or unique characteristics in the project are which have not been previously encountered or that would constitute and unknown risk to the human environment.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or presents a decision in principle about future consideration: The selected alternative will not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects. The proposed activities are similar in nature and effects to other projects in the immediate area and are consistent with the IPNF Forest Plan (EA pp. 31, 35, 40, 42, 43, 45, 49, 54, 57, 62, 63; Old Growth Report pp. 5-7; revised Wildlife Report p. 63). This action does not represent a decision in principle about future considerations.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individual insignificant but cumulative significant impacts: The combined effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were considered and are summarized in the Fallen Bear EA. Past actions considered in cumulative effects analysis include those that contributed to establishing the baseline conditions of the project area today (EA p. 28). There is no indication of significant cumulative effects to the environment.

- Proposed activities combined with effects from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities are not expected to appreciably affect stream channel form or processes. Cumulative effects from sediment levels are not expected to be appreciable in the St. Joe River because the estimated increase would be small and short-term, would not likely even be measurable at a downstream location, and sediment would be decreased overall. Stream temperatures may decrease from increases shade as vegetation continues to grow in RHCAs. (EA p. 32)
- The combination of proposed management activities and the existing condition indicate the fisheries habitat would be maintained or improved (EA p. 37-38).
- The cumulative effects on noxious weeds are expected to result in a static trend or in a slight increase in weed numbers over time (EA p. 42).
- There would be an indirect increased risk to threatened, endangered and sensitive plants because of the potential risk of increased weeds (EA p. 44).
- Design features would avoid potential effects to the historical trail (EA p. 45)
- Areas that would be treated are relatively small in comparison to the project area in its entirety; however, the positive effects would be enhanced in many cases due to the spatial relationships between treatment units and areas of previous management activities (EA p. 49).
- There would be an increase of approximately three percent in the project area in the composition of long-lived early seral species (EA p. 53). Overall, size classes would change approximately 1-2 percent in the project area. Stand densities would be reduced on approximately 10% of the project area through intermediate harvests and precommercial thinning. Only a small incremental increase in tree and stand size class is expected. The decrease in vertical structure and increase in horizontal structure for the project area overall would be small or incremental. The effects of insects and disease on structure as well as tree and stand size class would be incremental. (EA p. 53)
- New road construction resulting in one more road crossing for Trail 86. In the eyes of many hikers, this may reduce the value of this trail which already has several crossings (EA p. 57).
- Few cumulative effects to soils are anticipated in proposed activity areas because the majority of units have had little to no past disturbance (EA p. 61).
- It is unlikely that there would be any further changes in permanent impediments to wildlife movement. Alternative areas for movement by wildlife exist and opportunities for movement and travel would be maintained. (EA p. 65)
- There would be no cumulative effects to lynx from the proposed precommercial thinning beyond those covered in the current Biological Opinion for the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction. The proposed precommercial thinning would have no measurable effect on forest stand size class within or beyond the project area (EA p. 66). Changes in lynx habitat are not expected to adversely affect the ability of the project area to support lynx. The activities (excluding precommercial thinning) may affect but are not likely to adversely affect lynx or lynx habitat (EA p. 67-68).
- The federal actions evaluated in this proposal would not cause any adverse cumulative effects to gray wolf or proposed critical habitat (EA p. 68).
- The proposed activities, when added to the existing condition, are not expected to adversely affect the

ability of the project area as a whole to provide fisher/marten habitat. This alternative may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. (EA pp. 69-70)

- The proposed activities, when added to the existing condition are unlikely to affect wolverines due to their wide-ranging nature and the relative lack of preference for special habitat. Proposed activities may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.
- The proposed activities, when added to the existing conditions would have inconsequential effects on flammulated owls and may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species (EA p. 71).
- Mortality to western toads is unlikely; and potential adverse effects would not significantly exceed existing levels of risks to the species. The impacts from proposed federal actions activities would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts and would not affect population viability. (EA p. 72)
- Proposed activities, when added to the effects of previous management activities, would not change the overall ability of the project area to support northern goshawks. Both suitable nesting and foraging habitat would be treated, but the resulting changes would not change the overall ability of the project area to support goshawk. Therefore, proposed activities may impact individual goshawks and goshawk habitat, but is not likely adversely affect the use of the project area by goshawks. (EA p. 73-74)
- Proposed activities, when added to the effects of previous management activities, would not adversely impact pileated woodpecker populations. Based on the level of suitable habitat maintained it is not likely that this alternative would adversely impact pileated woodpecker populations. The amount (1.6%) and quality (4.6%) of suitable nesting habitat would decrease slightly with this alternative. (EA pp. 75-76)
- This project would only affect about 25% of the cumulative effects area for elk (the Quartz Gold EHU 10), so it is not expected that the overall EHP can be increased enough to meet the target of .50. The overall EHP for EHU 10 would be improved from .42 to .44 (a 5% change), which is still below the target level called for in the Forest Plan and set by agreement between the Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Elk habitat security would be increased, and this will have a positive and long-term effect on elk in both the project and cumulative effects area. (EA pp. 77)

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highway structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources: A comprehensive evaluation of cultural resources was conducted. One timber harvest unit would be located adjacent to a historic trail, but design features were developed to avoid the trail by implementing a buffer that will retain the trail's historic character (EA p. 44 and Design Feature II.C.3.). District Ranger, Chuck Mark, consulted with representatives of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe about this project, and they expressed no concerns with the proposed action (EA p. 4). No districts, sites, highway structures or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are located in the project area, so there would be no adverse effect.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973: The project was designed to protect wildlife, fish and plants and will not significantly adversely affect Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat. It will have no effect on federally listed threatened or endangered plant species: water howellia and Spalding's catchfly (EA p. 43), woodland caribou (EA p. 63; revised Wildlife Report p.7; Fallen Bear Listed Wildlife Species Biological Assessment (BA) p. 26), grizzly bear (EA p. 63; revised Wildlife Report p. 9; BA pp. 23-26). The project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of gray wolf or result in the destruction or adverse modification of proposed critical habitat (EA p. 68). The precommercial thinning would result in no cumulative effects to Canada lynx beyond those covered in the current Biological Opinion for the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (EA p. 66; BA p. 22). The other activities may affect but are not likely to adversely affect lynx or lynx habitat (EA p. 67; BA p. 23).

10. Whether the proposed action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment: The selected alternative meets federal, state, and local laws for air quality (EA p. 31), water quality (EA pp. 35), fisheries (EA p. 40), noxious weeds (Noxious Weeds Report p. 17), cultural resources (EA p. 45), fuels treatment (EA p. 49), vegetation management (EA p. 54), and wildlife (revised Wildlife Report p. 63).

National Forest Management Act - Forest Plan Consistency:

This proposal 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)).

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

Air Quality	Prescribed burning would 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 would be implemented; RHCA buffers would be implemented to protect water quality; and they would not appreciably change water quality or stream channel for or processes (EA p. 35).
Aquatics: Fisheries	Viability of management indicator species would be maintained. Standard 1 and Standard 2 (as replaced by INFS) would 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 would be met. New road construction would provide for fish passage and known passage problems on Forest Service roads utilized by the timber sale would 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 would 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 would comply with the forest plan requirement for moderate control through use of design features to reduce the introduction and spread of noxious weeds (EA p. 42).
Botany: TES Plants	The activities would 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 would 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 described for the action alternatives 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 would 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	<p>Specific goals, objectives and standards for old growth management would be met with this project (EA p. 5; Old Growth Report pp. 5-7).</p> <p>In compliance with Forest Plan old growth standard <i>10a</i>, the definitions of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force, documented in <i>Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region</i> (Green and others 2005) have been incorporated into Forest Plan standard <i>10a</i> and were used in the validation and analysis process of old growth in this project (Old Growth Report p. 5).</p> <p>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 <i>10b</i>. (Old Growth Report p. 5)</p> <p>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 <i>10</i> with 2,845 acres (approximately 27%) allocated to old growth management. Alternative B Modified (like</p>

Alternative C) would increase allocated stands to 2,913 acres (approximately 28% of the OGMU). (Old Growth Report p. 5)

Timber harvest would 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 would continue to do with Alternative B Modified. In Alternative B Modified, like Alternative C, the allocated old growth in OGMU 27 would 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 would 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 would be maintained (see discussion of *Standard 10f* above). After use this road would be placed into Road Management Prescription C (long-term storage) which would 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 would not affect the spectrum of recreational experiences available on the St. Joe River and therefore would comply with Management Area 12 (National Wild & Scenic River System) direction. The project would comply 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 would 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 would comply with Forest Plan standards for maintaining soil productivity (EA p. 62). The project would comply with forest plan standard #1 because all proposed activity areas would be at or below soil quality limits for disturbance and would maintain the acceptable productivity potential for managed vegetation. The project would comply with forest plan standard #2 because logging slash from tree limbs and unmerchantable pieces would remain within all harvest units that already contain satisfactory coarse woody debris levels. Coarse woody debris retention would 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 would be increased by logging residue to meet appropriate levels after harvest activities are completed. The project would comply with forest plan soil standard #3 because provisions to maintain sufficient nutrient capital would include leaving lopped limbs and branches from the remainder of the trees that would be yarded with attached tops. Nutrients would 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 would occur in units proposed for commercial thinning that would 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 visual quality objectives (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 will comply with other direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat and comply with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species.

National Forest Management Act - 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 would 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) would be maintained. Activities would 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 would 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 pp. 7-14). Alternative B Modified would 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 would be maintained (EA p. 64). Although the proposed activities may result in some potentially adverse effects, they would be limited in geographic and temporal scope (see previous discussion of potential adverse effects).

National Forest Management Act - Other Consistency Requirements:

1. Suitability for Timber Production: The proposed timber harvest is consistent with Forest Plan direction. Most of the timber harvest (414 acres out of 415 acres) would 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 damaged. The proposed activities would comply with Forest Plan Standards for maintaining soil productivity and Region 1 soil quality standards (EA p. 62). Watersheds would not be irreversibly harmed (EA p. 35). 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 would 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 would not change stream temperature. The small predicted increase in water yield is not outside the range of natural variability and would 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 would 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)). Proposed 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 would be used on 60% of the treatment acres. Generally, smaller trees would be harvested and larger (more valuable) trees would 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 described for the action alternatives 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 would 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 would provide for minimum needed road width, drainage, and safe operation while incorporating measures for mitigating for resources disturbances. New roads would be single-lane facilities suitable for log truck and lowboy use (revised Transportation Report p. 5).

References

Perry, James P. 1991. Memorandum for F. Dale Robertson, Forest Service Chief. Office of General Counsel. Washington D. C. 3 pp.