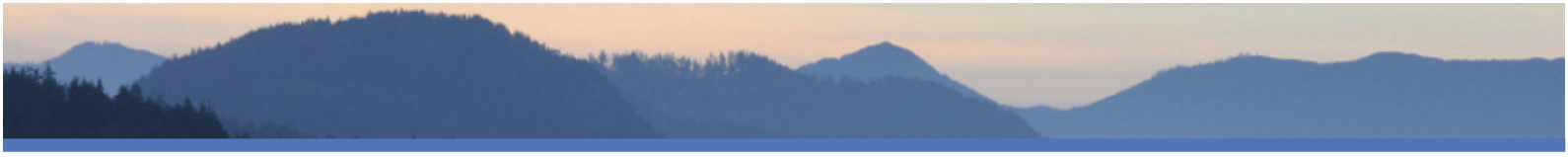


Payette National Forest

Highlights

Spring 2009

Intermountain Region

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2007 Wildfires 2
Conveyance 3
Travel Planning 4
Weed Infestations 5
Sheep Viability 6
Road Repairs 8
Accessibility 10
Squirrel Habitat 11
Salvage Projects 12

SUPERVISOR'S MESSAGE

Forest management plans move forward despite challenges

The following Forest accomplishments represent an amazing amount of effort and describes only a small portion of the work we have completed during the last couple of years. I am consistently inspired by my colleagues and Forest partners who get things done year after year despite many challenges. While the fires of 2007 certainly captured the attention of many of us, other employees carried on, making sure the campgrounds had safe drinking water, our roads were maintained, and wildlife and timber projects continued.

Suzanne Rainville
PNF Supervisor

We have made significant progress on the Travel Management process with the issuance of three Records of Decision for summer travel. The Record of Decision for New Meadows—Council was released on February 9, 2009. The decision for winter motorized use will also be released in 2009.

Much needed roadwork was completed in the Warren/Secesh area and on the EF/SF of the Salmon River Road. Some of this work was post-fire related, but a fair portion of it was overdue and I commend the local contractors, county governments, and local communities for helping the Forest Roads Section complete this vital work. I know the road closures required sacrifices by the hunting community and the residents of Warren and Yellow Pine. The new culverts will benefit forest visitors for years to come and we all can be proud of what we achieved this summer.

Fuel reduction work continues in Paddy Flat, Yellowpine, and Meadowslope that will make those communities safer and help create a more

Continued on page 2

By the #s
2007 Statistics

Total Land Area:
2.3 million acres

Permanent Employees:
222

Temporary Employees:
152

Volunteer Hours:
4,800

Volunteer Work Value:
$89,200

Youth Conservation Corps Employees:
12

Youth Conservation Corps Work Value:
$24,000

Did You Know?

Horse Mountain Lookout may be the last of the wooden legged lookout towers with a lookout house in Idaho?

One of the many lightening-caused fires of 2007, the Horton Fire burned 1400 acres.

Wildfires in '07 burn 500,000 acres

The 2007 fire season outpaced the extreme fire season of 2000 and 1994 for severe fire behavior. Fire managers were challenged by an extraordinary fire season due to extremely dry fuels, long-term drought, and fire resource competition that exceeded previous years.

The first fire of the season started on April 27th, and the first big lightning storm spread across the Forest (and the entire northwest) on July 6th, igniting 13 new fires over a 72-hour period. During this same time period over 1,000 fires were reported across the U.S. A second large lightning storm moved across the Forest on July 14th, igniting 16 new fires. This lightning storm came about as another 1,600 fires were reported across the U.S. With so many fires starting simultaneously, fire fighting crews were stretched thin, and fire managers were often faced with fire resource shortages to suppress fires. Conditions were so extreme that once fires were established there were not enough resources nation-wide to put all of the fires out. Late July and August saw the ignition of 27 new fires, including the Gray's Creek fire near Council, ID.

> **"Conditions were so extreme… there were not enough resources nation-wide to put all of the fires out."**

Seven more fire starts were reported in September before rain brought the 2007 fire season to a halt on September 18th. Out of the 87 fires last year, nine became large fires giving the Forest a 90% Initial Attack (IA) success rate. Approximately 500,000 acres burned with 51 percent burning at a moderate to low intensity and 22 percent of the area within the fire perimeters left unburned. The Air Tanker base recorded 847,094 gallons of air retardant drops.

By the #s

2007 Statistics

FIRE MANAGEMENT

Human Caused Fires: 21

Total Fires: 87

Fire Use Acres: 86,293

Wildfire Acres: 384,634

Total Acres Burned: 470,927

PRESCRIBED FIRES

Number of Ignitions: 35

Total Acres Burned: 717

PLANS from page 1

fire-resilient forest. The Secesh WUI project aided firefighting efforts when the fires of 2007 moved through the area.

I believe the Payette National Forest is one of the most beautiful places on earth and I look forward to working with others who use and love it as much as I do. Our challenge to balance multiple uses with responsible resource management will require all of us to work together. I am committed to making decisions that involve people, incorporate the latest scientific information, and that sustain the health, diversity and productivity of our natural resources.

Reducing our environmental footprint

Revenues will be used to construct an administrative facility to house a new supervisor's office and two new ranger district offices.

New seasonal housing will also be constructed and older housing will be renovated from sale revenues and capital improvement funds.

The Payette National Forest has four administrative sites in the city of McCall, Idaho. The Forest Headquarters Office is a leased facility on private land and costs the Forest in excess of $350,000.00 annually. Two other sites (the McCall and Krassel RD compounds) are owned by the Forest Service and are located on NFS lands; however, many buildings associated with these compounds are 30-50 years old and have significant deferred and annual maintenance costs.

In November 2006, the Payette National Forest successfully nominated three administrative sites for conveyance/sale in the McCall/New Meadows area:

1) A 4.6 acre vacant land parcel in McCall across from the existing smokejumper base.
2) A 16 acre parcel in McCall that currently houses the Krassel RD, the day care center, the radio shop, and seasonal/smokejumper housing.
3) A 1 acre parcel along with seven buildings in New Meadows.

It was the Forest's intent to use revenue from these conveyances to develop and construct an administrative site that would contain office space for the Supervisor's Office (S.O.) and two ranger districts on the McCall Ranger District site. Due to recent changes in the local real estate market the Forest will not be selling the Krassel site. Instead, the Krassel site will be the new location for the combined administrative site and the McCall Ranger District property will be used for operations and equipment storage. The Fire Warehouse on the property would remain on the site. Existing seasonal housing on the Krassel site will be retained and upgraded as funds become available. A site in Thorn Creek on the New Meadows Ranger District was being studied for new seasonal housing and a preliminary site plan was approved by District Ranger Brandel in 2008. However, problems with this site have led the Forest to consider a different location for employee housing. A Forest Service owned vacant lot in New Meadows is now being considered for the construction of seasonal housing.

Continued on page 11

By the #s

2007 Statistics

FOREST COLLECTIONS

Timber Receipts: $120,667

Salvage Receipts: $445,031

Livestock Grazing Fees: $61,640

Recreation Special Uses: $25,896

Recreation Fee Receipts: $90,026

Land Use Fees: $19,003

Power Receipts: $8,178

MISCELLANEOUS RECEIPTS

Brush Disposal: $210,985

KV/Reforestation: $543,034

Quarters Collections: $68,756

Specified Road Credits: $989,803

"Its' Been Said..."

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.

Author unknown

Travel planning progresses in 2008

The Payette National Forest released the Final Environmental Impact Statement for travel management in April of 2007. Due to the complexity of the Forest-wide analysis the Forest Supervisor chose to issue separate Records of Decision (ROD) by Ranger District for snow-free travel management. A ROD for winter travel management will be issued as a separate document for the entire forest in 2009.

The ROD for Weiser RD was issued on January 29, 2008 while the Krassel and McCall RODs were issued on October 6, 2008. The ROD for New Meadows and Council Ranger Districts was released on February 9, 2009. Each ROD reflects the Forest Supervisor's decision to select Alternative E, modified for each district.

Each ROD includes decisions on a small scale that apply to each District's unique needs and local issues. Motor vehicle use maps (MVUM) will be released once all of the Records of Decision for summer travel are signed and through appeals. The MVUM will only display motorized routes and forest visitors should always have an official PNF visitor's map on hand to supplement the b/w MVUM map. The maps will be free and available for download off of the forest web site.

The travel management process began in 2004 and has included planning meetings with cooperating agency representatives, public meetings, briefings for the media and congressional staff, and an extended comment period. The travel management process came as a result of national direction that mandated every forest to take a comprehensive look at their travel system and designate roads, trails, and areas open to motor vehicle use. The Rule also prohibits use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas inconsistent with the designation.

The Rule came about as a result of the harmful effects of indiscriminate off-road travel. The proliferation of user created routes is a major challenge on the PNF and nation-wide. These unauthorized routes can cause environmental damage, use conflicts, and lead to safety issues.

By the #s
2007 Statistics

RECREATION FACILITIES

Fee Campgrounds: 23

Miles of Motorized Trails: 660

Miles of Non-motorized Trails: 1,054

Miles of Authorized Open Road: 1,637

Miles of Classified Road: (open): 1,519.7

"Its' Been Said..."

The best friend on earth is the tree. When we use the tree respectfully and economically, we have one of the greatest resources on the earth.

Frank Lloyd Wright

Invasive species control efforts gain momentum in New Meadows District

The noxious weed program on the New Meadows District was productive in 2007 with its four person crew spending the summer recording, treating, and monitoring over 800 acres of noxious weed infestations.

Sixty new infestations were recorded and entered into the national database for a total of 776 sites on the district. Treatment of infestations included herbicide spraying and manual weed removal. Fifty percent of past treatment sites were checked for treatment effectiveness. Following consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the noxious weed crew treated infestations for the first time in Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel habitat.

The crew also worked on four cooperative projects in Adams County, Upper Payette River and Lower Weiser River with non-federal entities. The District hired a temporary employee to monitor and collect data on the noxious weed eradication program in the FCRNR Wilderness along the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. This information will be invaluable as the Payette continues to implement its management plan for the Frank Church.

"Scientists estimate that non-native species contribute to the decline of as much as half of all endangered species."

Invasive species are brought into forests in a variety of ways. They can travel in hay or straw, under or on cars and trucks or on off-highway vehicles. One of the most effective ways that citizens can help is to wash their cars and off road vehicles before and after they travel on forest roads & trails. Vehicle traffic is likely the biggest contributor to the spread of invasive species on the Payette. If we all do our part we can reduce new infestations and eradicate existing noxious weeds. Cooperation with other agencies and landowners is also important in our efforts to control invasive species. We have been working with local county governments, private landowners and other federal agencies in a coordinated effort to manage noxious and invasive species. The local CWMAs (Cooperative Weed Management Areas) are a good example of people and agencies working together.

Continued on page 7

Did You Know?

Spotted Knapweed is native to Europe. In Idaho the weed is widely spread and can cause erosion of surface soil during winter months because of low soil coverage from rosettes. Spotted Knapweed also decreases winter range of elk.

Spotted Knapweed can be found in rangelands, dry meadows, pastures, upland rocky areas, roadsides, and the sandy or gravelly floodplains of streams and rivers.

By the #s

2007 Statistics

NOXIOUS WEED TREATMENTS

Total Acres Treated: 2,619

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Programs: 53

Student Contacts: 675

Partners: 19

"Its' Been Said..."

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.

John Muir

By the #s

2007 Statistics

RANGE MANAGEMENT

Grazing Permittees: 52

Allotments: 55

Cattle Permitted: 10,541

Sheep Permitted: 26,541

Horses and Burros: 108

Range Improvements: 10

Bighorn sheep viability discussions continue

The Payette National Forest (PNF) has issued the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep viability following three years of study. The DSEIS re-analyzes the effects of current and proposed management of bighorn sheep within the PNF.

This DSEIS is a supplemental analysis to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Payette Revised Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) or Forest Plan and is intended to provide additional information and analysis to comply with the Chief's appeal decision of March 9, 2005.

The PNF received over 15,000 comments during the comment period on the DSEIS that ended on March 3, 2009. A special team from outside the Forest will organize the comments for the Interdisciplinary Team and Cooperators that will begin meeting again this summer. Additional work that remains to be completed this summer and fall includes: the preparation of a quantitative risk analysis, an economic analysis of Bighorn Sheep effects on recreation, and an update of popula

"The Payette National Forest ... wishes to balance public comment with scientific information and analysis."

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

tion and habitat models to include recent data. The Forest hopes to release the Final SEIS this winter.

"Much work remains to be done between draft and final and the public review of the draft was the first step toward that goal," said Forest Supervisor Suzanne Rainville. "I look forward to working with a variety of individuals and organizations on this complex land management issue this summer so that we can complete the SEIS this year."

The Forest hosted a public information meeting on September 29, 2008 in McCall at Forest headquarters and invited the public to a second meeting on October 6, 2008 in Boise. Forest staff participated in other events to aid the public's awareness and understanding of the issue including presentations at schools, clubs, and other government agencies.

DSEIS viability statement available

The DSEIS document is available for download on the Payette website at:
http://www.fs.fed.us/r4/payette/publications/big_horn/big_horn_sheep_documents_index.shtml

or a CD or hard copy can be requested by calling 208-634-0796.

Knapweed from page 1

Spotted Knapweed is an example of an invasive plant that we have on the Payette, and one that is detrimental to native plant communities due to its ability to rapidly infest large areas. When this happens, native vegetation production is reduced, which in turn reduces soil stability and vegetation diversity. Scientists estimate that non-native species contribute to the decline of as much as half of all endangered species. Endangered species need protecting not only because the law requires it, but also because they promote ecological diversity and support local economies through tourism and recreation.

Did You Know?

For protection, the Bighorn's own good sense gives it plenty of warning. If it cannot outrun its enemy, then it may turn and charge. The bighorn must watch out for predators such as wolves, bears, coyotes, bobcats, and lynx. It prefers open areas.

“Its' Been Said...”

The forest in the poor man's overcoat.

New England Proverb

By the #s

2007 Statistics

TIMBER OUTPUT

(million board feet)

Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ): 32.5

Timber Offered: 36.9

Timber Sold: 30.4

Timber Harvested: 18

Personal Use Firewood Sold: 1.6

Christmas Tree Permits Sold: 987

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

2,113 Acres

MECHANICAL FUEL REDUCTION

Wildland Urban Interface: 4,816 acres

Non-wildland Urban Interface: 146 acres

Contract and Forest Service engineering crews negotiate steep slopes while replacing the Goat Creek culvert along the South Fork Salmon River Road.

Engineering staff complete major road and bridge repairs

The record fire season of 2007 on the Payette National Forest made for a busy field season for the Payette's engineering group. Field assessments of road damage and needed drainage upgrades began in the fall of 2007 as soon as the fires allowed safe access. Crews quickly identified damaged culverts, a burnt bridge, burned timber walls, and undersized culverts prone to clogging within and adjacent to burn areas.

"The culverts and retaining wall timbers needed to be replaced prior to winter to prevent road damage and insure access."

The immediate concern was replacing 170 plastic (HDPE) culverts and timbers in retaining walls consumed by fire. One hundred-sixty burned out culverts were on the South Fork Salmon River Road, which provides the only winter access to the community of Yellow Pine. The culverts and retaining wall timbers needed to be replaced prior to winter to prevent road damage and insure access. Emergency repairs were done by both contract and the Payette NF road crew. One hundred-fifty culverts were replaced under contract while the Forest road crew replaced 20 culverts and replaced burned timbers in retaining walls.

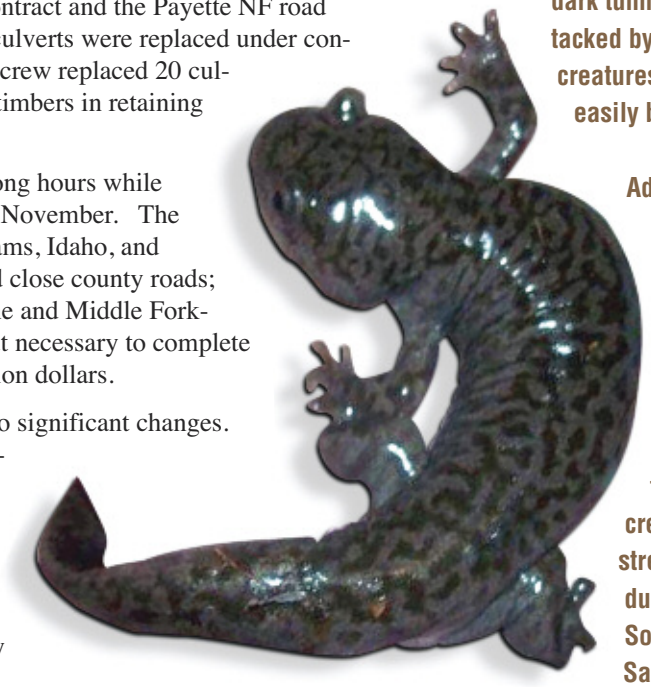
Both the contractor and road crews worked long hours while dodging inclement weather to finish by early November. The Forest coordinated and collaborated with Adams, Idaho, and Valley counties to identify needed repairs and close county roads; including Warren Wagon, McCall-Yellow Pine and Middle Fork-Weiser. Road closures were inconvenient but necessary to complete the work. Contract amounts totaled 2.2 million dollars.

All contracts were completed on time, with no significant changes. The projects resulted in fish passage being restored at 15 barriers. Aging infra-structure was replaced and upgraded to current standards. The improvements will improve public access to the National Forest and help insure reliable access to the rural communities of Warren and Yellow Pine for many years to come.

Did You Know?

Idaho Giant Salamanders live in north-central Idaho's forests and two locations in Montana. These large and robust predators are usually between 7 and 11.75 inches long, but can grow as long as 13 inches. They will attempt to eat anything they can catch.

These sneaky little critters surprised workers on the various culvert replacement projects by attaching to the crews' pant legs and arms and refusing to let go, even after a vigorous shaking. Workers began to find it more than a bit disconcerting to delve into dark tunnels only to be attacked by these annoying creatures whose bites can easily break human skin.



Adult Idaho Giant Salamanders prefer to stay in dimly lit quiet spaces - like those found in dark culverts. They also, unfortunately for the crews, need cold streams for reproduction like the South Fork of the Salmon River.

Did You Know?

Most PNF visitors live in Boise or Eagle, Idaho. This is suspected to be due to the Forest's distance from the interstate and the appeal of our less crowded, backcountry location.

By the #s

2007 Statistics

MISCELLANEOUS RECEIPTS

Brush Disposal: $210,985

KV/Reforestation: $543,034

Quarters Collections: $68,756

Specified Road Credits: $989,803

FOREST EXPENDITURES

Total Fire (pre-suppression): $7,485,332

Total Construction and Maintenance for Roads, Facilities, & Trails: $2,160,998

Total Trust Funds: $491,281

Total Fee Demo: $76,98

Recreation site improvements continue at a record pace

The Krassel Ranger District maintained and cleared over 200 miles of trail in the Frank Church Wilderness and an additional 160 miles of trail throughout the District. District trail crews had to return to many trails during the 2008 field season to clear debris slides, caused in part by the fires of 2007. Debris slides like the one pictured below in the Big Creek area of the Frank Church were a common occurrence across some parts of the Forest.

Renovation work in the Ponderosa Campground on the Krassel Ranger District was finished in 2008, with concrete work for ramps and table pads that improved accessibility. Other work included realignment of parking spurs for 10 camp sites, a refurbishing of tables and benches, installation of new fire grates to meet accessibility standards, and the placement of two interpretative signs.

Recreation program staff began upgrading campgrounds on Council and Weiser Ranger Districts in 2006 with an extensive renovation of Evergreen Campground. This campground, on the Council Ranger District, had been closed for several years. In 2007 all of the recreation facilities in Brownlee Campground on the Weiser Ranger District were upgraded to make them accessible, including the installation of a new toilet, new tables, and fire rings.

Huckleberry Campground on the Council Ranger District was also completely renovated in 2007, while upgrades began in 2007 in the Cabin Creek Campground were completed in 2008. Also on the Council Ranger District, improvements on the Big Flat Campground began in 2008 and should be completed this summer. Improvements to these campgrounds include new toilets, improved accessibility and some new picnic tables and fire rings.

Spring Creek Campground on the Weiser Ranger District is scheduled for a facelift in June of 2009 and planned renovations include improved accessibility at some sites and enlargement of parking areas at individual campsites. New interpretive signs will also be installed in Hells Canyon this summer that will highlight the history of the area.

This Ponderosa Campground received a new accessible ramp and picnic table pad.

Trail crew works to remove debris flow from the 2007 fire season on Big Creek.

Also scheduled in 2009 is the complete reconstruction of the popular Loon Lake trailhead and Chinook Campground on the McCall Ranger District. Plans include a new, larger parking lot to accommodate increased recreational use during the summer. On the New Meadows Ranger District the Cold Springs Campground will be renovated to repair damage caused during a hazard tree removal project that took place in 2007. New tables and fire rings will be installed along with a new double vault toilet.

"...Prescribed burning, habitat improvement, mapping and translocation efforts were all used as part of the recovery project."

Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel on the road to recovery

In an effort to facilitate the recovery of Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel (NIDGS) the Payette National Forest has implemented several projects to improve habitat and increase survival rates of this threatened species. Several projects involving prescribed burning, translocation, habitat improvement, monitoring, mapping and data gathering took place in 2007 involving Payette employees, researchers, YCC students and others.

In an effort to enhance grass and shrub lands habitat 30 acres were broadcast burned in Lost Valley while environmental analysis was completed to improve NIDGS habitat in the East Fork/Lost Creek area including 1500 acres of under burning and 875 acres of mechanical thinning. These treatments will help create travel routes between known populations in Lost Valley and East Fork/Lost Creek.

YCC students live trapped and relocated Columbian ground squirrels away from NIDGS habitat to areas more suited to them in order to reduce competition between the two species. Extensive monitoring sites were established for NIDGS within range allotments to study vegetation effects and in areas treated in past treatment areas to judge the effectiveness of restoration treatments. To aid in these efforts GIS maps were produced identifying treatment areas, active burrows, and confirmed NIDGS observations. Surveys also took place to look for possible habitat, and new colonies to NIDGS.

By the #s
2007 Statistics

HERITAGE RESOURCES

Total Recorded Sites: 1,722

National Register Listed Sites: 20

Volunteer Hours: 276

WILDLIFE AND STREAM HABITAT

Acres of Wildlife Habitat Restored: 1,042
(threatened & endangered species)

Acres Wildlife Habitat Restored: 320
(non-threatened and endangered)

Miles of Stream Habitat Restored: 9

LAND SALE from page 3

Conveyance/Sale

The Forest is currently in the process of conveying/selling the Jump Base parcel and the New Meadows parcel. Public scoping for the sale of the Jump Base parcel closed in mid-August and the city of McCall is working with the Lands Staff on an agreement for the direct sale of the property to the City. The environmental analysis (NEPA process) for the sale of the New Meadows site is complete and the property will be sold using an on-line competitive bid process through GSA this spring. The Krassel RD compound has been removed from consideration as a conveyance property.

Construction/Site Design

Preliminary site plans for seasonal housing on the New Meadows Ranger District are being reviewed by an interdisciplinary team. A preliminary site plan for the Combined Administrative Site on the Krassel compound is being developed in the Regional Office. The new compound will be LEED certified and every opportunity is being looked at to make it a green facility. The design team is hoping to include a biomass generator as part of the plan. A draft site plan should be ready for review this May.

Existing Smoke Jumper base property.

"Its' Been Said..."

A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.

Greek Proverb

Payette National Forest
800 West Lakeside Avenue
McCall, ID 83638

Highlights

is a product of the Payette National Forest and distributed yearly to Forest staff and partners.

If you would like to be added to our mailing list please contact:

Laura Pramuk
Public Affairs Officer
208-634-0784
lbpramuk@fs.fed.us.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Copyright © Payette National Forest 2009

Design by:
Hoffman Print Design
208-476-7295
www.hoffmanprintdesign.com

Did You Know?

Seventy-five percent of Forest visitors are males between the ages of 41 and 50.

Favorite activities are downhill skiing, hunting, hiking and wildlife viewing.

Council Ranger Districts' salvage projects near completion

By fall of 2008 15 million board feet of timber had been removed

The Grays Creek fire started on August 30, 2007 and burned approximately 25,000 acres of a combination of Forest Service, private, state, and federal lands. In April of 2008 the Forest Supervisor signed a decision notice allowing for post fire timber salvage and restoration activities in the burned area within the PNF. The area was logged in 2008 and with the assistance of Adams County and the cooperation of the community the Middle Fork Road was closed to enable logging trucks safe access in and out of the area. As of the fall of 2008 15 million board feet of salvageable timber had been removed from the burned area.

On June 4, 2006 a tornado with winds of between 113-157 miles per hour touched down near the community of Bear, Idaho approximately 25 miles northwest of Council, leaving a 12 mile long, one-mile wide swath of downed trees over an estimated 5,258 acres. Most of the affected land was on the Payette National Forest but private land was also impacted by the storm. The Forest Service conducted an expedited environmental review process to enable restoration and timber recovery activities to begin as quickly as possible. Project activities focused upon salvage, fuel reduction and reforestation treatment of 1,835 acres. During the years 2006-2008 the forest undertook tree planting, prescribed burning, and salvage logging at various times. As of the fall of 2008 11 million board feet of timber had been removed from the tornado area, as well as slash and biomass that is being utilized in the Council School District biomass burner.

Salvage timber ready for collections as firewood.