

**SALMON RIVER RECREATION SITES RENOVATION PROJECT  
RESPONSE TO PREDECISIONAL EA COMMENTS**

This document displays the comments received on the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation predecisional EA, and the Forest Service response to these comments.

The Salmon River Ranger District initiated the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project in June of 2006. On August 15, 2006, the Salmon River Ranger District sent informational letters regarding the proposed action to interested individuals and organizations on the Nez Perce National Forest's and the Salmon River Ranger District's NFMA/NEPA mailing lists, and to 21 outfitters who operate on the Salmon River. These comments were incorporated into design of the alternatives and the analysis for the predecisional EA.

On December 15, 2008, the Salmon River Ranger District sent informational letters to interested individuals and organizations on the Nez Perce National Forest's mandatory mailing list and to those individuals and organizations that responded to the proposed action scoping, and to other interested personnel. The project description was also included in the Forest's Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions from 2006 to the present.

We received 9 written responses to the predecisional EA, and one verbal response. Most commenters showed support for the project. Table 1 lists the individual respondents and the number assigned to their letter or written documentation of office visit, for tracking purposes. Table 2 shows the actual comments from the respondents, and the Forest Service's response to each comment.

**Table 1. Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation Project Respondents**

Letter Number	Respondent
1	Friends of the Clearwater, Gary Macfarlane
2	Silver Cloud Expeditions, Chris Swersey and Mary Wright
3	Mackay Bar Ranch, Ken and Andrea Cameron
4	Whitewater Expeditions and Five Mile Bar Landowners, Heinz Sippel and Barbara Eisenberg
5	Shepp Ranch, Lynne Demerse and Michael A. Demerse
6	Idaho Conservation League, Brad Smith
7	Greg Wonacott
8	Rod Parks
9	Alison Steen, Yellow Jacket River Guides
10	Gene Meinen, Idaho County Road Superintendent

**Table 2. Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation Project Predecisional EA Comments and Responses**

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
1-1	Please refer to our earlier scoping comments on these boat launch projects.	See Attachment 1 below.
1-2	One of the major concerns with this is the lack of a range of alternatives. At least one action alternative should have been developed that would not likely adversely affect TES fish species.	<p>The Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project Interdisciplinary Team (ID team) considered a range of alternatives, including the no action, proposed action, and an alternative that addressed public comments and issues. The ID Team also considered three other alternatives, but determined through further analysis and discussion that those alternatives were not feasible or were outside the scope of this project.</p> <p>Alternatives 2 and 3 meet the purpose and need and are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the ESA-listed fish species, nor to destroy or adversely modify critical habitat (Project Record F.1-0005 (NOAA BO)).</p>
1-3	The alternatives in the EA fail to look at carrying capacity. The current use may well be above the social and ecological carrying capacity of the area. Current use certainly is too high for the existing use, at least according to the EA.	<p>While "...carrying capacity of the general area" ... is not defined we assume the commenter is concerned about recreational use and activities in the Salmon River corridor, and whether or not use can or should be sustained. Attachment 2 details some additional use data for certain activities and portions of the Salmon River corridor.</p> <p>Evaluating social and ecological effects associated with the undefined concept of "carrying capacity" for the Salmon River corridor would be extremely complex, involving many variables and countless activities, and thus is beyond the scope of this project. Improving and/or maintaining recreational infrastructure is critical for appropriately managing existing uses while projecting the natural resources in the project area.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
1-4	An alternative that reduced the permitted use should have been considered.	<p>The purpose and need of the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project is to decrease congestion at recreation sites along the Salmon River road by improving parking, traffic flow and boat ramps and developing changing areas. The renovations would provide a safer recreational facility through improved parking and driving delineation. This project addresses needs for improvement to facilities that serve as portals to the Frank Church Wilderness.</p> <p>River use decisions in the Frank Church RONRW were addressed during FCRONR planning and are not a part of the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project.</p>
1-5	...the EA has no estimates for river use (Corn Creek) prior to 2003. However, the FCRNR Plan FEIS includes such data. That data clearly show an increase in numbers since the 80s.	See Attachment 2 below for an additional recreation use summary.
1-6	The EA also fails to note that increasing use was a serious concern of the Wilderness Plan.	<p>Proposed renovations will occur at recreation sites located outside of Wilderness and not governed by the direction in the FC-RONR Wilderness Plan.</p> <p>See Attachment 2 below for an additional recreation use summary.</p>
1-7	Instead, the EA suggests (incorrectly) that the only desire of the wilderness plan was to expand facilities. As such, the EA is inadequate.	<p>Proposed renovations will occur at recreation sites located outside of Wilderness and not governed by the direction in the FC-RONR Wilderness Plan.</p> <p>See 1-4 purpose and need of the EA.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
1-8	The EA determines that the project won't harm values like fisheries prior to completion of the BO.	<p>The fisheries value will be maintained on the eligible "Recreation" river segment throughout implementation of this project (EA, 2008, p. 3-19 to 3-20). "Although site disturbances may occur, proposed activities would not change the presence of wild stocks or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species in the river" (EA, 2008, p. 3-19). Although there is a likelihood of disturbances, the diversity of species and habitat would be maintained. Therefore, the eligibility status for future inclusion into Wild and Scenic River system will be maintained.</p> <p>Biological Opinions are issued from a Regulatory Agency for actions determined to "May affect, Likely to Adversely Affect" a listed species and/or their habitat. Letters of concurrence are issued for projects with effects determinations other than "May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect."</p> <p>At the time the EA was released, the Nez Perce National Forest had received a US Fish and Wildlife Service letter of concurrence (USFWS), dated 7/3/08, indicating they had reached "concurrence that the project is not likely to adversely affect..." that concluded informal consultation on the proposed project.</p> <p>Additional consultation prior to release of the EA included communication with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-NMFS). A "Draft" Biological Assessment was presented to the Level 1 Team in April 2008. The Level 1 team consists of members from both the USFWS and NOAA-NMFS. Both agencies had reached closure on this project in June 2008. The Fisheries Biologist worked closely with NOAA-NMFS throughout completion of the EA as the Biological Opinion was being routed through the NMFS. The EA was released on 12/16/2008 and the BO was provided on 1/8/2009.</p>
1-9	Perhaps the biggest problem with the EA is the fact that the preferred alternative would likely adversely affect listed fish species. A BO as not been prepared by NOAA-Fisheries yet. Consultation is not done. As such, the conclusions in the EA are premature.	See Response to 1-8.

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
1-10	The disturbance of 1500+ feet of riparian area is significant.	<p>“The length of river habitat impacted at the ramp sites would range from 140 linear feet under the proposed action to 1,550 linear feet under Alternative 3” additionally, “... Riparian habitats immediately adjacent to the ramps (25 to 50 yards upriver/downriver from any of the launch area) may be adversely impacted to varying levels from heavy use by recreationists” (EA, 2008, p. 3-33). There is a potential for “Adverse” affects, and the 1,550 feet equates to less than a 1% impact to streambank and riparian habitat within a 15 mile stretch of the Salmon River.</p> <p>Table 3-9 (EA, 2008, p. 3-34) displays 1,550 “Linear feet of Bank or Channel Disturbance Below 100,000 cfs elevation.” This value acknowledges the potential for temporary impacts to water quality and fishery resources through the displacement of cobble and eroding sands creating short term pulses of turbidity.</p> <p>The effects determination “May Affect, Likely to Adversely Affect...” includes consideration of activities and disturbances with the riparian areas. Implementation of the design criteria, mitigation measures, and monitoring (EA, 2008, p. 3-37, 3-28) were included to help minimize these effects.</p>
1-11	The EA does not clearly show how PACFISH is met. It does not discuss the specific requirements in PACFISH and the forest plan. It simply concludes all will be well.	<p>The project interdisciplinary team identified issues requiring detail analysis. Riparian Function - Issue 1 (EA, p. 2-3) was included among those requiring detailed analysis. Design criteria were developed and incorporated into each action alternative. Such design criteria ensures consistency with the Payette and Nez Perce Forest Plans including RMOs and Standards and Guidelines as required by PACFISH (EA, 2008, p. 3-36 - 3-41).</p> <p>In order to address any impacts to RMO status and function at the proposed sites with renovations, parking area designs are shaped to direct surface water runoff away from direct delivery to water stream courses.</p>
2-1	We are generally pleased that this project is moving forward. It appears that NPNF has overcome significant funding and administrative barriers to implementation, and will finally be able to use rec dollars and other funding sources to execute this project.	Thank you for your comment!
2-2	We support construction of Ramp E:	Thank you for your comment!

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
2-3	<p>We don't support removal of Ramp B. Ramp B is used extensively during summer operation seasons, and there are times when all three existing ramps are used simultaneously, a trend which we have observed increasing over the past 21 years. I understand that this is a fish habitat question at issue, rather than one of function or total capacity. Please be aware that we are active in fish recovery efforts, and that our business depends on viable populations of fish. If the fishery consultation process required a swap from B to E to mitigate habitat issues, then the question is whether acres of habitat disturbed (see p.2-3, Issue 3) is truly a valid indicator. The actual footprint of the ramps in question that are actually in the river during migration, spawning and juvenile rearing is significantly less than the total footprint of the ramps. It's not clear that removal of ramp B creates a real mitigation advantage, based on figures shown in Table 2-5, p. 2-24. If the B to E swap was necessary during consultation to allow the plan to move forward, then so be it.</p>	<p>Extensive mixed float boat and jet boat recreational use of Ramp B has been noticed during certain water flows over the years.</p> <p>The removal of Ramp B was presented for analysis as part of the proposed alternative 3 during the planning process. Removal of Ramp B is not a mitigation measure and there is no requirement as part of the consultation process requiring removal of Ramp B concurrent with construction of Ramp E. The intent of the Interdisciplinary team was to present an option to encourage growth of willows and other beneficial vegetation that contributes to Riparian Management Objectives.</p> <p>To clarify, Table 2-5 (EA, 2008, p. 2-24) provides a comparison of the alternatives and effects to fisheries, not the value of removing ramp B as a required mitigation.</p>
2-4	<p>2-23 and 3-8: The proposed decrease in signage should be eliminated from Alternative 3. For years, the downstream end of the Wild section of the Salmon River has been operated with no or very low management presence. Beaches and camps that are cared for all summer are trashed during the fall shoulder season by less sophisticated, or less caring, or less frequent users. Signage and interpretive educational materials should be enhanced at Vinegar under any alternative renovation plan, including Alternative 3. As a cost factor, signage is relatively small in the overall size of this capital project. As a member of the Rec Fee RAC, I can attest that users of all stripes show consistently strong and broad based support for educational signage.</p>	<p>An expansion of informational services at Vinegar Creek and Spring Bar to emphasize powerboat use safety and minimum impact camping techniques is directed under the FC-RONR Management Plan (2003). The proposed decrease in signage is shown for Vinegar Creek boat ramp only (EA, 2008, p. 2-23, 3-8). Currently, there are a total of two information boards at Vinegar Creek. One information board and fee tube is located at the entrance to the ramp and a similar information board and fee tube is at the farthest upriver end of the parking area near Ramp A.</p> <p>Part of the sign and fee tube near Ramp A is underwater during high river flows. This results in ruined personal checks and money contained in the fee tube. The facility and parking renovations proposed at Vinegar Creek suggest creating interpretive panels, which currently do not exist, in addition to the information board. Although one less information board might be the end result of the renovations, the net gain of consolidating to one information area would include: (1) a dry location for the fee collection tube; (2) improved presentation of information through professionally developed interpretive panels; (3) efficient message and information updates at one location only; and (4) better utilization of space for traffic flow and parking.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
2-5	3-5: Regarding Table 3-1, Fire is a past, present, and future activity. 3-5: Regarding Table 3-1,...Recreation Site Development can be Reasonably Foreseen in the future as this area becomes increasingly popular.	<p>Because no fires occurred within the project area in the last year, we did not consider fire to be a “present” action.</p> <p>Factors we considered in determining whether an action or project was “reasonably foreseeable” for the purposes of cumulative impacts analysis included: whether a project had been federally approved; whether there was funding pending for the project; and whether there was evidence of active preparation to make a decision on alternatives to the project. Because no project met these criteria, we did not consider Recreation Site Development as reasonably foreseeable.</p>
2-6	3-11: Verbiage below Table 3-4 indicates “There are no use estimates prior to 2003.” This is not true, they do exist. I do not believe that omitting pre-2003 use figures in any way affects the general validity of the EA. I mention this to establish that the statement quoted is not true, so that commenter’s during future planning processes that might choose to quote this phrase will not be able to do so with accuracy. Use figures do exist, they were used through the entire Frank Church Management Planning process that culminated in the 2003 Management Plan.	See Attachment 2 below for an additional recreation use summary.
2-7	3-13: The section entitled “Private Land Access Power Boating Use” say: “...If powerboat use for private land access grows towards the maximum possible (70), other use such as commercial powerboat operations, non-commercial powerboat use and float boat ramps may be reduced to meet Semi-Primitive Motorized ROS objectives.” This sentence contains what I think is a typo in the word “ramp”. Reducing the number of ramps would in no way affect the ROS objectives, and in fact, there is no differentiation of , or attempt to designate, any ramp under consideration in this EA as a float boat ramp or a motorized boat ramp. In order to bring this phrase into concert with the Frank Church Plan, the word ramp should be removed, and the word “launches” should be inserted in its place (see Frank Church Plan p. 2-73).	Thank you for your suggestion. You are correct, the terminology “launches” is used in the FC-RONR Plan (2003, p. 2-73) and should replace the word “ramp” in the EA (2008, p. 3-13).
2-8	I believe this EA erred when it included this verbiage from the Frank Plan. Because the EA concerns sites that are outside the Wild section of the Salmon River. The EA should instead generically indicate that Private Land Access Power Boating Use will be consistent with the provisions of the Frank Management Plan. As written currently, should this provision of the Frank Plan change for any reason, this provision in the EA will be in question.	Thank you for identifying this error, you are correct in suggesting this change.

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
2-9	3-14 Table 3-6 Alternative 3 comment regarding signage is inconsistent with 2-23 and 3-8, both of which indicate that signage will decrease. If the plan anticipates removal of existing signage base on current location and construction, it should also anticipate the location of new signage, and should include new signage in the plan, rather than simply noting the capacity for new signage at the site. This is crucial given poor use habits noted above in 2-23 and 3-8.	See response 2-4.
3-1	I am glad to see the plans for the renovation of the recreational sites on the Salmon river.	Thank you for your comment!
3-2	We rely on the Vinegar Creek site immensely for personal and business use. We think the changes made by the alternative 3 plan would adequately address the current problems at this site.	Thank you for your comment!
3-3	Removal of boat ramp B; This ramp is currently used for float boaters when the other ramps are busy. It is also often utilized to turn around a vehicle with a boat trailer at times of heavy use. I see no reason to expend the additional effort and cost to remove this ramp when it can be used even if in a limited fashion.	The District Ranger has decided to implement Alternative 3, with modifications. Ramp B will be left in place for 2 to 3 years so we can monitor use and determine whether removal is advisable.

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
3-4	<p>Island parking; I don't believe this would be the most efficient plan for parking and ease of access to the boat ramps. Perimeter parking between ramps B and E and E and A as well as along the back bank might better serve this area. One major problem is that people park their trucks with the trailers hooked up and crowd out the turnaround area. As the island parking has only 6 long parking spots this may not solve this problem. If island parking is utilized, I believe the boat ramps A and E would be better served by directing traffic clockwise instead of counterclockwise.</p>	<p>We appreciate your concerns related to parking configuration and traffic flow. Part of the concerns may be related to the lack of scale provided on the drawings. For reference, the long parking spaces delineated in the "island parking" are 44 feet in length.</p> <p>Perimeter parking versus "island parking" was evaluated during alternative concept development. Perimeter parking was estimated to provide for approximately 6 long parking spaces (pickup with trailer), the same number being proposed with the displayed alternative.</p> <p>Also, counterclockwise traffic flow was felt to provide better approach overall to the ramps, especially ramp E (proposed). Bear in mind that the top of the ramp A is to receive widening which will facilitate the use of ramp A with the counterclockwise traffic movement.</p> <p>Clockwise traffic movement conflicts with conventional traffic orientation around a stationary object (the island parking). Visitors that are unfamiliar with local customs would most likely approach the boat ramp anticipating a counterclockwise traffic movement.</p> <p>As stated, the major problem with the existing conditions at Vinegar Creek is that people park their trucks with their trailers hooked up on the perimeter and crowd the turnaround area. As a solution to this, we have proposed to increase the turnaround area by eliminating perimeter parking and use the island parking as a tool to facilitate the counterclockwise traffic flow. Signs could be used to discourage parking on the perimeter and to direct the flow of traffic.</p>
3-5	<p>We only occasionally use the other sites, so other than the obvious parking problem at Carey Creek we are not too familiar with their needs. Everything else looks great; good work.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment!</p>
4-1	<p>After studying the environmental assessment and proposed action, we mostly prefer alternative 3 concerning the Vinegar Creek Boat Ramp with the exception of the following:</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment!</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
4-2	<p>We strongly recommend keeping Boat Ramp B intact. This ramp is often the only usable ramp when Ramp A and C are not accessible due to high-water and/or filled up with sand after the water recedes. With the beginning of rafting activities Boat Ramp B is primarily used by private and commercial float groups to launch their boats for day-tours downstream, as well as it is used as a loading and unloading platform for private and commercial jet boats. The proposed new boat ramp E will not necessarily eliminate the need for Boat Ramp B! If after a few years Boat Ramp B proves unnecessary, it still could be taken out at that time. In proceeding like this, time and money will saved now and something that proofed (sic) usable so far is not destroyed.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Retention of boat ramp B (along with stabilizing it) is a part of alternative 2. Removal of ramp B is part of alternative 3.</p> <p>See also: response 2-3 and 3-3</p>
4-3	<p>Island parking between Boat Ramp A and B eliminates close to 50% of the perimeter parking. It also is very questionable if maneuvering a large jet boat trailer safely on one lane is possible with other traffic going in and out. The current parking arrangement is working well and the installation of the new Boat Ramp E provides a turn around option at all times by pulling into Ramp A and backing into Ramp E or vice versa.</p>	<p>See response 3-4 to address the concern about eliminating the perimeter parking.</p> <p>Eliminating the perimeter parking will provide full turning movement of the design vehicle (20' truck with 30' trailer) around the island parking.</p>
4-4	<p>We are in favor of concrete hardening the area between Ramp A and Ramp C. The horizontal platform at Ramp A is holding up well after years of high-water exposure. Hardening the rest of the area with the same quality concrete will make the removal of sand, snow, and ice easier.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment!</p>
4-5	<p>The proposed time for construction should not coincide with spring and fall fishing season and the busy summertime activities for float and jet boats. April and September might seem a more sensible option than July and August.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>The timeframe you referred to in the EA refers to in-stream ramp work. Other site renovations, non in-stream work, are not limited to this time frame. During Level 1 consultation the in-stream construction time frame was adjusted to occur during the low flow period, August 1 through October 10.</p> <p>To address this concern the final project design will consider construction staging and traffic control requirements (within the context of resource concerns addressed above and cost considerations) to minimize the disruption to services provided at this location. Some users may find services impacted as these improvements are implemented.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
5-1	<p>With regard to the proposed action, alternative three, at the Wind River trailhead, our only concern is that the hitching rails and feed bunks remain intact and usable during and after construction. Shepp Ranch uses these facilities during June and November.</p>	<p>Given the nature of the activities proposed at Wind River trailhead it should be possible to accommodate these needs. Final design will be reviewed to provide for this. Bear in mind that with construction activity present, some services may be impacted as these activities are implemented.</p> <p>See also response to 4-5.</p>
5-2	<p>After looking over the proposed action, alternative three, at Vinegar boat ramp we have a couple of suggestions for change. We do not think it is a good idea to remove any existing boat ramps (Ramp B Proposal). The extra launching space is necessary to prevent over crowding and conflict between float and non-float traffic. We would at least give the new ramp (E) 3-5 years before spending time, money, and energy removing concrete at the current Ramp B. The way the sand is distributed post high water currently determines which ramp is most usable for loading, unloading and launching. During part of the 2008 season, specifically during high water, this ramp was the best alternative. Eliminating any usable options may be a negative.</p>	<p>Please see responses 2-3, 3-3 and 4-2.</p>
5-3	<p>Alternative 2 and 3 show parking in the middle of the area near the upstream ramps. We think we would be better served by expanding perimeter parking in this area. The old steep ramp B and the new ramp E would provide options for turning around by backing into the open space. That is what happens now and it works well as long as the ramps are kept unblocked. We think this configuration would allow more parking and less likelihood of someone blocking the turn around. Currently there is room in the parking lot for two vehicles to pass/maneuver in the middle, if there is only one lane/one way traffic we feel passing and working around multiple activities, i.e. boats preparing to launch, rafting buses loading people, shuttle vehicles preparing to load or unload, would be compromised.</p>	<p>See response 3-4</p> <p>In addition, we believe that the widening the upper portion of ramp A from 14' to 36' will help alleviate congestion due to loading/unloading activities. Boaters can prep their boats on the left and right sides of the ramp before launch and after retrieval. We acknowledge that the area around the island parking must be kept free from stationary vehicles. No loading/parking signs could help facilitate this</p>
5-4	<p>On page 3-32 it states "Proposed activities would occur during the period July 1 through August 15". We are concerned that this timing would conflict with heavy use periods.</p>	<p>Please see Comment 4-5.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
5-5	On page 1-7 it mentions a proposed concrete surface for the Vinegar Ck parking area. Due to regular submersion below high water and the need to remove sand we are concerned about maintenance issues that might entail. While the current surface needs regular moving of gravel and sand we don't think that concrete would hold up and would instead be harder to patch and repair and would result in large potholes and a broken surface.	Constructing the parking/turnaround area without a hardened surface such as concrete would likely result in the same parking issues we are currently dealing with. As an attempt to better organize the parking and traffic flow near the boat ramps, we feel the area must be paved or partially paved realizing that maintenance issues must be addressed
5-6	The rest of the plan looks good to us.	Thank you for your comment!
6-1	We appreciate the fact that the Forest Service is proposing to address some of the resource concerns at Vinegar Creek, Wind River Trailhead, Carey Creek, and Spring Bar recreation sites resulting from increased recreational use. As the EA points out the proposed improvements will reduce erosion, sediment delivery, and other resource effects.	Thank you for your comment!
6-2	For example, the proposed expansion of the parking area at the Wind River Trailhead will lead to additional use of the Wind River Pack Bridge and Trail 88 adjacent to the Gospel Hump Wilderness by off-road vehicles. There are currently 5 vehicle parking spaces at the Wind River Trailhead. The number of parking spaces would more than double and triple under Alternatives 2 and 3 respectively. (EA at page 3-7). At nearby Carey Creek, the number of parking spaces would increase from 26 to 35 and 52 under Alternatives 2 and 3 respectively. Also close by, parking spaces at Vinegar Creek would increase from 41 to 62 under both Alternatives 2 and 3. The EA did not analyze the potential increased motorcycle use of the Wind River Pack Bridge and Trail 88 along the Gospel Hump Wilderness boundary or potential incursions into the Wilderness as a result of expanding these parking areas. If there is to be an off-road vehicle crossing of the Salmon River in the project area, it should be downstream of the Howard Ranch in order to minimize the effects of motor vehicle use to the Gospel Hump Wilderness by closing the Wind River Pack Bridge to motorized use. The Winder (sic) River Bridge and the segment of Trail88 between Road 394 and the Salmon River should provide hiking and equestrian access only, as Trail 88 is essentially on the Wilderness boundary. The Forest Service should consider additional signs, education and enforcement efforts if there is a possibility of increased motorized incursions into Wilderness as a result of the proposed action.	<p>Effects of motor vehicle use to the Gospel Hump Wilderness were analyzed as part of the Bullion Mine Segment of the Centennial Trail planning process (1996). There is an existing seasonal restriction that allows motorcycle use only between June 15 and September 15 annually on Trail 88. The width of the Wind River Packbridge allows only motorcycles to use the bridge.</p> <p>Increases to the available parking spaces at the Wind River Trailhead incorporate better utilization of the existing trailhead footprint with minor new construction (less than 1/10<sup>th</sup> acre). In Alternative 2 the planned change relies on formal delineation and deepening the existing footprint to accommodate parking perpendicular to the Salmon River Road. In Alternative 3 an additional three parking spaces are gained through new construction on the west end of the existing trailhead footprint The improvements at Wind River Trailhead are intended to reduce the need for additional development at Carey and Vinegar Creek boat ramps by providing nearby off-site parking. The improvements to Wind River Trailhead will also better serve the users of Trail #88 and #312.</p> <p>There are signs just past the bridge as well as at the Wilderness boundary that alert users of motorized use restrictions in Wilderness. Should future motorized Wilderness incursions increase, additional enforcement and signage would occur here; just as any other similar Wilderness boundary location experiencing similar issues.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
6-3	<p>Also not discussed in the EA is the use of personal watercraft (“PWC”) on the Salmon River, including jet skis and other small, motorized watercraft. As pointed out in the EA, there is a permit system in place for jet boat use during the summer months to minimize the effects of jet boat use to the Wilderness and Salmon Wild and Scenic River corridor in accordance with the Central Idaho Wilderness Act and the Endangered American Wilderness Act. However, the launches planned in the action alternative could service launching of PWCs. We highly recommend that the Forest Service prohibit launching and using PWCs on the Salmon River as part of this project and the travel management plan out for public comment at this time. These are connected actions with similar timing. There is no telling what kinds of motorized watercraft the industry will invent next. The Forest Service would be wisely proactive by prohibiting such use at this point in time.</p>	<p>On the designated Wild section of river, managed by the US Forest Service, prohibitions and regulations regarding such watercraft are provided for in the FC-RONR Plan. “Jet skis, airboats, motorized surfboards, wind surfboards, hovercraft, winged watercraft, amphibious craft, mini-submarines, powerboats under 8 feet in length and/or deigned to carry a maximum of 2 passengers, and motorized watercraft that must be straddled when ridden by the operator and/or passenger, are prohibited” (FC-RONR Plan, 2003, p. 2-66). A Regional Special Order (#04-00-030) prohibits the use of personal watercraft yearlong within the Wild section of River (1992).</p> <p>On the eligible Recreation section of river (Vinegar Creek to the town of Riggins), managed by the Bureau of Land Management, such watercraft use is similarly prohibited (43 CFR 8372.1, FR Doc. 92-11350). It is only allowed from Lucile Bridge (near Cow Creek Road) to the Deer Creek Road Bridge (near the town of White Bird), which is outside the eligible Recreation section of River.</p>
6-4	<p>We also have concerns about fuel, oil and sewage spills at these facilities. How will the Forest Service prevent fuel, oil and sewage spills from draining into the Salmon River? We recommend that all parking and RV facilities drain into a storm water collection device that will catch fuel, oil and sewage spills, preventing them from draining into the river. Secondary containment systems and leak detection and removal systems, if not already in place under fuel tanks, should be constructed. In addition, additional safety mechanisms should be in place on fuel dispensers to reduce the risk of mechanical failures that could spill fuel. Lastly, the Forest Service should require that an operator remain with hands on the pump during refueling efforts to help prevent spills. The State of Idaho has similar requirements for refueling motor vehicles at gas stations. Caches of clean up supplies, including absorbent pads, should be placed at all river refueling stations and these supplies should be signed so users know they are available.</p>	<p>The operation of the fueling tanks near Vinegar Creek boat ramp is authorized under special use permit separate from this decision. Fuel and oil spills - prevention, control and/or cleanup would be subject to provisions of the special use permit which require compliance with federal and state regulations.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
6-5	<p>In terms of the timing of this project, construction should take place at a time when it is least likely to affect listed fish species in the Salmon River. Timing is critically important to reduce erosion, sediment delivery and direct and incidental take of these species.</p>	<p>One of our overarching goals is to design the project with the least amount of risk to the fish species of concern. This can be achieved by conducting in-stream construction activities while the river is at its lowest level. Flow records indicate the lowest flows occur starting August 1 and continue through October 10. Conducting construction activities during the lowest possible flow, will: (1) minimize the amount of work to be done in-stream, (2) decrease the need for large coffer dams and associated risks of sediment delivery due to leakage. Additionally, recreation use received during construction would be lower outside the timeframe.</p> <p>Please see response to Number 4-5.</p>
6-6	<p>Finally, the Forest Service must closely monitor the use of the sites. If use continues to expand, additional permit programs or changes to the current permitting process for jet and float boats may be in order.</p>	<p>See Attachment 2 below for an additional recreation use summary in relation to monitoring of river use that occurs on the designated Wild section of River.</p> <p>The Bureau of Land Management manages the river-based use on the eligible Recreation section of river, and use upstream from Vinegar Creek in the "Wild" section is managed consistent with the FCRONR Management Plan.</p>
7-1	<p>I would like to begin with a general comment about these sorts of improvements to the areas in question as I believe that such improvement must be weighed against financial realities, real need and a lack of education by the general public. Also the fact these areas due to there proximity to primitive areas of Idaho should not reflect the culture of urbanized recreation of areas closer to population centers; in short one should not expect paved parking, elaborate restrooms, a highly organized parking matrix, etc. These sites should maintain a atmosphere conducive to the respective locations.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with your team. I would close in adding that keeping the resources on the Salmon River primitive is a key aspect to there existences. Solutions that do not expand the human footprint on these areas are much better than alternatives that include lots of concrete, barriers, fancy bathrooms, etc. What these sites truly need is simply some education, organization and guidance for the users.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment!</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
7-2	<p>Spring Bar: First of all, in the last several years a trash enclosure was placed at Spring Bar and located in the newly paved parking area thereby eliminating two full parking places. This is a poor use of the space and there is no evidence of excessive litter in the area and no demonstrated need for a trash enclosure in the parking lot. For years a dumpster was available in the campground and across the street from the rodeo grounds in Riggins; these served the area adequately; again there was no reason to locate a trash enclosure in the parking area at Spring Bar.</p>	<p>The location of dumpsters at the Spring Bar Boat Ramp is a result of an effort to provide solid waste disposal for boaters on the Salmon River. Historically, Salmon River boaters had used the dumpsters located on private property across from the rodeo grounds. In 2005, the dumpsters were removed from the private property and the landowner did not want them returned. After a number of incidents with boaters using private dumpsters in Riggins and unacceptable vehicle traffic within the campground at Spring Bar, the Forest Service, BLM, Idaho County, Salmon River outfitters and local community members considered the available options for a solid waste disposal site.</p> <p>In 2007, after unsuccessful attempts to locate a suitable site, the Forest Service selected the Spring Bar facility as a trial disposal site. Improvements located at the site were constructed for ease of removal or relocation if needed. The use of two of the longer parking spaces was needed to resolve a traffic safety issue. The facility has in large part been successful in addressing the need for boater solid waste disposal and is fully paid for by boater use fees. The improvements to the Spring Bar parking area were under consideration prior to the placement of the dumpsters. The shallow parking spaces on the west end of the parking lot were often blocked by boaters with trailers parking parallel across the front of the spaces. The planned improvements will deepen the existing spaces and add a few more to accommodate trailers and towing vehicles.</p>
7-3	<p>Spring Bar: Secondly, the area suggested for additional parking is O.K. however the need to pave the said parking is wasteful and unneeded; a gravel parking area would suffice just fine and produce much less heat in the summer.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. The paving was chosen to help organize parking and provide continuity to the site. Oftentimes in graveled lots, parking can be haphazard without the stripes or parking bumpers provided with paved areas. This leads to less efficient use of space and parking that impacts the safety of passing traffic or other vehicles attempting to park.</p>
7-4	<p>Spring Bar: In addition, the walkway at Spring Bar is unneeded and a waste of money. .in reality folks with a disability (my father) use a vehicle to access the restrooms and parking. In all my time at Spring Bar I have never seen anyone use the sidewalk provided... it just doesn't make sense given the steep angle of the actual walkway. It may be an ADA requirement, but it is really an unworthy expenditure.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. It is our aim to meet the ADA requirements in development of our recreation facilities.</p>
7-5	<p>Spring Bar: The repairs to the center section of the Spring Bar ramp is O.K. but again probably not necessary given the take out at Island Bar is a gravel bar.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
7-6	My bigger concern is the feeling that many aspects of this project is the burning desire to spend money collected as part of the recreation fee even though there is really no definite need at the location.	Thank you for your comment.
7-7	The establishment of concrete walls on the side of the ramp is not only unnecessary but mean spirited. You may be aware that a handful of folks park on the gravel (they do not effect any vegetation) during the fall and winter. Hundreds of vehicles drive all over the shoreline both at Island Bar and Shorts Bar and there appears to be no damage to these gravel shorelines. The few trucks who park in the gravel at the Spring Bar ramp do not damage the environment at all and allow for others to utilize the available parking up on the road. The existing natural boulders on the upriver side of the ramp are adequate for keeping vehicles off the sand beach areas and do not need any further investment. The real need is for proper signage and education regarding the use of OHVs in the river area not retaining walls. The use of OHVs on or around the beach areas at Spring Bar needs a better educational effort for those who ride four wheelers.	<p>There may be some confusion regarding the activity proposed at Spring Bar. The “concrete wall on the side of the ramp” (mentioned on page 1-5 and 1-6 of the environmental assessment) is really a stem wall. The stem wall concept would extend down into the soil at the edge of the ramp rather than extending upwards as a parapet. Its purpose is to mitigate against scour underneath the edge of the ramp.</p> <p>Page 1-6 does speak to the placement of barrier rock to prevent driving on beaches. Agency decision makers must often weigh the tradeoffs between reducing the potential and likelihood of resource impacts, in this case our ESA listed fish species and their respective designated critical habitat, and inconveniencing users. Decision makers must consider Federal law, policy, manual direction, and in this case the Forest Plan.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
7-8	<p>Before I address the specifics of the Alternatives considered for the Vinegar Creek Ramp (VCR) I would like to make a general comment about the area. I have actively used the ramps for about 20 years and have seen a ongoing problem with the misuse of the available space at the end of the road. I have made my comments known more than once to the BLM and Forest Service. Two of the largest factors contributing to the congesting at the VCR are education / organization of control season float party and the unrestricted misuse of parking by upriver land holdings and Salmon River locals. During the control season if the Forest Service would assign take out locations to river permits, i.e. send 80% of the private parties and 100% of commercial outfitters to Cary Falls a great deal of the daily congestion would go away. There is much better parking opportunities and service area at Cary Falls and it requires very little extra time on the water by floaters.</p> <p>Again, relocate the majority of control season float traffic to Cary Falls; especially outfitted trips. VCR is simply a tough place to handle lots of cars and the Cary Falls area has much better potential for "parking lots".</p> <p>And as for the minions of tourist in the summer months a little longer float to Cary Falls would go a long way in addressing the issues at the end of the road.</p> <p>At the same time the Forest Service and Idaho County needs to develop some regulations regarding the long term parking of trailers, equipment and boats at VCR. I can not count the number of times I have gone to the end of the road to jet boat upriver only to find 90% of the parking utilized by old boat trailers, hoisting equipment and jet boats left by individuals from the Riggins area. Even last Spring I found a boat on a trailer that appeared to be changing the oil and repairing the motor...and it was not a ranch boat! So before we identify all the need to fancy up the VCR and spend needless money on the resource we ought to devise some meaningful guidance for the users and adequate deterrents for those who choose to ignore some basic regulations. If I left my vehicle in Spring Bar campground for months on end...I guarantee you something would be done.</p> <p>Set regulations for outfitters in terms of boat parking at Ramp A. During the Fall Winter many times outfitters simply use the ramp area as boat parking.</p> <p>Many of the historic users, particularly at the VCR have grow to utilize the area as storage areas for their private use rather than a public portal to a wild and scenic river.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Please see response 2-4, which discusses the expansion and organization of information and interpretive panels that would address boat ramp ethics and education.</p> <p>Upriver landowner and long term parking issues at Vinegar Creek were not addressed in this planning process. Such management issues can be addressed through other forest closure order regulation measures such as designated landowner parking spaces and administrative action taken on landowner special use permits.</p> <p>Changing the river permitting system for the designated Wild section of river was also not part of this planning process and is outside the scope of the purpose and need. It is our hope that the expansion of available parking at both the Wind River Trailhead and Carey Creek boat ramp would help address the traffic and parking congestion you speak of.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
7-9	In terms of modifications at VCR I would say: Keep it simple. We do not need concrete service areas (only ramps); what is really needed is compacted heavy crushed rock.	Thank you for your comment.
7-10	VCR is a gateway to the wilderness; it should be left as wild and undeveloped as possible.	Thank you for your comment.
7-11	Improved posted education and guidance for motorized and non-motorized users.	Please see response 2-4 which addresses information services available at Vinegar Creek. This would be another appropriate message to include in the new information and interpretive panels at the site.
7-12	Improve Ramp A (widen) and eliminate the PARKING that goes on along the ramp.	We believe that widening the upper portion of ramp A from 14' to 36' will help alleviate congestion due to loading/unloading as well as parking.
7-13	Designate Ramp A as a motorized ramp and Ramp B and C as non-motorized. It is very frustrating to find someone rigging out a float party on Ramp A when it is the only ramp that can be used for a power boat.	Thank you for your comment. Designating allowable ramp uses was not part of this planning process. Such designations can be addressed through administrative remedies such as forest closure order regulation measures.
7-14	Widen the road area between the fuel depot and ramp C to provide for improved parallel parking.	Alternatives 2 and 3 include options for increased parking where topography allows.
7-15	In many cases, non-motorized users really don't need a ramp as much as a riverside staging area that can be simply graveled, but semi-flat. The VCR area could develop an area between ramp A and B that would simply be a flat area (gravel) that could be accessed by vehicle. The need for a formal ramp is really not necessary. And given the nature of annual high river flows a simple flattened gravel area would be much better in the long run.	Thank you for your comment!
8-1	I have reviewed these four proposed improvements and commend the ID team for the new improved Alternative #3 and appreciate this being the preferred alternative. I support Alternative #3.	Thank you for your comment!
8-2	The 5-10 year implementation of the projects is discouraging. With ever changing rules and regulations, I have fears that if this project is not completed in the next couple of years, that it may not be able to be completed dues to new regulations.	We appreciate your concerns. Obviously, we will adjust our implementation schedule as conditions and funding dictate. The 5-10 year implementation period of the project is realistic given of the amount of work to be completed and possible funding sources.

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
8-3	If not planned, I would hope that speed limit reductions will be posted on the main road at the Vinegar Creek Site and the Wind River Trailhead.	Idaho County has jurisdictional authority regarding operations and maintenance of the Salmon River Road. Posting of speed limits would fall under that authority.
8-4	I realize that the traffic flow this far up river is not real heavy, but it appears there will be vehicle backing into the main road from parking spaces or stopping in the road and backing into parking spaces and this is a safety concern.	Please see response to 8-3. There may be need for guidance/informational signing at some of the parking areas.
8-5	The stock loading ramp at Wind River needs to be lined up perpendicular to the road on the turn around and I'm sure the hitchrail location will be moved out of the road.	We agree. There are design refinements needed for the stock facilities at Wind River trailhead.
9-1	I really hope you'll consider an extra toilet [at Vinegar]. The one seater barely accommodates the current use load (if you've walked up the hill behind it, it's clear a lot of folks don't appreciate waiting in line). The upgrades will probably increase the amount of use. It seems that now is the time to add at least a two-seater.	This is a good suggestion and we agree that a two-hole toilet at Vinegar would address the additional stresses and long lines that result in what lies behind the toilet during high-use periods. We will modify the future construction plans at Vinegar ramp to include a 2-seat toilet.
10-1	...concerned the proposed improvements at these 4 sites will draw in more maintenance of the Salmon River road under their jurisdiction...pressed to provide winter maintenance and blading/plowing, which had not been their common practice. He said these planned improvements will only put more pressure on the county to maintain the road at a higher and higher level all the time... he cannot manage ever-increasing work on the road with only two employees stationed at Riggins.	<p>The purpose and need of the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project is to decrease congestion at recreation sites along the Salmon River road by improving parking, traffic flow and boat ramps and developing changing areas. The renovations would provide a safer recreational facility through improved parking and driving delineation. This project aims to address the unsafe and unorganized use already occurring at these sites. The increased availability of parking will provide the vehicles that currently park alongside the road when use is high a safer place to pull in and park.</p> <p>These improvements by themselves, are not expected to produce an increase in use of the Salmon River corridor. The mere fact that the world population is increasing in a time when popularity of outdoor recreational pursuits is also escalating points to possible increased use of the corridor and may prompt a change from current practices.</p>

Attachment 1. Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation Project Scoping Comments from Friends of the Clearwater, received 9/15/2006.

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
14-1	<p>“We have serious concerns about this proposal. ...a very serious issue [is] the overuse of the Salmon River in the Frank Church RONRW by boaters. ...this issue is presented as one of demand without any indication of carrying capacity.”</p>	<p>See the EA (2008) page 1-4, Purpose and Need for Action.</p> <p>See the EA (2008) Recreation Use Discussion on pages 3-10 to 3-14.</p> <p>See Attachment 2 below for an additional recreation use summary.</p> <p>These facilities are located outside of the designated Wild river and FCRONR Wilderness; they are located in the eligible Recreation stretch of river.</p> <p>The purpose and need of the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project is to decrease congestion at recreation sites along the Salmon River road by improving parking, traffic flow and boat ramps and developing changing areas. The project would enhance recreation sites to provide for user convenience, safety, maintenance or enhancement of Wild and Scenic Recreation River Corridor values, and reduction of impacts to natural resources. The renovations would provide a safer recreational facility through improved parking and driving delineation.</p> <p>The project does not propose increases in use. River use decisions for the Frank Church Wilderness were addressed during FCRONR planning and are not a part of the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project.</p> <p>The Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project is consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the FCRONR Management Plan.</p>
14-2	<p>“...no mention of the Carey Boat Ramp project of some 5 or 6 years ago and how it was supposed to have solved these supposed problems of recreation demand.”</p>	<p>In 2000, the ramp and turnaround were widened at Carey Creek, improving the efficiency of the boat ramp by widening the bottlenecks at the turn around and ramp. However, that project did not address needs for parking improvements.</p>
14-3	<p>“The proposal to expand this boat launch without any consideration of the effect of increased boat launch capacity is inappropriate. You assume...current level of boating is acceptable...should be increased... [And you should] take actions to accommodate it. We...strongly disagree with that assumption. ...instead...consider managing the use levels to accommodate the ‘facilities’ which are in place to keep the current character of the Wild and Scenic River and Wilderness intact.”</p>	<p>See response 14-1</p> <p>Again, decisions regarding use within the wild section of the Salmon River corridor were made during the FCRONR planning effort. Determining acceptable use on the wild river and in wilderness is outside the scope of this analysis.</p>

Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
14-4	<p>“Many animals...bald eagle, harlequin duck, and osprey are shown to leave and/or become locally extirpated within the river corridor as a result of intense human activity such as continuous boating... Your agency has failed to monitor this issue satisfactorily and should not take any further actions to worsen the situation.”</p>	<p>The potential for effects to wildlife and habitat is documented in the Salmon River Recreation Sites Wildlife Analysis and Biological Evaluation 2/4/2008 (see Wildlife section of the project record). Osprey are not a threatened, endangered, sensitive, or management indicator species on the Nez Perce National Forest, and therefore were not analyzed as part of this project. However, the effects to osprey would be expected to be similar to those for bald eagle.</p>
14-5	<p>“...no denying ...proposed expansion is directly related to the Frank Church RONRW management plan. ...recent improvement of the French Creek and Elkhorn Creek bridges as well as the section of the road to Spring Bar... slated to be paved...are also connected... These need to be looked at together in terms of connected actions and cumulative impacts. This expansion would increase boat ramp capacity to allow more boaters, more comfortably, to use the ramp.”</p>	<p>The proposed renovations will better organize the use occurring at these boat ramps. The increased parking described in the proposed renovations will provide the vehicles that currently park alongside the road when use is high a safer place to pull in and park.</p> <p>Cumulative effects of the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions were analyzed for each resource, and are included in Chapter 3 of the Environmental Assessment (EA, 2008, p. 3-5, 3-6) and in the project record.</p>
14-6	<p>“... ‘portal facilities’ such as this one should be part of the Wilderness plan. Yet the scoping letter includes no information about the plan.”</p>	<p>See response 14-1</p>
14-7	<p>“The Salmon River and shoreline at the project areas are designated as ‘Eligible’ for Wild and Scenic River designation in the Forest Plan. [guidelines for management include:]                      1—Maintain or enhance the recreation, visual, wildlife, fisheries, and water quality values of the existing and proposed ‘Wild’, ‘Scenic’, and ‘Recreation’ rivers.                      2—No management activities will be carried out that would alter the potential classification of study waterways. Impoundments are not permitted.                      3—Generally, no management practices are scheduled in the waterway corridors which are normally defined as the seen area up to ¼ mile either side of the channel.</p>	<p>For all Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) associated with the eligibility of this potential “Recreation” designation river, see the EA (2008) Recreation ORV discussion (p. 3-18), Visual/Scenery ORV discussion (p. 3-18), Wildlife ORV discussion (p. 3-21), Fisheries ORV discussion (p. 3-19), and Water Quality ORV discussion (p. 3-20). Additionally, Table 3.13, Nez Perce Forest Plan Consistency (p. 3-78) presents a useful summary of how this proposed project meets the Nez Perce Forest Plan’s Amendment #1, Clarification of Intent to Protect Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers.</p> <p>“...Therefore, the portion of the Salmon River in the project area would maintain its eligible “Recreational” status for potential future inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system, and the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation project is consistent with Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act” (EA, 2008, p. 3-25).</p>
14-8	<p>“As a proposed Wild and Scenic River, the management of the Salmon River and shoreline at this project area must primarily maintain or enhance the existing recreation, visual, wildlife, fisheries, and water quality values.”</p>	<p>See response 14-7</p>

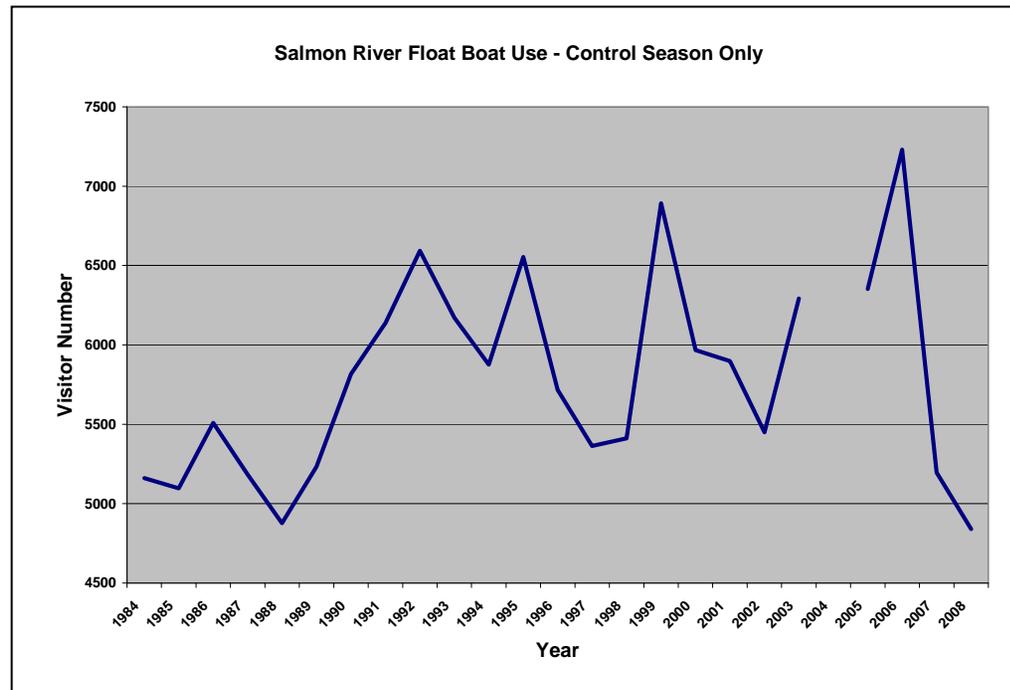
Letter-Comment Number	Comment	Response to Comment
14-9	“The development could harm the scenic values of the river by dedicating more of the environment to pavement/hardened sites.”	See response 14-7 and the EA (2008) Scenery ORV discussion (p. 3-18).
14-10	“...this proposal expansion would alter the potential classification of study waterways. Were this area to become a Wild and Scenic River, the third [forest plan guideline as stated in response 14-7] would apply... To preserve options should this portion be actually designated as a WS River, please uphold the spirit of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act by following standard [or would that be forest plan guideline??] 3 as well.”	See response 14-7
14-11	“...this action should be tiered to the Wilderness management plan. There must be a clear understanding of carrying capacity for the designated and potential wild and scenic river segments.”	See response 14-1

**Attachment 2. Additional Recreation Use Summary - February, 2009**

An analysis of permitted recreation use was not part of the planning process for the Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation Environmental Assessment (EA, 2008). Recreation river use decisions were addressed during the Frank Church River of No Return (FC-RONR) planning that began in 1991 and culminated in the FC-RONR FEIS and Management Plan in 2003. The Salmon River Recreation Sites EA erred in stating that there were “no use estimates available prior to 2003” (EA, p. 3-11).

The Forest Service began collecting river use data on the designated “Wild” section of the Salmon River in 1980 (FC-RONR FEIS, 3-9). River use data collected showed an increase in the amount of use from 1984-2002. The recreational use analysis presented in the Frank Church River of no Return planning processes influenced the eventual decision to select and modify Alternative D. The selection of Alternative D was a result of years of public involvement and a response to the noticeable increase in use occurring on the Salmon River. The modified Alternative D reduced the potential for growth in float boat use by maintaining 2003 use levels and increased noncommercial jet boat use on the Salmon River (FC-RONR FEIS, 2003, p. ROD-10). Float boat use estimates since 2003 have fluctuated, as in years past, with wildfire closures and variable river levels (Table 1.1). Data were not collected in 2004.

Table 1.1

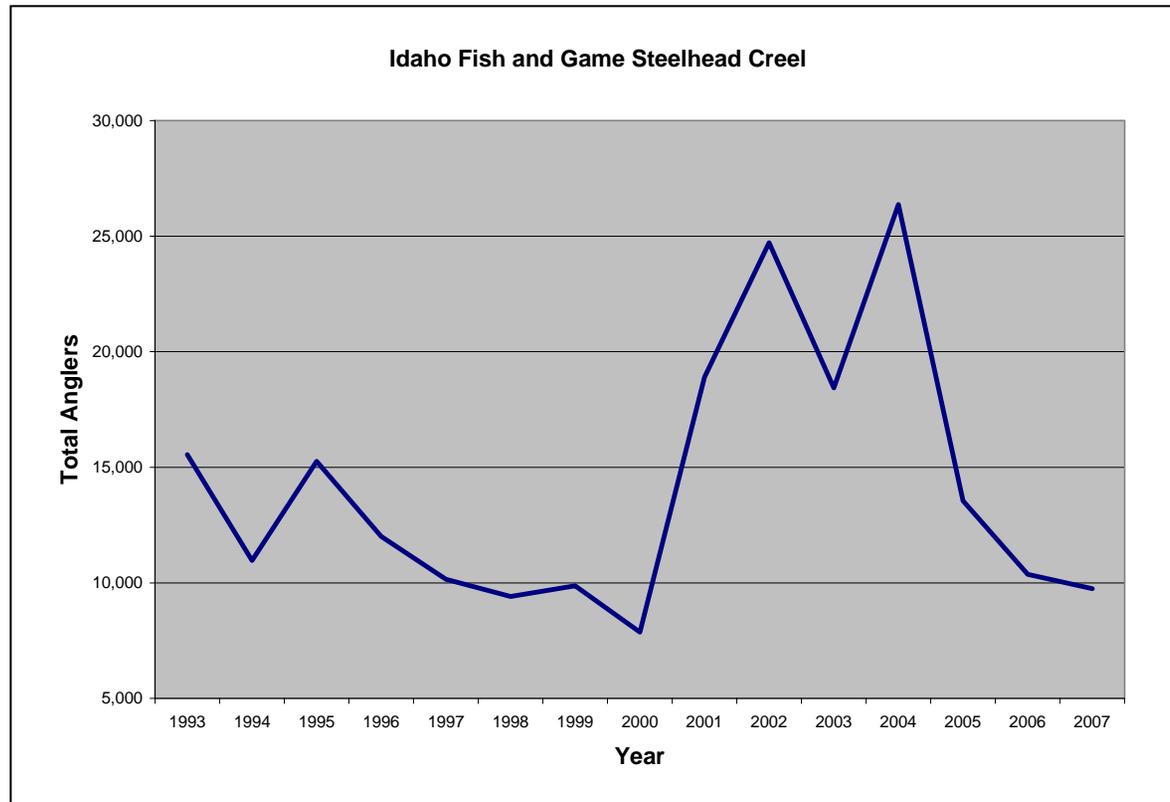


The modified Alternative D also implemented an improved monitoring program to better assess visitor use and experiences, campsite conditions, and other measurable resource effects in the designated “Wild” river corridor section (FC-RONR FEIS, 2003, p. ROD-12). It aims to maintain the semi-primitive motorized recreation setting along the “Wild” river corridor with a persons at one time (PAOT) capacity general guideline of 900 PAOT (FC-RONR FEIS, 2003, p. 3-9). The PAOT capacity, along with many other factors considered in the planning effort, were used to indicate acceptable social conditions for the designated Wild river corridor.

The Frank Church River of No Return Management Plan (2003) directs management of the designated “Wild” section of the Salmon River. The four recreation sites with proposed renovations in the EA exist outside and downriver of the Wild section of the Salmon River. The sites receive a lot of downriver use and are located within the eligible “Recreation” stretch of river. The river-based recreation opportunities on this stretch of river are managed by the Bureau of Land Management and most land-based opportunities are managed by the Nez Perce National Forest. The Bureau of Land Management has completed a Lower Salmon River Report each year since 2003. They analyze recreation use received “above” and “below” Hammer Creek boat ramp in all their reports. The majority of the use received above Hammer Creek occurs on what is called the “day stretch” and utilizes Shorts Bar or Riggins City ramps as the put-in. This recreational use is downriver of all four recreation sites with proposed improvements.

Due to the lack of recreational recreation boating use data available for the eligible Recreation stretch of river, the recreation use analysis in the EA employed direction from the FC-RONR Plan (2003). Demand was calculated for the downriver recreation sites based upon allowable control season use received from the upriver Wild section use. The only available recreation use data for the eligible Recreation stretch came from Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) Steelhead creel (Table 1.2). The IDFG categorize this stretch as River section 12, from Vinegar Creek to Riggins. The number of anglers calculated in this section was based on the sample rate created from the number of steelhead harvested. The variability in angler numbers reflects the steelhead run numbers each season. With increasing consistency in steelhead runs and more Chinook fishing seasons, the fishing pressure may continue to maintain or increase.

Table 1.2



Since these recreation sites receive upriver use from the "Wild" section of river, persons at one time (PAOT) maximum potential capacity was calculated from direction contained in the FC-RONR Plan (2003). Parking spaces were also calculated based on the maximum predicted use. The Salmon River Recreation Sites EA determined the maximum potential amount of use that these downriver sites would experience and evaluated the percentage of use each proposed alternative would address (EA, 2008, p. 3-12, 3-13).

The recreation standard from the Nez Perce National Forest Plan that guides management of the eligible "Recreation" river section states the following five standards apply to the eligible recreation segment and are relevant to the proposed Salmon River Recreation Sites Renovation Project (NPNF Plan, Amendment 1, 1991):

1. Maintain or enhance the recreation, visual, wildlife, fisheries, and water quality values of the existing and proposed "Wild," "Scenic," and "Recreation" Rivers.
2. No management activities will be carried out that would alter the eligibility or potential classification of study waterways.
3. The Wild and Scenic corridor is defined as an area extending the length of the river segment and ¼ mile in width from each bank of the river.
4. In eligible and existing "recreational" river corridors, roads are allowed. Consideration will be given to the type of use and protection of resource values within the river corridor.
5. Manage for recreation experiences in context with the existing or proposed designation. "Wild" segment - primitive or semiprimitive nonmotorized. "Recreation" segment - semiprimitive motorized or roaded natural.

As noted in the NPNF Plan Amendment #1 (1991), the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class for eligible "recreation" river segments is either semiprimitive motorized or roaded natural. The eligible recreation segment downriver from Vinegar Creek corresponds closely to a Roaded Natural (RN) area due to the roaded corridor and many permanent structures. Observers within a RN area are expected to notice landscape modifications that range from easily-noticed to strongly-dominant (USDA, 1986). The ROS social setting (frequency of encounters) for a RN area is to be managed for moderate to high frequency on roads and low to moderate on trails and away from roads (USDA, 1986). The ROS setting criteria for a RN area is described as an area where on-site regimentation and controls are noticeable, but harmonize with the natural environment. The controls can be physical (barriers) or regulatory (permits) (USDA, 1986).

Proposed alternatives in the Salmon River Recreation Sites EA would upgrade existing facilities and provide vegetative visual screening post-construction to enhance the recreation and visual values of the eligible "Recreation" section of river (EA, 2008, p. 3-18). Proposed renovations are appropriate for a roaded natural recreation setting and would not jeopardize the potential future classification of this section of river (EA, 2008, p. 3-25).

#### REFERENCES CITED:

FC-RONR FEIS (2003). Frank Church River of No Return Final Environmental Impact Statement

FCRONR Management Plan (2003). Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness Management Plan.

EA (2008). Salmon River Recreation Sites Environmental Assessment

USDA Forest Service, (1986). *ROS Book*.

NPNF Plan (1991). USDA Forest Service, Amendment #1 of Nez Perce National Forest Plan – Clarification of Intent to Protect Potential Wild and Scenic Rivers.