



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service



Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

## Record of Decision

# PLUMAS NATIONAL FOREST

## Land and Resource Management Plan



Reather Falls

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FOR

**RECORD OF DECISION**

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# Record of Decision

USDA-FOREST SERVICE

Environmental Impact Statement  
Plumas National Forest  
Land and Resource Management Plan  
Plumas, Lassen, Sierra, Butte, and Yuba Counties, California

## I. Overview

The 1,618,517-acre Plumas National Forest (PNF) is located at the northern end of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, in northeastern California. The name "Plumas" originated from a party of Hudson Bay Fur Company trappers who traveled the area in the 1820's. They found Indians wearing blankets interwoven with feathers along a waterway and so named it the "Feather River". Since California was under Spanish rule at that time the name was translated to "Rio de las Plumas", and extended to the naming of the County in 1854, and the Forest in 1905.

By 1850 the California gold rush drew thousands of people to search for gold on what are now PNF lands. With the advent of the miners came the need for timber to build new communities, to develop mines, and to provide heating and energy. To supply this need extensive tracts of land were heavily logged. Initially this was through rather primitive "horse" logging, however as technology developed railroad logging occurred on the more gentle slopes on the eastside of the PNF. The existing road system owes its origins to these early mining and logging ventures.

As a result of these early activities, large portions of the PNF are now in what can be considered "second growth" condition. On many of these sites growth has reached a point where timber harvesting is again appropriate. The PNF has only 6 percent of the Pacific Southwest Region land base but produces more than 10 percent of the Region's timber. This is a result of productive soils and sound management of the land base for varied multiple uses. A substantial standing volume of large sawtimber remains available to support ongoing production of quality timber.

The early miners' need for meat and dairy products also led to the establishment of cattle ranches in and adjacent to the PNF. This use peaked shortly after the turn of the century. Currently forty-five permittees utilize about 75 percent of the estimated 43,000 animal-unit-month (AUM) capacity.

Watershed value and quality continue to be of the highest order. About one-half of the Forest's total Present Net Value (PNV) results from the value of runoff water for domestic and agricultural uses throughout California. About 92 percent of the Forest's water drains to the State Water Project's Oroville Reservoir via the Feather River, and the PNF makes up nearly one-half of the reservoir's total watershed. A significant

portion of these waters pass through Pacific Gas and Electric's "Stairway of Power", a series of 10 powerhouses on the North Fork of the Feather River and its tributaries.

Recreation use on the Forest currently exceeds 2.3 million recreation visitor days annually and is expected to increase steadily due to the combination of five large reservoirs and scenic landscapes.

The variety of the Forest's flora and fauna reflects the notable variation as a result of climate, terrain and past logging activities. There is habitat for over 300 vertebrate species including two endangered species, the bald eagle and the peregrine falcon.

After 83 years of multiple-use management by the Forest Service the PNF is an environmentally sound and highly productive forest that contributes to the social, economic and environmental needs of society. The Forest Plan will continue the mosaic of uses that has been established over the past 140 years and will maintain and improve the quality and, where possible, the productivity of Forest resources. Over time the appearance of the Forest as seen from local communities, major highways, lakes, and recreation and other high use areas would remain essentially the same. Productive timberlands would contain uneven and evenaged stands, scattered among more natural-appearing areas. Wildlife habitat would generally be more diverse than it is today. Deer, bald eagle and peregrine falcon populations would increase, and viable populations of all other PNF species would be present. Eastside rangelands would change little. Recreational opportunities would be greater due to the development of more campgrounds and trails. Over 110,000 acres on the Forest would remain available for wilderness and semi-primitive recreation.

## **II. The Decision**

I have selected the Preferred Alternative described in the final Environmental Impact Statement and the final Plan to provide direction for management of the PNF for the next 10 to 15 years. This decision was based on a thorough study of the lands and resources, socio-economic interests, detailed study and analysis of six management alternatives and review of over 3,500 public comments on the draft Environmental Impact Statement and draft Plan. This record of decision summarizes the principle management objectives of the Forest Plan and the rationale for my decision.

### **Plan Direction**

The Plan provides a balanced management program that increases utilization of some market resources, maintains or enhances amenity values, and minimizes or avoids adverse environmental impacts. The following summarizes key management direction and goals to be achieved over the ten to fifteen-year period of Plan implementation.

## **Recreation**

The Plan provides a full range of recreation opportunities and encourages development of privately operated facilities. A comprehensive campground construction and reconstruction program will rehabilitate 19 recreation complexes and individual campgrounds to their originally designed capacities, including specialized facilities for handicapped users, and construct three new picnic areas, a fishing access trail, a family campground, three boat launching areas, and additional campsites at existing campgrounds in high use areas. About 9 percent of the PNF will be managed for semi-primitive and primitive recreation as provided by roadless areas, wild and scenic rivers, and Wilderness. Wild and Scenic River lands and easements will be acquired. The Forest trail system will be maintained and expanded. As cross country skiing and snowmobiling increase, a high priority will be placed on managing and coordinating these sometimes conflicting uses.

## **Special Areas**

The current designations of the Butterfly Valley Botanical Area and the Feather Falls Scenic Area are maintained. A recommendation is being made to the Secretary of Agriculture that the Lakes Basin Recreation Area be expanded to include an additional 4,360 acres similar to those within the existing designated area, and to withdraw 130 acres which more closely resemble land outside the area. Research Natural Area status for the Mt. Pleasant red fir-mesic meadow complex and the Mud Lake Modoc Cypress Stand is being recommended to the Chief of the Forest Service. I designate the Soda Rock Geologic Area (a travertine area with Maidu cultural/religious associations), Valley Creek Botanical Area (old-growth mixed conifer) and Little Last Chance Canyon Scenic Area to be Special Interest Areas. In addition, the Soda Rock Geologic Area and the Feather Falls Scenic Area are being reported to the National Park Service as potential National Natural Landmarks.

## **Wildlife**

A strong program of habitat management to meet the needs of various species dependent upon the full range of seral vegetation stages, from early seral through climax, is provided. A minimum of 5 percent of seral stage vegetation is maintained in each of the 43 management areas. Emphasis is placed on habitat management and monitoring of results. Improvements and activities in cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Game will place a high priority on maintaining viable populations of all species of wildlife. Twenty wildlife and plant species are identified as management indicator species. Management for 26 bald eagle territories (double the 1982 level) and for two peregrine falcon pairs (none in 1982) is provided.

## **Riparian Areas**

Forest-wide standards and guidelines and a riparian area prescription emphasize the protection and restoration of riparian areas. Riparian areas are critical to wildlife, fish habitat, vegetation diversity, water quality, flood and sediment control, stream channel stability, recreation, and aesthetics. Timber harvesting, livestock grazing, and

mining are allowable uses within these areas, but must not conflict with riparian dependent resources. Plan direction requires restoration of deteriorated channels and riparian areas.

### **Grazing**

The range program remains relatively static at 34,000 AUMs. The increase of 3,800 AUMs from the 1982 level comes primarily through land exchanges, with minor amounts from new approaches to using transitory range and range improvement programs.

### **Timber**

The timber allowable sale quantity (ASQ) will increase from 250.5 MMBF in the current Timber Management Plan to 265.5 MMBF (The actual amount sold in 1987 was 179.2 MMBF). Market demand and congressional funding will determine the actual annual sale quantity sold in any given year to reach the ASQ. Output estimates are the expected outputs and not what must be accomplished. ASQ decade volume cannot be exceeded.

A variety of harvesting methods including clearcutting, shelterwood, group selection and single tree selection will be used. Selection of silvicultural methods will be based on analysis of vegetation type, topography, and other site conditions and economics and public input. Clearcutting will be used on about 4,000 acres annually, less than proposed in the draft Plan (4,545 acres) but more than provided for in the previous Timber Management Plan (2,970 acres). Clearcutting would be used where even-age harvesting meets management objectives better than uneven-age harvest. Reasons for selecting clearcutting as the optimum method of harvest include:

1. Less ground disturbance will occur by harvesting more volume in fewer acres as compared to partial cutting a greater number of acres. Watershed objectives will be better met because harvesting more volume per acre means that fewer acres are affected.
2. Fewer residual trees will be damaged, which is particularly important for true fir stands.
3. Clearcutting makes possible more efficient and complete cleanup of logging slash to reduce fire hazard and facilitates planting for the reestablishment of timber stands.
4. Infections from dwarf mistletoe spread less quickly in young stands of trees planted in clearcuts.
5. Regeneration and growth rates are higher for shade-intolerant species such as pines and Douglas-fir when planted in clearcut areas, and within clearcut areas they better withstand invasion by the less valuable shade-tolerant trees such as true firs, incense cedar, and tan oak. Some encroachment of these shade tolerant species will occur, but the shade-intolerant species will predominate.

Group selection and single tree selection harvesting will be applied during the Plan period on four timber compartments to determine the feasibility of maintaining a generally continuous forest cover on the large diversified land base of the Plumas National Forest. Twenty-eight percent of the harvested acreage and 61 percent of the timber harvested in the first decade will use even-age regeneration cutting. Non-regeneration prescriptions will be used for the remaining 72 percent of harvested acres and will produce 39 percent of the allowable sale quantity.

Timber sale revenues exceed costs, as they have in the past, except for a small number of sales which are planned to meet other resource objectives. All capable, available and suitable (CAS) lands contribute toward the ASQ. Should timber demand increase significantly in the future, the allowable sale quantity could be increased only by amending the Plan and accepting a decline in visual quality, old growth timber, and associated impacts on old growth dependent wildlife species.

#### **Wilderness and Roadless Areas**

No additional wilderness is recommended. No scheduled activities are planned for the Bald Rock, Beartrap, Chips Creek, Dixon Creek, Grizzly Peak, Keddie Ridge, Lakes Basin, Middle Fork, and Thompson Peak roadless areas (79,500 acres in total) for the duration of the Plan. The Semi-Primitive Prescription (Rx-8) permits limited management activities (such as grazing on active allotments, mineral development, use of prescribed fire and timber harvesting with special cutting methods for salvage purposes) to take place in these areas provided that the semi-primitive nature of the areas is protected. Opportunities are available for activities such as hiking and walking, horseback riding, viewing scenery, camping, hunting, nature study, mountain climbing, swimming, fishing, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

#### **Water Quality and Quantity**

Water quality will be maintained and improved by use of Best Management Practices, an aggressive rehabilitation program and increased attention to protection of riparian areas. Only incidental yields in water quantity will occur as a result of vegetation manipulation.

#### **Visual Resources**

High visual quality will be maintained on areas readily apparent from recreational developments, major travel routes, other high use areas and lands managed as semi-primitive areas, Wilderness, Wild and Scenic River and Wild Trout Streams.

#### **Budget**

The Plan calls for an annual budget of \$29.9 million, an increase of \$7.6 million over the current annual budget. Implementation of the Plan will depend on annual allocations from Congress. If annual budgets are significantly less than the Plan requires, some objectives and outputs may not be met. In that case, an amendment or revision of the Plan may be needed.

### **III. Alternatives Considered**

#### **A. Alternatives**

A range of alternatives, six in all, was developed and analyzed. In response to public comment on the DEIS and draft Plan, alternatives PRF, AMY and CMY were modified.

##### Preferred Alternative (PRF)

This alternative attempts to meet both commodity and amenity demands, and has been revised in response to public input and desires. Thoughts and ideas from the public were incorporated and also resulted in development of a riparian prescription, strengthening of the standards and guidelines for wildlife and diversity, reanalyzing the visual management program, review of harvest methods and the appropriate combinations of harvest methods, and raising the allowable sale quantity by 10 MMBF over the draft Plan while continuing to protect other resources and values.

##### Current Management Alternative (CUR)

This alternative continues management policies and practices, resource outputs, and expenditures at 1982 levels.

##### RPA Program Alternative (RPA)

This alternative increases outputs for all resources to provide the Forest's share of the 1980 RPA targets.

##### Constrained Economically Efficient Alternative (CEE)

This alternative emphasizes production of timber, livestock, minerals, developed recreation, and special uses that have potential to produce income to the Government, while preserving a minimum level of amenity values.

##### Amenity Emphasis Alternative (AMY)

The Amenity alternative emphasizes amenity resources such as wilderness, wildlife, fish, water and dispersed recreation, with an ASQ of 247 MMBF of timber which would be harvested primarily through group selection. This alternative was revised due to input from the Friends of Plumas Wilderness.

##### Commodity Emphasis Alternative (CMY)

The Commodity Alternative emphasizes a response to commodity demands while maintaining a moderate level of amenity values. Timber, range, and other commodities are produced in such a way as to maximize economic efficiency. This alternative was revised due to input from the Plumas-Sierra Citizens for Multiple use.

## **B. Public Participation**

Coordination with Federal, State and local agencies was recognized as an important part of the planning process. Plans of the agencies, which might be affected by the planning effort, were solicited. Meetings were held with State and local agencies. Numerous meetings between the Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) were held, and the Forest Service Wildlife Biologist worked with his counterparts in the Department, both at the State and local level, in development of standards and guidelines, selection of Management Indicator Species, and in consideration of other measures affecting wildlife.

The Plumas National Forest conducted an active public involvement program. Federal, State, and local agencies have been informed and consulted throughout the planning effort. Forest users have had an opportunity to participate.

A notice of intent to prepare an EIS for the Plan was published in the Federal Register on November 7, 1979. A notice of availability of the draft EIS and draft Plan was published in the Federal Register on February 7, 1986, and announced by area news media. 650 copies of the draft Plan and DEIS were distributed to the public. Meetings and formal hearings were held during the comment period which lasted through May 23, 1986. Over 3,500 individuals, organizations, and Federal, State, and local agencies commented on the draft Plan and DEIS. All comments were considered in the preparation of the final documents and in the selection of the Preferred Alternative as the Plan.

## **IV. Reasons for the Decision**

This section describes the significant factors forming the basis for my decision in selecting the Preferred Alternative as the foundation for the Plan.

No single factor determined the decision. Rather, using professional judgment and experience, many factors were considered and weighed in making the decision. Based on consideration of all factors, including monetary and nonmonetary costs and benefits, land capability, protection of the basic resources, public desire, and advice and suggestions from other agencies, organizations, and experienced Forest officers, the Plan sets a course that results in the greatest overall long-term benefit to the public.

### **A. Response to Public Comments**

The Plumas National Forest responded to the input received on the DEIS and draft Plan; substantive comments and the responses to them can be found in the EIS Appendix W. This input was very helpful to the Forest; it showed areas of confusion, disagreement, and also those portions of the Plan that the public accepted. The comments included corrections that could be made

to the document, concerns that needed better explanation and major issues to be addressed further.

The Forest received many, varied comments from many different interests, and sometimes comments from one reviewer conflicted with comments from another reviewer. A discussion of how the Plan handles the major issues that surfaced during the public comment period follows.

## 1. Timber Harvesting Methods

Public concern centered on perceived adverse environmental effects of clearcutting and other even-age silvicultural systems and corresponding advantages of uneven-age silvicultural systems.

In the current Timber Management Plan, the allowable sale quantity is 250.5 MMBF per year. This includes a planned regeneration harvest of 2,970 acres per year from a 769,396 acre commercial forest land base. Under the draft Preferred Alternative the annual sale quantity would have been 255 MMBF per year, with a regeneration acreage of 5,233, from a 871,000 CAS land base. Within the regeneration acreage 4,545 acres per year would be clearcut and 688 acres shelterwood.

Due to public concerns over proposed harvesting methods the following measures were evaluated and incorporated in the final Plan:

- Reduce scheduled timber yields from riparian areas
- Limit timber harvest in semi-primitive areas to salvage
- Schedule low yields on slopes over 60 percent
- Distribute regeneration cuts among the different timber strata to meet dispersion requirements
- Increase intermediate cutting and salvage/sanitation to reduce clearcut acreage
- Utilize a variety of timber harvesting methods and even-age and uneven-age silvicultural methods.

The final Plan increases the allowable sale quantity by 10.5 MMBF to a total of 265.5 MMBF, as compared to the draft Plan. In accomplishing this the CAS land base is essentially fully utilized at 898,932 acres. The maximum regeneration acreage is 5,400 acres per year, of which 4,000 acres will be clearcut, 600 acres shelterwood cut, and 800 acres group selection cut with openings typically less than 2 acres but ranging to 5 acres in size. Standards and guidelines were revised to assure protection of non-timber resources.

## 2. Herbicide Use

The public was concerned that the Forest would use herbicides to control competing vegetation during reforestation. Many believed that herbicides are a health hazard and that the Forest Service has alternatives to herbicide use. There were others who supported herbicide use and indicated a trust in the Forest to carefully manage the use.

Current direction in the Plan states that: 1) the selection of any particular treatment method will be made at the project level based on analysis of the relative effectiveness, environmental effects and costs of feasible alternatives; 2) monitoring plans to evaluate predicted project effects and adherence to planned treatment methods will be developed for site-specific projects. In response to public comment no herbicide use was modeled in the AMY alternative. All other alternatives assume herbicides will be available for use.

### 3. Grazing

A number of respondents indicated that too much emphasis was being placed on grazing, especially in relation to the perceived conflicts with riparian areas. To address this concern the Forestwide standards and guidelines for riparian areas have been rewritten, and a new Riparian Area Prescription (Rx-9) has been incorporated into the final Plan giving direction to the management of grazing, as well as other management activities, in riparian areas.

The Plan calls for 34,000 Animal Unit Months (AUM's), 2,000 AUM's more than the draft Plan. This is a result of expansion of grazing land due to land exchanges and better utilization of transitory range. Overall range capacity is estimated to be 43,000 AUM's.

There was also some question as to the grazing AUM value used in the economic analysis of the grazing activity (\$10.20 per AUM) when this value was compared with the actual fee received from ranchers (\$1.86 per AUM). The grazing value used in the DEIS was based on Economic Research Service studies used to determine the relative value of the range resource. The grazing fee, which is established by Congress, is currently under review.

### 4. Riparian Areas

The public wants more stringent management and very little or no land disturbances in riparian areas. The Forest should give priority to restoring damaged riparian areas.

In the final Plan, Forestwide standards and guidelines have been rewritten to help address the concerns expressed. In addition a Riparian Area Prescription (Rx-9) was formulated to provide added management emphasis to these sensitive areas. The management of the areas will: 1) allow logging only where it benefits riparian dependent resources, helps control insects and disease, is needed to insure public safety, or facilitates off-site logging activities while protecting the riparian area; 2) implement grazing systems that protect riparian dependent resources; 3) minimize the number of road and stream crossings; and 4) protect riparian areas during mining operations. The final Plan also provides for an aggressive restoration program for riparian areas.

## 5. Spotted Owls

Numerous comments were received on the spotted owl issue. Some stated that too much land and timber were being set aside for spotted owls. Others wanted more area and stricter guidelines for the management of this species and questioned the ability of the Forest to meet the spotted owl management direction in light of the increased timber harvest proposed in the draft Plan. Some questioned the concept of non-site specific habitat areas used in FORPLAN modeling in the draft Plan and the ability of the Forest to maintain a viable population when the estimated habitat capability to support pairs shows a reduction from 125 to 53 pairs.

Forestwide standards and guidelines have been revised to help deal with some of these concerns. The spotted owl section in Chapter 3 of the EIS has been revised to more clearly explain the estimate of capability to support pairs and how these numbers were derived.

Recent field surveys to better identify areas occupied by pairs of spotted owls have provided more site specific information and allowed analysis of possible network arrangements. As a result, the estimated capability to support pairs of spotted owls has been revised. Also, the network has been revised to 54 spotted owl habitat areas in the final Plan. These were chosen by the PNF Management Team from several alternative network arrangements, which ranged from 53 to 60 habitat areas. The network review and update indicated that Regional standards and guidelines can be met with 49 spotted owl habitat areas. This network covers the geographic range of spotted owls and connects with owl networks on adjacent Forests. Five additional areas have been included in the network. Although these 5 are not needed to meet the standards and guidelines, they are included in the network because their protection is compatible with management of other resources.

The FORPLAN modeling process has been improved to provide a more site specific assessment rather than the "floating" area analysis that was done for the draft Plan. Improvements also were made in the analysis of estimated effects of managing habitat areas by various prescriptions. A mixture of management prescriptions has been adopted.

## 6. Management Indicator Species

A number of comments were received from individuals and agencies concerning the adequacy of the Management Indicator Species (MIS) listing shown in the draft Plan. The basis for the selection of the MIS was that the selected species would be representative of all other species on the PNF.

A major area of contention was whether we should include species shown on the State Endangered and Rare Species listing. Populations on the Plumas are not known for most of these species. The Forestwide standards and guidelines in the Plan have, however, been revised and call for cooperative surveys with DFG, as well as having a requirement to provide sufficient habitat to maintain existing populations for State listed species.

Management area direction has been added for specific species where information on distribution is known. Any new information discovered during the Plan implementation will be tracked and incorporated into management area direction. During the planning period a coordinated effort with the California Department of Fish and Game will be made to determine priority areas for management of listed species, and to develop population and habitat objectives.

#### 7. Indicator Species Population Levels

The public asked how could Management Indicator Species (MIS) levels be monitored when population levels and habitat requirements are unknown.

Habitat requirements and minimum population levels for MIS are shown on Table 4-4 in the Plan, except for those without population estimates. An assumption was made that viability of species not on the Federal Endangered Species List will be maintained if adequate quality habitat is provided.

Direction in the Plan states that during the planning period the Forest will meet with DFG, and other Forests, to establish MIS monitoring techniques and viability levels. In addition the Plumas will conduct selected species surveys, if needed, to establish background population levels on those species where information is lacking.

#### 8. Roadless Areas

Many of the respondents visualize the roadless areas as "de facto" wilderness and want to preserve the areas as such. Others fear that if the Semi-Primitive Roadless designation is used it will be the first step in making these areas into formal wildernesses in future years. Some indicated that giving the areas any type of designation will limit the activities which could be carried out in these areas.

No scheduled activities are planned for the Bald Rock, Beartrap, Chips Creek, Dixon Creek, Grizzly Peak, Keddie Ridge, Lakes Basin, Middle Fork and Thompson Peak roadless areas (79,500 acres in total) for the duration of the Plan. The title of the prescription for management of these areas has been changed from Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized to Semi-Primitive. Language has also been inserted into the Semi-Primitive Prescription (Rx-8) that would permit limited management activities to take place in these areas providing the semi-primitive nature of the areas is protected.

#### 9. Semi-Primitive Motorized Area

The only Semi-Primitive Motorized Area (SPM) on the Forest in the DEIS was Adams Peak (7,000 acres). The DFG and the Plumas County Board of Supervisors pointed out that this is a prime deer wintering and fawning area, and that off-road vehicle use could be attracted by use of this designation. Accordingly the SPM designation has been dropped in the Plan, even though motorized use will still be allowed to occur. Land characteristics dictate that only minimal management will occur on most of the area.

## 10. Bucks Lake

The draft Plan proposed to manage the Bucks Lake Basin using guidelines shown in three Management Areas: Bucks, Faggs, and Grizzly Dome. Most respondents pointed out that the Bucks Lake Basin is a unique recreational area and should be incorporated into one management area. There was also some fear that clearcutting would ruin the scenic values in this Basin. The Plan now incorporates the entire Bucks Lake Basin into the existing Bucks Management Area. Changes have been made in standards and guidelines to address concerns relative to timber management and recreation. The harvesting system for the Bucks Lake Basin will be uneven-age management, mostly group selection.

## 11. Feather Falls Scenic Area

The public's concerns reflect the desire to protect the Feather Falls Scenic Area from hydroelectric development. Commentors indicated that if hydroelectric development is allowed on the portion of Fall River that lies within the Feather Falls Scenic Area it would destroy the scenic value of the area. Many asked that this segment of Fall River be designated a Wild and Scenic River.

A number of hydroelectric projects have been proposed on Fall River. All of these projects have been subsequently abandoned. The lack of success by developers can only be partially attributed to the steep and rocky terrain. Major factors that have discouraged development have been the low price of oil and the relative abundance of power available from other sources. These limiting factors are not static and may swing into more favorable conditions in the future. If that occurs, the Forest will be faced with the dilemma of what to do when a developer has an economically viable project which may affect Feather Falls.

A study will be initiated during Plan implementation to determine the suitability of the 7 mile long portion of the river from Nelson's Crossing to Lake Oroville for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River System. This segment of Fall River has unpolluted water, is free of impoundments and is generally inaccessible except by trail. In the interim, the Plumas will manage this portion of the river to preserve its free flowing condition.

## 12. Lakes Basin Recreation Area

A substantial number of comments were received concerning the expansion of the Lakes Basin Recreation Area. These were generally focused on three areas. The Frazier Falls/Frazier Creek Canyon was of primary concern, followed by the Smith Creek and Claim Creek areas, and Jamison Canyon. There were also a number of people who felt that no more or no restrictions should be placed on the land base regardless of where it was on the Forest.

The Plan expands the Lakes Basin area to include an additional 4,360 acres of lands of "primary" concern, as presented by the public, while deleting approximately 130 acres which do not conform to the high altitude, glaciated

characteristics of the Lakes Basin. This would result in a net increase of 4,230 acres over the area originally designated in the draft Plan. Areas to be added are of similar nature to the lands already in the Lakes Basin Recreation Area. The new proposed boundaries of this area are shown in Management Area 35, Lakes Basin, in the Plan. A recommendation will be made to the Secretary of Agriculture to modify the boundaries of the area in accordance with the Plan.

### 13. Budget Projections

Public comment on this issue indicated concern over the discrepancy between current Fiscal Year budgets and the much higher cost of implementing any of the alternatives. The public questioned how substantially lower budgets would affect resource programs and their priorities.

Appendix C, Budgets and Their Relationship to the Forest Plan has been added to the EIS. This appendix provides an overview of the Federal Government's budgeting process and provides an explanation of how the Plan will be used to formulate budget requests. It also provides information on the importance of cooperative projects and the funding and the contributions of volunteers to program accomplishments. Further implementation of the Administration's policy of having users pay fees, commensurate with the cost or value of the service provided, is discussed as a means of making up budget shortfalls.

Outputs shown in the Plan will be realized only when adequate funding is provided. Regardless of annual budget levels, management requirements including the standards and guidelines established in the Plan will be met. Under the National Environmental Policy Act, an environmental analysis is completed for every project that could have an effect upon the environment.

## **B. Economic Efficiency of Alternatives**

The Constrained Economically Efficient Alternative has the highest Present Net Value, followed by the Commodity Emphasis Alternative and the RPA Program Alternative. However, these alternatives do not reflect the high values Forest users place on non-market values. If these alternatives were implemented, visual quality would be reduced and there would be a significant reduction in old growth timber with resulting impacts on old growth dependent wildlife species.

The Preferred Alternative was selected because it provides for more wildlife, better water quality, more old growth retention and higher visual quality than the three alternatives with higher Present Net Values. It is not the most economically efficient alternative, but provides a high level of net public benefits. These benefits include such market outputs as range, timber, developed recreation and water supply; and such non-market outputs as scenic quality, dispersed recreation opportunities, fish and wildlife and wilderness.

### **C. Social and Economic Stability**

Effects on jobs, revenues, recreational opportunities, fuelwood availability, roadless areas, resource protection for future generations, and social and economic stability for people living in and adjacent to the Forest in Plumas, Lassen, Sierra, Butte, and Yuba Counties were considered in choosing the Preferred Alternative. Public lands make up an overwhelmingly large share of the land base within most of those counties where the Forest is located. The resource and amenity values provided on the Plumas National Forest significantly affect the livelihood of the residents of those counties on public as well as private land. Revenues to the county governments from activities on the Forest are a solid component of the economic base.

The Plan emphasizes protecting and improving water quality, retaining high visual quality, and providing recreation opportunities for developed and primitive and semi-primitive experiences while providing timber harvest, grazing and mineral production that will not significantly curtail historic uses of the Forest, and also helps maintain local social stability by contributing to economic activity. It best meets social and economic concerns by providing for an increased level of timber harvest that is compatible with environmental quality goals and allows for public use of the Forest to ensure that local lifestyles are not adversely affected. The Plumas National Forest will follow a policy of non-discrimination in providing work and recreational and educational experiences for the community and will promote active participation by all segments of the public.

### **D. Contribution to the Regional Production of Goods and Services**

The Preferred Alternative will protect all resources while providing for additional opportunities for recreation, wildlife habitat improvement, forage, timber, fuelwood, and water production needed for local economic growth and stability. It provides an appropriate level of all outputs while protecting the basic soil and water resources and responding to public preferences, and provides commodity outputs at a level where amenity values can be maintained and enhanced. The Plan meets its share of 1990 RPA goals, as assigned in the Regional Guide, except for reforestation (down 1,000 acres), and wildlife equivalent acres (down 1,410 acres).

### **E. Rationale for the Decision**

In selecting the Preferred Alternative, I considered both monetary and non-monetary costs and benefits, the capability of the land, the need for protection of resources, concerns expressed by people interested in the Forest, advice from other agencies and resource professionals and the legislative mandate of the Forest Service. Therefore, national, regional, state and local objectives were considered in making the decision.

The Preferred Alternative provides management direction that will result in the greatest long-term benefits to people, including the benefits of a

healthy, diverse and productive Forest environment. It provides a mix of amenity and commodity resources at reasonable levels and addresses the range of public concerns more effectively than the other alternatives.

The Current Management Alternative does not address some existing problems with water quality and does not provide for future needs in recreation and timber; the RPA Program Alternative relies extensively on clearcutting to reach timber targets and has the highest projected losses from wildfire of all the alternatives; the Constrained Economically Efficient Alternative also relies extensively on clearcutting to reach timber targets, has the highest reduction in old growth timber of all the alternatives, reduces visual quality and provides few amenity resources; the Amenity Emphasis Alternative relies primarily on group selection for harvesting of timber; and the Commodity Emphasis Alternative does not retain most roadless areas and would intensively harvest timber in visual zones.

## **F. Environmentally Preferred Alternative**

I judge Alternative AMY to be the environmentally preferred alternative. All alternatives are environmentally acceptable, however, I judge alternative AMY to have the least impact on the environment. It emphasizes water quality, wildlife habitat, visual quality and wilderness, and provides the highest level of roadless area allocation (116,900 acres), and minimizes foraging competition between wildlife and cattle in favor of wildlife. Wide streamside zones protect riparian areas from disturbance. Timber is managed under the Visual Partial Retention Prescription, using group selection as the primary harvest method. The success of group selection on a large, diversified land base is uncertain, and is a definite deterrent to selecting this alternative. In addition, the level of timber management would require repeated entries on a limited land base, thus impacting the soils more frequently.

## **G. Compatibility With Other Public Agency Goals and Plans**

The goals and plans of other public agencies which could be affected by National Forest management were considered early in the planning process and during the development of the alternatives in the draft EIS. The EIS reflects these along with the comments from public agencies that were received during the public review period (see Appendix W, EIS). Where possible, the Plan was modified to accommodate these concerns.

Federal agencies commenting on the draft were the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX.

State agencies commenting on the draft included the Departments of Parks and Recreation, Water Resources, Fish and Game, and Forestry, the Central Valley and Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and the State Board of Forestry.

Local Governments and agencies commenting on the draft included Plumas, Butte, and Yuba counties; the cities of Oroville, Portola, Yuba City, and

Marysville; the Plumas and Oroville Chambers of Commerce; the Plumas County Fish and Game Commission; and the Plumas County Economic Development Commission.

Summarized below are the changes to the EIS and Plan resulting from the agencies' comments:

A number of these agencies had concerns about the economic impacts of planned timber harvest levels, and the effects of clearcutting and herbicides on the environment. Various management constraints were applied in response to these concerns. Modeling of the Preferred Alternative, after modification responding to comments on the draft Plan and DEIS, resulted in an increase in the CAS land base from 871,000 acres to 898,932. The Plan will increase the allowable sale quantity to 265.5 MMBF per year, up from the current Timber Management Plan allowable sale quantity of 250.5 MMBF. Timber harvesting will be accomplished by both even-age and uneven-age management. Clearcutting acres will be reduced from the draft Plan level. Usage of herbicides in the Pacific Southwest Region is still not resolved, pending a decision on the Vegetation Management EIS.

Water quality and protection of riparian areas was also a concern. To address these the Forestwide standards and guidelines for water and riparian areas have been revised, and a Riparian Area Prescription (Rx-9) was formulated. Aggressive rehabilitation is planned and monitoring will occur.

The maintenance of viable population levels of wildlife and plants was a concern of many of the responding agencies. Here again Forestwide standards and guidelines have been revised and planned monitoring intensified.

The above changes were also consistent with many other public comments.

The public input to the Plan provided much needed information and solidified coordination efforts. Dialogue with other federal agencies, the State of California, local governments, and interested publics, will not stop with the approval of the Plan. On-going involvement by interested parties is critical to the successful implementation of this Plan, and all other project and specific resource management plans. As more site specific planning is done, we will conduct additional environmental analyses, with public involvement.

#### **H. Reasons for Selecting the Preferred Alternative**

The Preferred Alternative was chosen because it best meets the needs of the people, including concerns for environmental quality. While other alternatives may be more desirable with respect to any particular consideration, none provides as good a mix of resource benefits and uses while maintaining a healthy and diverse natural environment.

The Preferred Alternative provides increased recreation and timber harvesting while protecting the Forest's basic soil and water resources. Amenity values are maintained or enhanced. Increases in all classes of recreation opportunity are provided. Timber is harvested by both uneven-age and even-age systems, utilizing a variety of harvesting methods, including individual tree selection, group selection, shelterwood, clearcutting and intermediate harvest. Increased prescribed fire, which lessens potential wildfire losses, will be used for fuel reduction and for meeting specific resource objectives. Vegetative diversity is emphasized in each of the 43 management areas on the Forest. Livestock grazing will be continued, while at the same time maintaining water quality and long-term soil productivity. Increased protection of riparian areas to reflect public concerns will be provided. Stream rehabilitation will be initiated. Community and regional stability through provision of timber for local industries and maintaining high visual quality for tourism is emphasized. This alternative was developed and modified to reflect, as much as possible, the broad range of desires of the public which were expressed in the letters which helped identify the initial planning issues, and in the comments on the DEIS and draft Plan. PRF maintains and/or enhances amenity values while providing a mix of commodity outputs in an economical manner, and is only slightly less environmentally preferable than alternative AMY.

I judge Alternative PRF to have the greatest long-term public benefit when compared to other alternatives, and have selected it to be the Plan for management of the Plumas National Forest.

## **V. Implementation, Mitigation and Monitoring**

The Plan will not be implemented sooner than 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision appears in the Federal Register. The time needed to bring all activities into compliance with the Plan will vary depending on the type of project.

As soon as practicable after approval of the Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all outstanding and future permits, contracts, cooperative agreements and other instruments for occupancy and use of affected lands are consistent with the Plan. The Forest Supervisor will also assure that (1) Forest's proposed annual programs, projects, objectives and budget requests are consistent with the overall management direction specified in the Plan; and (2) implementation is in compliance with the Regional Guide and 36 CFR 219.10(e), 36 CFR 219.11(d), and 36 CFR 219.27.

Implementation is guided by the management requirements contained in the Forest direction and management area prescriptions which are found in Chapter 4 of the Plan. These management requirements were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse effects.

Outputs in the Plan may be adjusted as a result of research efforts which produce new information and technologies. Air quality, prescribed fire, riparian trend studies, and other data will enhance and affect Plan implementation. Management Direction contained in Chapter 4 of the Plan will be used to analyze any proposal involving use of NFS lands.

The purpose of the monitoring program is three-fold: (1) to evaluate whether Forest goals and objectives are being realized, (2) to determine how closely management requirements have been followed, and (3) to determine when Plan amendments or revisions are needed. The results of monitoring and evaluation will be used to measure the progress of the Plan implementation.

## **VI. Planning Records, Amendments and Revisions, and Administrative Review**

### **A. Planning Records**

Planning records contain the detailed information and documents decisions used in developing the Plan and EIS as required in 36 CFR 219.12. All of the documentation detailing the Forest planning process is available for inspection during regular business hours at:

Forest Supervisor's Office  
Plumas National Forest  
159 Lawrence Street  
Quincy, California 95971  
(916) 283-2050

These records are incorporated by reference into the final EIS and Plan.

### **B. Amendments and Revisions**

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of the Forest Plan at least every 15 years. The Plan may be revised sooner if physical conditions or demands on the land and resources have changed sufficiently to affect the overall goals or uses for the Plumas National Forest. When revising the Forest Plan, all the procedures set forth in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed; this includes scoping, an analysis of the management situation, formulation of alternatives, an estimation of effects, an evaluation of alternatives, identification of a preferred alternative, documentation in an EIS and draft Plan, and formal public comment before approval and implementation of the revised Plan.

During the implementation of the Forest Plan, prior to its formal revision, various factors may trigger the need to change aspects of the Plan. In this event, based upon the advice and recommendation of the Forest's interdisciplinary team, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether the proposed changes are significant or nonsignificant. The Regional Forester

will approve any significant amendments to the Forest Plan. The determination of significance shall be made in accord with the requirements of 16 USC 1604(f), 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), and pertinent sections of the Forest Service Manual and Handbook. The determination of significance or nonsignificance will be documented in a decision notice that is available for public review. No changes will be implemented prior to appropriate public notification. In the event of a significant amendment, the procedures set forth in 36 CFR 219.12 will be followed, though the focus will be on the proposed changes. Determinations of whether proposed changes are significant or nonsignificant are appealable under 36 CFR 211.18.

### **C. Right to Administrative Review**

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 211.18. Notice of appeal must be in writing and submitted to:

Regional Forester  
Pacific Southwest Region  
USDA, Forest Service  
630 Sansome Street  
San Francisco, CA 94111

The notice of appeal, a statement of reasons to support the appeal, and any request for oral presentation must be filed within 45 days after the date of this decision.

Recommendations for Research Natural Area designation of the Mount Pleasant red fir-mesic meadow complex and the Mud Lake Modoc cypress areas are not appealable, as only the Chief of the Forest Service can make these decisions.

An appeal of my decision does not halt Forest Plan implementation. A stay of the decision must be requested. A stay may be requested at any time during the appeal period until a decision on the appeal is made by the Chief, USDA Forest Service.

No decisions on site-specific projects are made in this document, although a number of projects are identified. Those projects identified in various parts of the Plan or final EIS are only included in order to show that Forest Plan goals and objectives can be achieved.

Final decisions on site-specific projects will be made during Forest Plan implementation after appropriate analysis and documentation meeting NEPA requirements. Parties dissatisfied with a specific project may appeal the site-specific decision once it is made.

As provided in 36 CFR 219.10, this decision will remain in effect until the Plan is revised, which is expected to be in 10-15 years, unless an amendment or revision changing the decision is made at an earlier date. In the EIS the effects of alternative choices are projected 40 years beyond the planning period. Short-term opportunities, problems, or conflicts may arise in managing the Forest that were not anticipated in the Plan. When this occurs, the Plan can be amended or revised.



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PAUL F. BARKER  
Regional Forester

August 26, 1988

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Date