Record of Decision

Quartzite Watershed Management Project

USDA Forest Service

Three Rivers Ranger District, Colville National Forest
Stevens County, Washington

Introduction

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents my decision to select the Wildland Fire Alternative (J), from the Quartzite Watershed Management Project Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

The project area is located on the 1.1 million acre Colville National Forest. Three Rivers Ranger District administers roughly 483,000 acres, and is situated in the center of the Colville National Forest. The Quartzite Watershed Management Project area encompasses the Thomason, Sherwood and Cottonwood Creek drainages. The project area is located roughly two miles east of Chewelah, Washington, in Stevens County. The analysis area is 36.4 square miles in size or 23,311 acres, of which 12,723 acres are private or other ownership. The decision includes vegetation management, riparian/wetland management, and road management activities.

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Background

In the winter of 1998/99, the Colville National Forest used the Federal Guide for Watershed Analysis to complete a detailed ecosystem analysis for the Quartzite Watershed. The six-step analysis looked at the differences between present conditions and past conditions for a variety of ecosystem components (erosion processes, hydrology, vegetation, stream channels, water quality, species and habitats, and human uses). Significant changes from past conditions were identified, and their causes and effects on ecosystem processes were determined.

In May of 1999, in response to the Quartzite Ecosystem Analysis, the Colville National Forest proposed management activities with the Quartzite Watershed Management Project. The following purpose and need discussions describe the objectives of the three categories of resource management activities included with the project: vegetation management activities; riparian/wetland management activities; and road management activities.

Purpose and Need

One of the key findings of the Quartzite Ecosystem Analysis is that fire exclusion has changed forest vegetation. These changes in upland forest density, understory composition, and tree species have increased forest susceptibility to insects, disease, drought and atypical fire. This susceptibility and the disparity between current conditions and desired conditions define our management objective. The objective of vegetation management activities is to improve ecosystem integrity by moving the vegetation toward the natural range of variation; by developing forest matrix, patches and corridors that are consistent with fire landscapes; and by improving the landscape patterns of habitats for native and desired non-native species.

A second ecosystem analysis finding revealed that vegetation diversity and in-stream fish habitat in low elevation riparian areas have deteriorated. Opportunities to improve diversity and habitat occur in the wetlands associated with Woodward Meadows. The objective of riparian/wetland management activities is to improve ecosystem integrity by increasing the diversity of vegetation, and by improving in-stream fish habitat in low elevation riparian areas.

A third ecosystem analysis finding concerns roads. Forest roads provide access to conduct needed management. The benefits of forest roads are many. However, the ecosystem analysis notes that road corridors create habitat for noxious weeds that displace native plants. They also have introduced change to a variety of wildlife habitats. The connectivity of wildlife travel corridors has been disrupted in many places where roads cross riparian areas. In addition, road access has fragmented seclusion habitat for large home range vertebrates. The project road management objectives are guided by the benefits they provide and the relationship they have with other ecosystem components. Objectives for road management activities are to upgrade, maintain and develop those roads, which are necessary for long-term land management and important to public access, and to eliminate unneeded roads.

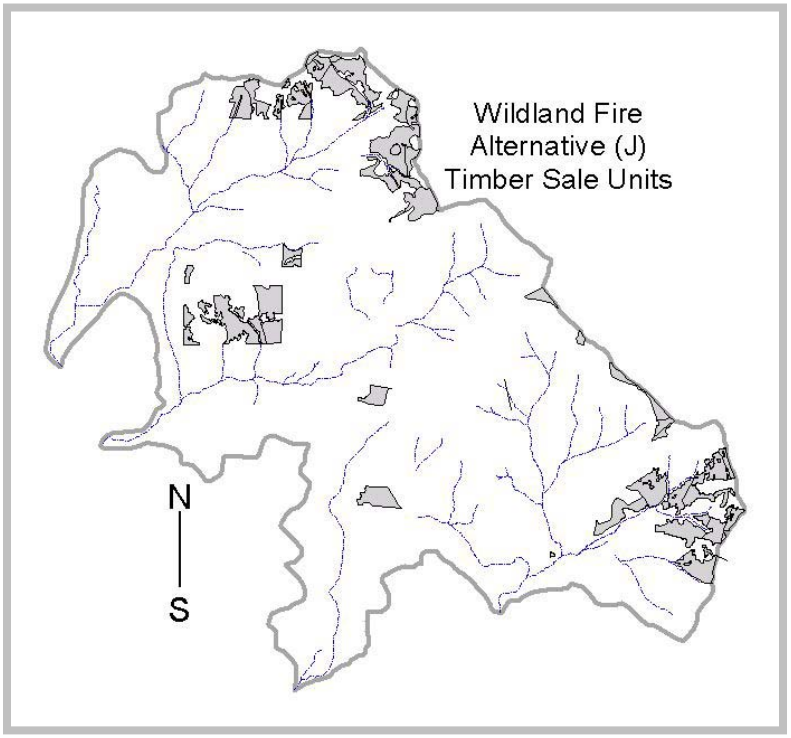
The environmental impact statement for the project documents the analysis of the six action alternatives that were developed to meet the purpose and need objectives for these three categories of management activities.

Decision

Based upon my review of all alternatives, **I have decided to implement the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) and its attendant mitigation measures, and monitoring items.** The Wildland Fire Alternative implements those proposed-action activities that are located *outside* the 4,801-acre[1] unroaded area. Within the unroaded area it implements 459 acres of prescribed maintenance fire.

The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) includes vegetation management, riparian/wetland management and road management activities.

Vegetation Management
Vegetation management activities are grouped into two categories: Timber Sale activities, and Prescribed Fire and Non-Commercial Thinning activities.



Timber Sale
Eighty years of fire suppression has increased the uniformity and density of forests by establishing a class of younger trees across the Quartzite Watershed. The majority of this class of trees would have been killed by fire in the past, and now because of their crown position, they provide a fuel-ladder that threatens older overstory trees. Many of these 70-80 year old trees are now merchantable and are included in the timber sale proposal. C*ommercial* vegetation management is designed to restore or maintain vegetation conditions consistent with fire ecology. Consequently, silvicultural prescriptions vary across the area. Most would thin trees to reduce stocking, and some small areas (up to 5 acres) would leave only a few trees, to increase patchiness and mimic intense fires. The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) implements 1,748 acres of commercial harvest, which includes:

[1] Acres and miles of road represent best estimates based on computer generated mapping and photo interpretation.

- 67 acres of uneven-age silvicultural prescription[2]
- 930 acres of irregular shelterwood silvicultural prescription
- 639 acres of commercial tree thinning silvicultural prescription
- 49 acres of seed tree silvicultural prescription
- 63 acres of salvage silvicultural prescription

These timber sale activities will yield an estimated16.3 million board feet of timber.

Prescribed Fire and Non-Commercial Thinning

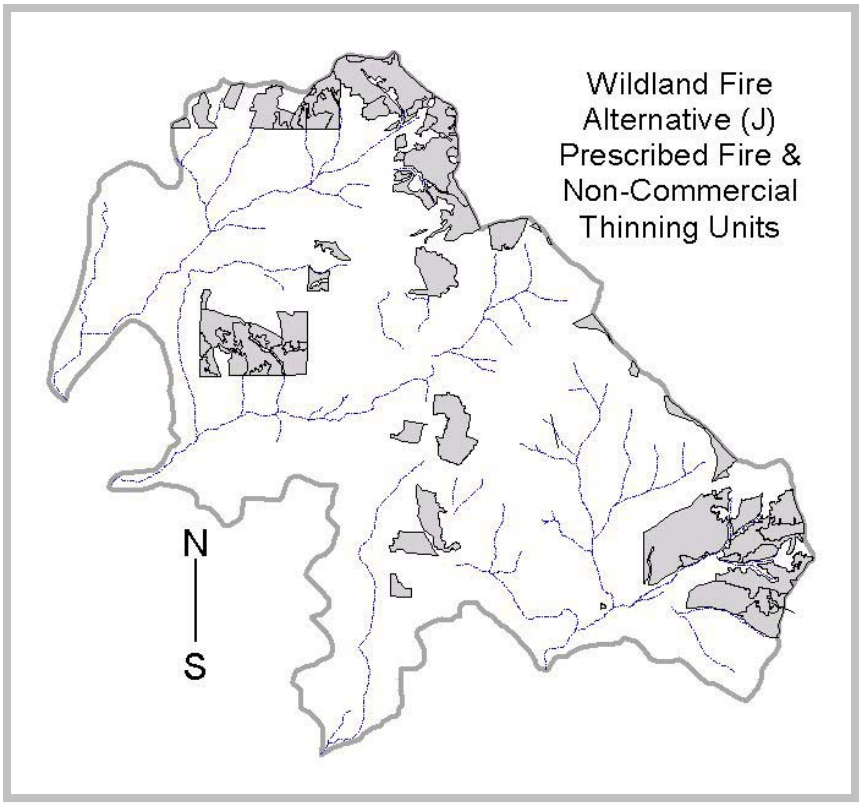
Most non-commercial thinning and prescribed fire vegetation management proposals will follow commercial activities. Like the commercial proposals, these activities are designed to restore or maintain vegetation conditions that are consistent with the fire dependent landscapes characteristic of the project area. Putting landscape solutions in place allows us to predict with some confidence that biodiversity, soil, and water will be sustainably conserved in these landscapes.

Prescribed fire that is designed to maintain conditions that are consistent with fire dependent landscapes will occur outside commercial vegetation management areas. Existing fuel loads in these areas are low enough to conduct a burn that reduces these fuels, while maintaining the conditions that are consistent with fire dependent landscapes. Within the unroaded area, 459 acres of prescribed maintenance fire will occur.

Restoration thinning and other prescribed fire proposals occur in areas where existing fuel loads exceed historic fuel loads. In most instances, they follow commercial vegetation management, and are designed to restore *fuel conditions* consistent with fire dependent landscapes.

The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) implements 3,479 acres of prescribed fire and non-commercial thinning, which includes:

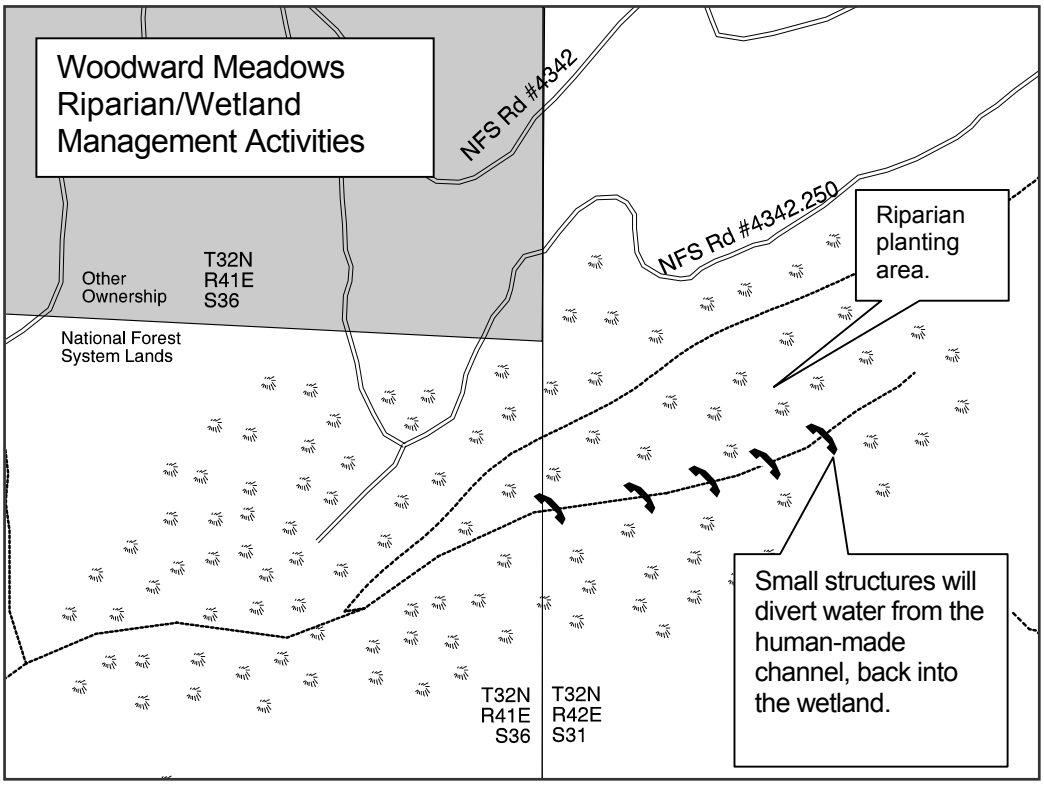
- 335 acres of the non-commercial thinning silvicultural prescription
- 3,144 acres of prescribed fire



[2] Silvicultural prescription descriptions and rational can be found on Page 2-10 of the FEIS.

Riparian/Wetland Management

Riparian/wetland management activities are located on National Forest System Lands, in the Woodward Meadows riparian area. They will improve riparian vegetation diversity and wetland habitat in this lower elevation wetland that was previously modified for livestock grazing. Management activities include improving the stream channel (water will be diverted from the human-made channel, back into the wetland, and planting native riparian plant species (planting will occur on 100 acres).



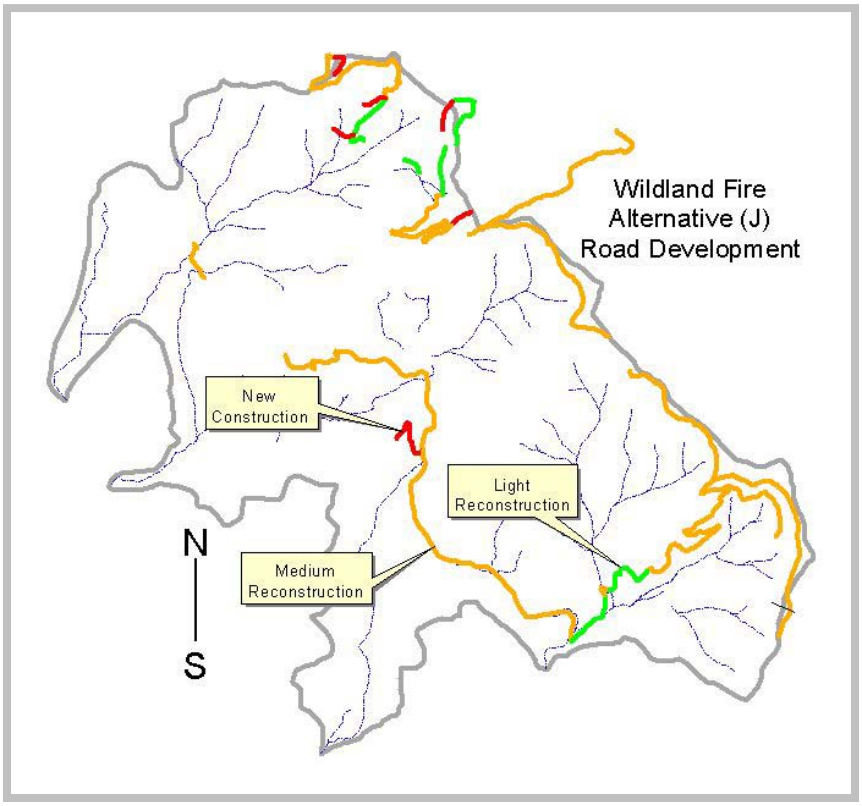
Road Management

Current Forest Service policy imposes significant restriction on road construction or reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas. The Colville National Forest contains 18 of these areas (over 175,000 acres or 16% of the Forest) that are located within a 50-mile radius of Chewelah. Roads or timber sales have affected fewer than 5% of these lands since the Forest Plan was signed in 1988. No inventoried roadless areas occur within or adjacent to the Quartzite Watershed Management Project area. Consequently, no road construction restrictions apply to the area.

In accordance with the Quartzite Roads Analysis used by the EIS, road management activities include road development, road/stream crossing improvement, and road closures.

Road Development

Road re-construction and new road construction will occur outside the unroaded area, in conjunction with timber sale activities. These roads will improve the feasibility of vegetation management proposals while minimizing effects on wildlife, hydrology and native plants. Following the timber sale, all new roads will be closed, as will all presently closed existing roads. The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will construct 2.33 miles of new road, and re-construct 35.05 miles of existing roads.Road re-construction falls into two categories: light[3], and medium[4]. Light reconstruction will occur on 4.18 miles of existing road, and medium reconstruction will occur on 30.87 miles of existing road.

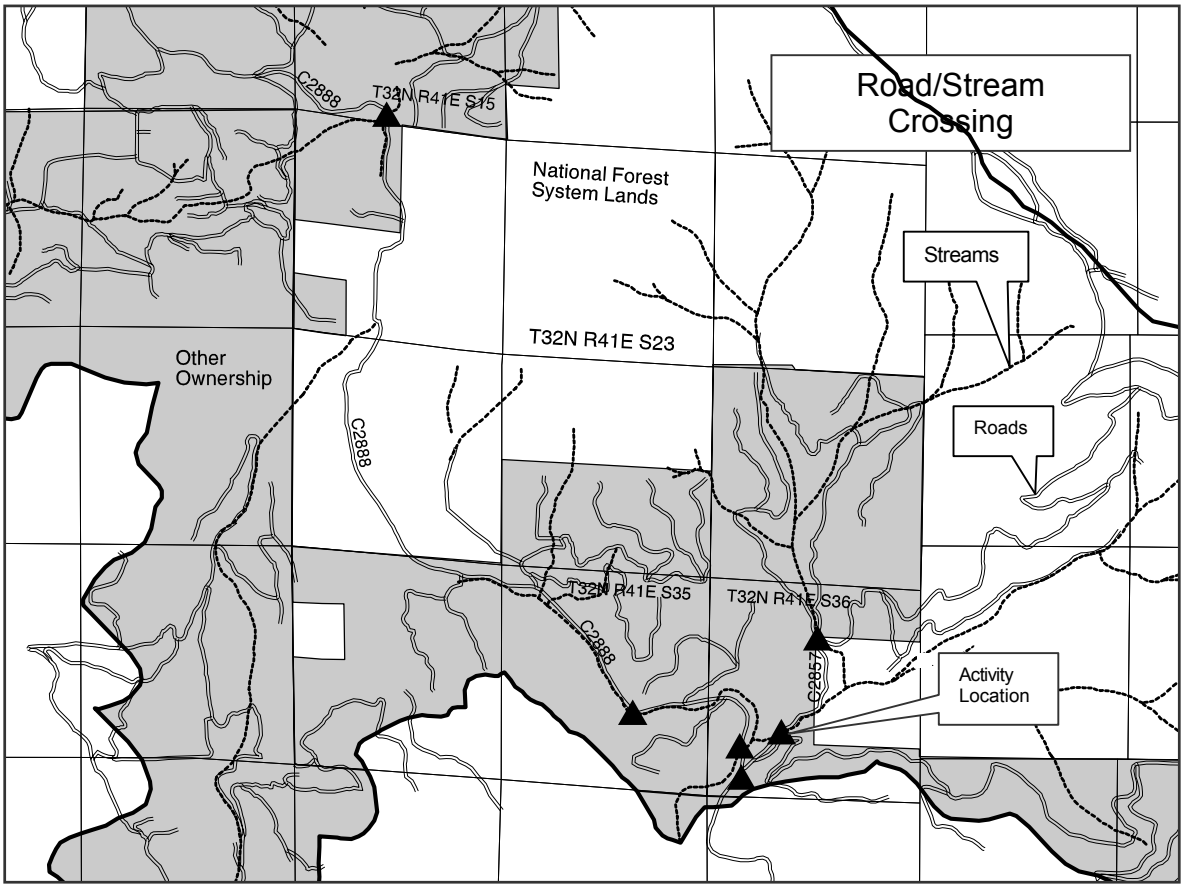


[3] Light reconstruction will involve occasional construction of drainage features, with associated light blading and brushing on roads used for log haul. Most drainage features will be drain dips designed to reduce sedimentation by moving water off of the roadbed. Rocking of drain dips in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas and their contributing areas, and rocking of roadbed for grade and sub grade strength is also included.

[4] Medium reconstruction will involve light reconstruction plus occasional cut bank and roadbed excavation to increase width (for safety).

Road/Stream Crossing Improvement

Six locations will be improved, where roads cross streams. Improvements will reduce the amount of road-generated sediment that reaches streams, by modifying road and ditch drainage structures such that water is directed away from streams. Applications of crushed rock to the road surface in these areas will also reduce the amount of sediment that moves off roads during storms and spring runoff.



Road Closures

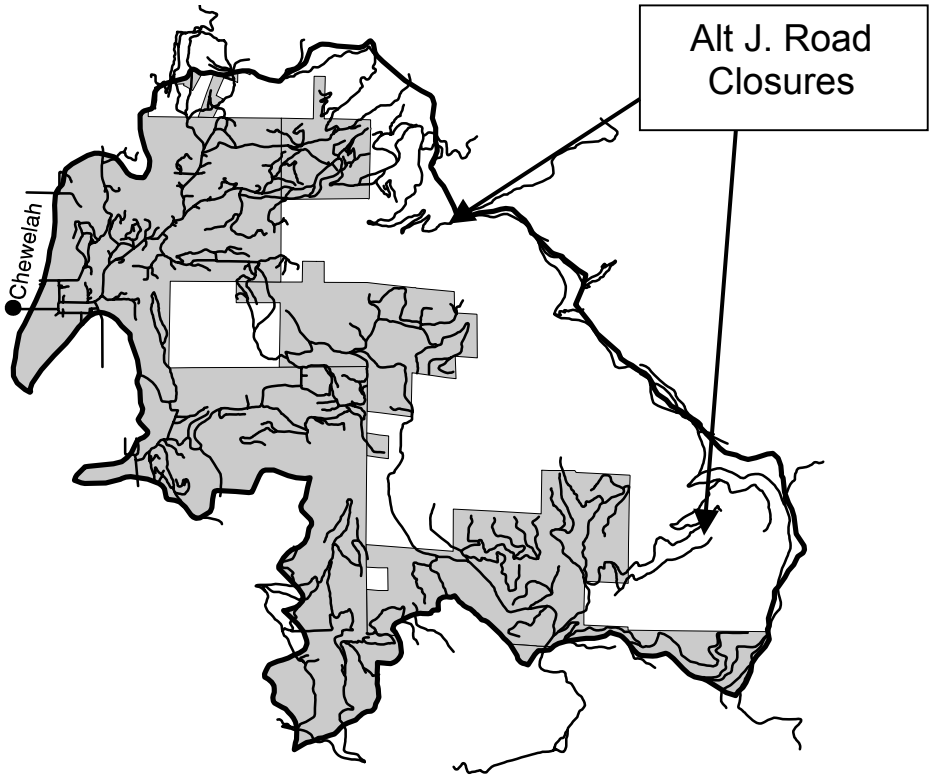
Project road management activities are designed to strike an appropriate balance between the safe and efficient access for all forest road users, and the protection of healthy ecosystems. Road closures will decommission non-beneficial or unauthorized roads that are damaging the environment or are no longer necessary for achieving resource management objectives. Two roads will be closed, reflecting a net increase of roughly two miles of closed road. One closure is located in the Jay Gould Ridge Area, and the other is adjacent to Woodward Meadows.

JAY GOULD RIDGE ROAD CLOSURE

Colville National Forest Road #4300.300 connects the Flowery Trail Road (Stevens County Road #2902) with the Cottonwood Divide Road (Forest Road #4342). This road has been closed by a gate for many years on the Flowery Trail end, but has remained open on the Cottonwood Divide end, where steep grades on Jay Gould Ridge threaten safety and damage soil. A closure device will be placed near the Cottonwood Divide end. Large boulders will be placed across the road here to prevent access to the steep lower portion of the road, where it is unsafe for travel. Five hundred feet of the beginning of the road will remain open to provide access to existing dispersed recreation sites. Roughly ½ mile of road will be closed beyond this point.

WOODWARD MEADOWS ROAD CLOSURE

Forest Road #4342.250 passes through Woodward Meadows and parallels a branch of Upper Cottonwood Creek for more than a mile. Illegal firewood gathering has degraded habitat for species dependent on late and old forest along this branch of Upper Cottonwood Creek; and vehicles that leave the road have damaged wetlands in Woodward Meadows. The location of the closure device will leave the first 2000 feet open, and close roughly 1½ miles of road that is currently open to travel. A wooden fence will be erected across the road, from the trees to the creek, to prevent off-road vehicle damage in the wet meadow and the removal of snag habitat further upstream. In addition, the existing road template will be removed behind the fence for roughly 500 feet. The Woodward Meadows road closure will occur after timber sale activities are complete.



Reasons for the Decision

In making my decision, I considered the many issues raised during the development and scoping of this project. These issues were raised in comments submitted during proposed-action scoping, public meetings and during the Quartzite Draft EIS comment period. I took into account competing interests and values of the public. Many divergent public opinions were expressed during the analysis. These comments have helped me make a better-informed decision. I have considered all views that have been expressed, and have used these contributions where feasible and consistent with the purpose and need of the project.

The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will satisfy the objectives of the Purpose and Need for the proposal. It will increase the diversity of vegetation, and improve in-stream fish habitat in low elevation riparian areas. It will upgrade, maintain and develop those roads, which are necessary for long-term land management, and eliminate two unneeded roads. It will improve ecosystem integrity by moving the vegetation toward the natural range of variation. When compared to other action alternatives, it excludes commercial silvicultural treatments located within the unroaded area while still improving vegetative conditions through the use of maintenance fire in this distinct area.

The selected alternative provides a beneficial mix of resources for the public within the framework of existing laws, regulations and policies, public needs, desires and capabilities of the land. The decision is suited to this project area at this time. The project provides the opportunity to provide wood fiber to society, and supports that part of the local economy that is based on timber resources while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the unroaded area.

Rational for Actions Within the Unroaded Area

Viewed in the larger context of the broad landscape patterns that emerge from the activities of mixed-ownership in this and adjacent watersheds, the relatively undisturbed condition of the unroaded area stands out as a unique feature. The majority of lands adjacent to this island of inactivity have been directly influenced by recent human activity. The value of this area and its relationship to the more actively managed adjacent areas need further consideration in the larger landscape context.

When asked to comment on the proposed action, and again on the DEIS, the majority of respondents voiced their concern for the effects timber harvest and road development would have on the unroaded area. For many the unroaded area serves as a place of solitude and inner reflection, where a spiritual tie to the land can be re-kindled, where the observation of natural processes and organisms can occur in the absence of human influence. Many people emphasized the importance of preserving *this* unroaded area because of the lack of similar areas on the south end of the Colville National Forest. The depth of passion evident in the comment letters made it apparent that the unroaded area is a special place for many people. It is also one of four areas on the Forest where environmental organizations and others are seeking wilderness designation.

Some, however are also concerned for the effects of wildfire on the unroaded area. One commenter summed it up best when he wrote “Off and on for the last 15 years I have been asking myself how to best preserve the Quartzite roadless area into the future. I have been asking the wrong question. [It] should have been: How best to maintain a forest while reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, which would destroy both the forest and the habitat the animals depend on?”

The alternatives present a range of solutions to this question. I am choosing the solution presented by the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) primarily because it does not foreclose options. The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will not harvest timber nor construct roads within the unroaded area. Timber sale and road development activities have the potential to change the character of the unroaded area for many decades. To select an alternative that makes these changes would limit future management options. These options will soon be considered by the upcoming Forest Plan revision. The issue of unroaded areas, inventoried roadless areas, and wilderness areas across the Forest will be addressed with the revision.

Now to the question of how to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire: In light of the information presented in the *Report to the Colville National Forest on the Results of the Quartzite Planning Area Fire History Research,* I recognize the need to improve vegetative conditions across the project area, including the unroaded area. Fire suppression has caused fuel levels to surpass historic levels. Some commenters prefer that we stop suppressing fires, and let future fires burn and play a natural role. However, given current fuel levels, and the proximity of the unroaded area to Chewelah, this scenario is unrealistic because wildfire would cause resource damage far above what would have occurred under natural historic conditions, both on public and on private land.

My challenge is to do something to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire in the unroaded area, without compromising future management options. Four hundred fifty nine-acres of prescribed maintenance fire that is included with the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) occurs within the unroaded area. A variety of factors influenced where and how many areas qualify for prescribed maintenance fire. Paramount among those was the objective of retaining overstory trees. The fuel situation in the majority of the unroaded area poses a fire risk to the overstory, and without first removing some of these fuels by other means, the prospect of introducing fire proves too risky. Consequently, prescribed maintenance fire is limited to those areas where existing fuels do not pose a risk to the overstory. While this represents only 10% of the unroaded area, and may not reduce the risk of wildfire as much as other alternatives, it will reduce the threat somewhat and help to maintain those areas where desired conditions currently occur.

I acknowledge the unroaded area wildfire risk incumbent with this decision, however concern for this risk occurs across the spectrum of interest groups, and with this much concern by so many, comes the increased possibility that alternate solutions will emerge. My hope is that a collaborative, community-based risk-reduction plan will soon be developed for the unroaded area that is both effective and feasible.

Rational for Actions Outside the Unroaded Area

Timber sale activities, and prescribed fire and non-commercial thinning activities will improve current vegetation conditions, and move area forests toward historic spatial arrangements. I am convinced that putting spatial solutions in place permits us to predict with some confidence that biodiversity, soil, and water will be sustainably conserved in the project area.

Human activities over that past century have converted portions of the complex wetlands of Woodward Meadows into pasture. The only Forest Service allotment within the project area (the Cottonwood range allotment) is vacant, and there are no near future plans to re-activate this allotment. Increasing the diversity of vegetation in this valuable wetland will improve the condition of this integral component of the local ecosystem. That is why I am implementing the water diversion and riparian planting activities included with the Wildland Fire Alternative (J).

The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) includes the construction of six new temporary roads totaling 2.33 miles. The longest of these will be less than 0.75 miles long. The placement and configuration of these roads improves timber sale feasibility. And, as noted on page 2, timber sale activities are designed to improve or maintain vegetation conditions consistent with fire ecology and historic stand conditions. Consequently, by improving feasibility, these new roads will increase the area of land where vegetation improvements can occur.

My decision to work in conjunction with Stevens County to improve six stream crossings on county roads will improve in-stream habitat by reducing road-generated sediment. Improving road and ditch structures at these six locations, in addition to surfacing the road with crushed rock will reduce the amount of sediment that currently reaches streams during storms and high runoff. Downstream fish spawning habitat and feeding habitat will benefit from the reduction in sediment.

Two roads will be closed with this decision. The Jay Gould road closure will eliminate access to a steep, marginally passable road that threatens user safety. Although erosion is also associated with this situation, safe access for forest road users is paramount in my reasons for this closure.

The Woodward Meadows road closure improves two resource situations. This road parallels a branch of Cottonwood Creek, and as it ascends the drainage, it enters habitat for old growth dependent species.

Access to this habitat has facilitated the illegal removal of dead, large diameter trees that serve as integral components for old growth dependent species. Attempts to curtail this activity have proven unsuccessful. Lower down, the road passes along the edge of Woodward Meadows, where the opportunity to drive into the wet meadow is presented to all who travel the road. Vehicle damage to the wetland has been documented on many instances. My decision to eliminate vehicle access to the meadow will curb the vegetation damage and sedimentation that results from vehicle damage, which in turn will compliment the Woodward Meadows riparian/wetland improvement activities described above.

Other Rational

All practical means to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the decision have been adopted. To minimize invasive species effects, mitigation measure #48 removes mud, dirt, and plant parts from all off-road equipment before moving into a new or different project area. The July 3rd, 2002 letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) documents the *informal* consultation for threatened and endangered species. Within that letter, the Service concurs that the proposed project is "not likely to adversely affect" bald eagles, grizzly bears, gray wolves, and Canada lynx. The Service also concurs that the proposed project will have "no effect" on woodland caribou and bull trout.

The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) meets requirements under the Endangered Species Act, The Federal Clean Air Act, the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, the National Forest Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act Amendments, Preservation of American Antiquities Act, National Historic Preservation Act, American Indian Religious Freedom Act, Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice), Executive Order 12962 (Recreational Fisheries) and the Colville National Forest's Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended (Forest Plan).

I am aware of the recent (December, 2002) summary judgment granted by United States District Court Judge Gladys Kessler, in favor of Defenders of Wildlife, in Defenders of Wildlife v. Norton (a suit challenging inadequacies in the rule listing the lynx as a threatened species). Judge Kessler granted Defenders' request to require *formal* consultation on all projects in lynx habitat until the agencies identify critical habitat for the lynx. This ruling would have affected this Quartzite decision if it had preceded the July 3rd, 2002 *informal* consultation concurrence letter from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Because Judge Kessler's ruling is not retroactive, the *informal* consultation conducted for the project meets the agency's obligations pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Other Alternatives Considered In Detail

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered six other alternatives, which are discussed below. A more detailed comparison of these alternatives can be found in the EIS on pages 2-33 thru 2-35.

No Action Alternative (A)

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. No Action means that the proposed vegetation management riparian/wetland management and road management activities described in the Proposed Action would not be initiated at this time.

Proposed Action Alternative (B)

The Proposed Action was designed to improve ecosystem integrity. It is the result of recommendations found in the Quartzite Watershed Scale Ecosystem Analysis Report.

Vegetation management proposals are designed to restore or maintain vegetation conditions consistent with fire ecology. Consequently, prescriptions vary across the area. Most commercial activities (4,254 acres) would thin trees to reduce stocking and some small areas (up to 5 acres) would leave only a few trees to increase patchiness and mimic intense fires. Most non-commercial thinning and prescribed fire vegetation management proposals (6,342 acres) would come after commercial activities. Like the commercial proposals, these activities are designed to restore or maintain vegetation conditions consistent with fire ecology.

Road management proposals include the construction of 10.83 miles of new road. These roads are designed to improve the feasibility of vegetation management proposals while minimizing effects on

wildlife, hydrology and native plants. Two segments of existing open road would be closed (1.8 miles total). 35.52 miles of existing road would be re-constructed.

Riparian/wetland management proposals in the Woodward Meadows riparian area include stream channel improvements, and planting native riparian plant species (roughly 100 acres). Other activities improve road drainage at six stream crossings (some outside NFS lands).

The Proposed Action alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan.

Upper Cottonwood Alternative (C)
The Upper Cottonwood alternative was designed to limit the effects associated with timber harvest and road construction proposed in Betts Basin.

This alternative would implement the Proposed Action Alternative in all areas except the Betts Basin (as defined by ownership and hydrologic divisions). It would implement 2,877 acres of commercial harvest, and 4,784 acres of non-commercial thinning and fire. It would build 6.89 miles of new road, and re-construct 32.68 miles of existing road.

The Upper Cottonwood alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan.

Wildland Alternative (E)
Alternative E broadens the range of effects the alternatives have on the unroaded area by excluding all proposed activities located within the unroaded area (as defined by the Quartzite Watershed Scale Ecosystem Analysis).

It would implement all other activities associated with the Proposed Action Alternative, including 1,748 acres of commercial harvest, and 3,020 acres of non-commercial thinning and fire. It would build 2.33 miles of new road, and re-construct 35.05 miles of existing road.

The Wildland alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan

Vegetation Alternative (F)
This alternative is designed to address forest health concerns. It would implement the Proposed Action Alternative plus additional commercial harvest areas where insects, disease, storm damage and overstocking occur.

Unlike the Proposed Action, it would not close the two segments of existing open road. It would implement 5,446 acres of commercial harvest, and 7,034 acres of non-commercial thinning and fire. It would build 18.37 miles of new road, and re-construct 35.54 miles of existing road.

The Vegetation alternative is not consistent with Forest Plan water quality and visual resource management standards and guidelines. Because the alternative increases the chance of channel-forming flows resulting from timber harvest and road construction in four sub-watersheds, it would not meet Forest Plan water quality standards. Road construction would not meet Forest Plan partial retention visual standards in two areas. A Forest Plan amendment that exempts this alternative from water quality and visual standards would be required to implement this alternative.

Existing Roads Alternative (K)
This alternative is designed to reduce the effects of road construction. It would implement the Proposed Action Alternative except for any commercial harvest areas (and associated restoration fire areas) not feasible from existing roads. It would implement 3,753 acres of commercial harvest, and 5,635 acres of non-commercial thinning and fire. It would not build any new roads. It would reconstruct 35.52 miles of existing road.

The Existing Roads alternative is consistent with the Forest Plan.

The Existing Roads Alternative (K) was the Forest Service preferred alternative during public review of the draft environmental impact statement.

Alternative Comparison

Activity	Alternatives						
	A	B	C	E	F	J	K
Timber Sale Area (acres)	0	4,254	2,877	1,748	5,446	1,748	3,753
Prescribed fire and Non-commercial thinning (acres)	0	6,342	4,784	3,020	7,034	3,479	5,635
Woodward Meadows Riparian/Wetland Improvement (acres)	0	20	20	20	20	20	20
New road construction (miles)	0	10.83	6.89	2.33	18.37	2.33	0
Road/Stream Crossing Improvement (number of crossings)	0	6	6	6	6	6	6
Road Closures (miles)	0	2	2	2	0	2	2

The Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that the Record of Decision specify "the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable." The environmentally preferred alternative has been interpreted to be the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in the NEPA Section 101. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources.

The Wildland Alternative (E) of the FEIS is the environmentally preferable alternative because it has the least likely adverse effects to the physical and biological environments. The Wildland Alternative (E) would allow the smallest amount of direct human-induced effects on the human environment. It has little roading, the least amount of timber harvest, and the least amount of non-commercial thinning and prescribed fire. Consequently, it would exclude intensive management over most of the project area.

Reasons for Not Selecting Other Alternatives

One of the three key issues listed in the EIS (the Road Management issue) incorporates public concern for the unroaded area. As a result, two of the six action alternatives limit effects to the unroaded area. The Wildland Alternative (E) and the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) both exclude road construction, and timber sale activities from the unroaded area, however; only the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) uses prescribed fire within the unroaded area to improve vegetation conditions. I selected the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) over the Wildland Alternative (E) because these prescribed fire activities will move vegetation in the unroaded area toward the natural range of variation, and accordingly, better meet the purpose and need for the proposed action.

When I issued the draft environmental impact statement for review, I identified the Existing Roads Alternative (K) as the preferred alternative. At the time I considered this alternative to be the best solution to reducing the risk of wildfire in the unroaded area, while maintaining some of the character valued by proponents of the unroaded area. However, after considering review comments, I realized the depth of concern the public has for introducing signs of human activity into an area that has the potential to be considered for wilderness designation. After considering these comments, I reconsidered the effects the Existing Roads Alternative (K) would have on the unroaded area, and decided that unlike the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) it would foreclose future management options.

I choose to implement the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) over the other action alternatives (Proposed Action Alternative [B], Upper Cottonwood Alternative [C], and Vegetation Alternative [F]) because they too foreclose future management options.

I choose not to implement the No Action Alternative (A) because of the need to increase the diversity of vegetation, and improve in-stream fish habitat in low elevation riparian areas; maintain and develop those roads, which are necessary for long-term land management, and eliminate two unneeded roads; and:

improve ecosystem integrity by moving the vegetation toward the natural range of variation. While the No Action Alternative (A) minimizes human activity in the unroaded area, it fails to improve conditions on the 5,786 acres of National Forest System Land located outside the unroaded area.

Alternatives Not Considered in Detail
In addition to the alternatives described above, several other alternatives were considered during the analysis but eliminated from detailed study. These alternatives were discussed during the development of alternatives. Some were suggested by comments received through public scoping. Some of the aspects of the ideas were modified and used in conjunction with the alternatives considered in detail. Other alternatives would not meet the Forest Plan direction for this project. A summary of these, and the reasons they were not analyzed in detail, can be found on page 2-8 of the Final EIS.

Public Involvement

Public involvement has been instrumental in the identification and clarification of issues for this project. This has been helpful in the formulation of alternatives and has assisted me in making a more informed decision for the Quartzite project.

Proposed Action Scoping
As described in the background section above, the need for this action arose in May of 1999. A notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement for the project was published in volume 64, number 150 of the Federal Register, on Thursday, August 5, 1999. The proposal was provided to the public and other agencies for comment during scoping from May 27, 1999 through September 6, 1999. Also, in an effort to fully disclose what was being proposed, two public meetings were held in the summer of 1999. Both took place in Chewelah, Washington, the first occurred on June 3rd and the second on July 27th. Comments were received from over 120 individuals, agencies, businesses and organizations. Public comments were received in the form of letters, electronic mail messages, phone calls, and personal visits.

Using the comments from the public, and other agencies, the interdisciplinary team identified several issues (see EIS Issues Section 2.1.2) regarding the effects of the proposed action. Three Key issues of concern resulted:

- **Road Management** Forest roads are an essential part of the transportation system in this part of Stevens County. They help to meet recreation demands and they provide economic opportunities. The proposal to build new roads and close existing roads caused concern for some. New road construction is viewed by some of the public to be inconsistent with ecosystem management. Would new roads reduce the quality of wildlife habitat? Would they reduce water quality? Also, two roads currently open would be closed by the proposed action. One is steep and unsafe for most vehicles and would be closed to protect unknowing travelers. The other would be closed to improve wildlife habitat and wetland conditions in the Woodward Meadows area. Some people would prefer these be left open for recreation, firewood gathering and wildfire access.

  In addition, an unroaded area 4,801 acre in size is located on national forest system lands between the Upper Cottonwood Road, and the Cottonwood Divide Road. To improve disturbance ecology, the proposed action builds roads and cuts trees in this area. There is concern that these activities would reduce natural integrity, reduce the opportunity for solitude, and reduce primitive recreation opportunities. Some consider unroaded areas essential for both humans and wildlife. Should the improvements to disturbance ecology be forfeited to preserve this unroaded area? If so, are the risks of catastrophic fire acceptable? Can disturbance ecology be improved without building roads and cutting trees?

- **Betts Basin** The Betts Meadows Wetland Preserve is a 140-acre family trust, located on the 3,420 acre Upper Cottonwood Creek drainage. The purpose of the trust is to maintain the property as a wildlife refuge and native fishery. Many are concerned that building roads and cutting trees above this area would reduce water quality and degrade

fish habitat in the preserve. Should the area above the Betts Meadows Wetland Preserve be exempted from treatment to establish baseline water quality information? Or conversely, would the proposed treatments reduce the possibility of an atypical fire event and its associated sedimentation?

- **Forest Health** There are areas where storm damaged trees; trees infested by Douglas-fir beetle; trees dying from root rot; and overstocked trees are not proposed for treatment. There are concerns that if left un-treated, forest health and productivity will decline. Should all areas with forest health problems be treated? Are certain amounts of these areas typical for the ecosystem? What role do they play in ecosystem functions and processes? If left un-treated, will these areas cause significant losses? If the trees are going to die anyway why shouldn't they be salvaged for human use? What is the difference between ecosystem health and forest health? Should tree vigor and forest health be given priority over ecosystem health?

DEIS Review

On Wednesday, June 5th, 2002, a notice that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was available for review on the Colville National Forest web site was mailed to planning participants. On that same date, DEIS hardcopies and digital CD copies were mailed to those who requested it. On Friday, June 28th, 2002, The Environmental Protection Agency published a notice of availability for the DEIS in the Federal Register. This notice initiated the required 45 day comment period for the DEIS. The comment period ended Monday, August 12th, 2002.

On Friday August 30th, 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency published a notice of availability of EPA comments on the DEIS in the Federal Register. The EPA expressed a lack of objections to the proposal, and noted that the DEIS is adequately documented and meets the requirements under NEPA.

Public review of the DEIS generated seventy-five comment letters. From these, 189 comments were extracted. These comments and agency responses are grouped into eleven categories, which correspond with the sections of EIS Appendix D.

Effects of the Decision on the Key Issues

To address these key issues, the Forest Service created the alternatives described above. The following tables use issue specific *measurements of change* to depict issue-related effects by alternative.

Road management Issue

Concern	Measurement of Change	Alternatives						
		A	B	C	E	F	J	K
Water quality & Wildlife habitat	Miles of road constructed.	0	10.83	6.89	2.33	18.37	**2.33**	0
Road access	Miles of existing open road closed by the alternatives.	0	2	2	2	0	**2**	2
Unroaded area preservation	Acres meeting unroaded criteria.	4801	0	2701	4801	0	**4801**[5]	1466

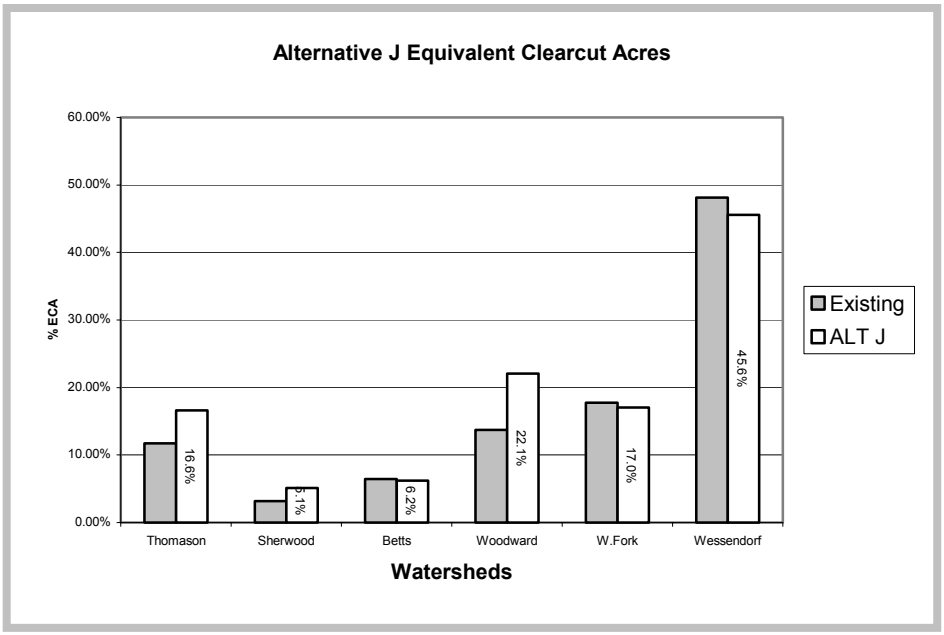
Water Quality: The Equivalent Clearcut Acre (ECA) model provides a snapshot in time of the amount of area in a watershed that exists in a *clearcut-condition*. ECA evaluates the likelihood of any increase in the average duration of near bankfull (channel-forming) flows, and the potential for increases in high magnitude peak flows due to rapid snowmelt. Past treatments such as timber harvest and road

[5] Without affecting unroaded criteria (any contiguous area greater than 1000 acres in size and greater than 100 meters from any existing road or harvest activity), the Wildland Fire alternative *does* implement 459 acres of prescribed fire in the Unroaded area.

construction, when expressed as a percentage of the total watershed, provide a baseline against which proposed management activities can be compared. For purposes of this analysis, if ECA values exceed 25%, more intensive field investigations and evaluations may be required.

The largest ECA increase will occur in the Woodward watershed. Values will increase 8.4% (from 13.7% to 22.1%). Sherwood and Thomason drainages will also experience ECA increases. The Betts, West Fork, and Wessendorf watersheds will experience a decrease in ECA values: a result of maintaining and increasing vegetation. Increases in the average duration of near bankfull flows are not likely to occur in any watershed.

The number of stream crossings is directly related to the expected increase in sediment and its corresponding relationship to channel morphology. By using the stringent road construction mitigation measures included with the Wildland Fire Alternative (FEIS pgs. 2-15 thru 2-20) minimal changes in channel morphology will occur as a result of the one new road/stream crossing that is included with this alternative. Sediment increases will occur as a result of timber haul over existing roads. Such increases would be expected to fall within the natural range of variation of sediment production within these watersheds, and will therefore be undetectable.



The cumulative effects of past and proposed activities on flow regimes were estimated using the Forest's Equivalent Clearcut Acre (ECA) Model. This model calculates the amount of area in a watershed that exists in a "clearcut condition," regardless of ownership. This procedure evaluates the likelihood of any increase in the average duration of near bankfull (channel-forming) flows, and the potential for increases in high magnitude peak flows due to rapid snowmelt caused by snowpack exposure to rain or warm winds. Past treatments such as timber harvest and road construction provide a baseline against which proposed management activities can be compared. As note above, if ECA values exceed 25%, more intensive field investigations and evaluations may be required.

Over 5,000 acres of timber harvest activity has occurred within the analysis area during the last 30 years. About 92% of that has been on state and private land. Some areas have been entered more than once during this time period. The Sherwood basin has experienced the most activity with about 3500 acres harvested, primarily outside the Forest Boundary. Almost 50% of the harvest activity in the Thomason basin within this time period occurred on Forest Service land (755 acres). Only Alternative F exceeds the Colville National Forest's ECA threshold of concern, and does not comply with Forest Plan standards.

Wildlife Habitat: The Quartzite Analysis Area has a variety of wildlife habitat types, ranging from high ridges to dense forests to cleared agricultural lands. The ridges and riparian vegetation serve as travel corridors for many species. The Colville River valley connects the area with the Columbia River valley, and provides access to the area for many birds and other species. Fields and logging areas create patches in the background forest matrix and roads interrupt many riparian corridors. Road density across the Quartzite Analysis Area averages 3.84 miles per square mile. The road density on National Forest

System Lands is 2.01 m/m^2. An isolated block of unroaded upland forest habitat, 4,801 acres in size is located on National Forest System Lands on the east side of the area.

Wildlife corridors link late structure stands, marten and pileated woodpecker habitat units and the MA-1. This connectivity serves a variety of indicator species associated with eastside old forest habitats including northern goshawk, pine marten, pileated woodpeckers and three-toed woodpeckers. Other ownership, Flowery Trail Highway and other roads in the analysis area disrupt continuity in a few places.

The travel corridor network crosses existing roads in 20 places. A very small portion of corridor is affected by each crossing (0.3 acres). While road crossings do not preclude use, they do reduce the effectiveness of this habitat. The more crossings an alternative has, the more negative effects it imposes on the travel corridor network. The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) adds 2 crossings.

The Forest Plan allocated 37% of the analysis area (3,954 acres) for big game winter range (MA6 and MA8). Small pockets of winter range habitat are also scattered throughout the planning area, especially on more open south and west aspects. Most of these small pockets are located in higher elevations, on the ridges between sub-watersheds. These areas provide winter range for mule deer rather than white-tailed deer, which tend to winter at lower elevations. A small herd of mule deer uses the Eagle Mountain area. Other mule deer winter range habitat occurs on the south side of Quartzite Mountain and in steeper areas between Horseshoe Lake and Roundtop Mountain, above Wessendorf Canyon.

Roads cause negative direct and indirect effects to big game and big game habitat. Direct effects are the loss of habitat converted to roadway. The greatest indirect effects are the potential for noxious weeds to encroach, and for vehicle traffic to increase (noxious weed vector, poaching potential, and disturbance). Direct effects from roads to *winter range* in all action alternatives range from minimal to moderate. The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will increase road density in winter range by 0.3 miles per square mile.

Harvest units or roads can affect seclusion habitat for several species. The effects of units relate to the duration of activities and to harvest intensity. Roads affect seclusion habitat both directly and indirectly. Direct effects of roads relate to length of time the road remains open, the level of traffic on the road, and habitat loss to the road prism. Indirect effects relate to the potential loss of prey habitat due to noxious weed encroachment and future disturbance by humans.

Because mitigation closes new roads, most negative effects would be short term and limited to the time the roads remain open. Although closed roads restrict some vehicles, they still allow access by humans riding ATVs, so nearly all closed roads have some effect to seclusion habitat until the road becomes too grown-over to pass.

The six short temporary roads that will be constructed by the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will not reduce the four blocks of seclusion habitat.

Road Access: The existing Forest Service managed roads do not represent the main access routes used by the public in the Planning Area. Forest Service roads within the area are not maintained for passenger cars, and many are managed to close naturally over time depending on use. Some get seasonal dispersed use by high clearance vehicles, but the primary roads offering public access to the area are county roads, typically single lane with turnouts and minimal surfacing.

Firewood gathering and four-wheel driving will be limited by the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) because of the two road closures. The Jay Gould road closure, while limiting four-wheel drive opportunities, also increases user safety. Existing dispersed campsites located within 500 feet of the beginning of this road will remain accessible. The Woodward Meadows road closure will not create a significant loss of quality dispersed recreation sites. Access to the area will not be denied; however, the location of some dispersed campsites will be changed.

Unroaded Area Preservation: As discussed in the previous *Rational for Actions Within the Unroaded Area* section, because no timber harvest or road construction will occur within the unroaded area, no evidence of human influence will affect the current character of the unroaded area. The effects of the

prescribed maintenance fire that will occur in the unroaded area will be subordinate to this character, and will appear natural.

Betts Basin Issue

Concern	Measurement of Change	Alternatives						
		A	B	C	E	F	J	K
Water quality & Fish Habitat	Percent increase in unforested open areas.	0%	18%	0%	1%	27%	1%	12%

Water Quality: Almost all of the Betts Basin drainage is located within the unroaded area. The 81 of timber sale acres that will occur within the basin as a result of my decision to implement the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) are located on the ridge more than a mile away from Betts Meadows. FEIS hydrology analysis shows that water quality in Betts Meadows will not be degraded by these activities.

Fish Habitat: An upper fork of Cottonwood Creek runs through Betts Meadows. Betts Meadows is not on Forest Service land, but activities in the watershed influence the fisheries of the Meadow. Brook and cutthroat trout reside in the meadow. An intensive effort is under way to eradicate the brook trout. The landowner intends to restore the meadow to a native cutthroat trout fishery.

In the tributaries to Cottonwood Creek above Woodward and Betts Meadows, the channels are similar to the upper portions of Sherwood Creek. Bar formations behind debris jams create multiple channels. The riparian vegetation consists of cedars and forbs. Very little management has occurred in these areas causing the somewhat reference condition of these streams. These streams carry high amounts of gravels. This causes the water to go under ground. Fish only occupy the channels up to the first few subterranean flow barriers. They provide excellent seasonal spawning habitat. These channels move high amounts of bedload.

Harvest units are located outside of riparian areas. There would be no effect to trout or INFISH RMOs from harvest activities within individual unit boundaries.

Prescribed burns will not be ignited in riparian areas. The vegetation will remain intact. The filtration capacity of the riparian forest floor will not decrease. For these reasons, it is unlikely that noticeable increases in sediment influxes to streams will be caused by the fuel treatments. However, the potential for prescribed fire to bare more soil than desired and to cause some increase in sediment production is recognized. With regard to water quality, the burning of slash and burning to restore open ponderosa pine-Douglas-fir forest stands will result in nutrient flushes into streams. This will support rather than damage the fishery, but in any event will be too minor to be a significant influence.

From an aquatics perspective the risk of catastrophic fire impacts poses the biggest danger to fisheries. The relative lack of harvest units within the Betts Basin included with the Wildland Fire Alternative (J) leaves the area prone to catastrophic fire and its associated aquatic impacts. As noted in the *Rational For Actions Within the Unroaded Area* section, I acknowledge the unroaded area wildfire risk incumbent with this decision, however concern for this risk occurs across the spectrum of interest groups and with this much concern by so many, comes the increased possibility that alternate solutions will emerge. My hope is that a collaborative, community-based risk-reduction plan will soon be developed for the unroaded area that is both effective and feasible.

Forest Health Issue

Concern	Measurement of Change	Alternatives						
		A	B	C	E	F	J	K
Forest health	Acres of Douglas-fir beetle infestation included in timber sale units.	0	433	193	127	589	127	392

Forest Health: Forest Health is a measurement of the condition of stands or landscapes of trees. Generally, it is defined as a measure of the robustness of forests in terms of their biological diversity, soil, air, and water productivity, disturbance ecology, and capacity to supply a sustainable flow of goods and services for humans.

The majority of stands in the dry Douglas-fir or grand fir habitat types within the analysis area have moderate to high susceptibility to Douglas-fir beetle. Stand susceptibility is highest on Forest Service lands in the Betts, Woodward, Sherwood, and Thomason subwatersheds. The current outbreak of Douglas-fir beetle in the analysis area is significant and predicted to create additional tree mortality over the next several years until the suitability of food source (Douglas-fir trees available as brood trees) diminishes or weather or disturbance events alter beetle population dynamics. Resistance of live trees is the most important natural factor controlling Douglas-fir beetle populations.

Within the Quartzite Analysis area Douglas-fir and grand fir has been replacing western larch, ponderosa pine, and western white pine. Many of the stands in Quartzite are infected with Armillaria root disease, caused by *Armillaria ostoyae*. Douglas-fir trees infected with Armillaria root disease are predisposed to attack by Douglas-fir beetles. Stand hazard and risk to Douglas-fir beetle remains high. The species composition of Douglas-fir in many stands exceeds 50%. Severe overstocking and a shift in tree species composition have created large homogeneous areas within the analysis area predisposing stands to risks of insects and disease. Mapping of Douglas-fir beetle activity on National Forest System Land shows 55 polygons totaling 821 acres within the Quartzite analysis area.

A sustainable landscape is not a static entity but one that changes within particular ranges of disturbance frequency, intensity, and extent. Alternative proposals were analyzed against the objectives of maintaining and improving the distribution and representation of structural stages within the Historic Range of Variability. The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will convert 316 acres (26 percent) of excess late structural stage 6 to late structural stage 7. Late structural stage 6 will continue to be in excess of historic conditions by 865 acres. Structural Stage 7 will remain below its historic range.

The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) will also enhance characteristics of approximately 912 acres of structural stage 5, by reducing stocking levels to within site capacity ranges and by moving stands toward late structural stages. This will increase the acreage of future dry site late structural stage and old growth. Fifteen percent or 127 acres of the area affected by Douglas-fir beetle infestation are included in timber sale units.

Mitigation

Mitigation measures are prescribed to avoid, reduce, minimize or eliminate the adverse effects of the proposed actions. These measures were applied in the development of the project alternatives, including the Selected Alternative, and in the design of the harvest units and road corridors. The *Mitigation Measures* section of Chapter 2 of the Final EIS discusses mitigation measures. These measures are adopted as part of this decision and will be implemented. Over 100 mitigation measures are included in this project. They apply to a variety of resources, including:

- Water Quality
- Soil
- Air Quality
- Noxious Weeds and Competing Vegetation
- Heritage Sites
- Scenery

- Fish and Wildlife
- Minerals

Monitoring

A monitoring program is the process by which the Forest Service can evaluate whether the resource management objectives of the final environmental documents have been implemented as specified and whether the steps identified for mitigating the environmental effects were effective. Project-level monitoring is specified in Chapter 2 of the Final EIS. These monitoring items are part of this decision and will be implemented.

Each monitoring item describes the objective of the monitoring, what will be done, how it will be done, and the approximate cost of the monitoring. Monitoring activities may reveal results that deviate from planned effects, in which case corrective actions are prescribed. The Three Rivers District Ranger is responsible for ensuring that project implementation, mitigation, monitoring, and enforcement are accomplished as specified in the Final EIS. The District Ranger will ensure the following project specific items will be monitored.

- Mitigation
- Timber management
- RHCA protection
- Noxious weeds
- Vegetation condition
- Air quality
- Down woody material
- Water quality

Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

This decision to implement The Wildland Fire Alternative (J) is consistent with the intent of the Forest Plan's long-term goals and objectives listed on pages 4-1 through 4-33 of the Forest Plan. The project was designed in conformance with Forest Plan standards and incorporates appropriate Forest Plan guidelines for visual resource management; cultural resources; wildlife; fisheries; timber: soil, water, and air; riparian; lands; transportation; fire management; and integrated pest management (Forest Plan, pages 4-36 to 4-60).

National Historic Preservation Act

Heritage resource surveys of various intensities were conducted in the project area, following protocols approved by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The Section 106 review for all proposed timber harvest units and roads has been completed. Through use of buffer zones seven sites were avoided and protected in all action alternatives. The State Historic Preservation Officer has been consulted, and the project complies with the provisions of 36 CFR, Part 800. Forest Service timber sale contracts contain enforceable measures for protecting any undiscovered heritage resource that might be encountered during sale operations. I have determined, consistent with Forest Service direction on heritage resources, that no sites eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places would be affected.

Clean Water Act

The design of harvest units for the Selected Alternative were guided by standards, guidelines and direction contained in the Forest Plan and applicable Forest Service manuals and handbooks. The Clean Water Act of 1972 (as amended in 1977 and 1987) was intended to protect and improve the quality of water resources and maintain their beneficial uses. Section 313 of the Clean Water Act and Executive Order 12088 of 1987 address Federal agency compliance and consistency with water pollution control mandates. Agencies must be consistent with requirements that apply to “any governmental entity” or private person.

The State of Washington has determined the Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the Forest Service’s Soil and Water Conservation Handbook (FSH 2509.22), to be consistent with the Washington Forest Practices Act. The site-specific application of BMPs, with a monitoring and feedback mechanism, is the

approved strategy for controlling non-point source pollution as defined by Washington's Non-point Source Pollution Control Strategy.

Endangered Species Act

The Quartzite Project Planning Area contains habitat for one endangered and three threatened animal species. The likelihood of adverse effects for these species is low for the Wildland Fire Alternative (J), which is not likely to adversely affect bald eagles, grizzly bears, gray wolves, and Canada lynx. A complete biological assessment is included in the planning record for this project. Consultation was done with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Consumers, Civil Rights, Minorities and Women

No negative impacts to the civil rights of individuals or groups, including minorities and women, are anticipated to be associated with this project. Additional information can be found in the Quartzite Final EIS.

Executive Orders

EO 11988 (Floodplains) – Executive Order 11988 directs Federal agencies to take action to avoid, to the extent practicable, the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. The selected Alternative improves floodplains by providing small hydrologic structures in Woodward Meadows that are designed to improve riparian vegetation diversity and wetland habitat in this lower elevation wetland that was previously modified for grazing livestock. The Selected Alternative does not impact but improves the floodplain ecosystem. No roads will be constructed across floodplains, and timber harvest will not occur on any floodplain.

EO 11990 (Wetlands) – Executive Order 11990 requires Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent practicable, the long and short-term adverse impacts associated with the destruction or modification of wetlands. The Selected Alternative avoids most identified wetlands. The road closure included with the Wildland Fire Alternative (J), will improve conditions in Woodward Meadows by limiting the incursion of vehicles in the wetland.

EO 12898 (Environmental Justice) – Executive Order 12898 directs Federal agencies to identify and address the issue of environmental justice, i.e. adverse human health and environmental effects of agency programs that disproportionately impact minority and low-income populations. I have determined that implementation of the Selected Alternative will not cause adverse health or environmental effects that disproportionately impact minority and low-income populations.

EO 12962 (Recreational Fisheries) – Executive Order 12962 directs Federal agencies to conserve, restore and enhance aquatic systems to provide for increased recreational fishing opportunities nationwide. Section 1 of the Executive Order is most pertinent to the proposed activity. Section 1 directs Federal agencies to evaluate effects on aquatic ecosystems and recreational fisheries, develop and encourage partnerships, promote restoration, provide access, and promote awareness of opportunities for recreational fishery resources. The Selected Alternative attempts to improve and minimize the effects on aquatic systems through project design, application of the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines, BMPs and site-specific mitigation measures. Downstream recreational fishing opportunities will remain essentially the same because aquatic habitats are protected through implementation of BMPs and the through the riparian improvement project in Woodward Meadows and the Road and Stream Crossing Improvements that are included with my decision.

Implementation

Implementation Dates

- **Vegetation management activities**
  The timber sale will begin October 1st of 2003. Those prescribed fire activities that follow the timber sale will also begin October 1st of 2003. Non-commercial thinning activities and those prescribed fire activities that do not follow the timber sale will begin July 1st of 2003.

- **Riparian/wetland management activities**
  Woodward Meadows riparian/wetland improvement activities will begin March 1st of 2004.

- **Road management activities**
  Road re-construction and new road construction will occur in conjunction with the timber sale, beginning October 1st of 2003. The six road/stream crossing improvements will begin June 1st of 2003. The two road closures will occur in conjunction with the timber sale, beginning October 1st of 2003.

Procedure for Changes During Implementation
Proposed changes to the authorized project actions will be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), and other laws concerning such changes.

In determining whether and what kind of NEPA action is required, the Forest Supervisor, will consider the criteria set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations (40 CFR 1502.9(c)), and FSH 1909.15 Sec. 18 for determining whether to supplement an existing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). In particular, the Forest Supervisor will determine whether the proposed change is a substantial change to the selected alternative as planned and already approved, and whether the change is relevant to environmental concerns.

Planning Record
The planning record for this project includes the DEIS, FEIS, Forest Plan material incorporated by reference, and all materials produced during the environmental analysis of this project. The planning record is available for review at the Three Rivers Ranger District.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215. A notice of appeal must be in writing and clearly state that it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Appeals must be filed with (or addressed to) the Regional Forester, ATTN: 1570 APPEALS, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon, 97208-3623 within 45 days of the date of legal notice of this decision in the Statesman-Examiner Newspaper, Colville, Washington. Any written notice of appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14 “Content of an appeal”, including the reasons for the appeal and how the decision fails to consider comments previously provided.

It is the responsibility of those who appeal a decision to provide the Regional Forester sufficient written evidence and rationale to show why my decision should be changed or reversed.

The written notice of appeal must:

- State that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to Title 36 CFR Part 215;

- List the name, address, and if possible, a telephone number of the appellant;

- Identify the decision document by title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Responsible Official;

- Identify the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks or portion of the decision to which the appellant objects; and

- State how my decision fails to consider comments previously provided, either before or during the comment period specified in Title 36 CFR 215.6 and, if applicable, how the appellant believes the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Ed Shaw, District Planner, Three Rivers Ranger District, Colville Office, 755 W. Main, Colville, WA 99114, or (509) 684-7000, or veshaw@fs.fed.us. Additional Quartzite Watershed Management Project information is available at http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/colville/.

/s/ Nora B. Rasure — March 28th, 2003

NORA B. RASURE — DATE
Forest Supervisor
Colville National Forest
Colville, Washington
509-684-7000