

HIDDEN CEDAR PROJECT RECORD OF DECISION

**BASED ON THE HIDDEN CEDAR FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**



**United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Idaho Panhandle National Forests
St. Joe Ranger District
March 2007**

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	1
II.	Description of Decision	1
	Vegetative Improvements	2
	Road Decommissioning and Long-term Storage	5
	Providing and Maintaining Access	7
	Design Features, Mitigation, and Monitoring.....	8
III.	Purpose and Need for this Activity.....	22
IV.	Public Involvement Process and Issues	23
	Initial Scoping.....	23
	Comments on the Original Draft EIS.....	23
	Original Final EIS and 2002 Record of Decision	24
	Litigation and the Decision to Prepare a Supplemental EIS.....	24
	Comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS	24
	Final Supplemental EIS	24
	Differences Between the 2002 EIS and the 2007 EIS	25
	Issues.....	26
	Other Concerns	26
V.	Brief Description of Alternatives.....	26
	Alternative A (No Action)	26
	Alternative B (Original Proposed Action)	27
	Alternative C.....	27
	Alternative D.....	27
	Alternative E	28
	Alternative F	28
	Alternatives Considered But Not Studied in Detail.....	29
VI.	Rationale for the Decision	30
	Meeting the Purpose and Need for Action.....	30
	Relationship to Environmental and Social Issues and Public Comments.....	37
	Consistency with Forest Plan and Other Laws and Regulations	43
VII.	Contact Person	54
VIII.	Appeal & Implementation Information	54

List of Tables

Table 1 – Differences Between Alternative F in EIS and Alternative F Modified.....	3
Table 2 – Alternative F Modified Vegetation Treatments	4
Table 3 – Road Management Prescription Changes	6
Table 4 - Alternative F Modified Road Construction and Reconstruction	7
Table 5 - Summary of Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) RHCA Widths	9
Table 6 – Alternative F Modified Access Management Plan During Timber Harvest Operations	12
Table 7 - Snag Guidelines	17
Table 8 - Site-Specific Design Features.....	19
Table 9 - Roads to be Surfaced with Gravel to Reduce Sediment Generation	20
Table 10 - Monitoring Plan.....	21
Table 11 - Summary of How Alternatives Meet the Purpose and Need.....	31
Table 12 Comparison of Issue Indicators by Alternative.....	44

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Maps

ROD-1 – Vicinity and Project Area

ROD-2 – Alternative F Modified Proposed Timber Harvest, Precommercial Thinning, Road Construction and Reconstruction and Riparian Planting

ROD-3 – Alternative F Modified Road Management

Appendix 2 – Summary of Treatment Prescriptions by Unit

HIDDEN CEDAR PROJECT
USDA Forest Service, Region One
St. Joe Ranger District
Idaho Panhandle National Forests
Clearwater; Shoshone; and Latah Counties, Idaho

I. Introduction

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my selection of management activities for the Hidden Cedar Project Area. More discussion of the purpose and need for this project, resource information, and environmental effects are found in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) and the project file.

As the responsible official for these projects, I am making site-specific decisions. This is not a general management plan for the area as would be found in a Forest Plan.

The decisions I am making here do not preclude the need for future decisions to help meet the desired conditions for the Hidden Cedar Project Area. Additional projects may be necessary some time in the future to achieve Forest Plan goals not met by this decision. After appropriate analysis and public involvement, a separate decision would be issued on actions not included in this decision.

The project is located on the St. Joe Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests in the St. Maries and West Fork St. Maries River Drainages. The 33,000-acre project area is located in Shoshone, Clearwater, and Latah Counties in Townships 41, 42, and 43 North, Ranges 1 and 2 East, Boise Meridian. The project area includes the Cedar Creek, Blair Creek, Christmas Creek, and Staples Creek Drainages in the St. Maries River and the Bechtel Creek, Mazie Creek, Wood Creek, Hidden Creek, Catspur Creek, Long Slim Creek, and Keeler Creek Drainages in the West Fork St. Maries River (ROD Appendix 1 - Project Area and Vicinity Map). Approximately 47% of the project area is National Forest System land.

II. Description of Decision

I have decided to implement Alternative F with slight modifications (**Alternative F Modified**) as described below to achieve goals described in the purpose and need. Maps displaying the activities in the selected alternative are located in the ROD, Appendix 1. Alternative F Modified is the environmentally preferred alternative since it best meets the purpose and need to improve vegetation and watershed conditions, and it addresses the transportation system relative to protection of fish, water, soil, and wildlife resources (see Purpose and Need and Forest Plan Goals Section III of the ROD).

This modification resulted from further analysis with thorough consideration given to public and agency comments and resource monitoring results. After discussing this modification with the interdisciplinary team, I have determined that this alternative is still within the range of action and effects analyzed and disclosed in the supplemental EIS. See discussions on rationale for decision.

With this Record of Decision I am authorizing:

- Vegetation improvements
- Changes to roads to improve water quality, soils, fish habitat and wildlife security
- Access to private, state, and National Forest lands and maintenance of roads for forest management now and in the future
- Design features, monitoring, and mitigation to protect resource values

The following is my decision for various management practices contained in Alternative F Modified:

Vegetative Improvements

Vegetation improvements include commercial timber harvest and related activities, pre-commercial thinning, and riparian planting.

Timber harvest will be used to treat approximately 1,268 acres over 45 units to encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions by reducing stand densities; promoting long-lived, early-seral tree species; and increasing larger tree structure. This timber harvest will primarily utilize stand improvement harvest (Table 2 and Appendix 2). Timber harvest with the following silvicultural systems will be used: 829 acres of commercial thin, 216 acres of shelterwood preparatory cut, 39 acres of shelterwood seed cut, 16 acres of shelterwood removal cut, 22 acres of irregular shelterwood cut, 40 acres of group shelterwood cut and 106 acres of clearcut with reserves. Approximately 35% of the units will be helicopter yarded; and the remaining 65% will be a combination of skyline/ground based yarding.

Where regeneration harvest is proposed, planting will supplement natural regeneration. Planting of 60% or more of the resilient, early seral species (white pine and western larch) will occur on the 160 acres of regeneration harvest. Gopher control will be applied in regeneration harvest units to protect both natural and planted seedlings from pocket gopher damage (FSEIS p.18).

This alternative includes a total of 8.6 miles of road construction. This includes 4.6 miles of system road construction and 1.4 miles temporary road construction for timber harvest on National Forest System Lands. Of the 8.6 miles of road construction, approximately 2.6 miles are associated with granting non-cost-share easements, exchange of easements, and maintaining alternate access for the Hidden Creek Road 498. Temporary road construction will be completely recontoured upon completion of activities (Design Feature 10.E.). Six miles of the existing roads used for timber harvest will require reconstruction to allow for safe timber haul, improve drainage, improve water quality and reduce sediment. Reconstruction will bring the roads up to their original standards and may include but is not limited to installation of drain dips and culverts, grading, clearing, dust abatement, and surfacing. See Table 4 and Map ROD-2 for more information about road construction and reconstruction.

Approximately 324 acres of pre-commercial thinning will decrease stand densities and improve the growing conditions of the remaining trees by reducing competition for light and nutrients.

Planting trees and shrubs on approximately 15 acres in riparian areas will help increase shade and eventually lower stream temperatures.

Slash and fuels reduction treatments include broadcast (136 acres), excavator piling (461 acres) and subsequent pile burning, lopping (614 acres), jackpot burning (38 acres) and hand piling (19 acres) for a total of 1,268 acres treated (Tables 1 and 2).

This project would result in timber sales planned to be sold in 2007 and 2008 and be harvested over a three- to five-year period. Prescribed burning associated with harvest activities will begin approximately one to two years following the end of harvest activities. Slash disposal and reforestation activities will follow harvest and are expected to be completed by 2015. These dates are *tentative*, based upon anticipated budgets, work force, weather and other considerations. Actual dates of implementation and accomplishment could vary.

During analysis it became apparent that Units 36 and 40 would have unacceptable soil impacts, so I decided to drop Unit 40 (seven acres) from the selected alternative and change the logging system of Unit 36 from ground-based to helicopter and eliminate the temporary road needed to accommodate ground-based logging. Special mitigation measures were identified to protect soil quality in Unit 48 (Table 8 - Site-Specific Design Features). Soils in Unit 48 will be monitored to ensure Forest Plan standards are met (Table 10 – Monitoring Plan). If monitoring shows standards are not met landings and skid trails within the unit will be decompacted.

In addition to the above changes, two other units will not be implemented. I eliminated Unit 24 (12 acres) to protect populations of sensitive plants. I eliminated Unit 35 (17 acres) because field reconnaissance showed that after needed riparian and sensitive plant buffers would be implemented the remaining areas do not require treatment. The species composition and structural conditions meet silvicultural objectives without treatment.

Table 1 – Differences between Alternative F in EIS and Alternative F Modified

Timber Harvest	1,304 acres	1,268	Decrease of 36 acres
Clearcut with Reserves	118 acres	106	Decrease of 12 acres
Group Shelterwood	57 acres	40	Decrease of 17 acres
Commercial Thin	836 acres	829	Decrease of 7 acres
Temporary Road Construction	1.6 miles	1.4 miles	Decrease of 0.2 miles
*Number of Units using Helicopter Harvest Systems	23	22	Eliminating two units, Adding one unit
*Number of Units using Ground-based and Cable Harvest Systems	29	26	Decrease of 3

** Some units have more than one harvest system, so numbers do not match total number of units.*

Table 2 – Alternative F Modified Vegetation Treatments

1	39	Shelterwood Seed	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Broadcast Burn
2	29	Shelterwood Prep	Cable-Skyline	Jackpot Burn
3	35	Shelterwood Prep	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Lop/Hand Pile
4	25	Shelterwood Prep	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Lop
5	22	Commercial Thin	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop/Hand Pile
6	16	Shelterwood Removal	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Lop
7	20	Shelterwood Prep	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
8	22	Irregular Shelterwood	Ground/ Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
10	32	Group Shelterwood	Helicopter	Grapple Pile
11	8	Group Shelterwood	Helicopter	Grapple Pile
12	10	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile
13	36	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile
14	15	Commercial Thin	Cable-Skyline/Helicopter	Grapple Pile
15	29	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile/Lop
16	109	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
17	120	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
18	28	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
20	14	Clearcut w/Reserves	Helicopter	Broadcast Burn
21	6	Clearcut w/ Reserves	Helicopter	Broadcast Burn
25	16	Shelterwood Prep	Helicopter	Lop
26	23	Shelterwood Prep	Helicopter	Lop
27	19	Shelterwood Prep	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
28	31	Shelterwood Prep	Cable-Skyline	Lop
29	9	Shelterwood Prep	Helicopter	Lop
30	130	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline/Helicopter	Grapple Pile/Lop
31	15	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile
32	11	Clearcut w/ Reserves	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Broadcast Burn
33	9	Shelterwood Prep	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Jackpot Burn
34	18	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
36	8	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Lop
37	21	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile
38	41	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile
39	22	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile /Lop
41	46	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Lop/Grapple Pile/Hand Pile
42	5	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Hand Pile
43	12	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile/Lop
44	18	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Grapple Pile/Lop
45	13	Commercial Thin	Cable-Skyline/Helicopter	Lop
46	20	Clearcut w/ Reserves	Cable-Skyline	Braodcast Burn
47	38	Clearcut w/ Reserves	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Braodcast Burn
48	17	Clearcut w/ Reserves	Ground	Braodcast Burn
49	68	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
50	10	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Lop
51	15	Commercial Thin	Helicopter	Lop
52	18	Commercial Thin	Ground/Cable-Skyline	Grapple Pile/Lop
Total	1,268			

Road Decommissioning and Long-term Storage

I am authorizing road decommissioning and storage to protect and improve aquatic habitat in watersheds that support native trout, protect and improve water quality conditions in Water Quality Limited Segments (WQLS), improve soils conditions, and increase security for wildlife. Road Management Map ROD-3 displays the change in road management from the existing condition. These activities include decommissioning and storing roads (Table 3), planting riparian areas where road clearing has reduced shade, and applying gravel to road surfaces to reduce sediment (Table 9). Approximately 25.2 miles of existing road will be decommissioned or stored. This is in addition to the twelve miles of road that were decommissioned and stored under the original 2002 Hidden Cedar ROD. It includes removing stream crossings and reducing miles of road in riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs). Culverts will be removed on existing roads at 34 stream crossings to restore natural drainage functions and reduce sediment.

Approximately 16.2 miles of existing roads will be decommissioned. A determination was made through an interdisciplinary process that there is no foreseeable use for these roads (project file: Book 9, Roads Analysis Process). Some roads are blocked with vegetation, or contain washouts and slumps. Following decommissioning they will not be passable by motor vehicles. Access (foot, horseback) will vary depending on terrain and type of treatment. Some of the roads identified to be decommissioned will be used for the proposed timber harvest and will be decommissioned when harvest activities are complete (see Table 3). Two culverts that are currently barriers to fish passage will be removed to allow for fish passage. One is on the Hidden Creek Road, and the other is on the Wood Creek Road. They will be removed when the roads are decommissioned.

Approximately 9.0 miles of road will be put into long-term storage. Roads identified to go into long-term storage are not needed in the near future, but use is expected in the long-term (10-20 years). The road bed will be decompacted but otherwise left intact except in areas where unstable fill material exists. Stream crossings will be left in self-maintaining conditions with the road beds recontoured for 200 feet on each side of crossings. Vegetation will be allowed to naturally grow in.



Table 3 – Road Management Prescription Changes

Long Slim	1450B	open	storage	0.6	
L. St. Maries R.	1452	gated	decommission	0.5	
Keeler Creek	1457	gated	storage	1.0	
Keeler Creek	1457	gated	decommission	0.3	
Keeler Creek	1457A	gated	decommission	0.2	
L. St. Maries R.	1916UC	barrier	decommission	0.2	
L. St. Maries R.	1916UD	barrier	decommission	0.6	
L. St. Maries R.	3321A	open	storage	0.2	yes
L. St. Maries R.	3321B	open	storage	1.0	
L. St. Maries R.	3321C	stored	decommission	0.2	yes
Keeler Creek	3327J	gated	storage	1.4	yes
L. St. Maries R.	3334	barrier	decommission	1.5	
L. St. Maries R.	3334UA	barrier	decommission	0.9	
L. St. Maries R.	3334UB	barrier	decommission	0.2	
L. St. Maries R.	3334UC	barrier	decommission	0.3	
L. St. Maries R.	3334UD	barrier	decommission	1.2	
L. St. Maries R.	3335A	barrier	storage	1.1	
L. St. Maries R.	3335UA	barrier	decommission	0.5	
L. St. Maries R.	3335UB	barrier	storage	0.3	
L. St. Maries R.	3335UD	barrier	decommission	0.1	
L. St. Maries R.	3335UE	barrier	decommission	0.1	
L. St. Maries R.	3335UF	barrier	decommission	0.2	
L. St. Maries R.	3335UG	barrier	decommission	0.2	
Bechtel Creek	3340A	stored	decommission	0.7	
Mazie Creek	3340UH	stored	decommission	0.2	
W Fk St. Maries R.	3380	gated	decommission	0.4	yes
Wood Creek	341	open	decommission	0.8	yes (.4 miles)
Wood Creek	341	open	storage	0.2	
Wood Creek	341A	barrier	decommission	0.6	yes
Hidden Creek	3457	open	storage	0.2	
Mazie Creek	3478A	stored	decommission	1.0	
Hidden Creek	3478UB	barrier	decommission	0.4	
Bechtel Creek	3478UE	stored	decommission	0.1	
Swede John Creek	3478UF	stored	decommission	1.2	
Hidden Creek	3499	stored	decommission	0.6	yes
Hidden Creek	3499UB	stored	decommission	0.1	
Log Creek	3553	stored	decommission	0.5	
Cedar Creek	3557	gated	storage	1.0	yes
Hidden Creek	3914A	barrier	storage	0.4	
Hidden Creek	3914B	gated	storage	0.2	
Hidden Creek	3914C	gated	storage	0.3	
L. St. Maries R.	3UBH	barrier	storage	< 0.1	
Hidden Creek	498	open	decommission	1.1	yes
Hidden Creek	498UB	stored	decommission	0.2	yes
W Fk St. Maries R.	504C	barrier	decommission	1.1	
W Fk St. Maries R.	504AUA	barrier	storage	1.0	yes
Total				25.2	

Providing and Maintaining Access

With Alternative F Modified I am granting access across National Forest System lands to the State of Idaho and Potlatch Corporation. Approximately 2.0 miles of road construction and 1.2 miles of reconstruction are associated with granting access and exchange of easements in accordance with ANILCA.

An additional 0.6 miles of road construction is needed to maintain access to National Forest System lands in the East Fork of Emerald and Upper Hidden Creek drainage (Bechtel 2 Tie Road) when the Hidden Creek Road 498 is decommissioned. This Bechtel 2 Tie Road will be in a slightly different location than it was in the original 2002 ROD. The new location will avoid old growth.

Approximately 0.6 miles will be constructed with the Final Supplemental EIS, and 0.7 miles was approved in the original ROD. As in the original decision, the road will be gated when construction is complete. Also, approximately one half mile of Road 3478UB will be decommissioned with this action.

Table 4 - Alternative F Modified Road Construction and Reconstruction

Road Construction	
<i>Forest Service Activities</i>	
Temporary Road Construction on NFS Land	1.4
New System Road Construction on NFS Land Not Associated with Access Requests (Long-Term Storage After Use)	4.6
Not Associated with Access Requests, Needed for Access to the Emerald Creek transportation system when Hidden Creek Road 498 is Decommissioned (Barriered After Construction)	0.6
Total for FS Activities	6.6
<i>Other Lands Access and Cost-Share Roads</i>	
Cost-Share Construction on NFS Land for Access Request (not needed for proposed FS timber harvest)	0.4
Cost-Share Construction on NFS Land for Access Requests and for Proposed FS Timber Harvest	1.2
Non-Cost Share Construction on NFS Land for Access Request	0.4
Total for Other Lands Access and Cost-Share Roads	2.0
Total Road Construction	8.6
Reconstruction	
For FS Timber Harvest	6.0
Cost-Share: for Access Request and Proposed FS Timber Harvest	0.4
Non-Cost-Share for Access Request (not needed for proposed FS timber harvest)	0.8
Total Road Reconstruction	7.2

Total Construction Miles on NFS lands = 8.6

Total Reconstruction Miles on NFS lands = 7.2

Design Features, Mitigation, and Monitoring

The following is a description of design features included to protect resource values. Site-specific design features and their objectives are described in Table 8. The effectiveness of design features is discussed where appropriate in Chapter 3 and in the project file. Effectiveness of protection measures is based on literature and research, administrative studies, professional experience, results of previous monitoring on other projects, and logic.

General Design Features and Mitigation

1. Air Quality

- A. 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 Airsheds 12a and 12b, 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. PM10 and PM2.5 projections will be sent to the North Idaho Smoke Management Group one day prior to ignition.
- B. Measures used to mitigate effects of prescribed burning on air quality will include:
 - i. Broadcast and understory burning will be accomplished as much as practical in the spring and early summer with spring-like conditions. This will reduce the total emissions by burning less of the duff and larger fuels. Risk of fire escape is also less in the spring months than during summer and early fall months.
 - ii. The discretion to terminate burns when air quality is threatened.
 - iii. Slash piles will be constructed as clean as practical and be burned as dry as practical to enhance efficient combustion.

2. Fish

- A. Activity in and around streams will occur during base flows, July 15 through September 1.
- B. Inland Native Fish Strategy Standards and Guidelines are specific based upon the proposed activity, i.e. timber harvest, road management, pre-commercial thinning, etc. Standard buffer widths (summarized in Table 5) apply to activities within this project area unless otherwise designated by the district fisheries biologist or district hydrologist. During the layout of units the widths may be greater based on ground conditions. Standard buffer widths are:

Table 5 - Summary of Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) RHCA Widths

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	Seasonal, flowing or intermittent streams; Wetlands < 1 acres; Landslide prone areas	50 feet (non-priority watersheds)

3. Heritage Resources

All known heritage resource sites, eligible or potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, will be protected as directed by the National Historic Preservation Act. Any future discovery of heritage resources sites or caves would be inventoried and protected if found to be of cultural significance. A timber sale contract provision will be included in all timber sale contracts to ensure protection of the sites.

4. 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).

- A. Existing populations of weeds along haul roads will be treated prior to harvest activities.
- B. 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.
- C. Mulching agents, such as hay or straw, will be certified weed-free prior to use.
- D. All seed used for revegetation and erosion-control purposes will be certified weed-free.
- E. Areas where ground-disturbing activities occur will be inspected for new populations of noxious weeds.
- F. 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.
- G. All weed treatments will be monitored for effectiveness.

5. Plants (Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive)

If Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species are discovered during project implementation, an agency Botanist will be notified so that measures could be taken to maintain population viability. Measures to protect population viability 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. Timber sale contract

provisions for protection of Endangered Species, and settlement for environmental cancellation will be included in any subsequent timber sale contracts.

6. Pre-commercial Thinning

- A. The maximum diameter of felled trees will be seven inches. Cull trees that exceed the diameter limit will be girdled in lieu of felling to provide additional cavity-nesting habitat.
- B. Snags or dead trees will not be cut.
- C. 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.
- D. Slash will be pulled back a minimum of four feet away from all system roads, cut banks and fill slopes.
- E. Established game trails will be kept clear of slash by directional felling and slash pullbacks to maintain travel linkages.
- F. A 50-foot no-activity buffer will be maintained along all wetted defined channels, springs, and seeps within and adjacent to thinning units.
- G. Existing closed gates will be locked after each entry and exit.
- H. Activity behind closed gates will be scheduled for completion prior to the opening of the elk any-weapon hunting season (commonly referred to as “rifle season”). An extension may be allowed based on extenuating circumstances (fire, weather, etc.) after interdisciplinary review.
- I. Earthen barriers removed to allow access for project activities will be replaced upon completion of the unit and before October 10th each year.
- J. If access is desired via roads that have naturally closed through revegetation, interdisciplinary field reviews will be conducted to evaluate options and make recommendations regarding opening the road to allow motorized traffic.

7. Public Motorized Access/Access Management

- A. The following National Forest System Roads (NFSR) will be managed as unrestricted routes, available for all legal motorized vehicle use (see ROD Road Management Map ROD-3):
 - East Elk Road 1451 (Staples Creek), from SH 3 to Road 1491
 - Christmas Creek Road 3321, from County Road to the end of road
 - Bluebell Road 3685, from segment 1 of Road 1486 to 3685C
 - Cat Spur Road 361, from Road 1486 (County Road) to Road 1450
 - Log Creek Road 1450, from Road 361 to Road 1480
 - Keeler Connection Road 765, from SH 3 to Road 765A
 - County Line Road 765A, from Road 765 to SH 3
 - Clarkia Emerald Creek Road 504, from SH 3 to Road 447
 - Bechtel Mountain Road 3478, from Road 504 to the top of Bechtel Butte

- Anthony Peak Road 1486, Segment I, from the Road 361 (County Road) to Road 3685
 - Anthony Peak Road 1486, Segment III, from Road 3685 to Road 3686
- B. Some roads that are currently restricted will be temporarily opened to accommodate timber harvest operations, and public travel will not be permitted on these roads due to safety concerns, wildlife security, and soil and water concerns (Table 6, Map ROD-3, and FSEIS Appendix D):
- 504A (Clarkia Peak Road) at the junction with Road 504 (gate)
 - 498 (Hidden Creek Road) gate at mile post 2.8
 - 3380 (Q Chalk Road) at the junction with State Highway 3 (gate)
 - 3557 (Cedar Butte Road) at the junction with Road 447 (gate)
 - 3335 (Poacher Road) at road to warehouse (Clarkia Work Center)
 - 3327J (Palouse Road) at the junction with Road 3327G (gate)
- C. Gates will be installed on the following roads after new construction to control access during timber harvest-related activities:
- Off of Road 765 (to Units 30, 31, and 32) – When timber harvest-related activities are complete this road will be put into long-term storage.
 - Off Cattail Road 361C (to Units 27 & 28, under the transmission line)

8. Recreation

- A. Dispersed recreation sites used for harvest operations activities will be restored or rehabilitated.
- B. Contractors will follow timber sale contracts and any other permit provisions required for camping.
- C. In areas where logging traffic may interfere with recreational traffic warning signs will be placed to inform visitors of logging activities.
- D. Portions of Hidden Creek and Wood Creek Roads will be decommissioned. Access to the dispersed site along the first mile of Hidden Creek Road 498 will be maintained. Decommissioning will be beyond the dispersed site.

Table 6 – Alternative F Modified Access Management Plan During Timber Harvest Operations

1	504A	@ jct. w/ Road 504	Lock existing gate open	Start of harvest operations	Harvest
			Gate locked shut on weekends & evenings	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
2	498	Gate @ milepost 2.8	Open existing gate.	Start of harvest operations	Harvest
			Gate will be locked shut on weekends and evening	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
3	3380	@ jct. w/ S Hwy 3	Open existing gate	Start of harvest operations	Harvest
			Lock shut on weekends and evenings	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
4	3557	@ jct. w/ Road 447; Gate is located outside project area, but road goes into project area	Open existing gate	Start of harvest operations	Harvest
			Locks shut on weekends and evenings	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
5	3335	@ road from Clarkia Work Center	Open existing gate	Start of harvest operations	Harvest
			Locks shut on weekends and evenings	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
6	3327J	@ jct. w/ Road 3327G	Open existing gate	Start of harvest operations	Harvest
			Lock shut on weekends and evenings	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
7	New road	Off Road 765 going to Units 30, 31, 32	Install gate (coordinate w/ ID Dept. of Lands)	Start of road construction	Big game security, water and soil concerns
			Lock shut on weekends and evenings.	During harvest operations	Big game security, water and soil concerns
			Lock existing gate shut (coordinate w/ ID Dept. of Lands)	After harvest operations are complete.	Big game security, water and soil concerns
8	New road	Off Road 361C to Units 27, 28	Install gate (coordinate with ID Dept. of Lands)	Start of road construction	Big game security, water and soil concerns
			Lock gate shut	After harvest operations complete	Big game security, water and soil concerns

* See Map ROD-3 Alternative F Modified Road Management

9. Roads

- A. **Sediment Control:** Road plans and specifications will include measures to minimize sediment production based on site-specific evaluation. They could include, but are not limited to slash filter windrows, surfacing, gravel or slash blankets, interim seeding, mulching, controlling the timing or extent of activities, and sediment traps.
- B. **Cost-Share Agreements:** The Forest Service has cost-share agreements with Potlatch and the State of Idaho in the analysis area. Cost-Share principles apply to construction, reconstruction, maintenance and use of shared facilities. Cost-Share roads are National Forest System Roads that are needed for the long-term management of the National Forest and also serve the needs of the cooperators.
- C. **Road Maintenance:** The ongoing upkeep of a road necessary to retain or restore the road to the approved road management objective. The overall condition and standards of the road are adequate for the anticipated uses. Provisions for and execution of maintenance on existing roads and newly constructed roads within Forest Service jurisdiction and on NFS lands are designed to minimize resource disturbance, as required by the Forest Plan.
- D. **Reconstruction:** Any existing road used for timber activities will be rebuilt to its approved traffic service level or will be improved to increase safety, operational efficiency or resource protection. For this document, reconstruction includes rebuilding roads to their original standards. All road reconstruction plans, standards and specifications will provide for minimum needed road width, drainage and safe operation while incorporating measures for mitigating for resource disturbances.

The overall existing condition of roads to be reconstructed is generally inadequate for resource protection or anticipated use or the road is impassable for the design vehicle. Spot reconstruction may also occur, where the primary disturbance is confined to a limited area, such as culvert installations, rebuilding a shoulder or addition of turnouts. Areas between the spots generally will need reconditioning (reshaping and processing the road surface and ditches and brushing the shoulders). Most of the reconstruction and reconditioning is actually maintenance (FSM 7705) to restore the road to its original condition.

- E. **New Road Construction:** All road construction plans, standards and specifications will provide for minimum needed road width, drainage and safe operation while incorporating measures for mitigating for resource disturbances. New roads will be single-lane facilities, suitable for log truck or lowboy use.

10. Soil and Water

- A. All activities will comply with:
 - i. Standards identified in the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) EA Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact, signed in July 1995. All alternatives will implement standard Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCA) widths specified by INFS (Table 5). 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. Keep felled trees on site when needed to meet woody debris

- objectives. When necessary to fall trees (for skyline/cable units); the sale administrator may approve the minimum number required and ensure that they remain where dropped
- ii. Objectives of Appendix O of the IPNF Forest Plan, Stream Protection.
 - iii. Activities are designed to protect water quality. Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be used to achieve water quality standards (SSW-2). 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, and through a memorandum of understanding with the State of Idaho (9/19/88) replaces the Forest Plan Appendix S – Best Management Practices.
 - iv. Requirements and Erosion Control Guidelines of the Rules and Regulations pertaining to the Idaho Forest Practices Act, Title 18, Chapter 13, Idaho Code.
- B. Areas of recent or historic landslides and slumping are considered landslide-prone and constitute Category 4 – RHCAs (INFS). Harvest and road design will avoid known sites (FSEIS p. 230) using INFS buffers (Small areas of instability may be found on roads).
- C. Tractor Yarding: The following tractor skid trail placement will be used:
- i. Ground-based yarding will be limited to slopes less than 35%.
 - ii. Only approved skid trail locations will be allowed.
 - iii. Trails will be spaced at least 100 feet apart, except where converging at intersections.
 - iv. Skid trail spacing closer than that listed above may be planned when winter logging occurs on at least two feet of settled snow or frozen ground or where adequate slash matting exists.
 - v. No excavated skid trails will be constructed.
 - vi. Skid trails in tractor-yarded units will be limited to less than 15% of the unit acreage to comply with IPNF Forest Plan and Region 1 soil quality recommendations.
 - vii. To minimize disturbance (soil compaction or displacement), practices such as skidding, grapple-piling and mechanical harvesters will occur over slash or on existing skid trails (Forest Plan Monitoring Reports). Units will be designed to utilize non-excavated skid trails and directional falling.
- D. Skyline Yarding: The leading end of logs will be suspended during yarding.
- E. Temporary Road: All temporary roads will be fully recontoured to the natural slope upon completion of activities. Temporary road that will remain on the landscape more than one dry season will be waterbarred according to specific interval direction and at specific angles to prevent erosion. It will then be mulched with a natural, weed-free material to prevent runoff and erosion during spring and/or winter runoff events.
- F. Roads to be put into long-term storage (Road Management Prescription C): Long-term storage retains a road for future use but removes features to reduce hydrologic risks. Includes removal of culverts and recontouring for 200 feet on both sides of stream crossings, recontouring for 300 feet at the beginning of the area of treatment to eliminate vehicle traffic, and decompaction of entire road surface to a depth of 18 inches. It may also include removal of unstable fill material, and revegetation as needed.

G. Roads to be Decommissioned

- i. Road Management Prescription D stabilizes and restores unneeded roads to a more natural state. It includes:
 - Removing culverts and recontouring for 200 feet on both sides of stream crossings
 - Recontouring for 300 feet or a site distance (which ever is less) at the beginning of the area of treatment to eliminate motorized vehicle traffic
 - Decompacting to a depth of 18 inches to aid water infiltration where surface is not recontoured
 - Full or partial recontouring all or some of the road prism
 - Adding woody debris
 - Seeding and planting as needed
- ii. Road Management Prescription E is similar to Rx D, but the entire road prism would be recontoured for the entire length of the road.

- H. Where roads will be stored or decommissioned, the beginning of the treatment area will be fully recontoured for 300 feet or a sight-distance (which ever is less) to eliminate motorized access.
- I. Prescribed burning will be done during the spring or when soil moistures exceed 25% to maintain soil productivity (IPNF, Updated Soil Guidelines, 1998).
- J. The Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrition Cooperative assembled data suggesting that soil potassium levels may be conserved in treatment units by allowing logging slash to over-winter. By leaving sufficient levels of wood on site, long-term soil productivity will be protected.
- i. Potassium 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, Moore, 1998).
 - ii. Tops of trees will be left in harvest units.
 - iii. Silvicultural and burning prescriptions will retain sufficient levels of coarse woody debris on site after slash disposal. The following recommendations will be used in prescriptions:
 - a. Douglas-fir, larch, and pine types: minimum coarse woody residues of 4-6 inches diameters well distributed through a treatment area at 10-15 tons/acre (Harvey et al. 1987).
 - b. Grand fir / beargrass types at 7-14 tons/acre of coarse woody residues (greater than three inches diameter), western hemlock/bead lily types at 17-33 tons/acre coarse woody residues (greater than three inches diameter)
 - c. Subalpine fir / beargrass types at 12-23 tons/acre coarse woody residues (greater than three inches diameter) Graham and others (1994).
- K. Wetlands identified during field review or harvest preparation will be excluded or 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 the timber sale contract will be utilized to protect wetlands that may be discovered during operations.

- L. Rodent control treatment will not occur within INFISH buffers; in areas where the soil is saturated; or during periods of or forecasted periods of heavy precipitation.

11. Transmission Lines

- A. Timber sale roads near the large transmission lines will be kept reasonably free of equipment, products, and debris. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) may need to have road access for emergencies. In this case "reasonably free" means that the road could be cleared within an hour of notice and roads will be left clear and passable when the timber sale purchaser or contractors leave the area for more than an hour at a time. Logging trucks and equipment may be parked on the right-of-way only during emergencies. When this occurs, the truck/equipment should be grounded with a flexible wire connecting the chassis to a ground rod driven into the ground, or by making the connection to ground with a drag chain attached to the truck/equipment chassis.
- B. Where units are adjacent to the transmission line right-of-way, timber will be harvested to reduce the risk of blowdown into the transmission line. Trees immediately adjacent to or under the transmission line will be harvested. If this is not possible, enough timber will be left to maintain wind firmness and reduce the risk of wind-throw into the transmission line.
- C. Haul roads shall remain a minimum of 50 feet from the point where steel lattice tower legs enter the earth. If this clearance cannot be met, use of road may be permitted if adequate protection for BPA structures from vehicles is provided by the use of guard devices (guard rails, posts, Jersey-type barriers, etc.) If guard devices are used, their location and design must be approved by the BPA.
- D. Yarders used near the transmission line will be grounded with copper wire attached to a copper rod pounded six to eight feet in the ground. Skyline cables will be grounded as described above at the tailhold.
- E. Chokers will be allowed to hit the ground before they are touched. Track mounted equipment is recommended near transmission lines to drain off induced voltage. If rubber mounted machines are used, a chain should be dragged behind on the ground to drain off voltage. A minimum separation of 20 feet between equipment and transmission line conductors will be maintained.
- F. High-lead or skyline yarding across the right-of-way will not be done.
- G. Transmission lines sag on warm days or when they are weighed down by snow or heavy frost. Lines that span long distances have greater potential to sag. The distance between equipment and transmission line cables in the same place can be different with different conditions. The timber sale prospectus will describe this to potential timber sale bidders.
- H. Concentrated columns of smoke under transmission lines will be avoided in order to prevent electrical arc. Burning planned within the right-of-way will be discussed with the BPA prior to writing the burn plan.
- I. No loading of logging trucks, fueling of vehicles or equipment, log decking or storage of logs or flammable materials will be allowed on the transmission line right-of-way.

- J. Logging trucks shall not be loaded to a height greater than 14 feet above the roadbed. If a tree comes in contact with the transmission line, no attempt will be made to remove it. Contact BPA Dispatcher immediately, 24 hours per day, seven days per week: 360-693-4703 or 800-392-0816.
- K. For extreme safety hazard trees near the transmission line BPA may be able to provide personnel at the work site with advance notification.
- L. The right-of-way width for the Dworshak-Taft No. 1 500-kV transmission line is 150 feet, measured 75 feet on each side of transmission line centerline.

12. White Pine Leave Tree Guidelines (Schwandt and Zack, 1996)

These guidelines 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.

13. Wildlife

- A. Slash depths next to new and reconstructed roads will not exceed 1.5 feet or if that is not practical, 16-foot wide openings every 200 feet will be created - especially on ridges and across game trails (Leege, 1984).
- B. To provide elk security, timber sales in adjacent areas will have a ridgeline between the disturbance and security area (Leege, 1984). This will be done by either subdivisions (larger sales) or scheduling (smaller sales) in the timber sale contract.
- C. The following snag management recommendations (Table 7) from the Northern Region Snag Management Protocol (January 2000) will be met (where these or higher levels exist). The retention of snags and snag replacements will be applied at the scale of every 5 to 25 acres (Bull et al. 1997). Replacement snags will be retained at five times the number of snags per acre.

Table 7 - Snag Guidelines

Warm dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir	1-2 greater than 20" dbh
Cool Douglas-fir, warm grand fir, slope <30%	4 greater than 20" dbh
Cool Douglas-fir, warm grand fir, slope >30%	6-12 total, with 2-4 greater than 20" dbh
Cool, wet, and dry spruce, grand fir, hemlock, and alpine fir	6-12 total with 2 greater than 20" dbh
Low elevation cedar and hemlock	12 total with 4 greater than 20" dbh
High elevation spruce/fir/lodgepole pine	5-10 greater than 10" dbh
Whitebark pine/limber pine	All available

- D. To meet the objectives listed above in Table 7 - Snag Guidelines:
 - i. Silvicultural and burning prescriptions will be prepared with the goal of protecting snag and green tree replacement snags, and retaining recommended levels and distribution of coarse woody material during site preparation and fuels treatment.

- ii. Snags that show signs of decay, loose bark, or broken tops will not be designated for harvest (Bull et al. 1997). Exceptions will be made for road construction and log landings.
 - iii. The Reserve Tree Guide (IPNF, 1995) will be followed to reach objectives of the Snag and Woody Debris Guidelines (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix X) and worker safety.
 - iv. Tree marking guidelines for wildlife reserve trees will favor the retention of large diameter trees, particularly hollow and broomed trees (Bull et al. 1997) except when they pose a safety concern. Western larch, ponderosa pine, and western redcedar greater than 20 inches d.b.h. will be marked as first choices for snags and reserve trees.
 - v. Snags cut for safety reasons will be left in the unit - preferably where they fall.
- E. In most cases 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 areas they will meet the following criteria:
- i. Less than 300 feet wide (Heinemeyer and Jones, 1994)
 - ii. Limited to one side of the ridge top
 - iii. Minimum of 800 feet between openings (Leege, 1984)
 - iv. None to be situated in a saddle (Leege, 1984; Heinemeyer and Jones, 1994)
 - v. Less than 25% of the distance from the peak of the ridge to the drainage would consist of openings.
- F. Excavator piled slash will be left unburned at a rate of one slash pile per five acres and will be constructed to provide wildlife habitat (Heinemeyer and Jones, 1994).
- G. Information from goshawk surveys (nest sites and Post Fledging Areas) would be used to protect goshawk habitat (see Monitoring section below). Existing goshawk nests and any nests found before and during implementation will be protected by a 30-acre, no-activity buffer (Reynolds, et al. 1992). Project activity will be suspended within the post fledgling areas of any active goshawk nests between March 15 and August 15 (Kennedy, 2003). Activity restrictions can be removed after June 30 if the nest sites are determined by the district biologist to be inactive or unsuccessful. Activity within an approximately 420-acre area surrounding each active goshawk nest will comply with the following management recommendations (Reynolds, et al. 1992):
- i. 20% or less in shrub/seed/sapling size class
 - ii. 60% or more canopy closure in immature and older size classes
 - iii. Created openings are less than two acres with a minimum of 300 feet between existing or other created openings and snag retention guidelines are applied on each acre of created opening
 - iv. Non-regeneration treatment in immature and older stands is thinning from below using irregular spacing of leave trees

Site Specific Design Features

Table 8 and Table 9 describe site-specific design features common to all the action alternatives.

Table 8 - Site-Specific Design Features

Maintain Visual Quality	No grapple piling or underburning in Units 3 and 4 ; Grapple piling is restricted to the southern portion of Unit 5 ; No grapple piling/underburning between Road 504 and new road construction in Units 8, 16, and 17
Meet Soil Quality Standards	Unit 48 will be logged using a ground-based system. In addition to design features discussed above the following will be implemented alone or in combination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit will be monitored using IPNF’s Soil Analysis Process after timber harvest and after fuels treatment • If monitoring shows detrimental disturbance is above Forest Plan standards, skid trails and landings will be decompacted after use
Reduce Sediment Production	Roads listed in Table 9 to be constructed or reconstructed will be surfaced with gravel. The intent of the treatment is to reduce sediment and minimize effects of roads on water quality.
Protect known populations of rare plants	<p>Unit 7: There is one individual of <i>Buxbaumia viridis</i> located east of the unit boundary. A tree height exclusion buffer was marked to protect the site.</p> <p>Unit 16: A single deerfern was located in a draw on the boundary of the unit. The planned buffer for the unit will provide adequate protection for the site. There is also one site of <i>Buxbaumia viridis</i> (with two individuals) in the southern portion of the unit. A buffer of 100 feet will be necessary here to protect the site. A proposed road will be constructed within this buffer. A 100-foot buffer would be established around the site. The road could be constructed through it but no cable or ground yarding will occur within it. Downed wood will be retained on the site to provide for future recruitment. The site will then be monitored for effects to the <i>Buxbaumia viridis</i>.</p> <p>Unit 24: Eliminated from decision. This unit will not be implemented.</p> <p>Unit 30: There are two sites of <i>Buxbaumia viridis</i> here, about 200 yards from one another. One population is in extremely poor habitat with little possibility for recruitment due to the lack of appropriate substrate. A 25-foot radius buffer was marked around the site to provide physical protection. A 100-foot buffer was marked around the second population. The gentle draw in which the individuals are located should have the downed wood preserved throughout. A proposed road ends near here and would need to remain outside of the buffer.</p> <p>Unit 35: Eliminated from decision. This unit will not be implemented.</p> <p>Unit 46: A reserve island was marked around a population of <i>Rhizomnium nudum</i>.</p>

Table 9 - Roads to be Surfaced with Gravel to Reduce Sediment Generation

Cedar Creek	504A spur	.27	Construction - Unit 18 - NFS
Cedar Creek	504A spur	1.03	Construction - Units 2, 3, 9, 19 - NFS
Cedar Creek	504a spur	.87	Construction - Units 7, 8,16,17 - NFS
Emerald Creek	3557	1.01	Reconstruction - FRTA
Emerald Creek	3557	2.2	Reconstruction - NFS
Long Slim Creek	765 B	.74	Construction - cost share
Lower St. Maries	1420- Potlatch access	.66	Reconstruction - cost share
Lower St. Maries	1452 - Potlatch access	.16	Reconstruction - cost share
Lower St. Maries	504A spur	.32	Construction NFS - to Unit 18
Lower St. Maries	361 C	.93	Reconstruction -NFS
Lower St. Maries	3321	.11	Construction - cost share
Mazie Creek	765-SH-3, NF sale road	.22	Construction - cost share
Mazie Creek	765-SH-3 to Units 25 & 30	.45	Construction - NFS
Mazie Creek	765/SB-3	.57	Construction - NFS
W. Fk. St. Maries	361C west	.50	Construction - cost share
W. Fk. St. Maries	361C west NF sale road	1.03	Construction - cost share
TOTAL		11.07	

For this project, monitoring and evaluation will be conducted as described in Table 10. Those monitoring components not specifically discussed in this appendix tier to the monitoring described in the Forest Plan.

Table 10 - Monitoring Plan

Watershed	Implementation and effectiveness of applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs)	Ongoing, during and a post harvest visit	This will be accomplished by completing BMP inspection reports for the timber sale(s) and associated road work.	Hydrologist/Sale Administration/ Engineering
Fisheries/ Watershed	Implementation of Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs)	Prior to advertisement of timber sale(s).	Monitor application of RHCAs, as noted in Chapter 2.	Fisheries biologist / hydrologist
	Determine status of riparian plantings	1 st , 2 nd , & 3 rd year following initial planting.	Walk through survey, ocular to determine survival of plants.	Hydrologist
Soils	Ensure standards are met in Unit 48	After timber harvest and after fuels treatment	IPNF Soil Analysis Process	Technician trained in methodology
Silviculture /Fire	Determine whether silvicultural objectives were accomplished. Assess site preparation and tree planting needs.	Post harvest and prior to any site preparation or fuels treatment	Review treatment areas. Evaluate silvicultural objectives compared with results. Check for special fuels treatment needs and special planting needs	Fuels Management Specialist / District Silviculturist
Silviculture	Determine status of regeneration harvest units.	First, third and, if necessary, 5th year, following initial planting	Monitor stocking and status of regeneration (planted) using walk-through and standard plot exams following R1 procedures.	District Reforestation Specialist
Wildlife	Determine status and assess response to project activity of known goshawk territory	Prior to, during, and two years post project activity	Yearly – ocular evaluation of nest status; and or surveys of post-fledgling areas (PFA). Document timing of project activity within ¼ mile of PFA	Wildlife Biologist
Sensitive Plants	Gain information on response to disturbance	During growing season	Unit 16 – standard plant survey methodology	Agency Botanist

III. Purpose and Need for this Activity

The Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan (USDA 1987) provides the primary management direction for my decision. The Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan prescribes goals and management standards for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest as a whole and for 20 subdivisions of the Forest referred to as Management Areas. In general, the goals and standards of the Forest Plan require me to balance a variety of resources and interests in managing these lands (e.g. maintaining or enhancing wildlife and fisheries habitat and providing a sustained yield of timber).

Specific Management Area (MA) direction from the Forest Plan further guides project development and location of activities in different areas. Within varying limits these MAs allow a wide variety of management activities including prescribed burning, timber harvest, watershed improvement, and road access and management. A description of the MAs and their acres can be found on page 1-2 and on Map (M-3) in the FEIS. The Forest Plan provides MA-specific goals and standards on pages II-2 through II-84.

Management Area (MA) direction from the Forest Plan is an essential consideration in project development. Much of the area is allocated to MA 1 (Timber Production), or MA 4 (Big Game Winter Range with Timber Production). Much of the timber harvest proposed was designed to improve vegetative conditions and provide sufficient cover and forage for big game. There is a very small percentage (271 acres) of MA-5 (Big Game Winter Range) in the project area. For this management area, approximately 0.3 miles of cost share road construction will occur. This road will be put into a storage condition after use.

Information presented in the Scientific Findings for the Interior Columbia River Basin, the Northern Region Overview, and the St. Joe Geographic Assessment was used to develop the purpose and need for this project (FSEIS pp. 3-4).

The interdisciplinary team of District specialists (ID team) compared existing conditions in the Hidden Cedar Project Area with the Forest Plan goals and standards, the Scientific Findings for the Interior Columbia River Basin, the Northern Region Overview, and the St. Joe Geographic Assessment in a landscape assessment process called an Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale to develop a purpose and need for action. The Ecosystem Analysis at the Watershed Scale (EAWS) for the St. Joe Landscape Analysis Area 12 - Sherwin-Staples (made up almost entirely of the Hidden Cedar Project Area) documents resource conditions and notes opportunities to move the landscape towards the desired condition (FSEIS, p. 3; PD-2). "Purpose and need for action" statements were developed. These statements capture the goals envisioned in the Forest Plan and address the need for action. They answer the fundamental question: "Why are you proposing these projects?" In response, we can say we are doing these things to:

- **Manage for vegetative conditions that, in the long-term, encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions. This includes a need for treatments to improve tree species composition and structure and to address increased stand densities, increase in pole- and medium-sized trees, and loss of species diversity.** (FSEIS pp. 3-4)

There is a need to manage for vegetative conditions that are more suitable to a fire-dependent ecosystem and, in the long term, encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions. This includes a need to reduce stand densities, promote retention of larger-sized trees, and improve the tree species composition and structure of selected stands through timber harvest to increase early serals such as western larch and white pine. There is a need to thin overstocked

sapling/pole stands created by past regeneration harvest and wildfires to improve growing conditions, and maintain species and structural diversity.

- **Manage the transportation system to improve water quality, soils, fish habitat and wildlife security** (FSEIS pp. 4-5)

There is a need to address the transportation system for protection of lands and resources by: a) protect and improve aquatic habitat in watersheds supporting native trout; b) maintain or improve water quality conditions in Water Quality Limited Segments; c) improve wildlife security, and d) improve soil conditions on roads and landings that are no longer needed.

- **Provide access to state, private, and National Forest System lands and maintain roads for forest development and utilization** (FSEIS p. 6)

There is a need to provide access to State and Potlatch Corporation lands in the project area, maintain existing cost share agreements, and provide the needed transportation system for Forest Service activities now and in the future. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) requires the granting of reasonable access across National Forest lands to other land owners. Access for management of National Forest System lands is also needed, and in some cases this involves existing cost-share agreements in the project area.

If an activity were proposed that did not address at least one of these purposes, it would be inappropriate to include in the proposed action. Likewise, if a suite of activities were proposed that did not in some way address and balance all three purposes, it would be an incomplete alternative.

IV. Public Involvement Process and Issues

The following is a summary of public involvement activities. Additional details are described in Chapter 2 of the FSEIS and in the project file.

Initial Scoping

On March 3, 2000, a scoping letter describing the proposed action with map was mailed to the District mailing list. Four responses were received. Public comments focused on the desire to maintain recreational opportunities and maintain or improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat. An analysis of the concerns was conducted in order to determine the major issues that would drive alternative development and the scope of the analysis.

A Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal register on March 22, 2000, which included a request for comments. There was one response from that notice.

Comments on the Original Draft EIS

On June 1, 2001, a notice that the DEIS was available was published in the Federal Register. The DEIS was mailed to the project mailing list, and legal ads appeared in local newspapers. Three comment letters were received on the DEIS.

Comments identified a need for additional analysis for the following issues: water quality (sediment production in Cedar Creek, sediment reduction from road decommissioning, and

cumulative effects of sediment production from private land), potassium levels in soils (base levels), and wildlife (clarification of existing cavity habitat and effects to fisher/marten from habitat reduction and lynx analysis and its compliance with the Lynx Conservation Assessment Strategy).

Original Final EIS and 2002 Record of Decision

Alternative F was developed to address the concern over increased levels of sediment and increased water yield in Cedar Creek and road construction in the Keeler Creek drainage. Alternative F is a combination of features from Alternatives B, C, and D and addresses all resource concerns. These changes and other minor errata were addressed in the FEIS. Responses to comments were added as Chapter 4 of the FEIS.

I signed the original Hidden Cedar Project Record of Decision in June 2002. The Record of Decision was administratively appealed to the Regional Forester who affirmed the decision on September 27, 2002.

Litigation and the Decision to Prepare a Supplemental EIS

A lawsuit was filed on April 21, 2003 in the District Court of Idaho alleging that the Hidden Cedar decision was in violation of federal environmental laws. The court granted a preliminary injunction enjoining the Forest Service from implementing the logging and associated road building identified in the Hidden ROD. Some of the projects approved in the original decision that were not involved in the court case proceeded as planned.

On May 18, 2005 I withdrew the ROD for the Hidden Cedar Project. The purpose for this withdrawal was to further address the issues raised by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Lands Council v. Powell*, 395 F. 3d 1010 (9th Cir. 2005).

Comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS

A Notice of Intent to prepare a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Hidden Cedar Project was published in the Federal Register on November 21, 2005. The Hidden Cedar Draft Supplemental EIS was mailed to the public on June 1, 2006, and the Environmental Protection Agency published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on June 16, 2006. The Idaho Panhandle National Forests published a Notice of Availability in the newspaper of record, *The Spokesman-Review*, on June 19, 2006 to let the public know the Draft Supplemental EIS was available for comment and that the comment period would end on July 31, 2006. The Forest Service received eight comment letters. Those letters and the Forest Service's responses to them are included as part of Appendix E of the Final SEIS.

Final Supplemental EIS

Changes were made to Alternative F between the Draft SEIS and the Final SEIS. Alternative F now includes decommissioning and long-term storage of Wood Creek Road 341, and an alternate road location was identified to replace access to the existing transportation system in the East Fork of Emerald Creek that will be lost when the Hidden Creek Road is decommissioned.

Differences Between the 2002 EIS and the Supplemental EIS

Changes in information and requirements

- The vegetation GIS layer was updated. No significant changes have occurred on NFS lands. The updates changed stand acres by less than 3% over the total project area of approximately 33,000 acres.
- District road layer maps were updated changing new construction for access request miles from 2.2 miles to 2.0 mile on NFS lands and from 5.6 to 5.7 miles on other lands. Several miles of road construction on other lands were constructed since the 2002 ROD.
- The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality approved Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for the West Fork and Lower St. Maries River for temperature and sediment. TMDLs were not approved at the time of the original decision.
- Additional stand exams were completed in 2005. This updated stand data was used for this analysis.
- Field surveys for rare plants were completed in 2006.
- Additional soil surveys were completed to more accurately estimate existing areas of disturbance

Changes in proposal

- A portion of Wood Creek Road 341 would be decommissioned (0.8 miles), and a portion would be put into long-term storage (0.2 miles).
- The 2002 ROD approved 615 of pre-commercial thinning, and 291 acres were accomplished. The Final SEIS proposed to pre-commercial thin the remaining 324 acres.
- Of the 30 acres of riparian planting approved in the 2002 ROD fifteen acres were accomplished, and the remaining 15 acres were proposed in the Final SEIS.
- Placement of large woody debris on approximately 1.2 miles of the West Fork of the St. Maries River was completed. No large woody debris placement is proposed in the supplemental EIS.
- The proposed construction and stocking of a fish pond was not completed and is no longer proposed. The partnership between Idaho Fish and Game, Clarkia Better Roads, Highway District and Potlatch Corporation was never developed.
- The original 2002 ROD approved 37.5 miles of road decommissioning and storage (including new road construction). Approximately 12.0 miles of decommissioning and storage of existing road was completed before the original decision was withdrawn. Alternative F of the FSEIS proposes to put 9.0 miles of existing road into long-term storage and to decommission 16.2 miles of existing road. Another 4.5 miles of road that would be constructed under the FSEIS would be put into long-term storage, and 1.5 miles of temporary road proposed in the FSEIS would be decommissioned.
- Road construction to provide access to part of the Emerald Creek road system when Hidden Creek Road 498 is decommissioned is proposed in a slightly different location than it was in

the original 2002 ROD. The new location will avoid road construction in old growth. Approximately 0.6 miles would be constructed with the Final Supplemental EIS, and 0.7 miles was approved in the original ROD. As in the original decision, the road would be gated when construction is complete. Also, approximately one half mile of Road 3478UB would be decommissioned with this action.

Issues

The following issues, presented in Chapter 2 of the FSEIS, represent unresolved conflict with the proposed activities.

Issue #1 – Road Construction: Concerns were expressed that new road construction impacts water quality, fish habitat, and wildlife security. The alternatives present varying levels of road construction to meet the vegetation management and access needs.

Issue #2 – Existing Road Management: There was public concerned that existing roads and their management may impact wildlife security, water quality and fish habitat and recreation opportunities.

Issue #3 – Possible Conflict Between Commercial Timber Harvest and Watershed Restoration: Concern was expressed that there should be a “restoration only” alternative and that commercial timber harvest and watershed restoration do not go together.

Other Concerns

Other concerns not categorized as alternative-driving issues focused on: openings in the form of clearcuts, soil quality, forest health, number of stream/road crossing and their effect on fish habitat, visual quality, management species viability, and accessing other lands without crossing Forest Service. These concerns were analyzed and were addressed through elements of project design (FSEIS pp.12-14). Other issues were not addressed in detail because they are either not relevant to the project or its resources; are beyond the scope of the purpose and need; are already handled by law, regulation, Forest Plan direction, or other higher-level decision; or are irrelevant to the decisions to be made.

V. Brief Description of Alternatives

The issues brought up during the public involvement process and our discussions with specialists on the Forest helped the interdisciplinary team develop several alternatives to the proposed action. The alternatives proposed represent the best options available to meet the overall purpose and need while addressing the complex resource conditions and issues identified. These six alternatives provided a range of alternatives to consider that sharply defined the issues.

The following discussion summarizes the alternatives considered in detail. Chapter 2 of the FSEIS contains a complete description of the alternatives and process used to identify them.

Alternative A (No Action)

The No-Action Alternative is required by the National Environmental Policy Act and provides a baseline against which to compare the amount and rate of change of all other alternatives. This alternative would take no new action at this time within the project area. Other activities such as road maintenance, tree planting, and fire suppression would continue. No timber harvest or road

work is proposed in this alternative, although harvest and road building is occurring on other lands in the project area.

Alternative B (Original Proposed Action)

Alternative B would use timber harvest methods to treat approximately 1,368 acres over 50 units to reduce stand density; reduce susceptibility to disease; promote long-lived, early-seral species; and increase older tree structure. This alternative would reconstruct 7.3 miles of National Forest System roads (NFSR) associated with harvest and cost-share agreements (other land access) and would construct new roads (11.1 miles). The new construction would consist of 1.6 miles temporary road and 9.5 miles NFSR. Primarily skyline or tractor yarding would be utilized, with some helicopter yarding. Some of the road construction and reconstruction would include gravelling to reduce sediment and minimize the effects of the roads (Table 9).

Approximately 324 acres of pre-commercial thinning would be done to improve the growing conditions of selected trees by eliminating competition for light and nutrients.

To protect and improve aquatic habitat in watersheds supporting native trout and to maintain and improve water quality conditions in Water Quality Limited Segments (WQLS), watershed rehabilitation work would be implemented. Approximately 15.9 miles of existing roads under Forest Service jurisdiction would be put into long-term storage or be decommissioned. An additional 15 acres of riparian planting would be accomplished.

Alternative C

Alternative C was designed to address the issue of road construction and existing road management while meeting the vegetative purpose and need. Two harvest units were added in the Keeler Creek drainage to fully address vegetation needs. The only road construction would be for cost-share purposes (2.0 miles).

Timber harvest would be used to treat approximately 1,393 acres over 52 units to reduce stand density; reduce susceptibility to disease; increase long-lived, early-seral tree species; and increase the older tree component structure. Approximately 7.3 miles of road would be reconstructed associated with federal and cost-share activities (other land access). There would be 2.0 miles of new road construction. The new road construction would be cost share associated with access requests and access to Units 27, 28 and 52. This alternative would have the same road construction on National Forest System land to access private land as Alternative B. Primarily helicopter yarding would be utilized, with some skyline or tractor yarding. Watershed restoration activities would be the same as Alternative B.

Pre-commercial thinning and watershed riparian plantings would be the same as Alternative B.

Alternative D

Alternative D was designed to avoid road construction and emphasize the issue of existing road management by putting more miles of road into long-term storage or a decommissioned state. This includes the removal (decommissioning) of two riparian roads (Wood Creek and Hidden Creek) and putting Mazie Creek road into long-term storage. Timber harvest units associated with road construction in Alternative B were dropped.

Timber harvest would be used to treat approximately 606 acres over 31 units to reduce stand density; reduce susceptibility to disease; increase long-lived, early-seral tree species; and increase the older tree component in structure. Primarily helicopter yarding would be utilized, with some skyline or tractor yarding.

This alternative includes 0.6 miles of road construction in the upper Hidden Creek area (Bechtel 2 Tie Road) to maintain access to Forest Service and private lands that would be lost with the removal of the Hidden Creek Road. New road construction (2.0 miles on National Forest System lands) would also occur associated with the requests to access other land. There would be 4.9 miles of road reconstruction.

Pre-commercial thinning would be the same as Alternative B and C. Watershed rehabilitation activities are greater than Alternatives B and C in that this alternative includes decommissioning or storing 24.8 miles of existing road under Forest Service jurisdiction. Riparian plantings would be the same as Alternative B.

Alternative E

Alternative E addresses the issue of commercial timber harvest and its compatibility with watershed restoration activities by including maximum watershed rehabilitation activities and no commercial timber harvest.

New road construction (2.0 miles National Forest System roads (NFSR) cost share) and reconstruction (1.2 miles) would occur associated with the requests to access other land.

Precommercial thinning is the same as Alternatives B, C, and D. Watershed restoration includes 24.8 miles of road decommissioning and storage. Riparian plantings would be the same as Alternative B.

Alternative F

Alternative F was developed to address possible increases in water yield and sediment generation in the Cedar Creek drainage. Three harvest units (89 acres) and 1.7 miles of road construction were dropped to address these concerns. Alternative F would use timber harvest methods to treat approximately 1,304 acres over 48 units to reduce stand density; reduce susceptibility to disease; promote long-lived, early-seral species; and increase larger tree structure. This alternative would reconstruct 7.2 miles of National Forest System roads (NFSR) associated with harvest and cost-share agreements (other land access) and would construct new roads (8.8 miles). The new construction would consist of 1.6 miles temporary road and 7.2 miles of NFSR. Primarily skyline or tractor yarding would be utilized, and approximately 30% of the harvest units would be harvested using helicopter. Alternative F includes all actions described in Activities Common to the Action Alternatives.

Changes were made to Alternative F between the Draft SEIS and the Final SEIS. Alternative F was changed to include decommissioning and long-term storage of Wood Creek Road 341, and an alternate road location was identified to replace access to the existing transportation system in the East Fork of Emerald Creek that would be lost if the Hidden Creek Road were decommissioned.

Alternative F addresses Issues #1 and #2 associated with roads (existing/new construction) by putting newly constructed roads into storage, decommissioning temporary roads, storing approximately 9.0 miles of existing road, and decommissioning approximately 16.2 miles of

existing roads. The decommissioning of roads addresses issues related to fish, wildlife, water and soils. Wood Creek Road 341 would be decommissioned except for the 0.2 mile segment that would be needed for access between Roads 3340 and 3499. That segment would be put into long-term storage.

Alternatives Considered But Not Studied in Detail

The ID team considered four other alternatives but did not study them in detail:

- **Conventional Logging Systems Only, No Helicopter** – This alternative was originally proposed for the area. It would require 25 miles of new road construction. Based on knowledge of the conditions of the resources, this would not meet environmental standards or Forest Plan standards. Resources of concern were: 303(d) listed streams, historical bull trout habitat, loss of wildlife security and sediment /peak flow increases from high road densities. Forest Plan standards related to the Clean Water Act or the Purpose and Need to improve water quality would not be met with this alternative.
- **No Road Construction** – This alternative was proposed to address the controversy over road construction on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Adjacent land owners, however, requested access across National Forests that would require road construction.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) requires the federal government to provide a method for owners of non-federal land access to their land for the reasonable enjoyment of those lands. 36 CFR 251 Subpart D governs procedures by which landowners may apply for access across National Forest System lands. The National Forest Roads and Trails Act (FRTA), specifically Section 2, works as the vehicle for providing that access by authorizing the granting of easements across National Forest System lands to those landowners who have property adjoining National Forest System lands. It also provides a method for the Secretary of Agriculture to acquire easements from, and construct and maintain Forest Development roads in a cooperative program, with other land owners. Thus, this granting and acquiring of easements is generally the form by which the parties develop a permanent road system that serves National Forest System lands and lands or resources of the landowner.

Both the State and Potlatch Corporation have existing construction and use agreements (cost-share) with the Forest Service for the areas where new cost-share road construction is proposed. Other than the No-Action Alternative, an alternative with no road construction was not considered in detail because of State and Potlatch Corporation access requests. Under Alternatives C, D, and E the only road construction would be cost-share roads proposed under Activities Common to All Action Alternatives. Those roads are required for access to private and State land, and they would provide access for the management of National Forest System lands. There would be no other new road construction for Forest Service activities in Alternatives C, D, and E.

- **Timber Harvest with other Silvicultural Prescriptions** – Silvicultural prescriptions, as originally proposed, may not have met Forest Plan standards for visual quality. The ID team raised the concern that 29% of the proposed units were in the Visual Quality Objective (VQO) of “retention”. This was addressed in the proposed action and alternatives by changing silvicultural prescriptions to meet VQOs (project file (PF): VIS-3 and-4).

- **Dry-Site Habitat Management** - Opportunities for improvement and expansion of sawtimber/mature sawtimber dry-site habitat (the forest type of primary interest is ponderosa pine) were explored. At this time there are no existing dry-site ponderosa pine stands that would benefit from active management.

VI. Rationale for the Decision

My decision is based upon the following:

- Meeting the Purpose and Need for Action
- Relationship to Environmental and Social Issues and Public Comments
- Consistency with Forest Plan
- Consistency with other laws and regulations

Meeting the Purpose and Need for Action

The need for action and desired conditions for the Hidden Cedar Project Area, as described above in Section III, are based on Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards. I determined it was not appropriate to select Alternative A for implementation 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. I evaluated the remainder of the alternatives to determine how well they respond to the Purpose and Need for Action. Table 11 can be used as a reference for the discussion that follows.

Table 11 - Summary of How Alternatives Meet the Purpose and Need

Composition:	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%	Acres	%
Long-lived, early-seral tree species: WL/WP forest types	1,661	11	1,959	13	1,959	13	1,851	12	1,661	11	1,923	12	1,904	12
Stand structure:														
Brush-seedling sapling	2,147	14	2,375	15	Same as Alt B		2,288	15	Same as Alt A		2,339	15	2,320	15
Pole-small-medium	10,756	70	10,537	68			10,624	69			10,573	68	10,592	69
Mature-large	1,684	11	1,675	11			1,675	11			1,675	11	1,675	11
Old Growth -allocated w/in analysis area	851	6	851	6			851	6			851	6	851	6
Stand density (Acres)														
Reduction in stand density	0		1,129		1,154		461		0		1,101		1,084	
Improve growing conditions for overstocked seedling/sapling stands			324		324		324		324		324		324	
Road Storage or Decommissioning (miles)	None		15.9		15.9		24.8		24.8		25.2		25.2	
Miles of road to be recontoured within 50 feet of stream channel	0		4.9		4.9		5.3		5.3		5.3		5.3	
# of stream crossings <i>remaining</i> *	113 existing *		110		98		85		85		95		94	
Net long-term reduction in sediment (tons / year) includes work done under 2002 ROD	19.6		38.7		46.8		58.3		58.3		51.7		51.7	
Acres of improving soil productivity from decommissioning and storing roads (acres)	0		64		64		99		99		101		101	
Decreased soil productivity from road construction (acres)	0		50		9		9		9		36		35	
Acres of wildlife security	660		1,009		1,009		2,240		2,240		2,240		2,240	
	no		yes		yes		yes		yes		yes		yes	

*NFS roads (SSW-57 and SSW-58)

Need - Manage for vegetative conditions that, in the long term, encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions:

I selected a modified Alternative F because it best meets (along with Alternatives B and C) the need to improve vegetative conditions through reducing stand density, changing species composition, and promoting larger trees in the future. Reducing stand density decreases the competition for water, nutrients, and sunlight in stands and promotes increased growth and yield. Promoting a species composition more representative of the late 19th/early 20th century keeps western larch and western white pine on the landscape. These species are well-adapted to the cedar/hemlock habitat types and they show resilience to fire, drought, and root disease, which the shade-tolerant trees do not (FEIS pp. 135-137). The exotic white pine blister rust has decimated western white pine where it was once a major tree species in North Idaho forest ecosystems. The accidental introduction of white pine blister rust and the low degree of natural resistance to this disease had reduced the potential white pine seed source by 90% or more (FSEIS p. 137). Because of this loss in a natural seed source, there is a critical need to restore western white pine through the planting of rust-resistant white pine in areas identified for regeneration (FSEIS p. 141). This action will contribute to this endeavor. There is also a lack of large tree forest structure in the analysis area and on the St. Joe Ranger District (FEIS pp. 137-140). The stands proposed for treatment are at the right age and developmental structure for commercial thinning (FSEIS pp. 137-140; SVEG- 15). Such thinning would encourage larger trees sooner and larger trees composed of long-lived, early seral species, like western larch, ponderosa pine, and white pine. It does this by treating approximately 1,268 acres of timber with silvicultural prescriptions designed to address density and species diversity.

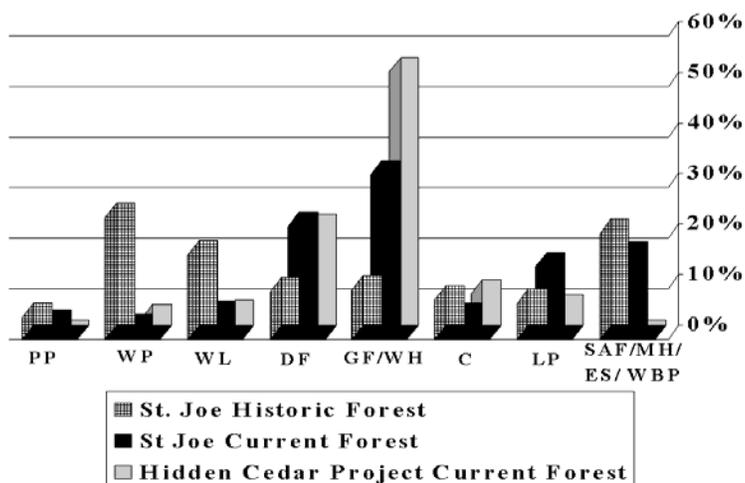
The WildWest Institute contends that I should consider how much native forest has been altered by fire suppression, logging, and road building before proceeding further with vegetation treatments. Well, that is exactly what was done with the Hidden Cedar analysis. Vegetation conditions were put into perspective with historical conditions to determine where we wanted these forests to go in the future (FEIS pp. 134-140). I agree that the forests have changed too much since the early 20th century to try and recreate forest communities at that point in time. So we have identified through our purpose and need that we want less trees per acre with a different species composition that will promote larger trees in the future, all within the context of historical conditions and information. Less vegetative competition and a species composition tending towards the early-seral, more resilient trees species should promote forests that can withstand and adjust to ecological disturbance better (FSEIS pp. 137-138). Adjusting forest structures in the Hidden Cedar Analysis area will not prevent forest disturbances, but allow these forest ecosystems to adjust and react better to insects, disease, and fire (FSEIS pp. 150-151).

The other fact that must be remembered and put into context is that the Forest Service only manages 47% of the analysis area. Potlatch Corporation and the Idaho Department of Lands manage the rest of the acreage under much different missions than the Forest Service. The overriding influence on vegetation pattern is no longer driven by elements in the biophysical environment (soils, topography, and elevation). Vegetation composition, structure, and processes are now heavily influenced by timber harvest and management patterns which resulted from this intermixed ownership pattern (St. Joe Geographic Assessment, 1997). Also, a transmission line corridor owned by the Bonneville Power Administration is intentionally managed differently from natural conditions. So it would be impossible to manage for or return to some historical point in time given the mixed ownerships and differing management regimes within the project area;

however, this project will move the National Forest System lands towards more resilient forest conditions.

Alternatives B and C are just as well suited to meet vegetative condition needs; however, they do not do as much to improve other resource values and issues as detailed later on.

The selected alternative meets the need to improve vegetative conditions by thinning approximately 84% of the harvest areas to reduce tree stand densities thereby promoting larger diameter trees and increase individual tree growth and vigor. It will also maintain or increase the percent of early-seral tree species through preferential retention of white pine, western larch and ponderosa pine (when present).



Alternatives B, C, D and F

(selected action) provide a range of activities that more closely represent the range and rate of past disturbance than do Alternatives A and E which do not provide for vegetative manipulation. Alternative C treats the most acres of Douglas-fir/grand fir stands with an intermediate harvest that reduces stand densities to enhance the remaining mature trees; however, Alternatives B and F (with slightly less acres treated) are about equal to Alternative C in the percentage of stands they are moving toward desired condition. Alternative D treats approximately 1/2 as many acres as Alternative C.

All action alternatives, including the selected alternative, would work towards meeting this need by pre-commercially thinning 324 acres to improve growing conditions in overstocked sapling/pole stands. Approximately 291 acres of pre-commercial thinning was accomplished before the 2002 decision was withdrawn.

Need - Address the management of the transportation system for protection of lands and resources (to improve water quality and reduce long-term sedimentation, improve fish habitat by reducing barriers caused by road/stream crossings and improve wildlife security and soil conditions):

To move aquatic conditions toward the desired condition, I am committing to the decommissioning and storage of approximately 25.2 miles of roads in the Blair, Bechtel, Cedar, Hidden, Mazie, Keeler, Log, Wood, and Lower and West Fork St. Maries Drainages (Table 4 and Table 5) in Alternative F Modified.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the WildWest Institute (FSEIS Appendix E) questioned the Forest Service’s dedication to implementing the proposed watershed restoration actions (road decommissioning, road storage, and riparian planting,) due to uncertain funding. The Forest Service budget is subject to the annual scrutiny and deliberations of Congress and as such, our budget is always uncertain from year to year. My commitment to this decision is that I will accomplish the watershed restoration work as quickly and efficiently as possible given

budgets, contracts, and timber market-related conditions. Approximately 7.1 miles or 28% of the road decommissioning and storage will be accomplished with a timber sale contract (Table 3). Most of the remaining watershed restoration is not dependent on the proposed timber sales, other than certain roads needed for timber harvest identified in Table 3 (ROD pp. 6-7). These roads would be utilized as haul routes for timber sales and would be removed after timber sale activities have been completed. Proof of my commitment is that approximately twelve miles of road decommissioning and storage, 15 acres of riparian planting, and 1.2 miles of large woody debris placement in the St. Maries River were already completed before the 2002 ROD was withdrawn. None of this watershed restoration work was predicated on implementing timber harvest activities.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Idaho Conservation League, and EPA expressed concerns that roads and road locations were issues affecting water quality and aquatics systems. Even though the Forest Service is proposing road decommissioning and storage that would remove stream crossings and recontour part or all of certain roads, the people who commented felt it is not enough and think no new road construction or reconstruction should occur, especially considering the high to extremely high road densities and functioning-at-risk streams. The roads that will be decommissioned were built right along creeks or they were built using lower design standards than what the Forest Service uses today (FSEIS pp. 52-53). On the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF), early to mid 20th century road construction activities focused construction mainly through river valleys, riparian areas, floodplains, and adjacent hillsides. The roads efficiently provided access but decreased the land's effectiveness as wildlife habitat and constricted stream channels, while providing a new avenue for erosion and discharge of sediment into streams. In some cases, the location and design of roads were predetermined from the previous uses and an earlier era. As time progressed, roads were "designed" and located to achieve their primary purpose, which was to provide access and haul product at a minimal cost. In the decades following World War II (1950s –'70s), the road network was rapidly expanded to support the domestic need for lumber in housing construction.

Land ownership patterns also influenced development of road systems, locations, and construction standards. Roads were often built in locations to avoid crossing other ownerships (FSEIS pp. 58 and 241). This mixed ownership pattern resulted in a road network with mixed jurisdictions, rights-of-way and agreements. Much of the existing road system is cost-shared with cooperators, Potlatch and the State of Idaho (FSEIS p. 242-243). Therefore, the Forest Service cannot simply decommission road systems that are shared with cooperators. Additionally the Forest Service is required by law to provide reasonable access to other ownerships (ANILCA).

I am proposing to decommission, put into long-term storage, or restrict access to roads the Forest Service controls; however, even if access to other lands were not an issue we would still need to maintain a transportation system in the project area for management and use of the National Forest System lands. I am authorizing timber harvest in areas that do not have the required access for the proposed logging systems, and therefore new roads will be constructed to allow us to manage those areas. Over the last twenty years, both road design and location have evolved as necessary tools to not only provide efficient access; but also to protect valuable watershed resources. I am authorizing road construction in better locations using more stringent design features and better management practices than were used in the past (FSEIS p. 25). I am committed to reducing the impacts of roads on water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and soils. Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) will be protected, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) for soil and water will be implemented in all activities (Design Features #10).

The new road construction required for the Bechtel 2 Tie Road is important to provide access for road maintenance on the East Fork Emerald Creek transportation system. Without the access the Bechtel 2 Tie Road will give us we will not be able to get vehicles to the East Fork Emerald Creek system for road and culvert inspections and maintenance. If we cannot readily inspect and maintain culverts we put aquatic resources at risk in the East Fork of Emerald Creek.

Of the five action alternatives considered, Alternative F, as modified, is best at meeting the purpose and need set forth for this project. It will improve vegetative conditions by encouraging more resilient and sustainable forest conditions, improve watershed health through road decommissioning and storage, and grant access; and it protects other resources in the project area. The biggest difference between alternatives is displayed in the purpose and need category of Moving Vegetation Toward Historical Conditions (Table 11). Here, Alternatives D and E are considerably different from Alternative B, C, and F Modified. However, the difference is marginal between Alternatives C, D, E, and F for the purpose and need of Improving Water Quality, Aquatic Habitat, Soil Conditions and Wildlife Security (Table 11).

Alternative E addresses the aquatic restoration and roads issues very well, but fails to address the restoration needs for vegetation that we have identified; therefore, I did not select this alternative.

Alternative C accomplishes both vegetative and watershed restoration activities. However the watershed restoration activities are much less than Alternatives D, E, and F Modified, but no new road construction is necessary for proposed Forest Service activities. I did not select Alternative C because it creates much less wildlife security, decommissions or puts into long-term storage less road miles, and removes less stream crossings than Alternatives D, E, and F Modified.

Approximately 82% of the treatment acres in Alternative C would be helicopter yarded, which is desirable to maintain soil productivity and reduce effects caused by sediment production. On the other hand, the high yarding costs associated with the large amount of helicopter yarding required under this alternative (FSEIS p. 35) could make selling timber sales difficult under negative market conditions.

Alternative D is comparable to Alternatives E and F Modified in improvements to watershed health in the form of water quality improvement, and fish and wildlife habitat. I did not choose Alternative D because it includes 52% fewer acres of vegetative restoration treatments than Alternative F Modified and is less effective at trending vegetation towards conditions identified in the purpose and need. Alternative D would treat 606 acres using commercial timber harvest and 324 acres of pre-commercial thinning, for a total of 930 acres treated. In contrast, Alternative F Modified will treat 662 more acres.

Watershed restoration activities identified for Alternative F Modified (as displayed in Tables 3, 6, 9) will utilize a combination of methods depending on specific site conditions. Work on roads to be decommissioned or put into long-term storage includes at a minimum: re-contouring unstable fills, recontouring the beginning of treatment areas to eliminate motorized vehicles, removal of culverts, restoration of stream channels including recontouring 200 feet on both sides of stream crossings, decompacting road surfaces to a depth of at least 18 inches, construction of armored drainways, and installation of waterbars. Roads maintained for public travel and administration of National Forest System lands will be graveled to reduce sedimentation (Table 9). Graveling of these roads will further reduce sediment in the St. Maries watershed compared to not graveling. The sediment model used to estimate sediment levels does not include road surfacing; so sediment

estimates do not reflect benefits from graveling roads, but in reality it will help reduce sediment (FSEIS pp. 31, 53, 231, 258; PF: SW-40).

I have also addressed the concern brought forth by the Idaho Conservation League that we should identify and analyze an alternate route into the East Fork of Emerald Creek so Road 498 can be decommissioned in Hidden Creek after timber sale activities have been completed (Appendix E, Comment #3-7). We have found a new location for alternative access into the East Fork of Emerald Creek, which is in a slightly different location than the original proposed route (2002 ROD). The new location avoids allocated old growth (FSEIS p. 169) and will facilitate the obliteration of Forest Road 498 (Hidden Creek). The development of a new road location to connect to the transportation system in the East Fork of Emerald Creek will allow the Forest Service to continue road maintenance on that transportation system, which minimizes sediment impacts from those roads (FSEIS pp. 113, 283).

The watershed restoration work I am committing to under this decision will improve conditions in the West Fork and main stem (upper) St. Maries River along with many of the sub drainages. The reduction in sediment in Cedar, Blair, Bechtel, Hidden, and Mazie drainages will result in improved water quality and improvement to beneficial uses on the West Fork of the St. Maries River and main stem of the St. Maries River, which are WQLS segments (FSEIS pp. 272, 277).

To maintain water quality this decision also includes application of BMPs on project activities in all watersheds (Design Features and Mitigation Measures). Effectiveness of BMPs have been shown in Seyedbagheri, 1996 and Idaho's 2000 Forest Practices Water Quality Audit Final Report (Idaho DEQ, 2001), and the Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan Annual Monitoring Reports (FSEIS p. 54, 222, 238, 255, 262, 282, 298; PF: SSW-61).

The proposed road decommissioning and storage will help restore soils in the project area and will increase the amount of wildlife security. Approximately 101 acres of road surface will be decompacted which will help improve soils quality (FSEIS pp. 48, 50, 231- 232, 234). Wildlife security areas will increase from the existing 660 acres to 2,240 acres (FSEIS p. 48, 50, 331, 333).

Need - There is a need to provide access to state and private lands in the project area, maintain existing cost share agreements, and provide the needed transportation system for Forest Service activities now and in the future.

All action alternatives meet the need to provide access to state and Potlatch Corporation lands to the same degree. Under the selected alternative (Alternative F Modified), approximately 2.6 miles of road construction and 1.2 miles reconstruction will occur on NFS land to provide or maintain access on other lands.

The road construction (0.6 miles) and reconstruction for the Bechtel 2 Tie Road addresses the need to maintain access to National Forest System lands in the East Fork of Emerald and Upper Hidden Creek drainages that will be lost when Hidden Creek Road 498 is decommissioned. Without the new road one of two things would have happened. Either the Hidden Creek Road 498 would not be decommissioned until other access to the East Fork of Emerald Creek transportation system was developed or the Hidden Creek Road would be decommissioned leaving no access to the road system in the East Fork Emerald Creek. After considering these options, I decided it is better to construct the new tie-through road (Bechtel 2 Tie) and get the Hidden Creek Road decommissioned at the same time than to leave the Hidden Creek Road in its current condition. It

is not acceptable to decommission the Hidden Creek Road without providing road access to the East Fork Emerald transportation system.

Alternative F Modified addresses these needs while protecting resources and meeting Forest Plan Standards and all laws and regulations (See discussion of Consistency with Forest Plan and Laws below).

Relationship to Environmental and Social Issues and Public Comments

I used environmental and social issues raised in public and agency discussions to design alternatives and select a course of action. The primary reason I chose to implement Alternative F Modified is because of its overall response to the issues and public comments. All action alternatives varied in response to the issues. Public comments were received throughout the process: during initial scoping process, during preparation of the original DEIS, in response to the DEIS, during the appeal process for the 2002 decision, in the litigation process, and in response to the draft supplemental EIS. Scoping comments were used to identify the major issues. Five alternatives, in addition to the No-Action Alternative, were considered in detail to address these issues. Alternative F was proposed (in response to public comment on the original DEIS) to address the potential for substantial increases in sediment loads in the Cedar Creek drainage. Detailed responses to the comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS have been prepared, and are incorporated into the Final SEIS, Appendix E.

Alternatives C and D address the issue of road construction by using more helicopter logging to harvest timber. Alternative E has no timber harvest. None of these alternatives have road construction strictly for timber harvest purposes. They do include road construction to provide access to adjacent lands.

The impact to wildlife security (total road densities) does not vary much by alternative with highest densities in Alternatives A and B and less of an impact in Alternatives C, D, E, and F Modified (Table 11). Alternatives D, E, and F Modified would all decommission existing roads and reduce the number of stream crossings to a similar degree and at a greater amount than Alternatives B and C. Alternatives D, E, and F Modified are similar in the reduction of sediment from road decommissioning, almost double that of Alternative B (Table 11). Analysis of yearly peak flow values indicates that there is statistically no trend of increase in peak flows values for the St. Maries River above Santa, Idaho (FSEIS p. 256). However, modeling does indicate some water yield increase may occur. According to models, Alternatives B, C, and F Modified would be similar in water yield produced from proposed Forest Service activities. Alternative D shows less water yield increase, and Alternative E shows no change to water yield because there would be no commercial timber harvest (FSEIS, Table 3-85).

Comment from the Idaho Conservation League (Appendix E, Comment #3-30) recommends that we consider utilizing broadcast burning in some of our proposed treatments areas to create fire-killed snags for the benefit of woodpeckers. Approximately 165 acres of broadcast burning is proposed in the regeneration units while 461 acres of grapple piling and burning is proposed in the thinning units. The reason more broadcast burning is not prescribed is to minimize the mortality of the residual stand left after thinning. Comments from the WildWest Institute (Appendix E, Comment) attribute many of the problems on National Forest lands to our fire suppression policy, and recommends that we consider allowing moderate and high-severity fires to burn at what is considered normal intervals (Hillis et al. 2002). The Forest Service is not promoting these

vegetation treatments as steps towards preventing catastrophic fires (FSEIS p. 82, 84). There are places in the upper St. Joe River Valley that we are allowing fires caused by lightning to burn under prescribed conditions (Wildland Fire-Use for Resource Benefit, PF: SFF-3). The mixed ownership pattern in the Hidden/Cedar Analysis Area precludes the use of other fire management strategies other than full suppression. Timber harvest and prescribed fire are not substitutes for wildland fire effects, but in many instances can mimic parts of this ecosystem process while maintaining sustainable and productive soils and watersheds (FSEIS p. 81 - 84; Graham et al 2004 pp. 29-30).

The Hidden Cedar Project Area soils have the potential to be potassium-limited (FSEIS p. 214). Appropriate design features and mitigation were developed (leaving tops and over wintering slash) to address this for proposed harvest units (Soil and Water Design Features #10). Density management composes 84% of the vegetation management treatments and will maintain higher growth rates and encourage nutrient allocation to the crowns and needles. Lopping slash will occur in many units, and the slash will be left over a winter to allow the most mobile nutrients to leach from the crowns and needles back into the soil. Over-wintered slash will then be grapple-piled and burned to address fuel hazard concerns. Finally adequate amounts of coarse woody debris (larger than 3 inches diameter) would be left, prescribed by habitat type, to promote habitat for soil biota, provide organic matter for forest soils, to act as a sponge for soil water and substrate for mycorrhizal inoculum, and a future source of soil nutrients (Design Feature #10.I.iii). The design features are expected to be effective based on research from the Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrition Cooperative (FSEIS pp. 196; Brown et al, 2003; Graham et al, 1994).

I would also like to discuss cumulative effects and how conclusions were arrived. There are unknowns on where, when, and to what extent activities are planned to take place on private and State lands. Potlatch Corporation and the Idaho Department of Lands provided some information on future harvest activities (FSEIS pp. 60-61). Road building and harvest activities on other private lands were estimated to determine effects for sediment and water yields and effects to wildlife habitat. Ongoing activities on private and state lands were assumed to be similar in spatial and temporal scope as timber harvest and road-building activities in the past because those lands have been and will continue to be used primarily for timber production.

Numerous discussions throughout the analysis and the project file refer to methods used to estimate activities on other lands (FSEIS pp. 57, 60-61, 66, 68, 81, 84, 95-103, 105-131, 138-141, 143-144, 151-153, 159-161, 178, 180-181, 183-185, 188-191, 196, 201, 240-253, 260, 262, 264-265, 267, 270-271, 284-285, 288-293, 296-298, 303-305, 316, 318-323, 327-328, 330-333, 339-341, 344, 347, 350, 353, 355). 1933 through 1996 and 2002 aerial photos were utilized to determine existing conditions and impacts of past management activities on private land. The Road Analysis process (project file: ST-1), utilized numerous documents with information as far back as 1911 on how the transportation system evolved. Information about Forest Practices Act applications was received from the State of Idaho that contain ongoing harvest activity on private lands (PF: SA-5). Aerial photography was utilized to analyze impacts to wildlife from vegetation manipulation on private and State lands. A summary illustrates the information we were able to obtain from Potlatch Corporation and the State of Idaho Department of Lands on proposed harvest activity (FSEIS pp. 60-61). We did assume that State BMPs and the Idaho Forest Practices Act are followed on private lands, and that no stream temperature or other pollutants (except sediment) is expected. The State of Idaho approved total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for the West Fork of the St. Maries River and the Lower St. Maries River (below Clarkia) for temperature and

sediment. The sediment TMDL, which indicates a larger than 'natural' sediment level, should be considered the cumulative effect of the changed base level for streams in the project area (FSEIS p. 264). Using information from Potlatch and the Idaho Department of Lands, our own photo interpretation, knowledge of ground conditions, and stream data we conducted an adequate cumulative effects analysis for me to make an informed decision for this project.

Major Issues

The following summary describes how the selected alternative responds to the major issues.

Issue #1- Road Construction: Watershed, wildlife, and soil conditions will be improved in the Hidden Cedar Project Area even though I am proposing to construct new roads. After all of Alternative F Modified is implemented there will be fewer roads on National Forest System lands (Table 12). I am authorizing road construction in better locations using more stringent design features and better management practices than were used in the past (FSEIS pp. 52-54). Newly constructed roads will only be in riparian areas where they cross streams, and those crossings not associated with management needs for adjacent land owners will be removed when activities are complete.

Alternative F Modified addresses water quality in Cedar Creek by eliminating 1.7 miles of road construction and 89 acres of timber harvest in the Cedar Creek Drainage that were included in the proposed action. It also addresses the issue of road densities and road construction in the Keeler Creek Drainage by changing those units to helicopter harvest and eliminating 1.3 miles of road construction.

Building fewer miles of road reduces the potential for sediment production. Graveling approximately 11 miles of road during reconstruction and construction will reduce sediment generated from those roads (Table 9). Most newly constructed roads will be put into long-term storage or be decommissioned (this does not include the Bechtel 2 Tie road or cost-share roads associated with access requests) thus reducing their impacts on the watershed, fisheries and wildlife habitat, soil productivity and water quality. Modeling shows the selected alternative, including new construction, will reduce sediment production by about 52 tons per year (FSEIS Table 3-75). Temporary roads to be constructed with Alternative F Modified (approximately 1.4 miles) will be fully recontoured after use (Design Feature #10.E.), so they would not contribute sediment over the long-term (FSEIS Table 3-72).

Fisheries conditions will improve in Hidden, Keeler, and Wood Creeks as a result of Alternative F Modified (Table 12; FSEIS, Table 3-23). Current conditions will be maintained in other streams. Inland Native Fish Strategy Standards and Guidelines will be followed and other design features (Design Features 2 and 10) will be implemented to minimize effects to aquatic systems and promote improved stream conditions for 6.2 miles (FSEIS pp. 21, 103).

The new road required to provide access to the East Fork Emerald Creek is the result of considering resource condition trade-offs. In my mind, it is better to decommission the riparian road in Hidden Creek and build the new Bechtel 2 Tie Road than to leave the Hidden Creek Road in place. It is also better than removing the Hidden Creek Road without providing access for road maintenance for the East Fork Emerald Creek transportation system.

Wildlife security would be improved in the long-term through lower total road density in the wildlife analysis areas. That translates to more acres of wildlife security cover and an increase in elk habitat potential (Table 12; FEIS Tables 2-27 and 2-28). The same amount of wildlife security

could be gained with Alternatives D and E (Table 11), but the need to encourage more sustainable and resilient forest vegetation conditions would not be attained.

Alternatives C, D, and E construct less Forest Service system road and less temporary road, and thus produce less sediment in the short-term than Alternative B and F Modified. The main reason is because Alternatives C and D use more helicopter-tyarding systems, and Alternative E does not proposed any timber harvest. Alternatives D, E, and F Modified would decommission and put into long-term storage more miles of road, remove more stream crossings, and produce more miles of appropriately functioning fish habitat than either Alternatives B or C. This is because of the restoration activities in Hidden Creek, Keeler Creek, and Wood Creek.

More watershed improvement activities, such as road decommissioning and long-term storage, could be proposed, but I feel this is what we can accomplish based on what watershed improvement work has been completed since the original 2002 ROD and anticipating continued flat or slowly declining budgets.

More sediment reduction could be gained through Alternatives D or E (Table 11), but the need to encourage more sustainable and resilient forest vegetation conditions would not be addressed.

Issue #2 – Existing Road Management: Alternative F Modified includes long-term storage and decommissioning of approximately 25.2 miles of existing roads in addition to the twelve miles of road decommissioning and storage completed before the 2002 ROD was withdrawn. These roads are either not needed for future management (decommissioning) or not needed within the next 20 years (long-term storage). These activities will improve water quality as sediment production will be reduced by about 52 tons/year (Table 12; FSEIS Table 3-75). Approximately 16.2 miles of road will be decommissioned and be removed from the National Forest road system. This work will reduce riparian road densities and reduce the number of stream/road crossings and thus improve fish habitat (Table 12). The Hidden Creek riparian road would be removed, and the Mazie Creek Road would be put into long-term storage. Additionally I have decided to decommission 0.8 miles of the Wood Creek Road 341 and put 0.2 miles of it into long-term storage. This action will begin to move Wood Creek towards functioning appropriately by removing the portion of the road within the Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RCHA) (FEIS p. 127).

More existing road will be decommissioned and put into long-term storage in Alternative F Modified than in all the other action alternatives (Table 11). Alternatives D, E, and F Modified promote the most acres of increased wildlife security through transportation system management, while Alternatives B and C promote considerably less wildlife security (Table 11).

Again I want to emphasize that we're headed in the right direction. Proof of this pledge is that approximately twelve miles of road decommissioning and storage (including removal of 22 stream crossings on NFS lands), 15 acres of riparian planting, and 1.2 miles of large woody debris placement in the St. Maries River was already completed before the 2002 ROD was withdrawn. Another 34 streams crossings will be removed under Alternative F Modified.

Issue #3 – Possible Conflict Between Commercial Timber Harvest and Watershed

Restoration: There is a concern about the effects of timber harvest on watersheds and restoration of watersheds. In other words, can we use timber harvest to treat timber stands without rendering the land unfit for other values or resources?

Alternative E was developed to address this issue and provide an alternative course of action to compare the other alternatives and proposed action to. No commercial timber harvest is proposed in Alternative E, and it would decommission or put into long-term storage the most road miles, remove the most streams crossings, implement the most sediment reduction, and have the least miles of roads in RHCAs. It would promote the same amount of wildlife security as Alternative F Modified. The differences in these various categories from Alternative F Modified are sometimes slight, as with roads in RHCAs; and in other instances differences are appreciable, as with sediment reduction. See Table 11.

Alternative E, however, would not meet the need to address vegetation conditions in the project area. Alternative F Modified does this.

Alternatives B, C, and F Modified best address the need to manage for vegetative conditions that are more suitable to a fire-dependent ecosystem and, in the long term, encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions. This includes the need to reduce stand densities, promote retention of larger-sized trees, and improve the tree species composition and structure of selected stands through timber harvest to increase early seral tree species such as western larch and western white pine.

Conclusion:

I selected Alternative F Modified because it best meets the overall Purpose and Need for the Hidden-Cedar Project. Alternative F Modified addresses the alternative-driving issues of road construction and existing road system effects on aquatics systems, fisheries, wildlife, and soils through design features and mitigation with accepted practices and acknowledged effectiveness through monitoring. The IPNF has a monitoring program, and this project will be monitored accordingly. Project-level monitoring will also be used to check results and make adjustments (Table 10). This is the essence of adaptive management. We do not know all the answers and when we don't, we need to acquire the necessary information to make a determination and adapt as necessary to protect the resource.

The vegetation resource is in need of treatment as I have portrayed earlier in this ROD, but the effects to the aquatics system from roads must be addressed to begin moving these stream systems and fisheries to appropriately functioning conditions. Obviously Alternative E best addressed the issue of possible conflict between commercial timber harvest and watershed restoration, but I could not ignore the opportunity to utilize silvicultural treatments to encourage more resilient and sustainable forest conditions to weather the inevitable disturbances that arise. Helicopter yarding will be used on approximately 30% of the treatment areas to address road/sedimentation concerns and aquatics/fisheries issues (FSEIS p. 43). A certain amount of road construction and reconstruction is necessary for the logging systems to implement the silvicultural prescriptions and other design features in this decision (ROD pages 11-22).

The 6.6 miles of road construction and 6.4 miles of road reconstruction needed to implement skyline/cable and ground-based logging systems in Alternative F Modified incorporate design and

location standards and mitigation that effectively protect valuable watershed resources. Road surfacing, road drainage controls, constructing rolling grades, partial or full bench construction, avoidance of highly erosive or unstable soils and/or locations (steep slopes), better stream crossing designs, and avoiding riparian areas all contribute to minimizing sediment delivery to aquatic systems. All temporary road construction (1.4 miles) will be put to bed and will be completely recontoured to original slope and revegetated. The other 4.6 miles of new road construction (not including access to private lands) will be put into long-term storage after timber harvest by removing culverts, recontouring stream crossings, seeding, and allowing natural revegetation. The road restoration activities also benefit wildlife and fisheries by creating more secure habitat for wildlife (Table 12; FSEIS pp. 322, 333) and reducing impacts of roads on fish habitat (Table 12; FSEIS pp. 114, 127, 131). Alternative F Modified addresses concerns associated with noxious weeds, minerals, recreation, air quality and soils with design features and mitigation (ROD pp. 8-19).

Alternative F modified would result in more net acres of improved soil productivity than Alternative B but less than Alternatives C, D, and E. This is due to less new road construction than Alternative B and more road decommissioning and storage than the other alternatives. The net soil improvement will be 65 acres (conditions after road construction and road decommissioning and storage) with Alternative F Modified where 101 acres of road decommissioning and decompaction will occur, which is offset by the 36 acres of new road construction (FSEIS p. 232). Alternative B would result in 14 net acres of improved soil conditions.

Alternatives D and E best address effects from the transportation system in order to protect and improve aquatic habitat in watersheds supporting native trout, to maintain or improve water quality conditions in Water Quality Limited Segments, and to improve soil conditions on roads no longer needed. Alternative F Modified though, decommissions the most miles of road. Alternative F Modified is very similar to Alternatives D and E in miles of road remaining in RHCAs and numbers of stream crossings removed. Alternative F Modified has the same number of acres of improved wildlife security as Alternatives D and E.

This project, combined with other activities in the area, will not alter stream channels. Even though models indicate continued increased water yield compared to reference conditions, data from the USGS gauging station does not show peak flows increasing over time (FSEIS pp. 259, 262, 265, 278, 291, 296). It is unlikely that the proposed activities combined with activities on other lands will increase water yields to levels that will cause noticeable changes to stream channels or sediment transport (FSEIS p. 256, 292-293, 296). The level of timber harvest in Alternative F Modified combined with past Forest Service timber harvest in this decade is similar to what has occurred on National Forest System lands in the project area each decade for the last 40 years (FSEIS Table 3-1), and stream channels have not changed appreciably (FSIES p. 267). Reforestation success has been good within the Hidden Cedar Project Area with 89 percent of the plantations and 100 percent of the treatment units prescribed for natural regeneration successfully stocked since 1976 (project file: SVEG-2). Prompt reforestation with thrifty and growing conifers reduces increases in water yield from regeneration harvest units.

Alternative F was developed to eliminate new road construction in Keeler Creek and reduce the amount of vegetation treatment and road construction in Cedar Creek. Alternative F Modified does not include Unit 40 and changes the yarding system in Unit 36 to helicopter because of unacceptable soil impacts. Special mitigation measures were identified to protect soil quality in

Unit 48 (Table 8). Soils in Unit 48 will be monitored to ensure Forest Plan standards are met (Table 10). If monitoring shows standards are not met, landings and skid trails within the unit will be decompacted. Additionally in order to protect sensitive plant populations, Units 24 and 35 will not be implemented.

The Bechtel 2 Tie Road will replace access that will be lost when the Hidden Creek Road is decommissioned. This will allow the Forest Service to more readily inspect and maintain roads and culverts in the East Fork Emerald Creek transportation system than would be possible with no vehicle access to the system.

Consistency with Forest Plan and Other Laws and Regulations

Numerous laws, regulations, and agency directives require that my decision be consistent with their provisions. I have determined that my decision is consistent with all laws, regulations, and agency policy. The following summarizes findings required by major environmental laws.

National Forest Management Act

Forest Plan

The National Forest Management Act requires projects to comply with forest plan direction. The Idaho Panhandle Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) establishes management direction for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. This management direction is achieved through the establishment of Forest goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, and Management Area goals and accompanying standards and guidelines. Projects and activity decisions must demonstrate and explicitly document consistency and compliance with Forest Plan forest-wide standards, management area standards, and monitoring plan requirements.

Alternative F Modified does not require any Forest Plan amendments.

Upon review of the pertinent information, I find the actions and activities contained in the selected alternative are consistent with Forest Plan direction.

- **Air Quality / Fire / Fuels**: The selected alternative 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 IPNF Forest Plan (FSEIS p. 69). Prescribed burning and mechanical treatment of activity fuels are consistent with direction in the Forest Plan. Continued fire suppression will be conducted in accordance with the guidance provided by the current IPNF Forest Plan (FSEIS p. 84).
- **Fisheries**: Alternative F Modified complies with Forest Plan standards and guidelines for fisheries (FSEIS p. 131). Standard #1 and Standard #2 (as replaced by INFS) would be met in Alternative F Modified because it meets riparian management objectives. 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 because new road construction would provide for fish passage and known passage problems on Forest Service roads would be corrected. Standard 5 was met because fisheries surveys were used to coordinate activities with other resources. Several projects have been identified in this document that 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.

Table 12 Comparison of Issue Indicators by Alternative

Issue Indicators							
New system road construction miles (NFS land)	0	11.1	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.8	8.8
Temporary road construction	0	1.6	0	0	0	1.6	1.4
Long-term sediment increase from Supplemental EIS road construction (tons / year)	0.0	12.1	3.9	3.9	3.9	10.5	10.5
Long-term sediment decrease from Supplemental EIS restoration work (tons / year)	0	31.1	31.1	42.6	42.6	42.6	42.6
Net long-term change in sediment production for entire Hidden Cedar Project (tons / year; negative equals reduction in sediment production)	-19.6	-38.7	-46.8	-58.3	-58.3	-51.7	-51.7
Number of new stream crossings (including temp roads) – FS activities	0	17	5	5	5	16	15
Number of stream crossings removed from existing roads – FS activities	0	20	20	33	33	34	34
Net change in number of stream crossings – FS activities	0	-3	-15	-28	-28	-18	-19
Miles of appropriately functioning fish habitat	0	0	0	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
Trend of fishery condition	stable	stable	↑ in 1 stream	↑ in 4 streams	↑ in 4 streams	↑ in 3 streams	↑ in 3 streams
Wildlife security on NFS land (total road density – mi/sq.mi. in wildlife analysis area)	3.6	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.6
Wildlife security on all lands in wildlife analysis area (total road density – mi/sq.mi.)	4.7	4.3	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1

2007 Hidden Cedar ROD

Issue Indicators	Alternatives						
	A	B	C	D	E		F Mod
Water yield increase for the St. Maries River (Project Area)	7.3%	8.6%	8.6%	<8.6%	7.3%	8.6%	<8.6%
Estimated acres of soil productivity improvement from road storage and decommissioning	0	64	64	99	99	101	101
Net acres of soil productivity improvement related to roads (after road construction)	0	14	55	90	90	65	65
Maintain at least 80 percent of the activity area (including system roads) in a condition of acceptable productivity potential	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Miles of appropriately functioning fish habitat	0	0	0	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
Trend of fishery condition	stable	stable	↑ in 1 stream	↑ in 4 streams	↑ in 4 streams	↑ in 3 streams	↑ in 3 streams

* Unit 48 is at the threshold

- Forest Vegetation: The selected alternative is consistent with goals, objectives, and standards for timber management and silvicultural practices (FSEIS p. 153).
- Heritage Resources: Alternative F Modified complies with Forest Plan direction for heritage resources (FSEIS p. 155).
- Minerals: The selected alternative is within Forest Plan standards for minerals (FSEIS p. 157).
- Noxious Weeds: Alternative F Modified will meet intent for moderate control of noxious weeds, as stated in the Forest Plan, through the implementation of design features. Weed control within the project area shall be done in accordance with the principles of integrated pest management, which is consistent with the Forest Plan (FSEIS p. 164).
- Old Growth: Specific goals, objectives and standards for old growth management as described in the Forest Plan will be met with the selection of Alternative F Modified. The project is consistent with all Forest Plan standards for old growth (FSEIS pp. 167-169). The standards that apply specifically to this project are discussed below. Discussion of other standards are included in the FSEIS. The definitions of old growth developed by the Regional Old Growth Task Force, documented in *Old-Growth Forest Types of the Northern Region* (Green et al, 2005) were used in the validation and analysis process of old growth in this project. These definitions of old growth have been incorporated into Forest Plan standard *10a*. The Idaho Panhandle National Forest is meeting Forest Plan standard *10b* in the Forest Plan which state, "Maintain at least 10 percent of the forested portion of the IPNF as old growth." The IPNF has allocated 12.1% of forested acres to be retained as old growth (FSEIS p. 168). The Hidden Cedar Project involves three old growth management units (OGMUs) on the St. Maries portion of the St. Joe Ranger District: OGMU 1, 9, and 14. OGMU 1 is approximately 8,106 acres in size with 514 acres, or 6.3%, allocated as old growth. OGMU 9 is approximately 10,363 acres in size with 703 acres, or 6.8%, allocated as old growth. OGMU 14 is approximately 9,541 acres in size with 985 acres, or 10.3%, allocated as old growth (FSEIS p. 168). The current old growth allocation within these three OGMUs meets Forest Plan standard *10c*, and the selected alternative will not change the allocation. Timber harvest is not proposed in any allocated old growth. None of the stands proposed for timber harvest meet minimum criteria for old growth (FSEIS p. 168). Old growth standard *10f* describes desirable patch size stating: "One or more old-growth stands per old-growth unit should be 300 acres or larger.....The remaining old-growth management stands should be at least 25 acres in size. Preferred size is 80 plus acres." OGMUs 1, 9 and 14 are in compliance with old growth standard *10f* (FSEIS pp. 168-169). No road construction is proposed within allocated old growth stands, so this proposal is in compliance with old growth standard *10g* (FSEIS p. 169).
- Plant Species at Risk: The selected alternative will meet the intent of the Forest Plan for the management of plant species at risk (FSEIS p. 183). One Forest Plan management goal is to "manage habitat to maintain populations of identified sensitive species of animals and plants". A Forest Plan standard for sensitive species is to "manage the habitat of species listed on the Regional Sensitive Species List to prevent further declines in populations which could lead to Federal listing under the Endangered Species Act". The Forest Plan also identifies the need to

"Determine the status and distribution of Threatened, Endangered, and Rare (sensitive) plants on the IPNF". The project complies with these Forest Plan goals and standards. Inventoried locations of rare plants populations were found in Units 7, 16, 24, 30, 35, and 46. The individuals or plant populations in Units 7, 16, 30, and 46 will be buffered from any road or harvest activity (Table 8). Units 24 and 35 will not be treated and are not included in Alternative F Modified.

- Range: The selected alternative will meet the intent of the Forest Plan for range (FSEIS p. 192). Management directive states that "transitory range in existing allotments may be used where compatible with the objectives of the specific management areas" and that forage production will not be reduced. The Forest Plan standard states "opportunities for grazing and other uses of public range resources will be managed to serve the welfare of local residents and communities".
- Recreation: The selected alternative will be within Forest Plan standards for recreation because a diversity of recreational opportunities will be provided, and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes will remain the same (FSEIS p. 201).
- Scenery: Alternative F, with associated design features and site-specific mitigation measures, will meet Forest Plan standards for visual quality (FSEIS p. 206).
- Soils: All treatment units will meet the Forest Plan Soils Standard of maintaining acceptable productivity on 80% of activity areas (FSEIS pp. 236-237). At least 80 percent of the activity areas will be maintained in a condition of acceptable productivity potential. Soil productivity will be improved on 101 acres of decompacted and recontoured roads in Alternative F Modified (Table 12). Special monitoring and mitigation features were identified to protect soil quality and productivity in Unit 48 (Table 8 and Table 10). Soils in Unit 48 will be monitored after timber harvest and after fuels treatment. If soil standards are not met, landings and skid trails in the unit will be decompacted. Estimates for Unit 48 indicate the proposed activities, added to the existing condition, will result in approximately 20% detrimental disturbance (Table 3-51). Unit 48 has approximately 7% existing detrimental disturbance that needs to be incorporated into the harvest design to keep potential impacts at or below thresholds. Proposed monitoring within this unit will verify soil impacts. If they are over the standard then landings and skid trails will be decompacted. Skid trail decompaction is expected to be moderately effective. On areas compacted by activities decompaction results in an estimated 30-50% recovery (FSEIS pp. 224 and 237). In Unit 48 approximately 1.2 to 2.0 acres of skid trail would be decompacted (SSW-76), and if the treatment is 30-50% effective the estimated recovery would be one-third to one acre. Harvest activity along with decompacting skid trails would result in a detrimental disturbance between 14% and 18% (FSEIS p. 224) which is within the Forest Plan standard.

To protect soil productivity and follow Regional soil quality guidelines, helicopter logging will be used for Unit 36, and the temporary road that was proposed will not be constructed. Unit 40 will not be implemented because it may not have met Regional soil productivity guidelines (FSEIS pp. 226, 236).

Sufficient large, coarse woody debris will be maintained for soil productivity, tree tops will be left in units, and slash will be left on the ground over winter to leach nutrients into the soil. Design standards will be sufficient to maintain productivity (FSEIS pp. 27, 237).

- Water: The project complies with Forest Plan goals and standards for water (FSEIS p. 298). Management activities on NFS lands will not significantly impair the long-term productivity of the water resource, and they will meet or exceed state water quality standards. All action alternatives would result in a long-term net decrease in sediment production (FSEIS Table 3-75) which would improve water quality, improve habitat conditions and improve support of beneficial uses. Stream temperatures would not be affected (FSEIS pp. 293, 295-296, 299). BMPs would be implemented in all action alternatives (Design Feature 10), and their effectiveness should be high (FSEIS pp. 54, 222, 238, 282, 298). Although models estimate slight increases in water yield for Alternative F Modified; it is unlikely that the proposed activities would increase water yields to levels that would cause appreciable changes to stream channels or sediment transport (FSEIS p. 245).

RHCAs are identified for watersheds of the Hidden Cedar Area. Landslide-prone areas and streams would have buffers applied to them to provide stream shading and prevent sediment entry into the stream system, as required by the Inland Native Fish Strategy Forest Plan Amendment.

See the discussion below concerning the Clean Water Act and State Water Quality Laws and Regulations. Alternative F Modified would remove 34 additional stream crossings in addition to the 22 stream crossings that were removed before the 2002 ROD was withdrawn.

- Wildlife: The selected alternative is consistent with applicable Forest Plan goals, direction, standards, and guidelines for the management of wildlife habitat and species populations (FSEIS p. 355). See additional discussion about Threatened and Endangered species under the Endangered Species Act below. Viable populations of management indicator species (elk, marten, moose, and pileated woodpecker) will be maintained (FSEIS pp. 307, 309-310, 324, 327-328, 330-331, 333, 340-342). Alternative F Modified will result in a 1,580-acre increase in security areas and a 22 percent increase in elk habitat potential for the combined Cedar/Hidden Elk Analysis Area (FSEIS pp. 331, 333). Moose are known to occur and are relatively common in the wildlife analysis area. The parameters used to evaluate effects on elk and other MIS are applicable and sufficient for addressing potential effects on moose (FSEIS pp. 309-310). The St. Maries River Drainage is and will remain an area of low integrity for marten. This condition most likely will exist independent of condition and management on NFS lands in the St. Maries River Drainage and the Hidden Cedar Wildlife Analysis Area. The relatively small changes in the amount of mature/older forest structure and young forest structure will not appreciably affect the availability of suitable marten habitat, and there will be no change in the quality of the "subdrainage". There will be a negligible change in the amount and distribution of future suitable habitat as succession continues to move the area towards a moderate- or high-quality subdrainage. The selected alternative will result in a small decrease in the risk to trapping/vulnerability for marten through road decommissioning and storage (FSEIS pp. 341-342). Riparian planting will begin the process of restoring/moving the riparian habitat closer to historic conditions thereby improving habitat for marten (FSEIS p. 342). Alternative F Modified will maintain suitable habitat to support pileated woodpeckers in a minimum of four home ranges (FSEIS p. 328). The project will meet Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards for cavity habitat (FSEIS p. 311). Habitat for sensitive species will be managed to prevent further declines in populations which could lead to federal listing under the ESA (FSEIS pp. 337-355). There will be no impact on black swift, common loon, flammulated owl, fringed myotis, northern bog lemming, peregrine falcon,

pygmy nuthatch, Townsend's big-eared bat, and wolverine. The project may impact individuals or habitat but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability to the population or species of black-backed woodpecker, western (boreal) toad, Coeur d'Alene Salamander, fisher, and northern goshawk (FSEIS Appendix F).

36 CFR 219 (references to 36 CFR 219 are to the 2005 rule unless specifically noted otherwise)

The 2005 regulations at 36 CFR 219 replace, with few exceptions, all previous versions of 219 relative to project and activity decisions made after January 5, 2005. The regulations promulgated in 1982¹ and in 2000 have been superceded and are no longer in effect. In addition, the 2005 rule states, "Except as specifically provided, none of the requirements of [36 CFR 219 (2005)] applies to projects or activities" (219.2(c)). Notable 36 CFR 219 considerations that do relate to project and activity decisions include:

- **FSM / FSH:** The 219 regulations now provide that requirements for project or activity planning are established in the Forest Service Directive System rather than the regulations. The 2005 planning rule at 36 CFR 219.2(c) specifies that none of the requirements of the rule apply to projects except as specifically provided below.
- **Suitability:** Identification of lands not suitable for timber production is required in the plan, but final determination of suitability for timber production needs to be made in "project and activity decision-making" (The 2005 regulations refer to these as, "the planning regulations in effect before November 9, 2000 (See 36 CFR parts 200 to 299, Revised as of July 1, 2000).") For brevity, they are simply called the "1982" rule here. All proposed vegetative treatments are on lands suitable for timber production (FSEIS p. 154).
- **MIS:** For Forests with plans "developed, amended, or revised using" the 1982 rule, 36 CFR 219.14(f) provides new direction on complying, "with any obligations relating to management indicator species." Specifically, the Responsible Official "may comply with any obligations relating to management indicator species by considering data and analysis relating to habitat unless the plan specifically requires population monitoring or population surveys for the species. Site-specific monitoring or surveying of a proposed project or activity area is not required..."

FSM 1921.12a – Timber Management Requirements

The minimum specific management requirements for projects and activities that must be met in carrying out projects and activities for the National Forest System (NFS) are set forth in this section. Under 16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(E), a Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities to harvest timber on NFS lands only where:

1. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged. Alternative F Modified will not irreversibly damage soil, slope, or other watershed conditions (FSEIS pp. 236-237, 298-299).
2. There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest (FSM 1921.12g). With Alternative F Modified approximately 180 acres would require regeneration, and these areas can be restocked within five years

(FSEIS pp. 153-154). Analysis of current and historical regeneration data for the project area support the conclusion that adequate stocking of the proposed harvest units is assured with site preparation efforts occurring in a timely manner following harvest. The project file contains supporting documentation of current and historical reforestation data (VEG-25 and SVEG-2).

3. Streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water are protected 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. The timber harvest associated with Alternative F Modified will not adversely affect water conditions (FSEIS pp. 298-299) or fish habitat (FSEIS pp. 131-132).

4. 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. The decision to implement the selected alternative is based on a variety of reasons as discussed in this record of decision, not solely on economics. Alternative F Modified does not have the highest estimated present net value (FSEIS Table 3-8 p. 74).

A Responsible Official may authorize projects and activities on NFS lands using cutting methods, such as clearcutting, seed tree cutting, shelterwood cutting, and other cuts designed to regenerate an even-aged stand of timber, only where:

1. For clearcutting, it is the optimum method; or where seed tree, shelterwood, and other cuts are determined to be appropriate to meeting the objectives and requirements of the relevant plan (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(i)). I have determined that clearcutting is the optimal method of treatment for Units 20, 21, 32, 46, 47, and 48 in the selected alternative. My determination is based upon diagnosis found in the project file (PF: SVEG- 3-6, 15), and the evaluation of effects found in Chapter 3 of the FEIS (pp. 154).

2. The interdisciplinary review has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts have been assessed on each advertised sale area and the cutting methods are consistent with the multiple use of the general area (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(ii)). An interdisciplinary team reviewed Alternative F Modified and determined the proposed timber harvest activities are consistent with the multiple use of the general area (FSEIS Chapter 3)

3. Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (16 U.S.C. 1604 (g)(3)(F)(iii)). Alternative F Modified, with associated design features, meets the Forest Plan standards for visual quality (FSEIS p. 206).

4. Cuts are carried out according to the maximum size limit requirements for areas to be cut during one harvest operation (FSM 1921.12e). All proposed openings are within size limitations (FSEIS p. 153-154).

5. Timber cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, esthetic resources, cultural and historic resources, and the regeneration of timber resources. Timber harvest will be carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soils (FSEIS pp. 236-237), watershed (FSEIS pp. 298-299), fish (FSEIS pp. 131-132; Appendix F), wildlife (FSEIS pp. 355; Appendix F), recreation (FSEIS p. 201), esthetic resources or scenic quality (FSEIS p. 206), cultural and

historic resources (FSEIS p. 155), and regeneration of timber resources (FSEIS pp. 153-154).

6. Stands of trees are harvested according to requirements for culmination of mean annual increment of growth (FSEIS p. 154, [16 U.S.C. 1604 (m); FSM 1921.12f; FSH 1909.12, ch. 60]).

The Clean Water Act

A declared objective of the Clean Water Act (CWA) of 1977 (33 U.S.C. 1323) is to "...restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity..." of streams (U.S., 1988). Alternative F Modified will meet the Clean Water Act objective of restoring or maintaining biological integrity as described in the analysis of alternatives (FSEIS pp. 132 and 298). The CWA directs the Forest Service to meet state substantive and procedural requirements respecting control and abatement of pollution. Through a Memorandum of Understanding with the State of Idaho (IDWR, 1993), the Forest Service is responsible for implementing nonpoint source pollution control and the Idaho Water Quality Standards (IDAPA 58.01.02) on National Forest System lands. Forest Service water quality policy is to: promote the improvement, protection, restoration and maintenance of water quality to support beneficial uses, promote and apply approved Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control non-point source pollution, comply with state and national water quality goals, and design monitoring programs for specific activities and practices that might affect in-stream beneficial uses (IDWR, 1993).

Buffer strips would protect the physical integrity of the water within the Hidden Cedar area from temperature modification and sediment routing. The chemical integrity of the water would not be affected by activities because no toxic pollutants are expected to enter the stream system. No fueling of equipment would occur within RHCA buffers. The overall sediment level is expected to decrease with the completion of all activities including activities from the 2002 Hidden Cedar 2002 ROD. Also, a cumulative reduction in sediment production is expected for the St. Maries River in the project area when activities on National Forest System lands and other lands are considered (FSEIS pp. 298).

The biological integrity of the water in the Hidden Cedar area would be protected and enhanced from proposed activities. See Table 12 for number of stream crossing removals and sediment reductions that would enhance water quality. Riparian plantings will eventually decrease stream temperature and provide aquatic habitat improvements. Additionally plantings would have the capability to attenuate flood peaks and enhance floodplain development.

State Water Quality Laws & Regulations

The State of Idaho established the Idaho Water Quality Law (§39-3601 et. seq.) and Water Quality Standards (IDAPA, 58.01.02) designed to protect beneficial uses. The State's Antidegradation Policy (IDAPA 58.01.02.051) directs that existing uses and the level of water quality necessary to protect those uses must be maintained and protected. In order to meet the intent of the CWA, the Forest Service is responsible for implementing non-point source pollution control and the Idaho Water Quality Standards on National Forest System lands.

Designated beneficial uses for the St. Maries River below the confluence of the West and Middle Forks to Carpenter Creek are Cold Water Aquatic Life, Primary Contact Recreation, Domestic Water Supply and Special Resource Water designations and below Carpenter Creek Cold Water

Aquatic Life and Primary Contact Recreation (IDAPA 58.01.02.110.11; IDHW, 1988). Tributaries (including West Fork St. Maries River) are Undesignated Surface Waters (IDAPA 58.01.02.101.01); existing beneficial uses are aquatic life (cold water biota), and primary or secondary contact recreation (IDAPA 58.01.02.101.01.a).

The West Fork St. Maries River and the main stem St. Maries River below Clarkia are listed on Idaho's 2002 303(d) list of Water Quality Limited Water Bodies. The pollutants of concern are temperature and sediment for the West Fork and the St. Maries River from the confluence of the Middle and West Forks to Carpenter Creek. For the St. Maries River below Carpenter Creek to the confluence with Santa Creek it is listed for temperature.

In 2003 Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) were developed for the West Fork St. Maries River (West Fork) and the Lower St. Maries River for temperature and sediment. The West Fork sediment TMDL calls for reducing the amount of sediment produced by 180 tons/year from National Forest System (NFS) lands and 168 tons/year from non-National Forest lands. The TMDL for the St. Maries River reach from Clarkia to the mouth of Emerald Creek calls for reducing sediment by 481 tons/year from NFS lands and 1,032 tons/year from non-National Forest lands. The temperature TMDL calls for increasing shade canopy over the stream channels by 60-85% in the Lower St. Maries and 43-90% in the West Fork.

The selected alternative will meet Idaho Water Quality Law, with the reasoning stated above for the Clean Water Act. Overall, the amount of sediment produced will be reduced by an estimated 51.7 tons/year from National Forest System lands when all Hidden Cedar Project activities are considered. Beneficial uses will be maintained through the application of best management practices and design features for protection of soil and water discussed above (FSEIS p. 299).

Trees will not be harvested in riparian habitat conservation areas, so shade will be maintained along stream channels; and proposed riparian plantings will move toward meeting the temperature TMDL in place for the St. Maries River (FSEIS pp. 293).

Sediment production would be lowered by decommissioning and storing roads. Best management practices will be utilized during road recontouring and stream crossing rehabilitation. The short-term sediment generated during this work was included in the sediment analysis which shows a net decrease of sediment in the impaired watershed. The short-term sediment generated during road recontouring and stream crossing rehabilitation is not expected to cause further beneficial use impairment because it is a short-term effect at each crossing ultimately resulting in a long-term reduction; the activity is essential to the promotion of public interest; it is a soil stabilization measure; and it is activity which results in overall enhancement or maintenance of beneficial uses (FSEIS pp. 293 and 299).

Analysis indicates that Alternative F Modified would not increase water yield to an extent that it would accelerate channel erosion (FSEIS pp. 291). Analysis also shows the combined and cumulative effects of Alternative F Modified would not degrade water quality with respect to sediment in these segments (FSEIS pp. 290 and 297).

The State of Idaho Department of Environmental Quality was notified of this project, and they were sent a copy of the DSEIS. Based on some of their comments, changes were made in the Final SEIS (FSEIS Appendix E, Response to Comments).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rated the DSEIS as Environmental Concerns – Inadequate Information. The EPA's primary concern was the potential for adverse water quality

impacts due to the proposed increase in road miles. Additional information on water yield was added to the Final SEIS (FSEIS pp. 259, 261-262, 265, 269, 278, 291). Complete responses to the agency's comments (letter #8) are located in the FSEIS Appendix E. The major points are discussed here.

The EPA-approved TMDL for the St. Maries River used a sediment model. The Hidden Cedar analysis was based on that model. The overall sediment level for the St. Maries River would be reduced in all alternatives. The sediment analysis accounted for the construction of permanent roads. Twelve miles of road decommissioning and storage approved in the 2002 Hidden Cedar ROD 2002 was completed before that decision was withdrawn.

In addition to the information contained in the DSEIS, a water yield – peakflow analysis was conducted for the USGS St. Maries River gauging station at Santa, Idaho. The trendline (including the extrapolated data) for the St. Maries River also shows a slight decrease in annual peakflow for the 40-year period of record and the extrapolated data. This corroborates observations of insubstantial stream channel adjustment in a comparison of aerial photographs from 1993 and 2002 and the conclusion that water yield is not appreciably increasing nor appreciably affecting the stream channel of the St. Maries River.

The Endangered Species Act (16 USC 1531 Et Seq.)

As required by the Endangered Species Act, biological assessments were prepared addressing the potential impact to threatened or endangered species utilizing the project area. The analysis concluded that this project would have no effect on water howellia, Spalding's catchfly, bald eagle, Canada lynx or grizzly bear, is not likely to adversely affect the bull trout and is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the gray wolf (FSEIS, Appendix F).

Through informal consultation, the USFWS concurred that the project is not likely to adversely affect the bull trout and is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the gray wolf (FSEIS Appendix F). The activities in Alternative F Modified are virtually identical to those of the 2002 decision. The potential impacts to Threatened and Endangered species and the determination of effects will not change. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service agreed that re-initiation of informal consultation is not required because there is no substantive change in the proposed actions (FSEIS Appendix F).

National Historic Preservation Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act and Native American Grave Protection Act

Systematic inventory and reports are complete for this project area, and the Idaho Historic Preservation Office and Native American groups have been given the opportunity to comment (FSEIS Appendix E). The project was discussed with representatives of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe during a meeting in March 2006 (PF: SPI-1), and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe received copies of the Draft SEIS. There is potential for finding additional sites during project implementation. If eligible sites are found within an area of potential effect, the project will be redesigned to avoid the site or measures will be designed to mitigate the effect to the project on the site (Design Feature 3).

Compliance with Other Laws, Regulations, and Policies

I have considered the effects of this project on low income and minority populations and concluded that it is consistent with the intent of the Environmental Justice Act of 1994 (EO 12898). No impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified (project file: SEJ-1).

The Northern Region Overview and Scientific Findings for the Interior Columbia River Basin

The Northern Region Overview focuses on priorities within northern Idaho and Montana for restoring ecosystem health and availability of recreation opportunities. The Overview concludes that there are multiple concerns in the Northwest Zone of the Regions and that “this sub-region holds the greatest opportunity for vegetation treatments and restoration with timber sales. From a social and economic standpoint, using timber harvest for ecological restoration would be a benefit to many communities that still have a strong economic dependency, more so than other zones in the Region.” Timber management fits well with the forest types in northwestern Idaho and can be used to provide openings to restore larch, white pine, and ponderosa pine, reduce fire risk and maintain upland grass and shrub communities. The selected alternative is consistent with the Northern Region Overview and the Scientific Findings for the Interior Columbia River Basin by promoting long-lived, early-seral tree species like larch and white pine with the proposed timber harvest. At the same time it will benefit the local economy.

VII. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Pete Ratcliffe, Project Leader, St. Joe Ranger District, 222 S. 7th Street, Suite 1, St. Maries, Idaho 83861; (208)245-2531.

VIII. Appeal & Implementation Information

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

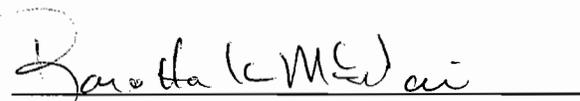
Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project being appealed. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word (.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, 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 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.

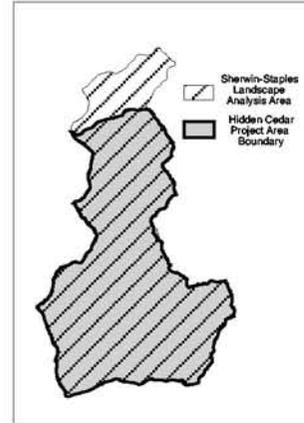
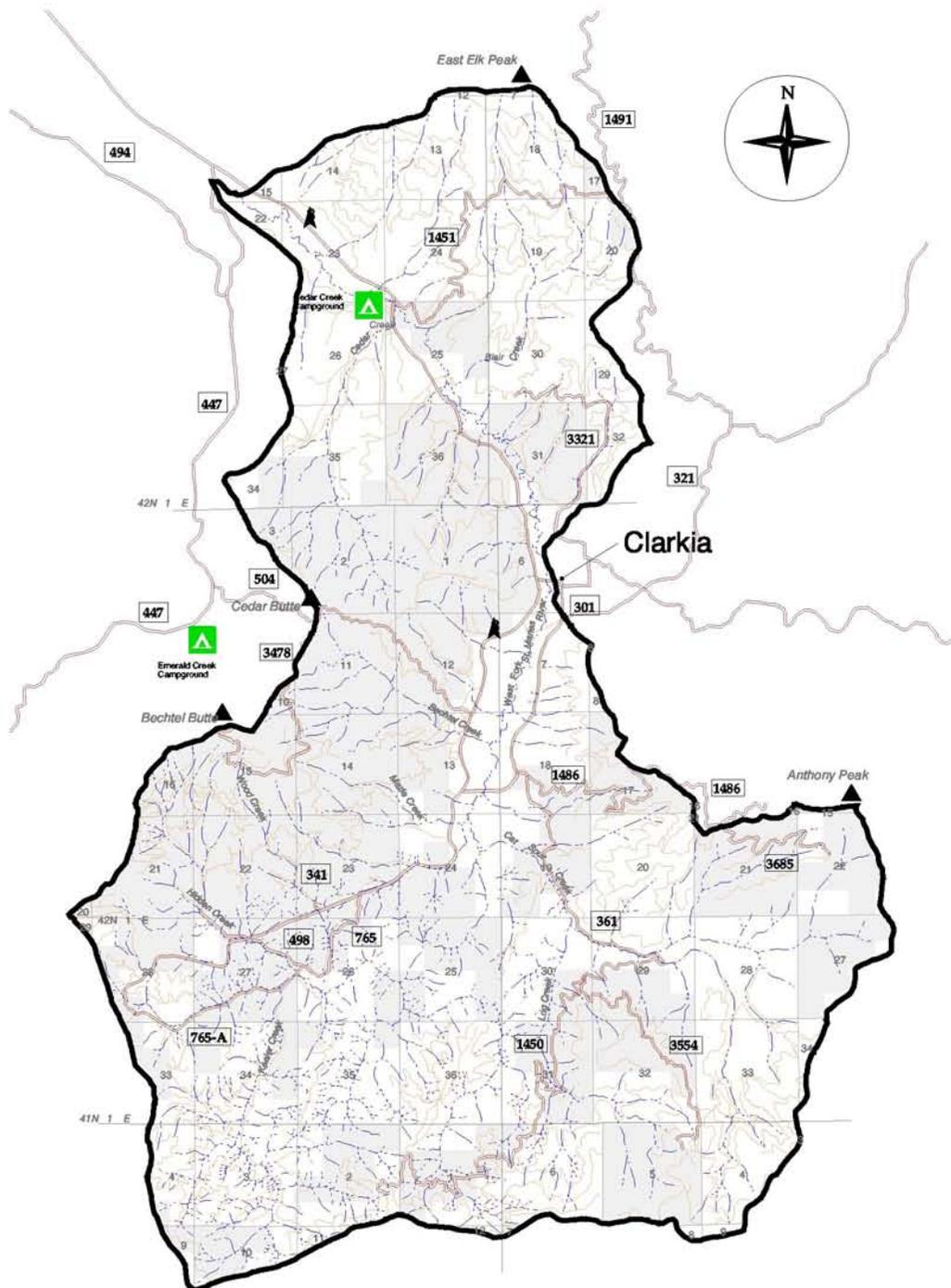


RANOTTA K. MCNAIR
Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

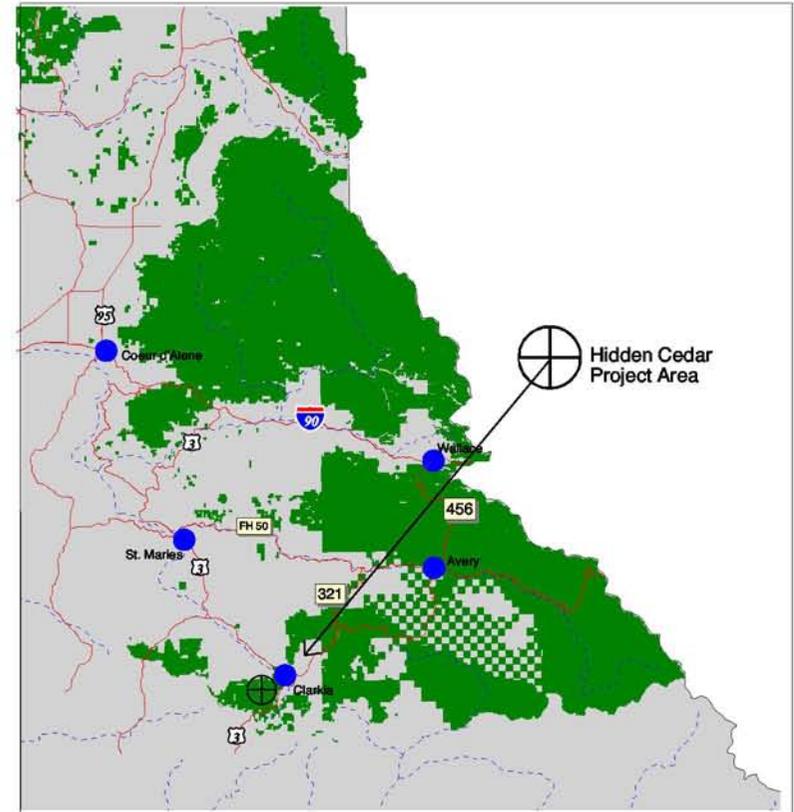
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Date

Vicinity Map Hidden Cedar Supplemental EIS



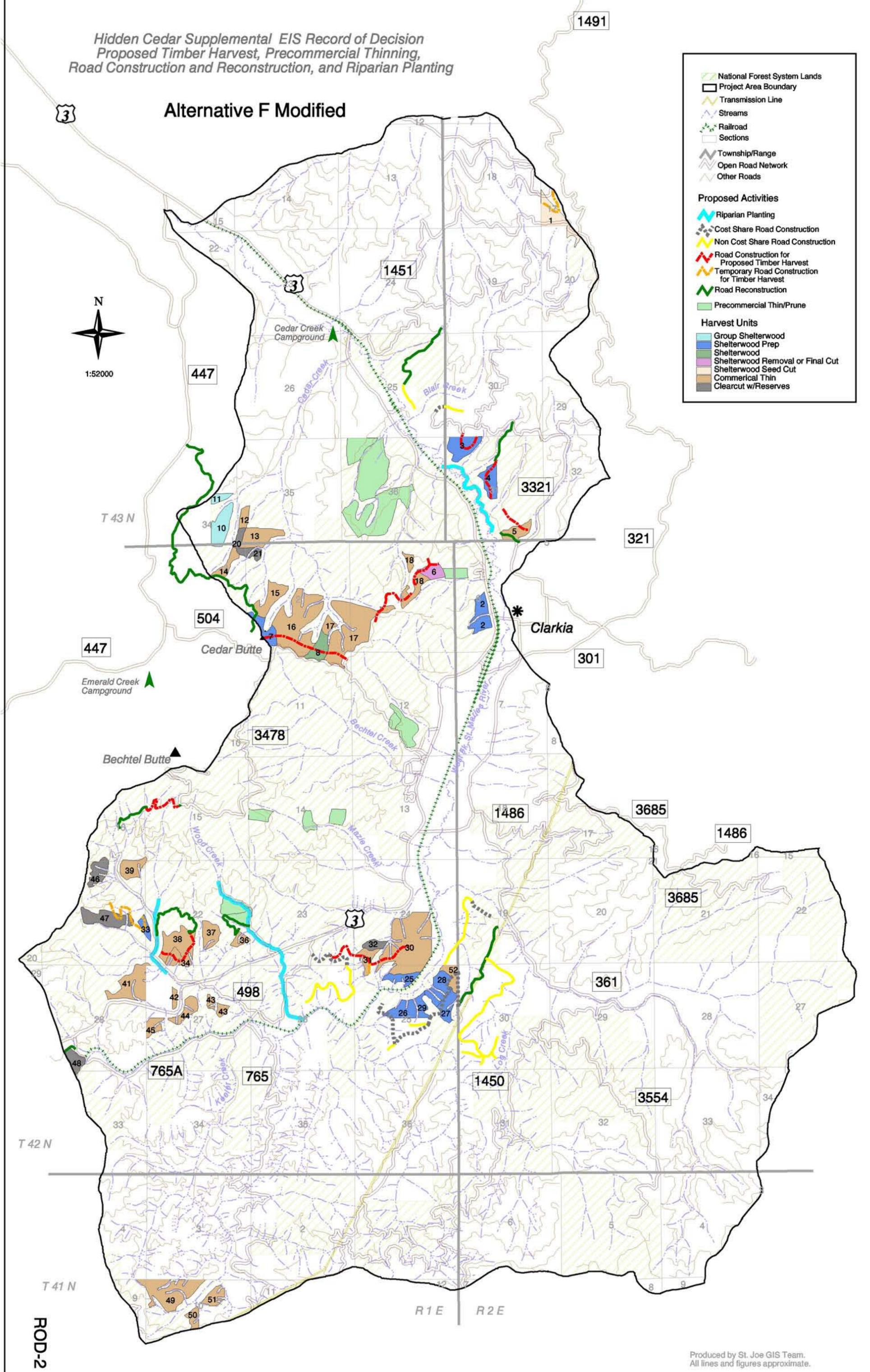
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Hidden Cedar Supplemental EIS Record of Decision
 Proposed Timber Harvest, Precommercial Thinning,
 Road Construction and Reconstruction, and Riparian Planting

Alternative F Modified

	National Forest System Lands
	Project Area Boundary
	Transmission Line
	Streams
	Railroad
	Sections
	Township/Range
	Open Road Network
	Other Roads
Proposed Activities	
	Riparian Planting
	Cost Share Road Construction
	Non Cost Share Road Construction
	Road Construction for Proposed Timber Harvest
	Temporary Road Construction for Timber Harvest
	Road Reconstruction
	Precommercial Thin/Prune
Harvest Units	
	Group Shelterwood
	Shelterwood Prep
	Shelterwood
	Shelterwood Removal or Final Cut
	Shelterwood Seed Cut
	Commercial Thin
	Clearcut w/Reserves



ROD-2

Alternative F Modified - Road Management

(Changes from Existing Condition Highlighted)

Post Activity Road Mgmt of New Construction

- Gate
- Barrier
- Long-Term Storage (LTS)
- Decommission

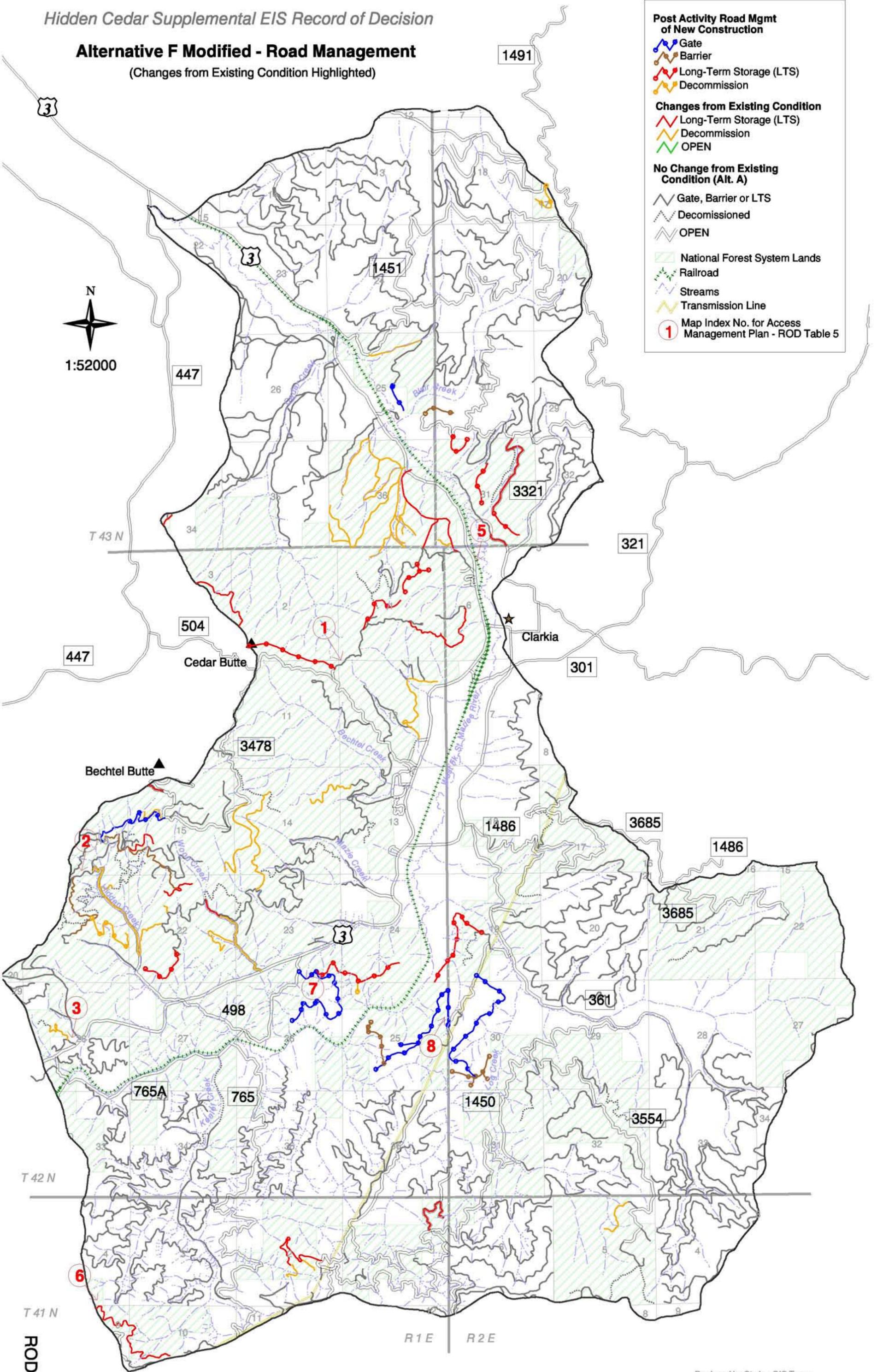
Changes from Existing Condition

- Long-Term Storage (LTS)
- Decommission
- OPEN

No Change from Existing Condition (Alt. A)

- Gate, Barrier or LTS
- Decommissioned
- OPEN

National Forest System Lands
Railroad
Streams
Transmission Line
Map Index No. for Access Management Plan - ROD Table 5



ROD-3

HIDDEN CEDAR PROJECT RECORD OF DECISION

**APPENDIX 2:
VEGETATION TREATMENT SUMMARY**

APPENDIX 2 –VEGETATION TREATMENT SUMMARY

Alternative F Modified

Yarding Systems: GB=ground base; C-S = cable/skyline; H = helicopter,

Fuel Treatments: BB = broadcast burn; GP = grapple pile; HP = hand pile; LP = lop; JP = jackpot burn

1	39	1	Blair Creek Merry Creek	Shelterwood seed cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 25-30 sq.ft./ac.	75	20	C-S/GB	GP/BB
2	29	4	W. Fork St. Maries River	Shelterwood preparatory cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. There will be a 100' "no treat" buffer between highway and east end of unit.	70	45-50	C-S	JP
3	35	4	St. Maries River	Shelterwood preparatory cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. Openings will be restricted to \leq 1 acre in size.	75	45-50	C-S/GB	LP/HP
4	25	4	St. Maries River	Shelterwood preparatory cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. Openings will be restricted to \leq 1 acre in size.	70-75	45-50	C-S/GB	LP
5	22	4	St. Maries River	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120 sq.ft./ac.	65	45-50	C-S/GB	GP/LP/HP
6	16	4	St. Maries River	Shelterwood Removal Cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 35-40 sq.ft./ac., or approx. 35-45 overstory trees/ac.	75	35-40	C-S/GB	LP
7	20	1	Cedar Creek	Shelterwood preparatory cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	75-80	60	C-S/GB	GP/LP
8	22	1	Cedar Creek	Irregular shelterwood cut; generally CT but will have variable BA retention and openings of up to 1.5-2 tree lengths in size in disease centers.	75-80	60	C-S/GB	GP/LP
10	32	4	Cedar Creek	Group Shelterwood Harvest; approx. 1/3 to 1/2 of stand would be in openings of 3-5 acres in size, and remainder of stand would be CT retaining approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. BA	75-85	45	H	GP
11	8	4	Cedar Creek	Group Shelterwood Harvest; approx. 1/3 to 1/2 of stand would be in openings of 3-5 acres in size, and remainder of stand would be CT retaining approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. BA.	75-85	45-50	H	GP
12	10	4	Cedar Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 100 sq.ft./ac.	70-75	45-50	H	GP
13	36	4	Cedar Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	65-70	45-50	H	GP
14	15	4	Cedar Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 140 sq.ft./ac.	80-85	45-50	C-S/H	GP
15	29	4	Cedar Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	85-90	60	H	GP/LP
16	109	1	Cedar Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 140 sq.ft./ac.	85-90	60	C-S/GB	GPLP
17	120	1	Cedar Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	75-80	60	C-S/GB	GP/LP
18	28	1	St. Maries River	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	75-80	50-55	C-S/GB	GP/LP
20	14	4	Cedar Creek	Clearcut w/reserves; removing approx. 90-95% of existing Basal Area.	65-70	5	H	BB
21	6	4	Cedar Creek	Clearcut w/reserves; removing approx. 90-95% of existing Basal Area.	65-70	5	H	BB
25	16	1	W.Fork St. Maries	Shelterwood Preparatory Cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 100-120 sq.ft./ac.	65	50	H	LP
26	23	1	W.Fork St. Maries	Shelterwood Preparatory Cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	75-80	45-50	H	LP
27	19	1	W. Fork St. Maries	Shelterwood Preparatory Cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. Openings restricted to \leq 1.5 acres in size.	75-80	50	C-S/GB	GP/LP

Unit	Acre	MA	Drainage	Treatment Description Summary	Existing % Crown Closure	Estimated % Retained Crown Closure	Logging Method	Fuels Treatment
28	31	4	W. Fork St. Maries	Shelterwood Preparatory Cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. and openings restricted to ≤ 1 acre in size	80-85	50	C-S	LP
29	9	1 & 4	W. Fork St. Maries	Shelterwood Preparatory Cut; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. and openings restricted to ≤ 1.5 acre in size	80	50	H	LP
30	130	1 & 4	West Fk St. Maries (50%) Mazie Creek (50%)	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./acre and feathering 2 tree lengths width along north and west boundary.	70-75	50-55	GB/C-S/H	GP/LP
31	15	1	W. Fork St. Maries Mazie Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120 sq.ft./ac.	70	50-55	GB/C-S	GP
32	11	1	Mazie Creek	Clearcut w/reserves; removing approx. 90-95% of existing Basal Area	65	5	GB/C-S	BB
33	9	4	Hidden Creek	Shelterwood Preparatory Cut; retaining a Basal area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac. and openings restricted to ≤ 1 acre in size	80-85	50-55	C-S/GB	JP
34	18	4	Hidden Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 90-100 w/ ave. spacing of 20-21 ft, openings restricted to ≤ 1 acres and feathering 100' strip along southern boundary.	70-75	50-55	C-S/GB	GP/LP
36	8	4	Wood Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	70-75	50-55	H	GP
37	21	4	Hdden Creek Wood Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120 sq.ft./ac.	80-85	50-55	H	GP
38	41	4	Hidden Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 110-120 sq.ft./ac., openings restricted to ≤ 1 acre in size, feather approx. 100' along southern boundary.	75	50	GB/C-S	GP/LP
39	22	4	Hidden Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 140 sq.ft./ac.	75-80	50-55	H	LP
41	46	4	Hidden Creek (50%) West Fk St. Maries (50%)	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac., irregular density, 200' no treat buffer along southern edge next to highway, 50-75 foot feathering along no treat buffer.	80	50-55	H	LP/GP/HP
42	5	4	Hidden Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 140 sq.ft./ac., 200' no treat buffer along southern & eastern edge next to highway, 50-75 foot feathering along the no treat buffer.	85-90	50-55	H	HP
43	12	4	Hidden Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	80	45-50	H	GP/LP
44	18	4	Hidden Creek W. Fork St. Maries	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120 sq.ft./ac., 200' no treat area along highway at northwest bdy. and 50-75' feathering along this unit edge.	75	50-55	H	GP/LP
45	13	4	W. Fork St. Maries	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac., 50-75' feathering along the northern boundary.	75-80	50-55	H/C-S	LP
46	20	4	Hidden Creek	Clearcut w/reserves; removing approx. 90-95% of current basal area.	65-70	5	C-S	BB
47	38	4	Hidden Creek	Clearcut w/reserves; removing approx. 90-95% of current basal area.	75	5	C-S/GB	BB
48	17	4	W. Fork St. Maries	Clearcut w/reserves; removing approx. 90-95% of current basal area.	75-80	5	GB	BB
49	68	1	Keeler Creek	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac.	80	50	C-S/GB	GP/LP
50	10	1	Keeler Creek	Commercial Thinning, retaining a Basla Area of approx. 120- 140 sq.ft./ac.	80-85	50-55	H	LP
51	15	1	Keeler Creek	Commercial Thinning, retaining a Basla Area of approx. 120- 140 sq.ft./ac	85	50-55	H	LP
52	18	1	W. Fork St. Maries	Commercial Thinning; retaining a Basal Area of approx. 120-140 sq.ft./ac., variable density. Openings restricted to ≤ 1 acre in size.	70-75	45	C-S/GB	GP/LP

Note: 1) Existing and estimated retained crown closure are **weighted values** for unit overall.

Pre-commercial Thinning

Unit		
A	29	St. Maries River 4
B	83	“
C	77	“
D	15	“
E	8	Bechtel
G	31	W. Fork St. Maries
H	7	Bechtel/W. Fork St. Maries

I	15	Wood
J	16	Wood
K	14	Mazie
L	13	Mazie
M	16	Mazie
Total	324	