

UNITED
STATES
DEPARTMENT
OF
AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Intermountain

Region

Caribou-Targhee
National Forest



DECISION NOTICE

AND

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

FOR THE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

OF THE

SOUTH FORK OF THE SNAKE RIVER
ACTIVITIES AND OPERATION PLAN

Project

July 2008

Palisades Ranger District
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
USDA, Forest Service
Bonneville County, Idaho

BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have prepared an Environmental Assessment for the update of the 1991 South Fork of the Snake River Activities and Operation Plan. This updated document will provide direction for management of the river for several years.

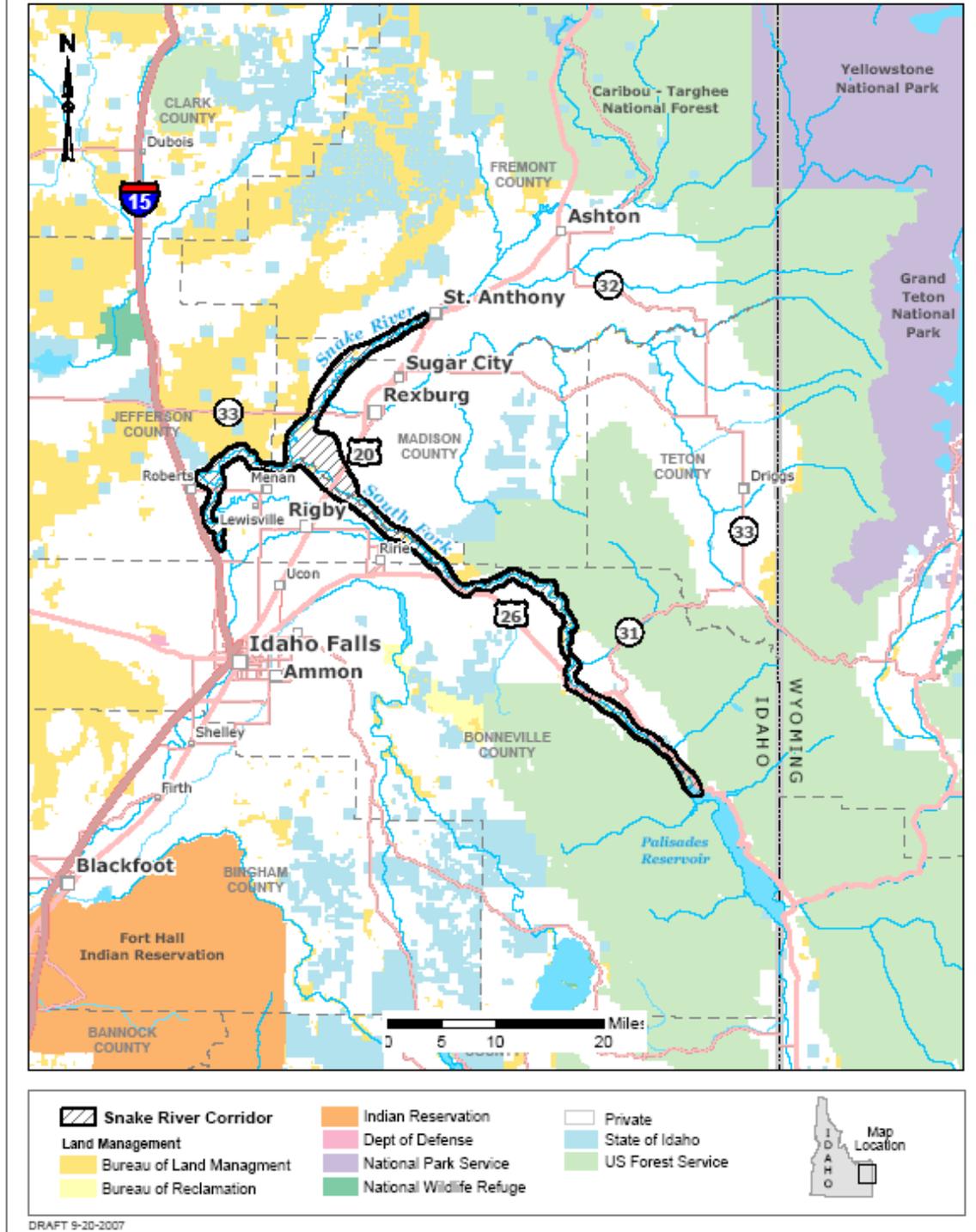
The Snake River Planning Area covers approximately 119 miles and includes the South Fork of the Snake River (South Fork) from Palisades Dam to the confluence with the Henrys Fork of the Snake River (Henrys Fork), the Henrys Fork from the confluence to St. Anthony, and the main stem of the Snake River (Main Snake) from the confluence south to Market Lake Canal below Lewisville Knolls. Only a portion of the South Fork of the Snake River is located on National Forest (Palisades Dam to Tablerock Canyon) and is the only part addressed in this decision document (Figure 1).

The South Fork from Palisades Dam to the confluence with the Henrys Fork, including the entire stretch located on National Forest lands, is considered eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. These designations require the USFS and BLM to manage in a way that protects important resource values while allowing for public use and enjoyment. The river

is also a haven for dozens of bird, fish and big game species, in part because the largest cottonwood gallery forest in the western United States is part of the planning area.

Management direction for the planning area has been provided by the *Snake River Activity/Operations Plan*, a joint USFS – BLM planning document. The plan contains a series of standards and management objectives based on the delineation of the planning area into nine site-specific management classes. The plan describes an array of management actions for each of the classes designed to conserve natural and cultural resources while providing for recreational opportunities in the area. The adoption of this management direction was based on public concerns expressed at that time and levels of use and environmental conditions that existed 17 years ago.

Figure 1. Snake River Corridor



1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed action is to revise the existing South Fork of the Snake River Activities/Operation Plan, prepared in 1991 (Snake River Plan). The proposed action and alternatives developed in the environmental assessment (EA) analyze the environmental effects of implementing the revised Snake River Plan on National Forest land, administered by the Palisades Ranger District, Caribou-Targhee National Forest and public land administered by the Upper Snake Field Office, Bureau of Land Management. (This decision will cover National Forest only.)

Since the adoption of the 1991 plan, increases in use stemming from expanding popularity, population growth, and changes in state and federal regulations have resulted in an increasing level of user conflict and environmental impacts, prompting mounting concern from federal land managers and the public.

These circumstances point to the need to consider alterations or adjustments to current management direction to respond to these changing conditions. The decision to be made by federal land managers is how to best adjust the management direction in the interest of all concerned parties.

1.3 Public Involvement

Formal public involvement for this project began by mailing a news letter to potential interested parties in November 2005. This included mailing a copy of the document to all parties on the District mailing list.

The information packet provided a summary and map of the proposed action, the purpose and need for the action, and background information as well as the time frames for submitting written comments.

All public comments are available for review in the Project File located at the Palisades Ranger District Office, Caribou-Targhee National Forest.

The Pre-Decisional Environmental Assessment was mailed for review on September 24, 2007 to all persons who had commented on the initial scoping and to government agencies and interested parties. A legal notice for the 30 day comment period was published in the Idaho Falls Post Register on September 29, 2007. The responses or actions taken on these comments have been placed in the project folder.

The USFS and BLM initially determined five issues (i.e., winter access, camping, commercial activity, facilities and trails, and visitor use) that instigated the need for the Snake River Plan Revision. As a result of the scoping process, the agencies (USFS and BLM) received over 100 separate statements on issues (University of Idaho, 2006). An additional seven issues were developed to be considered in the analysis. Comments were received from a variety of public interest including recreational groups, landowners along the river, conservation groups, wildlife advocates, general public, and state and other federal agencies.

A final Environmental Assessment refined the preferred alternative based on public comments and is available on request (USFS 2008).

Issues and concerns can be found in the Environmental Assessment.

THE DECISION

2.1 My Decision – Chosen Alternative

After considering the scoping comments, issues and analysis and reviewing the substantive comments received during the 30-day notice and comment period, I have decided to select Alternative D (Preferred Action). Alternative D is described in

detail in Table 1. This decision is applicable to those parts of the planning area under USFS authority. A separate decision will be issued by the BLM authorized officer for those parts of the area under the jurisdiction of the Upper Snake River field Office.

Issues identified during the scoping and public involvement process were addressed throughout the environmental document and were used as the basis for analyzing the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. I also used factors other than environmental effects to help make my decision. My decision was also based on the analysis and conclusions of the Biological Assessments and/or Evaluations for Threatened and Endangered Species.

2.2 Reasons for the Decision

Implementation of this management plan is in conformance with the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines established in the 1997 Revised Targhee Forest Management Plan and as a result, no plan amendments are warranted. In considering the resources and the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant impacts, I have determined that the Proposed Action (Alternative D) will not have any significant impact on the human environment when managed in accordance with the specific guidelines listed in the environmental assessment. Prior to the implementation of individual actions contained within the revision, additional NEPA analysis may be required.

This decision further meets the public's best interest and safety. The river will be managed to protect and enhance the river's resource values while allowing the continuation of compatible existing uses, including a wide range of public outdoor recreation opportunities, and minimizing user conflicts. These recreation opportunities will be provided in a manner that does not substantially impair the natural beauty of the Snake River, diminish its aesthetic, fish and wildlife, scientific or recreational values. River management will take into account the rights and interests of private landowners, state and federal agencies, and Tribal treaty rights.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

3.1 Alternatives

In deciding upon the most appropriate course of action, the USFS and BLM evaluated three alternative revisions of the plan and a No Action alternative (e.g., continuation of current management direction). The various revisions are alternative means of responding to the issues and concerns expressed during the internal and external scoping processes.

Alternative A (No Action)

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) mandates consideration of a No Action Alternative which provides a basis for comparing the impacts of the other alternatives. This Alternative involves continuing the management activities that already exist in the 1991 South Fork Activities and Operations Plan, which is part of the 1997 Revised Targhee Management plan.

Alternative B (Emphasis on Intensive Resource Management with Less Recreation Development)

This alternative would intensively manage the natural resources to limit impacts to riparian resources, wildlife, and threatened and endangered species. Alternative B would allow the greatest extent of resource protection within the planning area, while still allowing resource uses.

Alternative C (Emphasis on Development of Resources for Recreation Opportunities)

Alternative C would allow the greatest extent of resource use within the planning area, while maintaining the basic protection needed to sustain resources. Alternative C places an emphasis on maximum appropriate human use/influence and the widest array of recreation opportunities.

Alternative D (Compromise between alternatives A, B, C) [Preferred Alternative]

Alternative D would emphasize multiple resource use in the planning area by protecting sensitive resources and applying the most current information to allow USFS and BLM to set priorities for flexible, proactive management of public and forest lands.

3.2 Comparison of Alternatives

Table 1 summarizes the various actions comprising each alternative revision and describes how they respond to the issues derived from the internal and external scoping effort. Issues 10-12 are not addressed in the comparison of alternatives because management actions for these issues are addressed in the section of the environmental assessment titled, Management Actions Common to all Alternatives.

Table 1. Comparison of Alternatives by Issue.				
Issue No. 1 Education of River Users				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
1A. Education Tools and Media	Information kiosks at all boat access sites. Boaters Guide, East Idaho Visitor Information Center, and Conant Visitor Center provide information.	Same as A., in addition Boaters Guide updated and reprinted more frequently. Boat etiquette information and cultural brochures developed. Coordinate with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, state and federal agencies.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
1B. Outfitters and Guides	Annual meeting.	Annual meeting with periodic training.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
1C. Camp Hosts and Recreation Technicians	Annual training.	Annual and continued training.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
1D. Signs	Limited signs at kiosks and along corridor.	Sign hazards, boundaries and day use areas, keeping signs small.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B; also develop partnership with state, county and irrigation company.
1E. Maps	Boater’s Guide (does not include Henrys Fork)	Update guide, including conservation easements, fee acquisitions, Henrys Fork and Main Snake. Include designated trails for BLM and USFS.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B; also develop partnership with the State of Idaho.
1F. Website	None available.	Develop joint website.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B; develop commercial business link to agency website.

Issue No. 2 Protection of Riparian Habitat				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
2A. Grazing	USFS: Refer to Targhee National Forest RFP and NEPA information as indicated in Table 16 in the EA document.	USFS: Same as Alternative A	USFS: Same as Alternative A	USFS: Same as Alternative A
2B. Non-Motorized Trails	USFS: Refer to Targhee National Forest Open Road and Open Motorized Trail Analysis (October 1999) and the current travel plan map.	USFS: Same as Alternative A.	USFS: Same as Alternative A.	USFS: Same as Alternative A.

2C. Human Waste Disposal (All Users)	Require human waste carryout system (e.g., sealable portable toilet, or EPA approved disposal bag - Wag Bags®) for overnight camping in South Fork Canyon.	Require human waste carryout system for all day and overnight users along river corridor in riparian areas.	Require human waste carryout system for all visitors in South Fork Canyon.	Require human waste carryout system for all day and overnight users along river corridor in riparian areas except where public facilities are available.
2D. Camp Fires (All Users)	Campfires allowed anywhere. Can burn dead and down wood, but no girdling of trees or use of chainsaws.	All users must provide their own fire pan and carry out ash unless agency provided fire rings are available along river corridor in riparian areas. Dead and down wood may be burned, but no girdling of trees or use of chainsaws.	All users are encouraged to provide their own fire pan or utilize agency provided fire rings; pack out ashes. Can burn dead and down wood, but no girdling of trees or use of chainsaws.	Same as Alternative B.

Issue No. 3 Protection of the Watershed				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
3A. Erosion Control	USFS: Limit new development.	USFS: Where feasible, close and rehab unauthorized boat ramps.	USFS: Identify and develop unauthorized boat ramps where sites are desirable.	Same as Alternative B.
3B. Vegetation Management	Limited vegetation projects.	Consider projects benefiting river restoration, wildlife and special status species habitat.	Consider projects benefiting recreation.	Same as Alternatives B and C, projects guided by ecological necessity and acceptable to the public.
3C. Undesirable Species and Noxious Weeds (including plant and insect pests)	Treat under existing USFS treatment plans. Treat noxious and invasive species emphasizing biological control along corridor. Treat upland areas with chemical and some riparian areas where feasible. Follow BA, BO, and letters of concurrence requirements.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
3D. Undesirable Aquatic Species	No educational outreach program.	Interagency work group develop a joint education and response plan to improve public's awareness.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.

Issue No. 4 Land Ownership				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
4B. Unauthorized Use	USFS: Forest Protection Officer and LEO.	Same as Alternative A, plus develop partnerships, and work with local groups to identify and report unauthorized uses.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
4C. Public Access	Pursue public access with willing land owners.	Consider acquiring public access where it does not conflict with resource values and there are minimal impacts to wildlife.	Acquire all public access locations where feasible. Work with other agencies to pursue access in order	Same as Alternative B, plus work with other agencies.

			to avoid duplication.	
4D. Conservation Easement/Land Acquisition	Pursue land acquisitions and easements when funding is available. Currently working with three non-profit partners.	Pursue land acquisitions and easements within planning area when funding is available and there are willing land owners. Continue to work with non-profit partners and look for opportunities to work with other federal and state agencies and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes	Same as Alternative B, plus pursue public access for recreation activities on acquisitions and easements.	Same as Alternative B. Promotion of program in maps and boaters guide. Education with public and outfitters about the Acquisition/Easement Program.

Issue No. 5 Protection and Enhancement of Fish, Wildlife and Botanical Resources				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
5A. Tributary Stream Flow	Maintain existing reconnect projects to reconnect stream tributaries to main river.	Same as Alternative A, plus pursue new opportunities for minimum instream-flow.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B, plus work with IDF&G in determining and prioritizing tributary reconnects.
5B. Winter Access to Boat Ramps	No agency snow removal, yet boat access sites are still open for use, except Fullmer Boat Landing.	Prohibit snow removal at federal boat access sites, yet boat access sites are still open for use.	Snow removal at the federal boat access sites dependent on funding, except Fullmer Boat Access.	Same as Alternative A.
5C. Wildlife Closures	The USFS has winter travel closures identified in the Targhee Travel Plan. Currently South Fork Snake Road #206 is closed upriver from Table Rock. Bald Eagle nesting areas signed in South Fork Canyon.	Same as Alternative A. Sign Bald Eagle nesting areas in entire planning area where there is pressure.	Same as Alternative A. Bald Eagle nesting areas signed in South Fork Canyon.	Same as Alternative A. Same as Alternative B.
5D. Fish Passage Inventory	Inventory complete for the USFS.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
Fish Passage Treatment	No plans for non functional fish passage.		Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
5E. Fish Entrainment Inventory of Diversions	None.	Complete an interagency inventory of diversions for fish entrainment. Interagency work group prioritize and screen diversions where feasible. Work with irrigation companies and private right-of-way holders.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
5F. Inventory for Plant,	Currently little data is	Complete floristic,	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative B,

Pollinator, Neo-tropical Migratory Birds, and Amphibian Species Needed	known on the extent of the floristic diversity, pollinators, neo-tropical migratory birds and amphibians.	pollinator, neo-tropical migratory birds and amphibian inventories.		plus inventories to be completed as funding and resources allow.
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Issue No. 6 Management of Off Highway Vehicles (OHV's)				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
6A. OHV Trails and Trail Closures (summer/winter)	Follow RTFP and Travel Plan Direction.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
6B. Unauthorized Motorized Access	Follow RTFP and Travel Plan Direction.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
6C. Signing of Designated Trails	Follow RTFP and Travel Plan Direction.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
6D. Motorized Closures (including 4WD trucks) below High Water Mark	Follow RTFP and Travel Plan Direction.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.

Issue No. 7 Management of Planning Area Uses				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
7A. Visitor Capacity Study	Conduct study for planning area, addressing motorized and non-motorized boat activity and recommending options to minimize recreation conflicts. Study findings adopted administratively by BLM and USFS.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.	Same as Alternative A.
7B. Special Use Permits	Permit commercial activity on case-by-case basis with no limit. Maintain eight commercial fishing outfitters.	Based on a visitor capacity study, the number of commercial permits issued may be adjusted. Until the study is completed, the eight commercial fishing outfitters will be maintained and additional applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Commercial fishing outfitter stipulations may change to address conflicts.	Consider different commercial permits issued on a case-by-case basis, with no limit. Otherwise, similar to Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.

Issue No. 8 Management of Camping and Facilities				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
8A. Corridor-Wide Management of Facilities	Partnership with county and state agencies for managing boat access facilities. Fee program in place.	Maintain partnership and fee program. Fee increase at boat access sites if needed to fund future projects. Work with working group on recommending fee increases.	Same as Alternative B. Include other projects on the South Fork.	Same as Alternative C.
8B. Corridor-Wide Condition of Camp Areas	Use existing monitoring protocols to evaluate camping areas, determine if closure/rehab is necessary.	Adjust protocols and evaluate camp areas. Harden campsites if necessary. BLM/USFS develops method to monitor the quality of the recreational experience on the South Fork.	Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B.
8C. Corridor-Wide	Camping is first	Allocate campsites. Consider	First come, first serve.	Conduct capacity study to

Campsite Use	come, first serve.	check-in or reservation for sites when necessary.	Allocate campsites only during high use periods.	determine visitor thresholds for corridor; consider check-in or reservation system when thresholds are reached. Allocate campsites. If needed, assess fee for camping within corridor if reservation system is implemented.
8D. Corridor-Wide Group Size (day use and camping)	Unlimited group size.	Limit and designate group size to 16 people. With the exception of large camp areas that can accommodate larger groups.	Limit and designate group size to 25 people. With the exception of large camp areas that can accommodate larger groups.	Group size limits would be based on the individual physical site capacity and the social threshold from the outcome of a visitor study.
8E. Corridor-Wide Boat Camping	Dispersed camping allowed; campers encouraged to use Leave No Trace (LNT) practices.	Camping only in designated campsites; campers required to use LNT practices.	Dispersed and/or designated campsite camping; users encouraged to use LNT practices.	Similar to Alternative B. Phased process for designating campsites, starting with Swan Valley and Black Canyon to Heise.
8F. Corridor-Wide Vehicle Camping	Dispersed camping allowed. USFS: 5 day limit	Designate campsites in high use areas as needed. USFS: 5 day limit	Same as Alternative A. USFS: 5 day limit	Dispersed camping allowed except in South Fork Canyon and in riparian areas from Black Canyon to Cress Creek. Designate campsites in these areas; limit camping to five days. Continue to designate campsites elsewhere as needed.
8G. South Fork Canyon Boat Camping	Designated camp areas and campsites may be identified in future.	No dispersed camping. Designate campsites in 11 areas.	Designate campsites within 11 designated areas. Designate additional camp areas in South Fork Canyon.	Similar to Alternative B; designate additional campsites if needed.

Issue No. 9 Present and Future River Access Needs				
Issue Component	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D
9A. Recreation Development	Recreation Developments in 1991 South Fork Activities & Operation Plan (Map). Gravel Pit and Box Canyon Restroom. Palisades Dam – not in plan. Fall Creek Falls Overlook – interpretive sign, parking lot, trail, safety fence, toilet. Snake River Boat Access	No development of Gravel Pit and Box Canyon Restroom. Developed boat ramp (fee program) and developed camping area. Same as Alternative A. Administrative site only.	Same as Alternative B. Same as Alternative B. Same as Alternative A. Same as Alternative B.	Same as Alternative B. Same as Alternative B. Same as Alternative A. Same as Alternative B.

	Admin Site, Boat Ramp/Parking Area, Campground.			
9B. User Created Access	Do not allow user created slides/boat access. Rehabilitate sites where feasible.	Same as Alternative A.	Allow user created slides/boat access. Harden sites and allow for additional access.	Same as Alternative A.

As presented in the Table 2, all of the alternatives would be associated with some level of environmental impact. In general, the greatest impact to both the natural environment and the character of recreational experiences would be associated with taking no action (Alternative A). The fewest and least intensive environmental impacts would be associated with Alternative B, although recreational opportunity would probably decrease. Under Alternative C, recreational experiences would be enhanced, but some of the natural character of the area would probably be lost.

Table 2. Synopsis of Environmental Impacts by Alternative.				
Resource	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B	Alternative C	Alternative D (Proposed Action)
Cultural Resources	Current uses have resulted in illegal collection, vandalism, and unintended destruction of cultural resources. The types and intensity of impacts would increase due to higher levels of use, resulting in a relatively rapid accumulation of cumulative impacts compared to the other alternatives.	The types of impacts would be similar to Alternative A. However, the intensity of impacts would be reduced by public education efforts and less recreational development. Educational efforts and less recreational development would result in a relatively slow accumulation of impacts.	The types of impacts would be generally similar to Alternative A, but the intensity of impacts could increase due to greater recreational development. High levels of recreational development would result in a relatively rapid accumulation of impacts similar to Alternative A.	The types of impacts would be generally similar to Alternative A. The intensity of impacts from a moderate amount of recreation development would be balanced by a strong emphasis on public education. Impacts would be most similar to Alternative B. Moderate levels of recreational development and public education efforts would result in a moderate rate of impact accumulation.
Livestock Grazing Management	Grazing would remain unchanged. However, increasing levels of human use would increase the level of conflict between livestock and users.	There would be no immediate impacts to grazing management. Educational efforts would reduce conflicts between livestock and users.	Increased recreational development would increase conflicts with livestock.	Impacts would be the same as Alternative B.
Recreation and Visual Resources	Given the increasing demand, a continuation of current management of the planning area would likely result in the loss of recreational	Under this alternative, there would be less recreational opportunities. Increasing demand would not be met and user conflict	Increasing demand could be met by high levels of recreational development. However, some of the natural character of the planning area would be lost.	A moderate amount of recreational development would improve the ability to meet demand while reducing user conflicts and maintaining most of the natural character of

	opportunity and degraded experiences.	would likely increase. However, the natural character of the area would be largely maintained.		the area.
Soils/Surface Water/Floodplain/Water Quality	High use areas, especially those used by motorized watercraft and OHVs would continue to degrade, reducing floodplain functionality, and soil stability. Further compaction of floodplain soils and continued streambank and road erosion would increase suspended sediment loads in the river.	This alternative would implement the most protective management actions and as such, would result in relatively minor impacts to soils, water, and the floodplain.	High levels of recreational development and use would result in increased potential for erosion and off-site sedimentation. However, these impacts would be mitigated to some degree by educational programs, requirements to dispose of human waste, and the hardening of areas that are susceptible to erosion.	An intermediate amount of recreational development would result in some erosion and off-site sedimentation potential. Other management actions such as requirement to dispose of human waste, designating more campsites, and the hardening of some facilities would have beneficial effects. Impacts would be greater than Alternative B, but less than Alternatives A and C.
Vegetation	Riparian-wetland areas that are currently impacted by recreational activities would continue to decline. Further reductions in riparian-wetland habitat are likely. Adverse impacts to upland vegetation have been and would remain limited.	The health and vigor of riparian-wetland vegetation would improve and further reductions in riparian-wetland habitat would be unlikely. Impacts to upland vegetation would be similar to Alternative A.	The high degree of recreational development could result in adverse impacts to currently undisturbed riparian-wetland areas. However, impacts to riparian-wetland habitat from unauthorized uses would be reduced. Impacts to upland vegetation would be similar to Alternative A.	The condition of wetland-riparian habitat would improve somewhat and further losses of riparian-wetland habitat would be reduced. Impacts to upland vegetation would be similar to Alternative A.
Wildlife and Aquatic Species Habitat Management	Increase in demand especially during the winter season has resulted in habitat degradation and displacement of wildlife species. Recent winter closures, conservation easements and acquisitions have mitigated these	Under this alternative, habitat would be enhanced because fewer recreational facilities would be developed and actions would be taken to reverse declining trends in habitat condition. Fewer recreational developments and	Increased recreational development and use would result in an increase in direct and indirect habitat loss and further decreases in habitat quality for wildlife. The high degree of recreational development and associated erosion	A moderate amount of recreational development, including the closing of unauthorized trails, removing human waste, prohibiting the removal of dead and down wood, and the implementation of erosion controls would benefit wildlife. However, increased visitor use, especially during winter, would

	impacts to some degree. Aquatic species have benefited from the reductions in erosion and off-site sedimentation associated with soil and vegetation management actions.	educational efforts aimed at protecting and conserving aquatic species resources would have a beneficial impact.	and off-site sedimentation potential could adversely affect aquatic species	disturb or displace some wildlife species. Impacts would be generally similar to Alternative B.
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FINDINGS

4.1 Finding of No Significant Impact

Based on the following summary of effects (as discussed in the EA), I have determined that Alternative D, which I have selected, will not have a significant effect on the human environment. For this reason, no environmental impact statement needs to be prepared. I made this determination based on the following factors set forth in 40 CFR 1508.27. I have considered both the context and intensity of the alternative and its effects.

Context: The project effects are limited in size and duration upon the human and natural environment. Project boundaries and potential effects are also limited to a relatively small area and may be considered beneficial effects to the environmental resources of the analysis area.

Intensity

1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been taken into consideration when making this determination of significance. However, beneficial effects have not been used to offset or compensate for potential adverse effects. There are no known individual environmental effects that are of a magnitude or severity that could be considered irreversibly committing resources or irretrievably causing a loss of wildlife habitat, soil productivity, and water quality or vegetation production.
2. Public health and safety will not be adversely affected.
3. The analysis did not identify any unique characteristics of the geographical areas where management activities are proposed that would affect the significance of effects. It was therefore not discussed in the EA.
4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be controversial among experts. The resource specialists who analyzed the proposed actions agree that the project can be implemented without significant adverse effects on the environment.
5. The effects of the selected alternatives are not highly uncertain nor do they represent unique or unknown risks.
6. This action and decision does not establish precedence for future actions that would be potentially significant.
7. As shown throughout the EA, this action does not represent a potential accumulation of adverse impacts when considered with other past and reasonably foreseeable actions.
8. There is no potential for adverse effects on sites that are listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Nor is there potential to cause a loss of or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources.
9. There is no potential, or it is very unlikely, for this action to adversely affect a species that is listed or is being evaluated for listing as an endangered or threatened species and concluded in the Biological Assessments completed for this project. US Fish and Wildlife has concurred that the selected alternatives will not adversely affect any federally threatened or endangered species (concurrence letter dated May 14, 2008). Implementation of the proposed actions will not affect any Forest Service sensitive plant species.
10. This action does not threaten a violation of any State, Federal or local environmental protection law or regulation. The action of Alternative D is consistent with the Revised Forest Plan, Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, National Forest Management Act and other legislation.

4.2 Compliance with Other Laws

National Forest Management Act

The 1991 South Fork Activities and Operation Plan was incorporated as part of the 1997 Revised Targhee Forest Management Plan. This action amending the 1991 River Plan meets all standards, guidelines, goals and objectives of the RTFP.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Section 2 of the ESA of 1973, as amended 1978, 1979, 1982 and 1988 declares that "all Federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered species and threatened species and shall utilize their authorities in furtherance of the purposes of ESA. According to the Biological Assessment, this project will have no effect on the following species listed under ESA: Ute ladies-tresses, Utah Valvata, yellow-billed cuckoo, or Canada lynx. The Bald Eagle and Gray Wolf are no longer listed as a T&E species; however they were listed when this project began and are currently considered Forest Service Sensitive Species. This project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Bald Eagle and is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the experimental, nonessential population of the gray wolf, and Yellowstone Cutthroat Trout Beneficial Impact. (Biological Assessments Fisheries (1/23/2008), Wildlife BA 4/21/2008, Wildlife BE 4/22/2008, T&E BA 4/23/2008. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have agreed with these determinations (USFWS Concurrence Letter dated 5/14/2008).

According to the plant Biological Assessment, this project will have no effect on the following species: Ute ladies'-tresses (*Spiranthes diluvialis*). (Biological Assessment dated April 23, 2008).

Heritage Resource Conservation

Caribou-Targhee National Forest, BLM, Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), and Idaho State University (ISU) have conducted cultural resource inventories in the planning area. These inventories are usually limited in geographical scope and result in the identification of few cultural resources. The result of this survey activity is a record of few widely scattered archaeological sites located within the planning area. This action will not have any potential change to any cultural resources, but is more an administrative action and site specific survey will be completed for future projects. Therefore, this project will have "no effect" on any known archaeological or historic properties. In accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1) No Potential to cause effects, there are no further obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the project can proceed as planned.

Invasive Species: Executive Order 13112

Each Federal agency will, to the extent practicable and within Administration budgetary limits, use relevant programs and authorities to (i) prevent the introduction of invasive species; (ii) detect, respond rapidly to, and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner; (iii) monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; (iv) provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; (v) conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction and provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and (vi) promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them. The noxious weed control program on the Palisades Ranger District accomplishes all of these with the exception of conducting research. Information boards are posted at key locations to educate Forest users about noxious and invasive species. The District uses Integrated Pest Management to control and contain invasive species. My chosen course of action does not authorize activities which would further contribute to introduction of invasive species. Weed treatment will follow disturbance for a period of 3 years as required in the mitigation.

Clean Water Act

Consultation with the States of Idaho Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has been ongoing regarding Forest requirements for meeting the intent of the Clean Water Act. The Clean Water Act requires states to identify nonpoint sources of water pollution from a range of activities that includes but is not limited to cropland agriculture, livestock grazing, recreation, mining, and forestry. States are also required to develop management programs for controlling nonpoint sources of pollution. Best management practices (BMP's) are the recognized method of control for nonpoint source pollution.

The South Fork River is listed as a 303(d) waterbody for flow alteration and unknown pollutants from Palisades Dam to Fall Creek. No pollutants causing the impairment for this project are identified in the analysis.

Best Available Science

My conclusion is based on a review of the record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.”

Inventoried Roadless Areas, Research Natural Areas and Congressionally Designated Wilderness Areas or Wild & Scenic Rivers

This project is not located within an Inventoried Roadless Area, Research Natural Area or Congressionally-designated Wilderness. The project is within an eligible Scenic and Recreation River corridor, but has not yet been designated by the Congress.

Other Legislation

This decision complies with other applicable legislation such as the Noise Control Act, Clean Air Act and the Executive Order on Environmental Justice. This will not significantly affect human or natural resources.

CONCLUSION

5.1 Implementation

If no appeal is filed, this project may be implemented business five days following the end of the appeal period. If an appeal is filed, implementation may begin 15 days following the disposition of the appeal.

5.2 Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215. Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Only individuals or organizations who submitted comments or otherwise expressed interest in the project during the comment period may appeal. Appeals must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 days of the publication of this notice in Post Register. This date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Timeframe information from other sources should not be relied on. The Appeal Deciding Officer is Larry Timchak, Forest Supervisor. Appeals must be sent to: Appeal Deciding Officer, Intermountain Region USFS, 324 25th Street, Ogden, Utah 84401; or by fax to 801-625-5277; or by email to: appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Emailed appeals must be submitted in rich text (rtf) or Word (doc) and must include the project name in the subject line. Appeals may also be hand delivered to the above address, during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

5.3 Contact Person

Detailed records of the Environmental Assessment are available at the Palisades Ranger District. For more information regarding this decision please contact:

Brent Porter
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3659 E. Ririe Highway
Idaho Falls, ID 83401
208-523-1412
Email: bporter@fs.fed.us

/s/ *Ronald D. Dickemore*
RONALD D. DICKEMORE
District Ranger

July 8, 2008
Date

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