



File Code: 1950

Date: November 16, 2007

Dear Forest Neighbor

I have previously (September 11, 2007) sent you a copy of or notified you of the availability of the final Environmental Impact Statement for the Tripod Fire Salvage Project or its summary. I am now pleased to announce the completion of the Record of Decision for the Tripod Fire Salvage Project. Enclosed is a copy. This letter also serves as notification of the availability of the Record of Decision on our website at:

www.fs.fed.us/r6/wenatchee/projects/tripod

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Any written notice of appeal of the decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, "Appeal Content." The notice of appeal must be postmarked, hand delivered, or faxed to the Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region, ATTN: 1570 APPEALS, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon, 97208-3623 (US Mail) or 333 SW First Avenue, Portland, OR 97204 (for street address deliveries), faxed to (503) 808-2255, sent electronically to appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us, or hand delivered to the above address between 7:45AM and 4:30PM, Monday through Friday except legal holidays. The appeal must be postmarked or delivered within 45 days of the date the legal notice of this decision appears in the *Wenatchee World*. The publication date of the legal notice in the *Wenatchee World* is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal and those wishing to appeal should not rely on dates or timeframes provided by any other source.

Electronic appeals must be submitted as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format or portable document format only. E-mails in other formats or containing viruses will be rejected. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure their appeals are received in a timely manner. For electronically mailed appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of the appeal, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. Only individuals or organizations who submitted comments during the comment period may appeal. This project may be implemented 5 business days after the close of the appeal period if no appeal is received. If an appeal is received the project may not be implemented for 15 business days after the appeal decision.

For further information on this project, please contact Bob Stoehr at (509) 548-6977.

Sincerely,



JOHN E. NEWCOM
District Ranger



RECORD OF DECISION

Tripod Fire Salvage Project and Okanogan National Forest Plan Amendment #40

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
Okanogan County, Washington

INTRODUCTION

Lightning storms on July 3 and 24, 2006 ignited the Spur and Tripod Fires that ultimately burned together and became the Tripod Complex (hereafter called the Tripod Fire), burning a total of 175,184 acres. Of that total, 163,669 acres burned on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, 11,408 acres burned on Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and Department of Natural Resources lands and 107 acres was in other ownership. The National Forest burned area is located on the Methow Valley Ranger District on the east side of the Chewuch River drainage and on the Tonasket Ranger District in the Salmon Creek watershed. Active fire suppression activities continued into the fall of 2006. The fire was declared contained on October 31, 2006 and was declared out on December 1, 2006. The Forest Service is to salvage harvest a proportion of the dead trees and fire-injured trees that are expected to die within one year. The project area for the Tripod Fire Salvage Project includes portions of the Tripod Fire that lie on National Forest lands on the Methow Valley and Tonasket Ranger Districts within Okanogan County and includes portions of the following townships: T34N, R23E; T34N, R24E; T35N, R22E; T35N, R23E; T35N, R24E; T36N, R22E; T36N, R23E; T36N, R24E; T37N, R22E; T37N, R23E; T38N, R23E and T39N, R23E, W.M. (38,278 acres). The project area is located within the Lower Chewuch River, Middle Methow River and Salmon Creek watersheds. It also includes all land immediately adjacent to Roads 37 and 39 within the fire boundary.

This Record of Decision documents my decision for the Tripod Fire Salvage Project and approval of Okanogan National Forest Plan Amendment #40.

DECISION AND RATIONALE

Introduction

Following publication of the FEIS, I met with members of Conservation Northwest, The Lands Council, Alpine Lakes Protection Society, and Wilderness Society to present changes to the project as a result of the application of mitigation measures and design criteria in the FEIS during on-the-ground layout of the units. As described below, the

changes substantially reduced the acreage of harvest that was reported in the FEIS. At that meeting, these groups made clear to me they were still concerned about removing any large trees from the landscape. Subsequently, I had my staff contact some key members of the timber industry to determine the interest in larger diameter trees given the recent deterioration in market conditions. Timber industry indicated interest only in the larger trees around Ramsey Creek and Peak because the larger trees in this area had not experienced the deterioration that other species in other areas had experienced. However, these units containing about 800 thousand board feet (MBF) still appraised negatively and would be offered at base rates for a sale value of approximately \$3,000. After carefully considering the composition and value of the trees in each area of the Tripod Fire Salvage project, I decided to drop trees equal to or greater than 21 inches from the entire project. No trees equal to or greater than 21 inches will be felled in any unit, except for safety reasons.

This will allow me the best possible option for responding to the recent deterioration in market conditions and tailoring the timber sales to the current market, while remaining sensitive to the large tree issue. This will improve our ability to offer a successful project that meets the purpose and need for economic recovery.

Decision

Based on a careful review and consideration of the public comments and the analysis presented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Tripod Fire Salvage Project, I have decided to select a modified Alternative E. Alternative E is described in the FEIS on pages 2-5 to 2-11 and 2-18 to 2-39. Alternative E was modified to respond to further information gathered during field reconnaissance as follows: (Changes in ground based yarded units represent actual acres of the unit as it was laid out on the ground. Changes in skyline units are estimates based on field reconnaissance and expected reductions in acres similar to the ground based units.)

During field layout of ground based units, Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA), which will not be salvage harvested, were excluded from the unit.

During field layout of ground based harvest units, areas that exceeded 35% slope for pitches of 150 feet or more were identified and excluded from the unit.

During field layout, fringe areas were identified where fire damage was not as severe and the level of green trees remaining exceeded the number of dead trees or trees expected to die within one year. In this case, unit boundaries were modified to limit the damage to remaining green trees and to create economically feasible harvest units. Other adjustments were made to ground based unit boundaries as a result of on-the-ground layout of units based on topography, slope, actual tree conditions and RHCA locations.

Reconnaissance of skyline units indicates that acreage reductions are also expected due to delineation of RHCAs and identification of fringe areas where fire damage was not as severe as anticipated. These reductions are estimates, and are shown in the summaries below in Figure 1, however the units are not changed on the map.

Original timber volume removal was estimated to average approximately 7 thousand board feet (mbf) per acre from all the proposed harvest units. The actual cruise average for proposed volume removal is approximately 3 mbf per acre once ground based harvest units were marked according to marking guidelines. Similar volume/acre reductions are anticipated in the skyline units.

This difference is attributed to the application of the Scott Guidelines for identifying trees expected to die. The guidelines limited fire-damaged trees actually designated for removal to include only actual crown dead trees and trees very severely damaged, leaving little or no doubt that they would die within one year. In addition the amount of defect exhibited in the included timber was higher than originally estimated.

In association with the treatment modifications identified above, acreage of salvage harvest units will decrease from the area considered in FEIS Alternative E, by 1,464 acres to a total of 1,284 acres for a total 3.7 million board feet of timber (the skyline portion of these totals are estimates). Ground based harvest units will decrease from the area considered in FEIS Alternative E, by 1,287 acres to a total of 869 acres and estimated skyline yarding acres will decrease by 176 acres to a total of 415 acres. Depending on the logging system employed, fuels may remain on site or be concentrated at landings. For example, on the 869 acres to be salvage harvested with ground based methods, fuels will remain on site if felled by chainsaw or a harvester processor, or will be removed to landings if a feller buncher were used. On the 415 acres to be salvage harvested with skyline, fuels will remain on-site. Approximately 940 acres of salvage harvest will be reforested by planting and 344 acres of salvage harvest units are expected to regenerate naturally. The transportation system (roads) used for Alternative E-Modified will not change from Alternative E. Danger tree falling will occur along 47.0 miles of roads. The post-project road status for Alternative E-Modified will not change from Alternative E. All mitigation measures and design criteria (FEIS pages 2-20 to 2-39 for Alternative E-Modified will not change from FEIS Alternative E. Alternative E-Modified salvage harvest units are detailed in Attachment 1 at the end of this document. Alternative E-Modified outcomes are summarized in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Alternative E-Modified Outcomes

Outcome	Unit of Measure	Amount
Timber Salvage Harvest	Acres	1,284
Ground-based Harvest Method	Acres	869
Skyline Harvest Method	Acres	415
Timber Salvage Volume	MMBF	3.7
Tree Planting	Acres	940
Natural Reforestation	Acres	344
Capable Lynx Habitat	Acres	287

The Alternative E description in the FEIS on pages 2-5 to 2-11 and 2-18 to 2-39 describes Alternative E-Modified, with the above changes. A listing of units (Attachment 1), and maps of Alternative E-Modified (Attachments 2 and 3) and are part of this Record of Decision. Alternative E as modified in this ROD is described below:

An estimated 1,284 acres will be commercially salvage harvested, with an estimated recovery of 3.7 million board feet (MMBF) of wood fiber (includes ground based and skyline yarded units). Only dead trees and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year from when the salvage harvest unit is marked and cruised will be considered for harvest. Salvage logging will focus on removing dead trees and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year. Approximately 870 acres of salvage harvest will include dead and dying conifer trees ranging in size from 10 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) to less than 21 inches DBH. Approximately 316 acres of salvage harvest will

include dead and dying conifer trees ranging in size from 12 inches DBH to less than 21 inches DBH. Approximately 98 acres of salvage harvest will include dead and dying conifer trees ranging in size from 10 inches DBH up to and including 18 inches DBH.

Native tree seedlings will be planted within salvage harvest units on 940 acres that have insufficient residual seed source to ensure adequate and timely regeneration of conifer species within five years (FEIS pages 2-13, 2-28). Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce, western larch and lodgepole pine seedlings will be hand planted to ensure that salvage harvest units will meet minimum tree stocking guides within five years of completion of harvest. Approximately 344 acres within salvage harvest units are expected to regenerate naturally. Natural regeneration will re-establish forest stands in areas where there is a residual seed source that is sufficient to ensure adequate regeneration of conifer species within five years of salvage harvest.

In the approximately 869 acres to be harvested with ground-based methods, fuels will remain on site if felled by chainsaw or a harvester processor, or will be removed to landings if a feller buncher were used. Fuels brought to landings will be concentrated into piles for later burning. In the approximately 415 acres of skyline logging harvest, fuels will remain on-site.

Roadside danger trees will be felled along 47 miles of open (Maintenance Level 2 and above) roads within the project area to improve safety for road users. Danger trees located within RHCAs will be felled and left in place to provide coarse woody debris. A portion of the danger trees felled outside of RHCAs will be removed as firewood or other forest products depending on its marketability. Any roadside danger tree greater than or equal to 21" DBH will be felled and left in place.

Approximately 155 miles of open forest transportation system roads will be used for access to salvage harvest units and for timber haul. Approximately 23 miles of closed system road will be opened for use and closed following harvest operations. About 7 miles of currently open road will be used and closed, implementing a past decision from the South Twentymile Environmental Assessment (EA). All other system roads will remain open. Approximately 3 miles of previously decommissioned or unauthorized roads will be used as access spurs to salvage harvest units. These roads will be decommissioned following harvest operations. Approximately 3 miles of unauthorized roads were identified as having utility for management in the future. Most of these roads will be re-opened, classified as a system road and closed following harvest operations. Less than 3 miles of temporary roads will be constructed to access landing sites and allow landings to be less visible from roadways. Most individual temporary road segments will not exceed 500 feet in length. Temporary roads constructed during the project will be decommissioned and returned to productive ground following salvage harvest operations. No new permanent system roads or access routes will be constructed.

As part of my decision, I will implement the mitigation measures and design criteria on FEIS pages 2-20 to 2-36 because they are expected to minimize the effects of management activities. I will also implement monitoring measures (FEIS pp. 2-37 to 2-39) to assure those aspects of my decision are carefully tracked during implementation.

My decision also includes a site-specific, non-significant amendment, applicable only to the Tripod Fire Salvage Project, to several Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan standards and guidelines as follows:

1. Allow snowplowing and motorized use of designated, groomed snowmobile routes to facilitate winter salvage activities. Currently Forest Plan Forestwide Standard and Guideline 17-6 identifies roads that should not be snowplowed and should be closed to motorized wheel traffic from December 1 to April 1. If salvage harvest operations occur in the winter the following roads will need to be snowplowed and opened for project motorized activity during that time interval: Road 37 from the junction with Road 5010 to the junction with Road 39, and Road 42 from the sno-park in Section 23, T35N, R24E, to the junction with Road 4235. This will allow salvage harvest operations to be completed as quickly as possible to facilitate the recovery of deteriorating timber.
2. Allow timber salvage operations to take place in Management Area MA-26 deer winter range from December through March, in order to facilitate the recovery of deteriorating timber. Currently Forest Plan Standard and Guideline MA26-20J prohibits operations from December through March. If salvage harvest activities occur in the winter, salvage harvest operations (but not public access) will be allowed in the following areas: within discrete Management Area (MA) 26-04, Units BL02, RA2, RA5, and RA6; within MA 26-02, Unit BO03. This will only negligibly affect deer because most of the deer winter range affected is currently not effective habitat because it was burned by the Tripod Fire.
3. Standard and Guideline MA 12-17D will be amended to allow timber salvage motorized use (but not public access) to occur in the discrete MA 12-01 from December through March, in order to facilitate the recovery of deteriorating timber. MA-12 has a management emphasis of providing habitat to support a stable lynx population while accessing the area for growing and producing merchantable wood fiber. This will only negligibly affect lynx because most of the habitat affected is currently in an unsuitable condition for lynx because it was burned by the Tripod Fire.

I considered a Forest Plan amendment to allow live trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH to be salvage harvested, in order to allow those fire-injured trees with a low probability of survival to be harvested. With my decision to implement Alternative E-Modified (which will not salvage harvest any tree greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH), this amendment will not be necessary. Although some trees equal to or greater than 21 inches or larger may be felled for safety reasons, they would not be sold and are therefore not subject to Regional Forester Amendment #2.

Analysis Changes as a Result of Alternative E-Modified

The purpose and need for this project is to recover the economic value of a proportion of dead trees and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year of project implementation (when salvage harvest units are marked and cruised) and provide sawtimber and other wood products to local and regional economies. Therefore, an updated economic analysis of Alternative E-Modified (Attachment 4) was completed to assess its ability to meet the purpose and need. The analysis explains that currently the average stumpage value has become deficit (the cost of logging and hauling timber to the mill exceeds its value). Alternative E-Modified therefore will produce a deficit timber

sale offering. However, timber from this project will be offered at base rates as shown in Attachment 4, and may recover a small economic value and a proportion of dead and fire damaged trees may provide wood products to local and regional economies. Although the salvage harvest units that will be logged with the skyline system are far below a break-even point in today's market, including them will allow them to be harvested if market conditions change.

Approximately 287 acres of capable but currently unsuitable lynx habitat will be salvaged harvested compared to 413 acres in Alternative E.

No trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH will be salvage harvested (unless felling is necessary for safety reasons, in which case it will be felled and retained on-site).

All other environmental effects of Alternative E-Modified will be within the range of effects disclosed in the FEIS and will be less than those disclosed in the FEIS for Alternative E because fewer acres and fewer trees per acre will be salvage harvested. For example, the amount of detrimental soil compaction will be less because fewer acres will be harvested by ground based equipment. However, I consider the above modifications to Alternative E consistent with the purpose and need for action, and within the range of the alternatives and effects considered in the FEIS.

Reasons For The Decision

I carefully considered the issues and concerns raised by those who participated and commented in this analysis, including meeting with several conservation groups and consulting with industry after publication of the FEIS, to help make my decision. I tailored my decision to meet market conditions in keeping with the economic recovery purpose and need for this project and to respond to public concerns about salvage harvesting large trees greater than or equal to 21" DBH. I considered thirty alternatives; five of which were analyzed in detail and 25 of which were considered but eliminated from detailed study for the reasons stated in the FEIS, Chapter 2, pages 2-40 to 2-49. The following narrative presents how my decision responds to the purpose and need and why I selected Alternative E-Modified and did not select Alternative A (no action) or Alternatives B, C, or D. A detailed description of the five alternatives analyzed in detail can be found in FEIS pages 2-4 to 2-39. I also discuss below how I considered the key issues most relevant to me in making my decision.

Purpose and Need

Some people agreed with our intentions to salvage harvest within the Tripod Fire area to provide economic benefits for the community and remove potential hazards. Others equally and strongly believe that the Forest Service should not salvage harvest trees in favor of other potential ecological benefits. I have heard and considered both of these strongly held viewpoints. I believe that I have chosen the best course of action to meet the needs we've identified for land management in today's timber market. Based on the considerations discussed below, I believe my decision affirmatively addresses and best fulfills the purpose and need for action while providing a balanced response to the key issues identified.

Key Issue: Recover the economic value of a proportion of dead trees and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year of project implementation in the Tripod Fire area. Removing fire-killed and damaged trees through salvage logging would provide sawtimber and other wood products to local and regional economies.

My decision authorizes the harvest of approximately 1,284 acres of dead and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year, approximately 3.7 million board feet. The expected potential economic benefit of selling the timber is estimated to be about \$14,000 to the federal government if the timber sells at base rates.

Since the Tripod Fire was declared out on December 1, 2006, an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists has been analyzing how to deal with the aftermath of a 175,000 acre wildfire on the National Forest, including how much timber would be appropriate to salvage while maintaining important resource values such as wildlife habitat, fisheries and soils. Many large areas were dropped from consideration such as Inventoried Roadless areas, adjacent areas with undeveloped characteristics and areas with sensitive fisheries that are home to threatened fish species. These alone totaled over 102,000 acres or 62% of the fire area on the National Forest. The fire burned with varying degrees of intensity and the Team finally recommended a proposed action which would salvage harvest the most severely burned areas on land that could handle the logging operations totaling 17.9 million board feet (MMBF) over 2,748 acres. As these salvage harvest units were laid out on the ground, the proposal was modified for reasons detailed on pages 2—3 of this document to become a total of 1,284 acres for 3.7 MMBF.

While this detailed analysis and public input was occurring the deterioration of the timber proceeded at a more rapid pace than has been experienced locally. In June of 2007, beetles had infested 12" DBH trees the entire length of the bole. By the time the Final EIS had been published in September 2007 and as I was preparing to make a decision, the rest of the timber in the project area was found to be largely infested with these secondary wood borers, reducing its value as saw timber. I made contacts with key timber industry representatives and they indicated that they were no longer interested in the majority of the timber. The timber market is currently at a low-point, salvage timber is already on the market and even some green timber sale offerings are not selling. The recent spike in fuel prices has made this situation worse. I also contacted conservation groups interested in this proposal and they indicated that they were still concerned about removing any large trees from the landscape.

Our current timber appraisal shows that the average value of the timber does not have enough economic value to cover the costs of logging and hauling it to the mill. Alternative E-Modified therefore will produce a deficit timber sale offering. This project had been focused on making an economic recovery from a proportion of the fire damaged trees to provide wood products to the regional and local economies. To that end the timber from this project will be offered at base rates, as shown in Attachment 4, and if sold will recover a small economic value and more importantly will provide wood products to local and regional economies. Additionally, this is a proposal that is sensitive to the large tree issue and is best able to get wood into the market quickly. Even though our appraisal process indicates a deficit sale, these sales sometimes sell when offered, and these trees may potentially be sold as other types of wood products. Although the salvage harvest units that will be logged with the skyline system are not near break-even point in today's market, including them for future sale will allow them to be harvested if market conditions change.

My decision affirmatively addresses the need to salvage harvest as rapidly as possible as demonstrated by the completion of the FEIS and release of this Record of Decision within one year of the Tripod Fire being declared out. Inaction or delaying the sale and harvesting of dead and dying trees increases the amount of decay and other wood deterioration, which in turn reduces the potential economic value of the product. I intend to sell and harvest the trees as soon as practicable to maximize potential economic benefits to the federal government, local businesses, and communities.

Key Issue: There are a large number of dead and dying trees located next to roads that are open for public use and are hazardous to road users. There is a need to improve safety along roads open to the public within the fire area.

The safety of the public will be improved by the felling of roadside danger trees along 47 miles of open roads (Maintenance Level 2 and above) and closed roads that are temporarily open for salvage operations, as directed by Alternative E-Modified.

Key Issue: There is a need to accelerate reforestation by re-establishing trees in salvage harvest units where there is insufficient seed source.

Alternative E-Modified will plant trees on approximately 940 acres of salvage harvest units where there is insufficient residual seed source to ensure adequate and timely regeneration of conifer species, so that salvage units will meet minimum tree stocking guides within five years of completion of harvest. Approximately 344 acres within salvage units that have a residual seed source are expected to regenerate naturally. These units will be monitored during the second and fourth growing seasons following completion of harvest to certify that minimum tree stocking standards have been attained. If not, the unit will be re-planted.

Considered Rationale and Factors in Making the Decision

I have chosen Alternative E-Modified because this alternative best meets the purpose and need for the project to recover the economic value of a proportion of the dead and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year as described above. It will harvest approximately 3.7 million board feet of dead and fire-injured trees expected to die within one year over 1,284 acres with a potential economic benefit of selling the timber estimated to be about \$14,000 to the federal government if the sales sell at minimum rates. This project had been focused on making an economic recovery from a proportion of the fire damaged trees, but the situation changed due to the rapid deterioration of the timber and very weak timber markets. Alternative E-Modified will produce a deficit timber sale offering as shown on Attachment 4. However, timber from this project will be offered at minimum rates, which may recover a small economic value and more importantly, may provide wood products to local and regional economies. Additionally, this is a proposal that is sensitive to the large tree issue and is best able to get wood into the market quickly, while meeting all Forest Plan standards and guidelines as amended by this decision. Even though our appraisal process indicates that this will be a deficit sale, sometimes these sales sell when offered. If these sales do not sell, the Forest will consider other types of wood product use.

Alternative E-Modified will not enter any currently suitable lynx habitat and will not affect the development of future lynx habitat in currently unsuitable areas (FEIS page 3-114).

Alternative E-Modified will salvage harvest dead trees, or those expected to die within one year, less than 21 inches DBH. However, sufficient structure will remain to adequately provide for all post-fire ecosystem functions (FEIS page 3-74). This determination is based on the best available science and follows the most recent Forest Snag Management guidance for managing post-fire forest habitats that contribute to the viability of primary cavity excavators and cavity users (FEIS pages 3-38 to 3-74). I believe that by identifying large portions of the post-fire forest habitat to remain unlogged, by maintaining remnants of the burned forest habitat within salvage harvest units including all live, dead and dying trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH, and by retaining an average of 6.2 snags per acre over 100 acres of the larger available snags (FEIS pages 3-65 to 3-67), enough larger snags will be left within the project area to provide habitat conditions that contribute towards the viability of primary cavity excavators and secondary cavity users (FEIS pages 3-73 to 3-74).

Many people who commented on the Draft EIS were concerned about what constitutes a dead or dying tree in a post-fire context and how that determination is made. Numerous articles, studies, and reports relative to the identification of dead or dying trees following prescribed fire and wildfire were reviewed during the analysis process (FEIS Appendix K). Tree mortality following fire depends on the type and severity of fire-caused injuries, initial tree vigor, and the post-fire environment including the influence of insects, diseases, and weather. Based on this review, it is my belief that a comprehensive assessment of tree injury, and associated prediction of fire-caused tree mortality, should consider the effect of fire injuries on the whole tree collectively rather than just one or more of its individual parts. I believe I have considered the most recent science regarding what constitutes a living tree, a dead tree or a tree that is likely to die in a post-fire context and how that determination is made. FEIS Appendix K includes a discussion of recent scientific literature and methods for assessing post-fire tree mortality. FEIS pages K-13 to K-21 specifically compare the different tree mortality assessment methods and demonstrate that the Scott Guidelines are the most appropriate model for the Tripod Fire Salvage project. The Tripod Fire area experienced a wide range of fire intensity and a broad range of fire damage to trees. Five different species of fire-damaged trees occur on a variety of forest sites considered for salvage harvest within the project area. The Scott Guidelines provide a methodology for predicting the relative probability of survival for fire-injured trees with variable site conditions, variable levels of pre-fire factors that can predispose trees to fire-induced mortality, and variable levels of fire damage to their crowns, stems, and roots. I believe that the Scott Guidelines are more appropriate for predicting post-fire tree mortality in the Tripod Fire Salvage Project than any of the alternative mortality prediction models individually that were considered during the analysis process. I believe the Scott Guidelines to be the best comprehensive assessment of potential tree mortality relative to other associated prediction methods because it considers the effect of fire injuries on the whole tree rather than just one or more of its parts. I conclude the Scott Guidelines are the best available scientific procedure for our local geographic area, timber types, fire types, and associated insects and diseases to determine whether a fire-damaged tree is expected to live or expected to die, and therefore they will be utilized on the Tripod Fire Salvage Project

I am amending the Forest Plan to allow snowplowing and motorized use of designated, groomed snowmobile routes (Road 37 from the junction with Road 5010 to the junction with Road 39 and Road 42 from the Sno-park in Section 23, T35N, R24E to the junction of Road 4235) to facilitate winter salvage activities. Currently, Forest Plan Forest-wide Standard and Guideline 17-6 identifies roads that should not be snowplowed and should

be closed to motorized wheeled traffic from December 1 to April 1. This closure could affect snowmobile use (if winter logging is utilized) however the disruption will likely be only one winter and I believe the urgency to harvest this material while it still has value is necessary. Waiting until the summer of 2008 will result in further tree decay and less value. Even with plowing and closing part of the 5010 Road (East Chewuch) to public access, snowmobile access to the Chewuch area will still be available via the 51 (West Chewuch) road, since this is part of a paired trail system. Access to "the Meadows" will not be available from the Methow Valley side for one winter should plowing occur, but will still be available from the north and east via Forest Road 39.

I am amending the Forest Plan to allow salvage harvest operations to take place in MA-26 deer winter range from December through March, in order to facilitate the recovery of deteriorating timber. Currently Forest Plan Standard and Guideline MA26-20J prohibits operations from December through March to protect deer during winter. Harvest activities will have little effect on deer populations because the Tripod Fire eliminated the value of this winter range for a few years (FEIS page 3-30). Therefore, I believe the urgency to provide winter access to harvest his material as soon as possible is appropriate.

I am amending the Forest Plan to allow salvage harvest motorized operations to occur in Management Area 12 from December through March, in order to facilitate the recovery of deteriorating timber. MA-12 has a management emphasis of providing habitat to support a stable lynx population while accessing the area for growing and producing merchantable wood fiber. Motorized access will have little consequence for lynx since more than 70% of the capable habitat in the affected Lynx Analysis Units is in an unsuitable condition from the Tripod Fire, which likely displaced the lynx that might have been using these areas. Therefore, I believe the urgency to provide winter access to harvest this material as soon as possible is appropriate.

Impacts to resources will be adequately mitigated. The project may affect but would not likely adversely affect, or would not likely affect listed threatened or endangered species as defined in the Interagency Cooperation Regulations, 50 CFR part 402, for the Endangered Species Act, nor will it cause a trend for listing of sensitive species as threatened or endangered (FEIS page 3-100). There will be no timber harvest, road construction, or landing development within any Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs), therefore at the reach scale, RHCAs will not be functionally affected. There will be no project effects on stream temperature, large woody debris or water yield (FEIS pages 3-187 to 3-189). Any increases to fine sediment levels in spawning beds will be so low as to be statistically immeasurable (FEIS page 3-197). Existing areas of detrimental soil disturbance will be re-utilized (skid trails) and additional detrimental soil disturbance will be mitigated with active restoration to meet the 15% allowable detrimental soil standard in the Forest Plan (FEIS pages 3-231 to 3-232). Salvage will only occur outside of currently mapped old growth and outside of stands with late-successional structure (LOS) (FEIS pages 3-255 to 3-256). All salvage harvest units where there is not an adequate residual seed source for natural regeneration will be planted to ensure that they will be adequately re-stocked with trees within five years after harvest (FEIS pages 3-255 to 3-256). A noxious weed prevention strategy will minimize spread of invasive plants by in part; cleaning all ground disturbing equipment, seeding disturbed soils, and ensuring proper timing of road blading and ditch pulling (FEIS page 2-30 and Appendix G-1 to G-9). To mitigate the effects on recreation, commercial timber haul will not be permitted on project area roads on weekends and holidays from

Memorial Day to Labor Day (FEIS page 2-31). No salvage harvest units will be located within Inventoried Roadless Areas nor in any areas with undeveloped character (FEIS page 3-313). Slash burning will follow the current Washington State Smoke Implementation Plan regulations to protect air quality and avoid smoke intrusions into sensitive areas (FEIS page 2-32), and burning will be done under conditions that protect the Pasayten Wilderness Class I airshed. There are no known federally listed plants nor known sensitive plants within any harvest units (FEIS 3-375). There are five known heritage resource sites within the project area, four of which are potentially eligible and they will be avoided by salvage operations (FEIS pages 3-403 to 3-404). Therefore, no mitigation will be necessary. This project will not require unusual energy requirements (FEIS page 3-407). Public health and safety will be improved by removing danger trees along open forest routes and haul routes within the Tripod Fire Salvage project area (FEIS page 3-353).

Other Alternatives Considered

Alternative A is the No Action Alternative. Under this alternative, no active management to recover the economic value of fire killed and fire damaged trees to provide wood products to local and regional economies would be implemented. I considered but did not select Alternative A because it would not recover any of the economic value of fire damaged trees nor provide any wood products to local and regional economies. Therefore it does not respond to the purpose and need to recover a portion of the economic value of dead trees and fire-injured trees that are expected to die. Alternative A would also leave about 47 miles of open road with trees that threaten public safety. I am not willing to leave these trees standing and place forest visitors and employees at risk.

Alternative B was designed to maximize recovery of dead and fire-injured trees that have positive net value to be part of the sustainable supply of saw timber to local and regional economies. Though this alternative best met the purpose and need of economic recovery when the FEIS was written, in today's market none of the standing saw timber has enough value to appraise with a positive value. In addition, key industry representatives were no longer interested in the majority of the timber as saw timber. Alternative B included harvesting trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH which was a concern to interested conservation groups. Therefore, this alternative, which now has little value, would have required more time and expense to implement. Similar proportional reductions in ground-based yarding acres, volume and value would have occurred during layout for Alternative B as shown for Alternative E above. I considered but did not select Alternative B because it was not sensitive to the large tree issue and would not get the remaining wood onto the market quickly.

Alternative C responds to the key issue of reducing disturbances to lynx habitat. Under this alternative, no salvage harvest would occur within lynx habitat, including habitat currently in unsuitable condition, as defined in the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS). I considered but did not select Alternative C because it is not as responsive to meet the need to recover the economic value of fire-killed and fire-injured trees which would provide wood products to local and regional economies, compared to my decision of Alternative E-Modified (similar proportional reductions in ground-based yarding acres, volume and value would have occurred during layout for Alternative C as shown for Alternative E above). More importantly, all applicable conservation measures from the LCAS will be implemented under Alternative E-Modified, therefore any potential

effects on lynx will be reduced to immeasurable/discountable levels (FEIS page 3-114). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination on June 22, 2007. In twenty years there will not be a measurable difference for lynx or hare recovery under any alternative including Alternative A or C (FEIS page 3-116). Trees will only be salvage harvested in lynx habitat that is currently in an unsuitable condition (FEIS page 3-114). Burned stands will not be favorable for lynx for about twenty years, few lynx will use these areas until they recover sufficiently to provide lynx and hare cover taller than the average snow depth (FEIS page 3-115). Conifer recovery will also not be substantially different for any alternative (FEIS page 3-116). Therefore, I believe that salvage harvest in currently unsuitable lynx habitat as proposed in Alternative E-Modified will not threaten the viability of lynx in or near the project area, nor will it affect the recovery of lynx habitat. The acres harvested in Alternative E-Modified that are excluded from Alternative C will further help Alternative E-Modified to better meet the purpose and need for supporting the local and regional economies.

Alternative D addresses the key issue of economics by providing an increased amount of salvage timber (compared to Alternative E-Modified) that would be available to local and regional economies. I considered, but did not select Alternative D because this additional timber includes salvage harvest units with an even higher logging cost and resultant lower saw timber value resulting in substantial negative net values. More expensive logging systems such as helicopters would be utilized to access additional salvage harvest units. There is little chance that the Alternative D product mix would sell in today's market since the value of a timber sale offering is at an expected loss of -\$310,000 (FEIS page 2-51). I believe that this alternative would not result in an economically feasible timber offering.

25 other alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed study. These included maximizing timber recovery, salvaging in Blue Buck Creek, fuels reduction, use of prescribed fire, harvesting green trees, harvesting trees over 28 inches, harvesting trees with a moderate chance of survival, an alternative developed by the Collaborative Action Team, focusing on the green tree program, salvaging in inventoried roadless or undeveloped areas, providing more protection for soils, an alternative using helicopter yarding exclusively, winter logging only, active restoration of riparian or wildlife habitat, harvest within RHCAs, building no new roads, closing roads rather than falling danger trees, avoiding areas with noxious weeds, no burning of slash, prohibit snowplowing of groomed snowmobile routes, changing the upper diameter limit on units originally offered in the East Tripod CE, not allowing motorized access in deer winter range or lynx habitat during winter, and treatment consistent with the 2004 Beschta Report. Those alternatives and the rationale for their elimination is discussed on pages 2-40 to 2-49 of the FEIS.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Council on Environmental Quality Regulations at 40 CFR 1501.2(b) require an agency to specify the alternative, or alternatives that are considered to be environmentally preferable in the process of reaching its decision. The definition of environmentally preferable is the alternatives that causes the least damage to the physical and biological environment, and which best protects, preserves and enhances

historic, cultural and natural resources. Alternative A, no action, best meets this definition. No impacts would occur under this alternative because no salvage harvest to recover economic value would be implemented. There would be no additional soil disturbance, no burned forest habitat would be harvested, no further risk of invasive weed spread, no disruption of recreational activities would occur, and no effect to air quality would occur.

Of the action alternatives, Alternative C is the environmentally preferable alternative because it would salvage harvest on the fewest acres, eliminating any effect on those unharvested acres.

Reasons for not choosing these alternatives are detailed above in the "Other Alternatives Considered" section.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

On December 28, 2006 a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Tripod Fire Salvage Project appeared in the Federal Register and a press release was sent to regional media. On January 5, 2007, scoping packages for the Tripod project were sent to 530 addresses, which consisted of the Methow Valley and Tonasket Ranger Districts planning mailing lists, adjacent landowners, and others who indicated an interest in the Tripod Fire Salvage Project. Federal, state and local agencies and American Indian tribes were also invited to participate.

A public meeting was held in Winthrop, WA on January 16, 2007. The entire ID Team was on hand to explain their resource objectives and answer any questions. Sixteen people attended the meeting. Letters of public comment were received after the meeting. Articles about the project appeared in the *Methow Valley News* and *Omak Chronicle* newspapers. 208 written letters of input were received before the close of the public comment period on January 29, 2007.

The Notification of Availability of the Draft EIS appeared in the Federal Register on June 1, 2007. The DEIS or Summary was mailed or made available to those listed in the DEIS Chapter 5. 217 parties commented during the 45 day comment period which closed on July 16, 2007.

On October 24, 2007 I met with representatives from Conservation Northwest, the Lands Council, Alpine Lakes Protection Society, and the Wilderness Society to present changes to the project as a result of the application of mitigation measures and design criteria in the FEIS during the on-the-ground layout of these units. At that meeting, these groups made clear to me they were still concerned about removing any large trees from the landscape. Subsequently, I had my staff contact some key members of the timber industry to determine the interest in larger diameter trees given the recent deterioration in market conditions. Timber industry indicated interest only in the larger trees around Ramsey Creek and Peak because the larger trees in this area had not experienced the deterioration that other species in other areas had experienced.

Consultation and Coordination

Separate government to government consultation was initiated with the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation in December 2006 and has continued through development of this EIS. The Yakama Nation expressed no concerns regarding the project. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation identified a potential gathering area of interest that could benefit from ecosystem restoration treatments. A letter was sent in response noting that restoration was not a purpose and need of this project. The salvage harvest units near this site were surveyed in July 2007 and no sites or artifacts were discovered.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) was initiated for this project. On June 22, 2007 USFWS concurred with the Forest Service determination that the Tripod Fire Salvage Project may affect, but not likely adversely affect gray wolf, Canada lynx, grizzly bear or bull trout. On June 4, 2007 NMFS concurred that the project is not likely to adversely affect Upper Columbia River (UCR) steelhead or UCR spring-run Chinook salmon. NMFS also concurred that the project is not likely to affect critical habitat for these species and that conservation recommendations pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA 305(b)(4)(A) are not necessary.

National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 requirements have been completed in accordance with the Forest Service Programmatic Agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office, with a determination of no effect on historic properties, because all known sites will be avoided.

Issues

Issues were identified during the scoping process that raised concerns about the proposed action. Key issues were utilized to develop alternatives or additional mitigation and monitoring. The issues identified below as a result of public scoping were considered important enough to analyze in detail and information is provided on the disposition of each.

Economics – Key issue: Alternative E-Modified would recover damaged timber from less than 2% of the National Forest burned area that burned in the Tripod Fire. There was a concern that more acres should be harvested, that helicopter logging was not included in the proposed action and that economic recovery objectives would not be met. FEIS pages 2-51 and 3-17 to 3-18 illustrate that when additional acres are added to the proposed action, requiring more expensive yarding systems (such as helicopter logging), the resultant sale offerings have a substantial negative value and would not sell in current market conditions (Alternative D). Alternatives B, C and E were all estimated to have positive net values (FEIS pages 2-51 and 3-17 to 3-18), however with updated information on the deterioration of the timber and current market conditions, all alternatives are now estimated to have negative values and key timber industry is not interested in the majority of the project. However, Alternative E-Modified will offer timber from this project at minimum rates as shown in Attachment 4, which may recover a small economic value and more importantly may provide wood products to local and regional economies. Additionally, this is a proposal that is sensitive to the large tree issue and is best able to get wood into the market quickly. Even though our appraisal process indicates a deficit timber sale, these sales sometimes sell when offered. Although the

salvage harvest units that will be logged with the skyline system are not near break-even point in today's market, including them may allow them to be harvested if market conditions change.

Canada Lynx – Key issue: Lynx are a State and Federal Threatened species, and the area surrounding the Tripod Fire is the home to a large concentration of lynx. There was a concern that salvage harvest has the potential to reduce the amount of tree establishment and growth, which could affect the recovery of lynx habitat. In twenty years many trees killed by the Tripod Fire will have fallen over, improving habitat for snowshoe hares and the lynx that prey upon them. Salvage harvest would remove a portion of these trees, which could remove components of lynx habitat in the future. In addition, creation of linear open areas in lynx habitat (such as construction of a temporary road) has the potential to attract snowmobile use during the winter season. This use could improve access for cougars and other predators to utilize lynx habitat and compete with or prey directly upon lynx.

The Tripod Fire and several other recent fires nearby have naturally reset forest succession in the subalpine fir zone. Lynx and snowshoe hares are adapted to this process, but for about 20 years, the areas burned with high tree mortality will not provide habitat for hares and lynx.

A key consideration in my decision was whether allowing the harvest of some dead and dying trees from habitat that was burned and no longer suitable for Canada lynx would affect the ability of that habitat to recover and once again become valuable for lynx. Design criteria specific for the protection of lynx were incorporated into project design (FEIS page 2-20) including:

- Field verification of harvest units to ensure harvest will not occur in suitable habitat.
- Decommissioning of temporary roads sufficiently to prevent unwanted use.
- Retention of abundant structure to allow for hare population recovery (FEIS pages 3-113 to 3-115).
- Allowing natural regeneration to recover the site if possible.
- Ensuring soil compaction is not a problem for abundant regeneration.
- Limiting grass seeding to places where needed for soil erosion and weed control.

In addition, all conservation measures from the scientifically based 'Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy' will be implemented and followed.

I do not believe the harvest proposed in Alternative E-Modified will affect the ability of lynx habitat to recover fully because in 20 years enough snags, logs and conifer regeneration would be present in each 20 acre neighborhood where harvest occurs to provide for lynx and hare recovery (FEIS pages 3-114 to 3-115). There will not be a measurable difference for lynx or hare population recovery under any alternative (FEIS page 3-116). No new travel routes will be created in capable lynx habitat because any temporary roads or skid trails will be decommissioned to effectively close them to prevent unwanted use (FEIS pages 2-20, 3-118 to 3-120).

An amendment to the Forest Plan (Standard MA12-17D) will allow motorized vehicle access for salvage logging operators in Management Area 12-01. This will have little consequence for lynx since the fire itself probably displaced lynx that might have been using these areas and short-term disturbance from the noise of vehicles in habitat that is mostly not suitable for lynx would not have a measurable effect on lynx populations.

I believe that my decision will not threaten the viability of lynx in or near the project area, and I am also convinced that, after project implementation, the areas harvested will recover and in about 20 years, will provide excellent lynx habitat that will contribute to lynx population recovery.

Salvage harvest of trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH – Key issue:

There was a concern about salvage harvesting trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH. These trees have value for wildlife, fisheries, and soil productivity at the stand scale. Modeling for the Methow Valley Ranger District showed a current shortage of snags over 20 inches DBH. The concern was that there was an ecologic need to maintain legacy structures for current and future habitat and structural purposes. This was an issue of concern for many people in comments to the Draft EIS. The Interdisciplinary Team developed and analyzed Alternative E in the FEIS that proposed to retain all trees great than or equal to 21 inches DBH. I carefully reviewed the findings in that alternative and discussed this issue specifically with the Tripod Interdisciplinary Team.

Alternative E-Modified will not harvest any trees that are expected to survive and will not harvest any trees greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH. Some trees 21 inches and greater may be felled for safety, but left in place. As stated on page 2-5 of the FEIS, “Salvage logging would focus on removing dead trees and fire killed trees that are expected to die within one year of project implementation.”

As stated in the FEIS page 3-51: “Alternatives were designed to retain large portions of the fire area, the watersheds, subwatersheds, and neighborhoods completely as they are; keeping the largest dead trees, all pre-fire snags, and all down logs; while acknowledging that some areas would be harvested and would resemble stands 10 or 20 years post fire where snag attrition has already occurred and the species that favor these (open) habitats would be provided for 10-20 years earlier than if they were not harvested.”

I believe Forest Plan requirements for snag retention will be met because the best available science was used to develop guidance to provide habitat conditions in post-fire environments (snag abundance and distribution) that contribute toward the viability of primary cavity excavators and secondary cavity users. Project design criteria of retaining 10% of the area within each salvage harvest unit and 40 acres of every 100 acre neighborhood adjacent to salvage harvest units in an unharvested condition will meet the guidance to retain an average of 4 snags/acre over 100 acres of the largest available snags (FEIS pages 3-73 to 3-74). Alternative E-Modified will leave 6.6 snags per acre over 100 acres of the largest available snags (FEIS page 3-67).

As reported in the FEIS pages 3-51 to 3-66 for Alternative E, no less than 95% of the burned portion of any watershed (Figure 3.2-18), 89% of the burned part of any habitat type (Figure 3.2-19), 94% of the burned habitat in any subwatershed (Figures 3.2-21, 22, and 23), and 81% of all habitat in any 100-acre neighborhood (Figures 3.2-28, 29, and 30) will be retained as it occurs after the fire (including all stages of fire-related plant mortality and all levels of previous harvest).

FEIS page 3-68 found that, “After the harvest of dead trees and dying trees (with a low chance for survival), many snags of various sizes, many live trees of various sizes, and

many dying trees of various sizes would be left at all scales. These snags, live trees, and dying trees would provide adequately to support ecological processes of regeneration, re-growth, and recovery throughout the fire and salvage area.”

FEIS page 3-66 shows that, with my selection of Alternative E-Modified, at least 98% of large snags in Dry Forest, 98% of large snags in Mixed Conifer Forest, and 99% of large snags in Montane Forest habitat will be retained.

I am convinced that the alternative I have selected will balance the removal of some dead and dying trees for economic benefit and retain enough large trees to completely support needed ecosystem functions and processes and encourage the viability of the species that depend on large snags.

Burned Forest Habitat: A concern of many people was providing sufficient habitat after the fire to allow for the viability of wildlife that use snags and dead wood. I considered in my evaluation of alternatives whether some wood could be salvage harvested while providing habitat needed for the species that respond to fire.

Very clearly, the landscape will have a large number of snags left. Under Alternative E-Modified, more than 161,000 acres of the 163,000 acres of National Forest burned will be left completely as they are. The Burned Forest and Snag analysis considered several scales (FEIS pages 3-42 and 3-47 to 3-74) and considered all of the best available science including the information provided in the Region 6 tool, DecAID - the Decayed Wood Advisor (FEIS pages 3-38 to 3-44). On July 3, 2007 the Forest updated guidance to meet the purpose and intent of the Regional Forester’s Amendment #2 to the Forest Plan (commonly referred to as the Eastside Screens) specifically for projects in burned areas. This guidance acknowledges that snags are important and that past management practices have greatly reduced the number of large snags and down logs in managed stands. It also incorporated the current best available science in determining the appropriate numbers of snags to retain to ensure viability of all the species that benefit from snags and logs. The design criteria for the project were developed to meet these Forest Plan requirements for all primary cavity excavator Management Indicator Species.

Key design criteria include (FEIS page 3-49):

- Retain all snags greater than 28 inches DBH (For Alternative E-Modified all snags greater than or equal to 21 inches DBH will be retained).

- Retain all snags less than 10 inches DBH.

- Allocate 45 black-backed woodpecker reserves, 1,000 acres in size

- Retain 40% of all 100-acre ‘neighborhoods’

- Retain all trees down at the time of marking

- Retain 10% of the area within each harvest unit in a representative unharvested condition by identifying small retention islands surrounding favorable 10-28 inches DBH burned wildlife snags. Retention islands would comprise no less than 10% of the acreage within all units and include at least 8 favorable snags for each 10 acres harvested

- In Montane Forest habitat, retain 6 acres of unharvested habitat representative of existing post-fire conditions in all 20-acre ‘neighborhoods’ within and surrounding harvest units

I am convinced that habitat will be retained to support the viability of all Management Indicator Species and Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species. I believe that species that benefit from snag and log habitat would be perpetuated and current and future habitat needs would be met (FEIS page 3-73 to 3-74).

Fisheries and Hydrology: There was concern that salvage harvest, temporary road construction, and road use would degrade water quality. Hydrologic processes and effects to water quality were considered and disclosed in the FEIS (Chapter 3, pages 3-146 to 3-206). All action alternatives were developed with design features to lessen the potential impacts to water quality (FEIS pages 2-22 to 2-23).

The Water Erosion Prediction Project (WEPP) model was used to estimate erosion and sediment delivery for each alternative. I understand that fire related erosion will generate the majority of sediment delivered to the drainage network. About 97% of the sediment delivered to the drainage network occurs in the first three years and is a result of fire effects. I also understand that there is essentially no difference in cumulative sediment delivery between action alternatives, and that the relative difference between the no action alternative and action alternatives is only 0.3% (FEIS pages 3-194 to 3-195). I also noted that only a very small fraction of sediment delivered to drainage networks might end up in spawning gravels, and that the increase would be below the limits of detection of our sampling protocol (FEIS pp 3-194 to 3-197). Project activities would not have an effect on stream temperatures, and that projected, but very small, increases in surface runoff would not be measurable (FEIS pages 3-188 to 3-189). Cumulative effects disclosed in the FEIS indicate that Alternative E-Modified is fully consistent with all applicable state and Federal water quality standards (FEIS pages 3-202 to 3-206)

After analyzing risks associated with all alternatives regarding potential sediment increases and effects analysis, I believe the extent of increase from Alternative E-Modified is negligible. Alternative E-Modified is consistent with the Clean Water Act (FEIS page 3-205). Therefore, I believe that economic recovery, improvements to public safety along open roads, and accelerating reforestation outweigh the minimal impacts to water quality.

There was also concern that salvage and associated activities may affect fish habitat for Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive (TES) and Management Indicator Species (MIS). The Tripod Fire did and will continue to have an effect on fish and fish habitat in the short term. These fire-related effects are much larger than any salvage harvest related effects and in the case of accumulated sediment delivery to streams are well within the error of sampling for reaches in the lower Chewuch and are statistically immeasurable (FEIS page 3-197). Fire related sediment to drainages will increase, stream temperatures will likely increase, as well as water yield in subwatersheds affected by the fire. Also short term large woody debris will probably increase dramatically as a result of the fire (FEIS pages 3-187 to 3-192).

BAER restoration activities related to water quality and fish habitat included road maintenance, erosion control maintenance, drainage network maintenance, and aerial mulching to reduce erosion, all of which will help reduce delivery of fine sediment to streams. All action alternatives were developed with design features to lessen the potential impacts to water quality and fish habitat (FEIS pages 2-22 to 2-23). Summaries of alternative effects to fish species, fish habitat can be found in the FEIS on pages 3-200 to 3-206. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National

Marine Fisheries Service concurred with findings of “may affect, not likely to adversely affect” bull trout and “not likely to adversely affect” Upper Columbia River steelhead or Upper Columbia River spring run /Chinook salmon, without terms and conditions. My decision is in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Because of this, I accept the effects of salvage harvest to meet the purpose and need knowing that fish and their habitat will be protected.

Soils: Detrimental soil disturbance from salvage harvest can increase soil compaction, decrease site productivity and accelerate erosion. The loss of ground cover as a result of the Tripod Fire may have elevated the sensitivity of soils to additional impacts. On some areas, past activities may have already impacted soils.

A unit-by-unit analysis was completed that identified acres of existing detrimental soils, estimated additional detrimental soil acres as a result of salvage harvest, and estimated the amount of active restoration necessary to ensure each unit meets the Forest Plan allowable detrimental soils threshold (FEIS pages 3-221 to 3-224 and 3-227 to 3-231). The effects on soils are consistent with Forest Service policy (Forest Service Manual 2521, Section 2520.3, Region 6 Supplement 2500-98-1). I have considered the effects of salvage harvest on soils and the mitigation measures and design criteria to minimize soil disturbance and to aid recovery of sites disturbed through salvage harvest operations (FEIS pages 2-20, 2-23 to 2-27). They are effective and will address and lessen impacts to soil productivity. Based on this information, I accept the effects of salvage harvesting to meet the purpose and need, knowing that adequate soil protection measures are in place to address this issue.

Forest Vegetation: There was a concern that large areas, particularly in dry forest ponderosa pine stands would not be allowed to recover because of human intervention following the Tripod Fire.

FEIS pages 3-251 to 3-255 display the amount and percentage of acres to be salvage harvested by forest type. Within the 38,278 acre project area, Alternative E-Modified will treat 7% of the dry forest acres, 12% of the mixed conifer acres and 2% of the montane acres, for a total of salvage harvest on 5% of the project area. No salvage harvest will occur on the remaining 125,391 acres of National Forest burned by the Tripod Fire outside of the project area.

FEIS page 3-251 displays the amount of acres that would be reforested under Alternative E. The only acres proposed for artificial reforestation (hand planting) are those that will be salvage harvested and where there are not enough residual live trees to ensure natural seedling establishment to minimum acceptable stocking levels within five years of harvest activities, a requirement of the National Forest Management Act. Alternative E-Modified will plant 940 acres. These units will be monitored during the second and fourth growing seasons following completion of harvest to certify that minimum tree stocking standards have been attained. If not, the unit will be re-planted.

Plant Communities: Salvage harvest activities such as ground-based and skyline yarding, have the potential to slow the natural rate of vegetative recovery by stressing residual live root crowns and below-ground plant parts through site alteration, soil compaction, and/or soil displacement.

FEIS pages 3-271 to 3-272 show that Alternative E would harvest 1.7% of the fire area. Site specific effects of harvest activity on floristic recovery result from changes in microclimate and mechanical damage to regenerating plants and soil. Harvest activities will likely be completed within two years after the fire (in order to capture as much timber value as possible), which will minimize the overall effect to vegetation recovery (FEIS page 3-272). Summer, ground based yarding has the highest potential to retard vegetation recovery, however the short term lag in recovery rates across all burn severities and logging systems, when compared to unharvested areas in the fire, will be minor or undetectable in the long term (FEIS page 3-273). I believe this project will not result in a loss of species viability or habitats and the long term vegetative recovery will follow a similar successful trajectory as is expected for the remainder of the Tripod Fire area.

Invasive Plants: Post-fire salvage activities such as ground-based, helicopter and skyline logging could contribute to the spread of invasive plants by further disturbing soil and shade and removing remaining cover provided by dead and dying trees. The soil disturbance caused by the Tripod fire could facilitate the introduction, spread, and establishment of invasive plant species. Since roads are the primary vector for weed dispersal, new and existing invasive plant species could be introduced to the area by equipment and vehicles from other locations.

The spread of invasive plants is generally proportional to the amount of area disturbed. The analysis (FEIS pages 3-294 to 3-305) calculated areas with potential for spread depending on the activity and the location of activities in relation to existing invasive plant populations.

A Prevention Strategy was developed for this project and the project is also consistent with all Forest Management Direction and Prevention Standards listed in the USFS Region 6, 2005 Record of Decision for the FEIS for the Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Program (FEIS Appendix G). Opportunities for weed spread associated with logging, road opening and temporary road construction and decommissioning will be reduced by the Mitigation Measures and Design Criteria listed in FEIS pages 2-30 to 2-31 such as cleaning equipment prior to entering the project site, seeding to re-vegetate disturbed soils and hand pulling new infestations. I believe an integrated weed management approach consisting of manual and cultural activities combined with herbicide treatments already authorized under 1997, 1999, and 2000 Weed Environmental Analysis Decision Notices in addition to the Burned Area Emergency Response treatments will lessen the threat of invasive plants to native plant communities in the project area.

Recreation: The project area is used for dispersed recreation activities such as camping, hiking, hunting, driving for pleasure, mountain biking, horseback riding, motorcycling and snowmobiling. Salvage harvest operations such as tree falling, log yarding, and timber haul may make it unsafe for the recreating public to be in the area. To provide for safety, salvage harvest activities will restrict public access in and to portions of the project area. In addition, if salvage harvest occurs in the winter, portions of roads that are normally groomed for snowmobile travel may be plowed for timber haul. This snowplowing and log haul may restrict routes that are normally used for snowmobiling, affecting snowmobile access to large areas outside as well as within the project area.

FEIS pages 3-308 to 3-310 disclose that recreational road access will be restricted around salvage harvest units and haul routes to provide for public safety. If winter operations occur, roads will be snow-plowed. If this occurs snowmobile grooming and use of Roads 37, 39, 42 and 5010 will be prohibited for public safety. Hunting will only be affected through road access restrictions. To reduce the effects on recreational traffic, commercial timber haul will not be allowed on project area roads on weekends and holidays from Memorial Day to Labor Day (FEIS page 2-31).

Inventoried Roadless Areas/Areas with Undeveloped Character: In the middle portion of the fire area there are three Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA): Granite Mountain, Tiffany, and Long Swamp. Adjacent to these areas are additional areas that have an undeveloped character. Within the fire area, the IRAs comprise 73,342 acres and the adjacent undeveloped areas comprise 23,177 acres for a total area of 96,519 acres. Project activities such as road opening (increased access) and timber harvest (noise, dust and smoke) have the potential to affect the undeveloped character of these areas.

This project does not include any salvage harvest units within any of the IRAs, nor in any areas with undeveloped character (FEIS page 3-313), therefore the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum classes will not change. These areas will continue to provide recreation in an unroaded and undeveloped setting. In the short term, sights and sounds of road opening and salvage harvest adjacent to these areas will be noticeable from the boundary portions of the undeveloped areas. However, re-opened roads will not be open for recreational traffic and will be closed when salvage operations are complete, minimizing any increase in recreational access (FEIS page 3-313).

Fuels and Fire Behavior: Salvage logging may increase small woody debris (0-2.9 inches diameter) to levels that would increase short-term fire risk. There was also a concern that salvage harvest may change fuel loading in the coarse (large) woody debris category (3 inches or greater in diameter), creating an unacceptable fire hazard or increasing potential for high burn severity.

Modeling done for this project indicates that salvage harvest will increase small woody fuel loadings (slash) slightly faster (by about five years) than if salvage did not occur, and would decay within 10-20 years (FEIS page 3-327). I accept this short-term fire risk, understanding that it applies to a patchy network of salvage units across the larger landscape of the Tripod Fire and that this slash decays rapidly, 10-20 years depending on forest type (FEIS pages 3-324, 327).

Coarse woody debris (CWD) contributes to unacceptable fire hazard or increasing potential for severe burns when it exceeds the recommended range for a forest type (FEIS page 3-322). I understand that CWD created by salvage harvest in this project is not projected to exceed the recommended range over the next 30 years in all forest types where low-mortality fire occurred. Where high-mortality fire occurred, CWD levels will exceed the recommended range over the next 30 years in all Dry and some Mixed Conifer and Montane forest types (depending on harvest alternative selected) 2 to 18 years later than where no salvage harvest occurs (FEIS page 3-333). When combining fuel loads of both small woody debris and large woody debris from 3-10" diameter to determine fire hazard in salvaged areas, I find that modeling indicates that salvage harvest decreased resistance-to-control ratings over a 30-year period (FEIS pages 3-335 to 3-336). Again, this change in resistance-to-control affects the scattered salvage

units within this project and will have little effect on a landscape scale. I acknowledge that salvage harvest creates both small and large woody debris and that my decision will increase short-term fuel loading in proportion to the mortality caused by the Tripod Fire, but I considered the economic benefit of salvaging wood products to outweigh this in the short term.

Air Quality: Post-salvage fuels treatment activities such as landing-pile burning could temporarily decrease air quality in communities down wind of the project area.

Management and minimization of smoke is an important goal during prescribed fire planning. Multiple environmental factors are carefully examined before ignition to minimize air quality impacts (FEIS page 3-342). Current Washington State Smoke Implementation Plan (SIP) regulations will be followed, as well as the guidelines in the Methow Valley and Tonasket Ranger Districts' Prescribed Fire Public Information Action Plans (FEIS page 2-32). Because the concentration of materials in landing piles retains enough heat to consume more materials more quickly and with less smoldering than underburning (FEIS page 3-344), air quality will be minimally affected (FEIS page 3-343). The Pasayten Wilderness Area is a Class I airshed. The current SIP contains provisions to avoid impacting Class I airsheds which will be followed (FEIS page 3-344).

Transportation: There was a public concern about developing any further roads within the project area. Additional roads could reduce wildlife habitat effectiveness and cause additional erosion and sedimentation. There was also a public concern about management of existing roads; that no roads that were closed before the fire should be opened, nor that any roads that were opened before the fire should be closed.

The transportation system is analyzed on FEIS pages 3-349 to 3-353. No new permanent system roads or access routes will be constructed (FEIS page 2-6). Temporary roads constructed during the project will be decommissioned and returned to productive ground following operations (FEIS page 2-13). There will be no change after the project to the status of roads that were either open or closed prior to the Tripod Fire with the exception of the implementation of decisions that were already documented in the South Twentymile EA (FEIS page 3-350). I understand that road densities will increase in two deer winter range Management Areas (14-05 and 26-04) that already exceed Forest Plan standards (FEIS page 3-349). I agree with the determination that no Forest Plan amendment is necessary to further exceed road density standards in these two discrete management areas because the goals of the management areas are met, because such an exceedance will be of little consequence to deer, because deer activity is reduced in burned areas and because the roads will only be open to vehicles involved in the salvage harvest operation (FEIS page 3-31). When salvage operations are complete, MA 26-04 will return to its pre-fire density and MA 14-05 will be within the Forest Plan standard. Danger tree falling will meet USFS Region 6 direction to provide safe access to open roads.

Range: Salvage logging activities could retard post fire forage vegetation recovery and increase the time needed to rest the pasture from livestock grazing. Harvest activities can cause mechanical damage to regenerating plants and can create additional soil disturbance with the potential for soil erosion and soil compaction. Grazing allotment and pasture division boundaries have been established along natural drift barriers. These drift barriers that were opened by the fire could be further disturbed by salvage

logging resulting in increasing livestock drift. Salvage logging activities could change livestock distribution patterns and could increase the use of riparian areas.

FEIS pages 3-362 to 3-372 analyze the effects of salvage harvest on range activities. The range allotments affected are shown on FEIS page 3-363. Alternative E-Modified covers less than 3% of the available pasture where mechanical damage to plants and soil may occur. However, seeding on landings and main skid trails will be effective for revegetating this disturbed soil (FEIS pages 3-362 to 3-363). The indirect effect of salvage harvest is an increase in forage (by opening the stands) and lower large wood debris levels, which will improve livestock distribution. Drift barriers that have been opened by fire will be further opened by salvage harvest causing a slight increase in livestock drift between pastures. However, critical drift areas will be identified and disruption to these areas will be reduced to the extent that is feasible (FEIS page 3-365). No harvest will occur within Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCA), allowing down, dead material to accumulate. In addition, disturbed soil areas within ¼ mile of perennial RHCAs would be seeded with a mix unattractive to livestock. Both measures will minimize access to streams.

Scenic Resources: Local residents, recreation users and tourists all value the scenery within the Tripod Fire Salvage Project area. Salvage harvest operations such as tree removal, establishment of skid trails and skyline corridors and road establishment could affect the scenic resource by altering the naturally established form, line, color and texture in the foreground and middleground of a given viewshed.

FEIS pages 3-387 to 3-397 display the effects of salvage harvest on the scenic resource by specific viewshed. A range of Moderate to High Landscape Character and Scenic Integrity will be met and the established Visual Quality Objectives (VQO) of Partial Retention to Retention in Management Area 5 (with Moderate and High Visual Significance) will be met. In areas designated to high Visual Significance (Retention VQO), all foreground landscapes will be natural appearing and have high scenic integrity. In areas designated to Partial Retention VQO landscapes will be natural appearing to slightly altered in the foreground and middleground and will have moderate scenic integrity. The salvage harvest will be consistent with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for Visual Quality.

Heritage Resources: Heritage resources are nonrenewable resources that can be vulnerable to ground disturbing activity and in some instances, to increased public access or alterations in the surrounding landscape. Proposed project activities could physically disturb known or undiscovered cultural sites.

There are five historic heritage sites in the Tripod Fire Salvage Project area, four of which are potentially eligible and they will be avoided by salvage operations. Therefore, no mitigation will be necessary (FEIS pages 3-402 to 3-403).

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

National Forest Management Act

The salvage timber harvest silvicultural activity is authorized by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (P.L. 94-588), including its amendments to the Forest and

Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-378), as one permitted response to “natural uncharacteristic conditions such as fire, insect and disease attack, or windstorm” (Sec. 6, (g), (3), (F), (iv)). This project will provide timber to help meet the demand for wood products and provide socioeconomic benefits to the American people (FEIS 3-20). The Okanogan Forest Plan was prepared in accordance with the National Forest Management Act. The selected alternative, as amended by this decision, is consistent with the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, Record of Decision, the accompanying Land and Resource Management Plan (1989), as amended, dated 1989, as detailed on FEIS pages 3-13, 3-20, 3-34, 3-36, 3-73 to 3-74, 3-79, 3-108, 3-133, 3-135, 3-137, 3-139, 3-143, 3-145, 3-205, 3-231 to 2-232, 3-255 to 3-256, 3-305, 3-310, 3-314, 3-338, 3-346, 3-353, 3-372, 3-380, 3-396 to 3-397, 3-403.

All of the proposed salvage timber harvest areas are also proposed for tree planting to ensure that they will be adequately restocked within 5 years after harvest (P.L. 93-378, Sec. 6, (g), (3), (E), (ii)). Reforestation (tree planting) proposals would be consistent with National Forest Management Act requirements to maintain forested lands in appropriate forest cover (FEIS page 3-404), and with related Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards and guidelines (Forest Plan, pp. 4-56 to 4-57). Implementation specifications for the tree planting activity will ensure that Forest Plan minimum stocking level standards (FEIS, Appendix F, Figure F-2) are met.

Finding of Non-Significant Amendment

The site-specific Forest Plan amendment applies to, and only for the duration of, the Tripod Fire Salvage Project. The amendment does not delete wording from the Forest Plan. The amendment does not change the goals and objectives for other resources in the amended Forest Plan. The amendment is not expected to preclude or require other actions across the forest and incorporation of this management direction will not change the amount of timber made available for public use outside this project area; will not require changes in grazing permits; or the access and travel management plan (FEIS, Chapter 3). Therefore, anticipated changes brought about by this amendment in the levels of resource activities and outputs (Forest Plan, page 2-2 to 2-4) projected for this planning period are expected to be non-significant and immeasurable.

The Forest Plan Amendment will allow: snowplowing and motorized use of designated groomed snowmobile routes (32 miles at most) for winter salvage operations, salvage operations to occur in deer winter range (442 acres) from December through March, and motorized wheeled vehicle use from December through March (144 acres) in a management area that has emphasis on providing lynx habitat while accessing the area for growing and producing merchantable wood fiber. This amendment is specific to, and only for the duration of the Tripod Fire Salvage Project and will not apply to future decisions throughout the planning area. The desired future condition and land allocations are not changed by this decision.

On the basis of information and analysis contained in the FEIS, and all other information available as summarized above, it is my determination that adoption of the management direction reflected in my decision is a non-significant amendment to the Forest Plan. I have found the site specific amendment to the Forest Plan to be non-significant because it applies only to certain portions of this project area and it is applicable for only the life of this project (1-3 years). It is a minor change in standards and guidelines and does not

significantly alter the multiple use goals and objectives for long-term land and resource management (FEIS 2-7 to 2-11).

Other Laws

This project was prepared under and complies with the regulations for the National Environmental Policy Act (FEIS page 3-404). Objectives of the *Interim Strategies of Managing Anadromous Fish-Producing Watersheds on Federal Lands in Eastern Oregon and Washington, Idaho and portions of California*, also known as PACFISH will be met as detailed on FEIS page 3-205. The project was prepared to be consistent with both the Mediated Agreement and the 2006 Record of Decision for Invasive Species (FEIS page 3-305 and Appendix G). The project will conform to the Clean Water Act as it will not affect stream temperature of a 303(d) stream that is impaired for water temperature (FEIS pages 3-205 to 3-206). There will be no adverse impacts to floodplains or wetlands, consistent with Executive Orders 11988 and 11990, because there are no identified wetlands within any salvage harvest unit and wetlands will be sufficiently buffered to protect this habitat (FEIS page 3-405). Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas (RHCAs) were designated in part to protect floodplain functions. No temporary roads will be constructed in RHCAs and any danger trees felled will remain in place (FEIS page 3-405). The project will meet air quality standards set by the Clean Air Act, by avoiding impacts to the Pasayten Wilderness, a Class I Airshed and will follow the State of Washington Smoke Implementation Plan (FEIS pages 3-344 to 3-345). Under the Endangered Species Act, the project may affect, but not likely adversely affect gray wolf, Canada lynx, grizzly bear and bull trout; the US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination (FEIS pages 3-108,3-121, 3-127, 3-206, 3-404). The project is not likely to adversely affect UCR steelhead or UCR spring run Chinook salmon; the National Marine Fisheries Service concurred with this determination (FEIS page 3-206). The National Marine Fisheries Service also concurred that the project is not likely to affect critical habitat for these species and that conservation recommendations pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act MSA 305 (b)(4)(A) are not necessary (FEIS 3-206). Impacts to migratory birds are minimized in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (FEIS page 3-99). National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 requirements have been completed in accordance with the Forest Service Programmatic Agreement with the state Historic Preservation Office, with a determination of no effect on historic properties, because all potentially eligible sites will be avoided (FEIS pages 3-403 and 3-404). Consultation with Indian Tribes has been completed in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (FEIS pages 3-398, 3-403, 3-410). This project is consistent with the Roadless Area Conservation Area rule because no timber harvest or road construction will occur in an inventoried roadless area (FEIS page 3-313). The project will have no effect on prime lands or wild and scenic rivers (FEIS page 3-405). Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice requires that federal agencies adopt strategies to address environmental justice concerns within the context of agency operations. With implementation of any of these alternatives, there will be no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations (FEIS, page 3-405 to 3-406). Proposed actions will occur in a remote area and nearby communities will mainly be affected by economic impacts as related to timber harvest.

EMERGENCY SITUATION DETERMINATION

On October 18, 2007 Chief Gail Kimbell found that an emergency situation existed. An emergency situation is defined in 36 CFR 215.2 as “A situation on National Forest System (NFS) lands for which immediate implementation of all or part of a decision is necessary for relief from hazards threatening human health and safety or natural resources on NFS or adjacent lands; or that would result in substantial loss of economic value to the federal government if implementation of the decision were delayed.” The determination that an emergency situation exists does not exempt an activity from appeal. The determination only eliminates the automatic stays built into the appeal review process.

Pursuant to 36 CFR 215.10 (b) she granted an emergency exemption from stay for a portion of the Tripod Fire Salvage Project as follows; specifically for 1,160 acres of ground-based yarding salvage units, with an estimated 3.4 million board feet of saw log volume. The Chief determined that failure to act quickly would result in substantial economic loss to the Federal Government. However, since late September/early October when the economic analysis was completed for the Emergency Situation Determination, information about continued deterioration of the timber and softening market conditions came to light (as detailed on page 7 of the ROD). Therefore the analysis that the Emergency Situation Determination of October 18, 2007 was based on is no longer valid. I am not invoking this Emergency Situation Determination and implementation of this project will not occur until after the normal administrative appeal process as detailed below.

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL PROCESS AND RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Any written notice of appeal of the decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14, “Appeal Content”. The notice of appeal must be postmarked, hand delivered, or faxed to the Regional Forester, Pacific Northwest Region, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, OR 97208 (US Mail) or 333 SW First Avenue, Portland, OR 97204 (other delivery services), FAX #503-808-2255, or sent electronically to appeals-pacificnorthwest-regional-office@fs.fed.us within 45 days of the date the legal notice of this decision appears in the Wenatchee World. The publication date of the legal notice in the Wenatchee World newspaper is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal (36 CFR 215.5(a)). Hand deliveries must be made between 7:45 AM and 4:30 PM Monday through Friday, except legal holidays. Electronic appeals must be submitted only to the e-mail address shown above as part of the actual e-mail message, or as an attachment in Microsoft Word, rich text format or Adobe portable document format only. E-mails in other formats or containing viruses will be rejected. Note in the subject line the name of the project and that it is an appeal. It is the responsibility of all individuals and organizations to ensure their appeals are received in a timely manner. For electronically mailed appeals, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of the appeal, it is the sender’s responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Should this project be appealed, I extend an offer to meet with appellants to attempt to informally resolve the appeal on January 18, 2008 from 9:00 to 11:00 AM. The meeting

will be held at the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Headquarters Office, 215 Melody Lane, Wenatchee, WA.

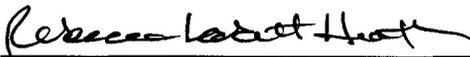
For further information regarding these appeal procedures, contact the Forest Environmental Coordinator Jan Flatten at (509) 664-9239.

IMPLEMENTATION

If no appeals are filed, implementation of this decision shall occur no sooner than 45 days, plus 5 business days after the publication of the legal notice in the *Wenatchee World* newspaper. If an appeal is received, implementation may occur on, but not before the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal decision.

CONTACT PERSON

For further information regarding the project, contact the Tripod Fire Salvage project manager Robert Stoehr at 600 Sherbourne, Leavenworth, WA 98826, (509) 548-6977.



REBECCA LOCKETT HEATH
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
Forest Supervisor

November 15, 2007
Date

Tripod Fire Salvage Project Record of Decision

Attachment 1: Alternative E - Modified

Unit Name	Unit Acres ^{1/}	Logging System	MBF per Acre ^{1/}	Forest Habitat Type	Cut DBH Range (inches)	Capable Lynx Habitat	Reforestation Method
BL02	13	Tractor	3.4	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO02	12	Tractor	1.2	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO03	9	Tractor	1.6	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO04	26	Tractor	0.8	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO06	15	Tractor	1.3	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO07	3	Tractor	2.3	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO10	65	Tractor	2.8	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BO19	34	Skyline	5.2	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR02	3	Tractor	4.7	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
BR03	5	Skyline	4.7	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
BR04	8	Tractor	4.8	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
BR05	2	Tractor	4.8	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
BR07	10	Skyline	3.7	Montane	10-20.9	Yes	Naturals
BR09	33	Skyline	3.7	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
BR11	7	Skyline	6.0	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
BR14	7	Skyline	2.7	Montane	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR15	10	Skyline	4.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR16	5	Tractor	1.9	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR19	10	Tractor	2.1	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR22	14	Tractor	2.5	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR26	22	Tractor	1.6	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR27	5	Tractor	1.6	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR28	2	Tractor	3.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR29	8	Skyline	3.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
BR30	9	Skyline	3.1	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
BR31	12	Tractor	3.2	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
CE01	36	Tractor	2.0	Mixed	10-18.0	No	Planting
CE02	9	Tractor	2.0	Mixed	10-18.0	No	Planting
CE03	44	Tractor	2.0	Mixed	10-18.0	No	Planting
CE04	32	Skyline	4.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
CE08	9	Tractor	4.0	Mixed	10-18.0	No	Planting
HA02	30	Tractor	3.9	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
HA03	2	Tractor	3.8	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals

Tripod Fire Salvage Project, ROD Attachment #1
 Okanogan- Wenatchee National Forest
 Methow Valley and Tonasket Ranger Districts

Unit Name	Unit Acres <u>1/</u>	Logging System	MBF per Acre <u>1/</u>	Forest Habitat Type	Cut DBH Range (inches)	Capable Lynx Habitat	Reforestation Method
HA04	2	Tractor	2.0	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
HA05	11	Tractor	2.1	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
HA08	8	Tractor	2.7	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
JU07	34	Skyline	3.7	Montane	10-20.9	No	Planting
JU08	13	Tractor	3.0	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
JU11	19	Skyline	2.8	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
JU20	13	Skyline	4.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
LI08	6	Skyline	3.4	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI09	8	Skyline	3.4	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI10	25	Skyline	4.1	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI17	4	Skyline	2.0	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI18	5	Skyline	2.6	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI19	22	Skyline	5.1	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI25	16	Skyline	6.1	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
LI32	8	Skyline	5.0	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
LI34	12	Skyline	5.0	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Planting
LI35	2	Skyline	3.4	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI39	8	Tractor	2.3	Montane	12-20.9	No	Planting
LI46	28	Tractor	2.3	Montane	12-20.9	No	Planting
LI50	4	Tractor	6.1	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
LI54	3	Tractor	3.0	Mixed	12-20.9	No	Planting
MK02	12	Tractor	6.5	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
MK04	3	Tractor	6.5	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
MK07	7	Tractor	6.5	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
PE02	5	Tractor	6.5	Mixed	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
PE04	18	Tractor	6.5	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
PE05	18	Skyline	6.5	Montane	12-20.9	Yes	Naturals
RA01	50	Skyline	6.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
RA02	80	Tractor	2.0	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA05	23	Tractor	1.6	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA06	100	Tractor	4.8	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA07	18	Tractor	2.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA09	54	Tractor	1.4	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA10	18	Skyline	3.5	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA11	31	Tractor	1.0	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Naturals
RA13	16	Tractor	1.4	Dry	10-20.9	No	Planting

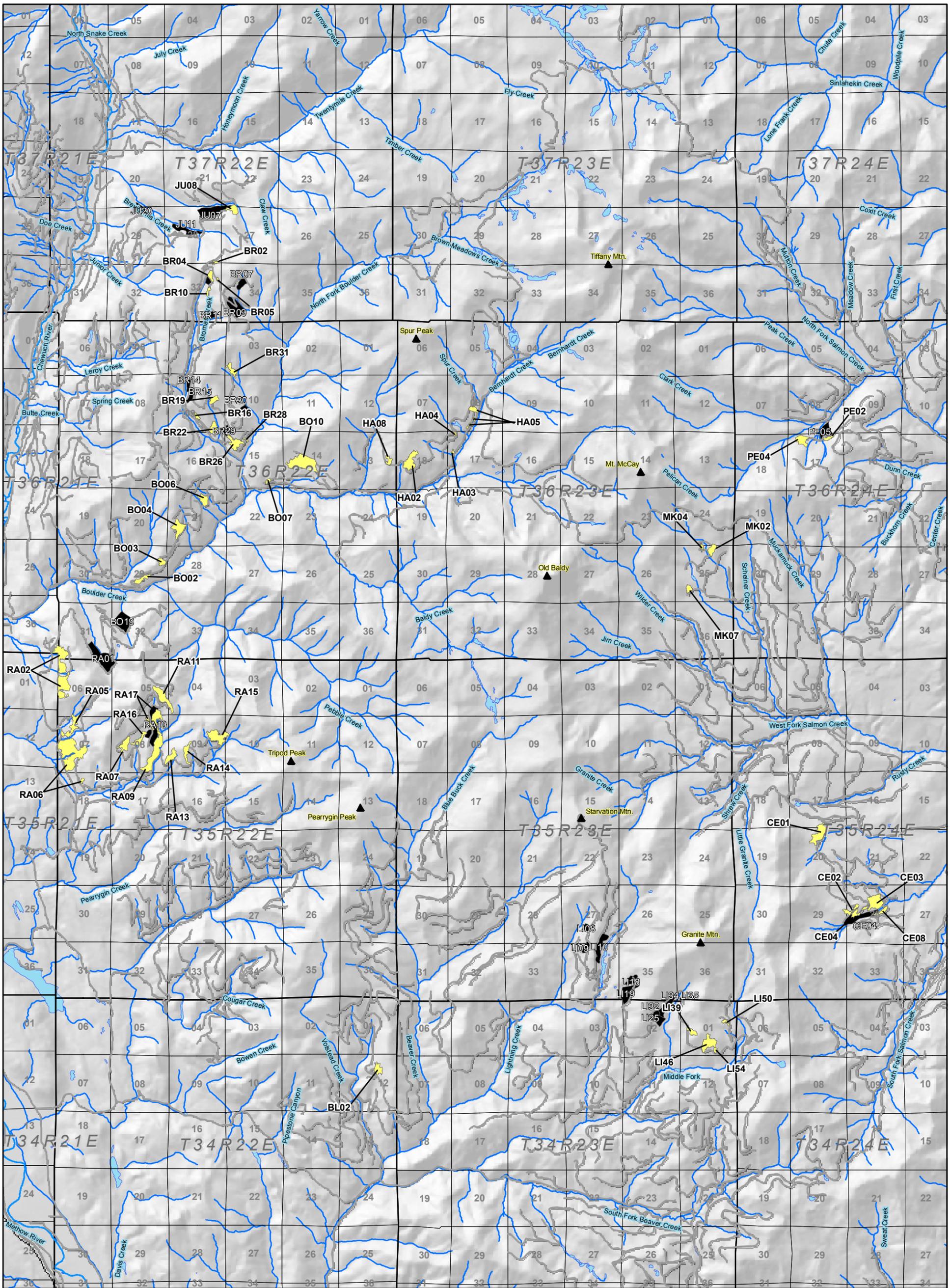
Tripod Fire Salvage Project, ROD Attachment #1
 Okanogan- Wenatchee National Forest
 Methow Valley and Tonasket Ranger Districts

Unit Name	Unit Acres ^{1/}	Logging System	MBF per Acre ^{1/}	Forest Habitat Type	Cut DBH Range (inches)	Capable Lynx Habitat	Reforestation Method
RA14	15	Tractor	2.3	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA15	35	Tractor	1.2	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA16	14	Tractor	1.6	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting
RA17	6	Tractor	1.8	Mixed	10-20.9	No	Planting

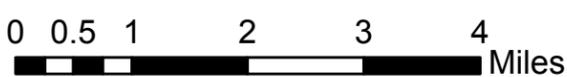
^{1/} Skyline logging acres and volume shown are estimates based on reconnaissance of units.

Summary Table

Logging System	Acres	Forest Habitat Type	Acres	Capable Lynx Habitat	Acres	Reforestation Method	Acres
Tractor	869	Dry	248	Capable	287	Plant	940
Skyline	415	Mixed	744	Not Capable	997	Naturals	344
		Montane	292	(18" cut limit)	(98)		



**Tripod Fire Salvage Project
Alternative E - Modified**



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Attachment 2

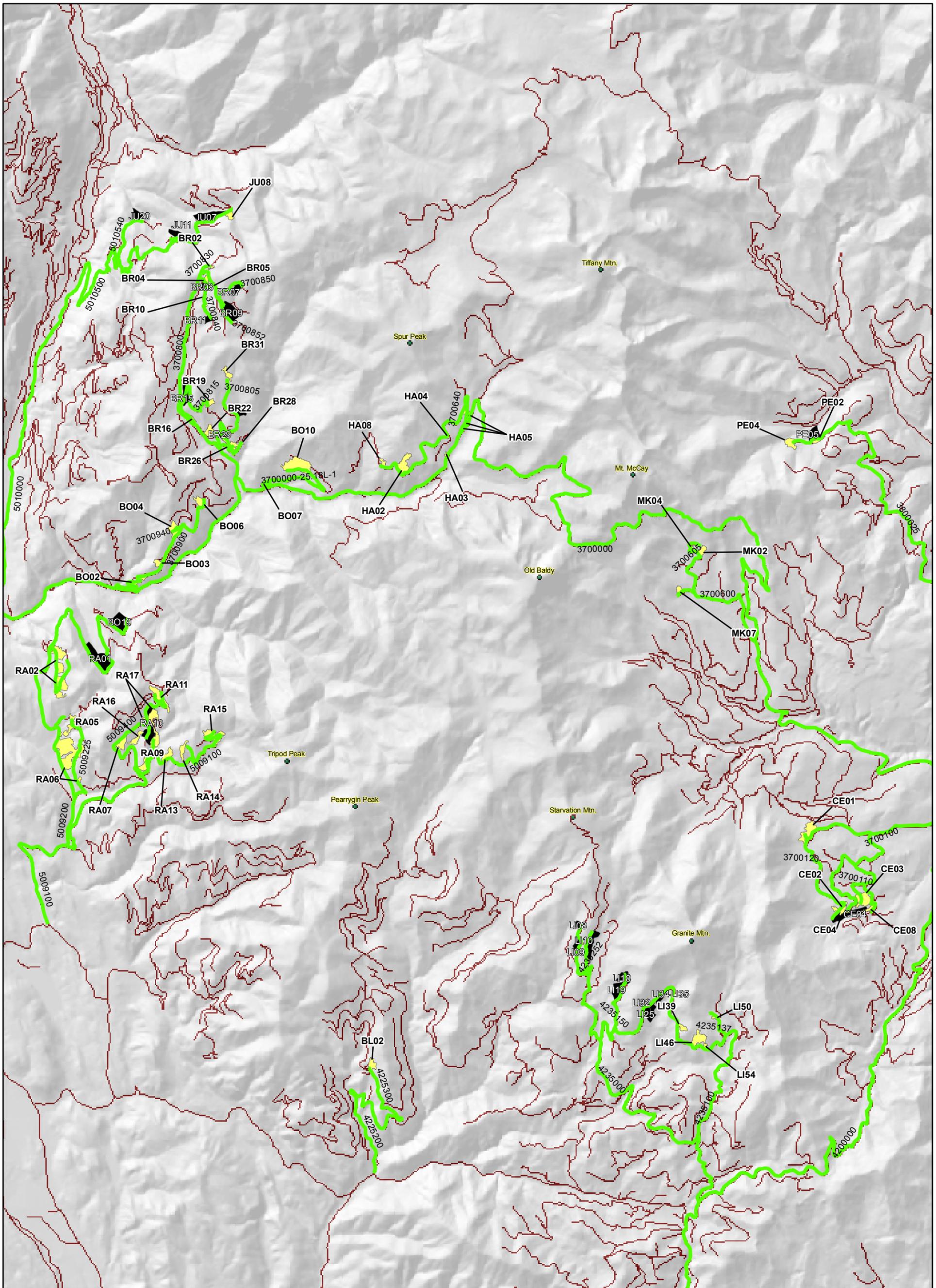
Legend

- Ground - Based Units
- Skyline Units
- System Roads

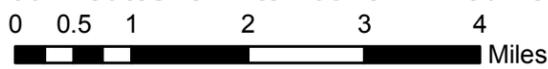
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**Tripod Fire Salvage Project
Haul Routes for Alternative E - Modified**



1:100,000

Attachment 3

Legend

- Alt E- Modified Haul Route
- Ground - Based Units
- Skyline Units
- Roads

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Tripod Fire Salvage Project Record of Decision

Attachment 4: Economic Analysis of Alternative E - Modified

Implementing a modified Alternative E will recover about 3.7 million board feet (MMBF) of sawtimber averaging 2.9 MBF per acre, with an estimated average stumpage value of -\$63 per MBF and a combined total value of about -\$234,000. About twenty-five percent of the harvest volume will be recovered in comparison to the original Alternative E as described in the FEIS, due to a combination of fewer treatable acres (tractor logging limitations on steeper ground) and a revised estimate of recoverable sawtimber (less marketable volume per acre and additional sawtimber deterioration).

Average stumpage value becomes deficit due primarily to the advanced deterioration of the sawtimber. Spot checks for wood boring beetles in late May and late June 2007 found that the fire-killed trees were being quickly infested with the beetle larvae. By early October over 70 percent of the sawtimber was infested with continued degradation of the sawlog material. Sawtimber infested with wood boring beetle larvae is considered as "wormwood" with a much reduced value, averaging about forty percent less value than sound green sawtimber. Stumpage value of the sawtimber also decreased about 10 percent due to reduced logging efficiency from lower volumes per acre. In addition, fuel prices have continued to increase, causing increased hauling costs, and, the market value of sawtimber has continued to fall, further reducing the potential stumpage value of the burned trees. Thus, the potential value of the salvage volume is now deficit.

The Forest Service cannot sell sawtimber at negative prices so will offer the salvage sale at minimum rates, with a minimum bid rate of about \$4 per MBF. Tractor volume, currently valued at -\$63,000 (-\$27 per MBF) will be offered at a minimum bid of about \$9,000. Skyline volume, currently valued at -\$171,000 (-\$124 per MBF) will be offered at a minimum bid of about \$5,000. These estimates may vary depending on TEA appraisal rates and values at the time of sale.

Refer to the following table for a comparison of the sawtimber volume recovered and the potential economic benefits of Alternative E - Modified.

Total Area, Volume, and Value		
Total Area	1,284	Acres
Total Volume	3,698	MBF
Total Value	-\$234,000	
Average Stumpage	-\$63	\$/MBF
Minimum Bid Rate	\$4	\$/MBF
Minimum Value	\$14,000	
Harvest area by logging system		
Tractor	869	Acres
Skyline	415	Acres
Harvest volume by logging system		
Tractor	2315	MBF
Skyline	1383	MBF
Harvest value by logging system		
Tractor Value	-\$63,000	
Tractor Stumpage	-\$27	\$/MBF
Skyline Value	-\$171,000	
Skyline Stumpage	-\$124	\$/MBF
Harvest volume by species		
Douglas-fir	2,301	MBF
Ponderosa pine	1,069	MBF
White woods	328	MBF
Averaged stumpage value by species		
Douglas-fir	-\$55	\$/MBF
Ponderosa pine	-\$83	\$/MBF
White woods	-\$59	\$/MBF