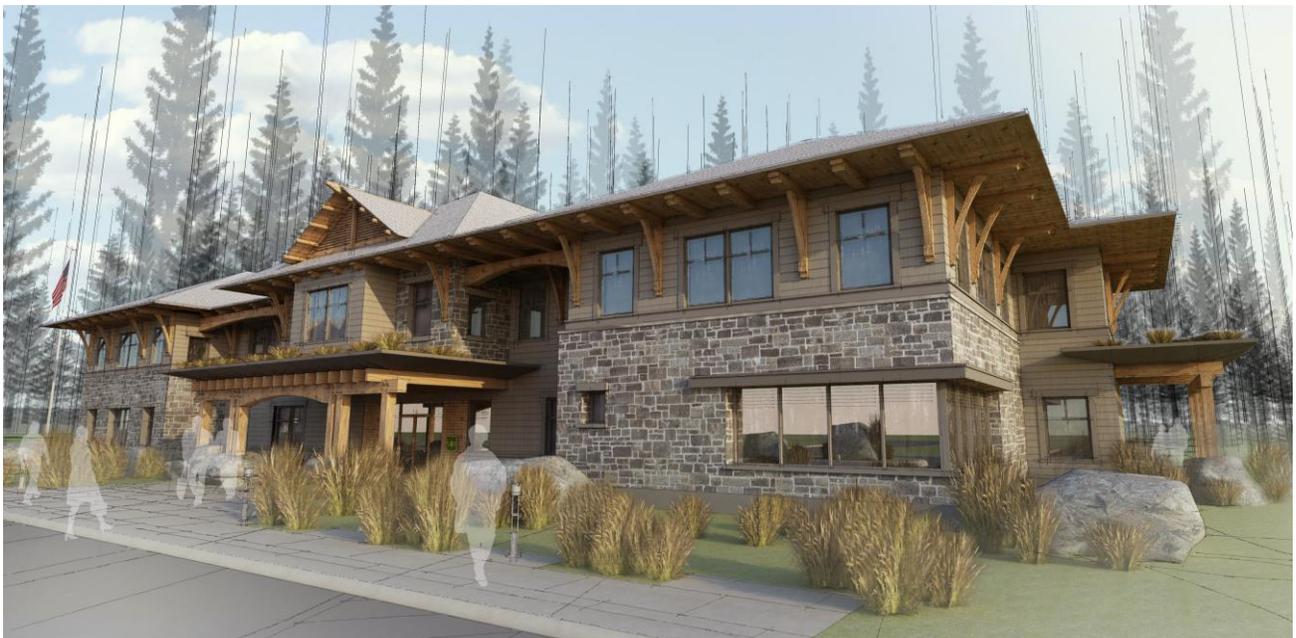




United States Department of Agriculture

Interagency Natural Resource Center

Environmental Assessment



Forest Service

Idaho Panhandle National Forests

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Introduction

The Forest Service proposes to construct a new Interagency Natural Resource Center (INRC). The new center will provide office space and other facilities for Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees (USFWS), to include public information and services.

We prepared this environmental assessment to determine whether effects of the proposed activities may be significant enough to prepare an environmental impact statement. By preparing this environmental assessment, we are fulfilling agency policy and direction to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. For more details of the proposed action, see the “Proposed Action and Alternatives” section of this document on page 4.

Location of the Proposed Project Area

The proposed new center would be built at the Coeur d’Alene Nursery, near Kathleen Ave, at 3600 Nursery Rd., in Coeur d’Alene, ID. The legal description is T51N R4W Section 34. The project area encompasses approximately 14 acres within the Nursery.



Figure 1. Vicinity map

Background

The Supervisor’s Office is located at 3815 Schreiber Way, Coeur d’Alene, ID in leased buildings. The BLM Coeur d’Alene District and Field Offices are co-located with the Supervisor’s Office.

There are currently 128 Forest Service and 35 BLM employees who work at this location, but 221 total work spaces. The lease for these facilities consists of approximately 43,041 square feet of office, 15,760 square feet of warehouse, and 68,084 usable square feet of ware yard space. There is parking for 162 employees and 24 visitors. There are also 78 secure parking spaces for government vehicles. This lease expires in September 2017.

Because there are currently no USFWS office facilities in northern Idaho, the USFWS Northern Idaho Field Office (19 employees) currently shares facilities with the Eastern Washington Field Office in Spokane Valley, WA. The USFWS is in a separate lease in Spokane, WA for 6,781 square ft.

Over the past 10-15 years both the Forest Service and the BLM have reduced the number of employees assigned to the organizations in the current office. As a result, the office building has much more space than either agency needs. In addition, the annual lease rate is very high and the office building is not energy efficient. When the lease expires, the Forest Service has determined that it would be financially advantageous to relocate to an energy efficient building owned by the government in the Coeur d'Alene area. The Forest Service conducted a Preliminary Project Analysis of possible options in April 2011. Based on the results of this analysis, the Forest Service proposes to construct a new facility on Forest Service managed land at the Coeur d'Alene Nursery, one mile west of the current facilities. The total rentable office space would be reduced from 49,822 square feet down to 30,750 square feet, which is a reduction of about 40 percent.

Executive Orders 13423 (January 2007) and 13541 (October 2009) require new government facilities to be high performance and sustainable, including optimized energy performance, protection and conservation of water, and reduced environmental impact of material.

Need for the Proposal

Due to the pending expiration of the lease on the current facilities used by the Forest Service and BLM, there is an opportunity to reduce costs, become more energy efficient, and improve public service and inter-agency coordination.

Therefore, the purpose of the proposed action is to:

- Lower facility costs for the federal agencies;
- Comply with Executive Orders regarding sustainable and energy efficient facilities; and
- Improve public service and facilitate inter-agency coordination.

What will be Decided?

The need for the proposal sets the scope of the project and analysis to be completed. Based on the analysis, the forest supervisor will determine whether the proposed project and alternatives could result in a significant impact. If there is a finding of no significant impact, the forest supervisor will select an alternative deciding:

- Whether to implement construction of a new modern two story office building and combined warehouse and dispatch center;
- What specific design criteria or mitigation measures are needed; and

- What specific project monitoring requirements are needed to assure design criteria and mitigation measures are implemented and effective.

The decision will be based on:

- How well the selected alternative achieves the need;
- How well the selected alternative protects the environment and addresses issues and concerns; and
- How well the selected alternative complies with relevant policies, laws and regulations.

Public Involvement

This environmental assessment takes into consideration public comment received. The Forest Service initially shared information about the proposal during a public meeting conducted in April 2014. Participants were invited to submit comments. The Forest Service received six comment submissions, primarily from adjacent land owners/residents. After conducting preliminary analysis, the Forest Service published a legal notice in the Coeur d'Alene Press sharing more detailed information about the proposal and initiated a 30-day formal public comment period. Three comment letters were submitted by the public during this period. The Forest Service considered all comments received when determining the issues for analysis in this EA (see below) and refining the proposed action.

Additionally, the Forest Service worked with the City of Coeur d'Alene on annexation and zoning, which included opportunities for public comment on the proposed zoning and annexation requests. Working with the Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission and concerned neighbors, language for retaining a vegetative buffer adjacent to the southern property boundary was refined and agreed upon. On April 14, 2015 the Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission held a public hearing on the proposed annexation and zoning request. The request was approved, subject special conditions, including the requirement for an 80-foot wide open space/buffer area along the southern property line.

Issues

An issue is a conflict with, or concern about the proposed action based on an anticipated effect. The Forest Service identified the following issues for detailed analysis in this EA based on public comments and input from an interdisciplinary team of resource specialist:

- **Special Status and Native Plants:** How will the construction affect native vegetation at the site?
- **Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds:** Will construction result in spread of invasive species or noxious weeds?
- **Wildlife and Special Status Wildlife:** Will the construction and use of the new facilities affect wildlife or special status wildlife?
- **Soil/Water:** Will there be excessive run-off or sediment from the site during and after construction?
- **Viewshed and Noise:** How will noise and changes in the view resulting from construction and use of the new facilities affect neighboring residents?

- Recreation: How will construction and use of the new facilities affect recreational use of the adjacent bike trail?
- Socio-economic: Will the construction and use of new facilities affect adjacent property values?

The Forest Service also considered the following issues, but eliminated them from detailed analysis

- Cultural Resources: Will the proposed construction damage or destroy cultural resources? This issue was eliminated from detailed analysis because inventory of the area revealed no cultural properties located in the area of effect.
- Public Safety: 1) Will public safety and traffic flow at the nursery site be affected by the INRC and 2) Will public and federal employee access to the nursery result in a safety risk from nursery operations such as large equipment or pesticide use? These issues were eliminated from detailed study because the proposed action incorporates the construction of turn lanes (east and westbound) with an associated traffic light on Kathleen Avenue and a design feature to construct a fence and gate that will restrict access to the area of nursery operations and the proposed action.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

No Action Alternative

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the No Action Alternative forms a basis for describing and comparing the effects of the proposed action. Under the No Action Alternative, the Forest Service Supervisor's Office, BLM Coeur d'Alene District and Field Offices and the Coeur Interagency Dispatch Center would continue to be co-located at their current locations in Coeur d'Alene. The USFWS would maintain their existing office lease in Spokane, Washington.

Proposed Action

The proposed action would construct a new Interagency Natural Resource Center on Forest Service managed land at the northeastern corner of the Coeur d'Alene Nursery. The footprint of the proposed office, infrastructure, and other facilities would be about 7.5 acres (see Figure 2). The new facilities would be high performance and sustainable to include optimized energy performance, protection and conservation of water, and reduced environmental impact of material.

Development would occur in phases. The removal, thinning of trees and slash treatments on the site would begin in the spring of 2017, followed by construction of a dispatch center beginning in the fall of 2017 (including new entranceway and parking lot), a warehouse in the fall of 2018 and the new office construction beginning in either the fall of 2019 or 2020. Construction activities on the site would be completed by 2021 or 2022.

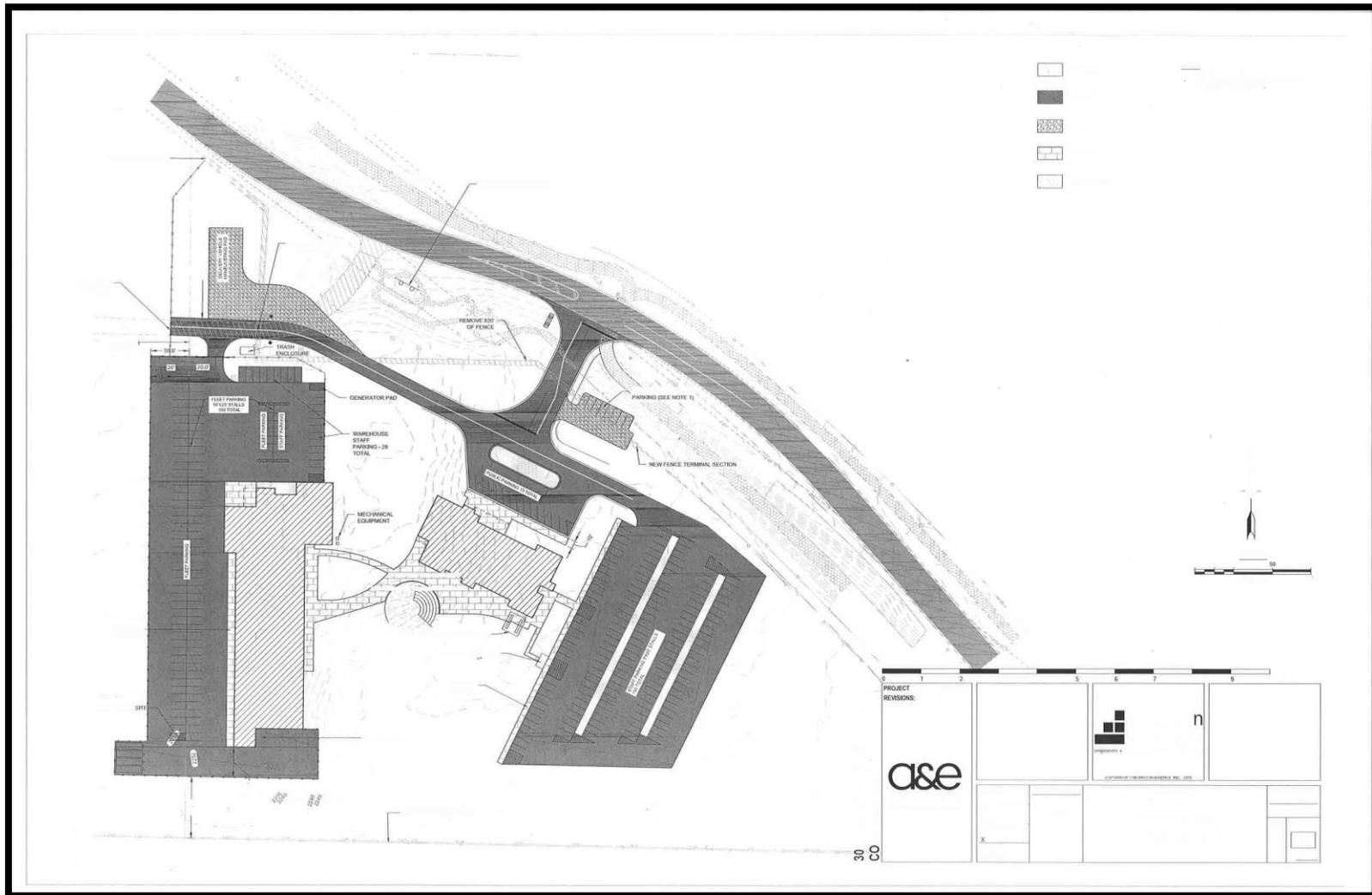


Figure 2. Overall Site Plan

The proposed action would include:

- A developed footprint of approximately 7.5 acres;
- Construction of 28,000 square-feet combined warehouse and dispatch center;
- Construction of a new 30,750 square-feet, two-story office building;
- Surface paving of about 3.5 acres for visitor, employee, and government vehicle parking;
- Construction and paving of new 50' x 250' entrance road from Kathleen Avenue;
- Addition of turn lanes (east and westbound) and traffic light on Kathleen Avenue. The minimum lengths for turn lanes is 100' westbound and 160' eastbound;
- Construction of a 5,000 square-foot paved parking area adjacent to the existing bike trail on the south side of Kathleen Avenue for public use;
- Installation of 1,580 foot chain-linked security fence with two electric gates around the warehouse and government-vehicle parking area;
- Installation of street lights within parking areas and external lighting on buildings;
- Installation of buried water, sewer, electric, and communications lines;
- Inclusion of native landscape design features utilizing native species that are resilient to insects, disease and drought as well as pollinator friendly for landscaping and educational purposes;
- Construction of drainage for surface water run-off;
- An 80 foot wide open space/ buffer area along the southern property line composed of the 20 foot wide utility access area and a 60 foot wide two-aged forest area designed, planted and maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. The intent is to plant and maintain trees and shrubs within the first 20 feet past the 20 foot utility corridor and overtime have them grow to provide additional dense screening. The open space/buffer area will be managed for fuel loadings and forest health in accordance with best forest land management practices; and
- A thinning is proposed for a firewise area (see Figure 3).

Features of the thinning would include:

- Larger trees with good vigor would be maintained;
- Ground-based yarding (i.e. skidder) would be utilized to move trees from the woods to a landing;
- Whole-tree yarding would be utilized; and
- Non-utilized material, including tops and limbs would be chipped or masticated.

The firewise area's fuel reduction activities would include:

- Sub-merchantable trees less than 7 inches DBH (all species) would be selectively cut. Tall shrubs would also be cut where they are contributing to the ladder fuels;

- Slashed material would be chipped and removed from the site; and
- Slash disposal would occur immediately after thinning activities.



Figure 3. Vegetation Treatment

Design Features

The project would also include the following design features:

Cultural Resources

- 1) If, prior to, or during construction work, items of archeological or historical value, or human remains are reported or discovered, or an unknown deposit of such items is disturbed, the contractor would immediately cease activities in the area affected. The Forest Service would be notified and ground disturbing activity would not resume until written authorization is provided.

Soils and Hydrology

- 1) Best Management Practices found in the Catalog of Stormwater Best Management Practices for Idaho Cities and Counties (IDEQ, Water Quality Division, 2005) would be applied.

Invasive Plants

- 1) All known invasive plant sites would be treated prior to any ground disturbing activities.
- 2) All gravel, fill, sand stockpiles, quarry sites and borrow materials used for this project would be inspected for invasive plants before such material is transported and used within Forest Service managed lands. Any infested sources must be treated before use of pit material. Only gravel, fill, sand, and rock that are judged to be weed-free by a weed specialist would be used for this project.
- 3) Remove all mud, dirt, and plant parts from all off road equipment before moving into project area. Cleaning must occur off National Forest lands. This does not apply to service vehicles that would stay on the roadway, traveling frequently in and out of the project area.
- 4) Straw used for stabilization and erosion control would be certified weed-free or weed-seed-free.
- 5) Vegetation would be re-established on bare ground due to construction activity to minimize weed spread.
- 6) All material brought in from outside the construction area would be certified by the Forest Service as clean and weed-free.

Vegetation

- 1) Local seeding guidelines would be utilized for appropriate mixes. If possible, native material from the site, including shrubs and forbs would be gathered prior to construction and utilized in reestablishing vegetation. Revegetation may include planting, seeding, fertilization, and weed-free mulching as indicated by local prescriptions. This activity would be designed and implemented by a botanist and other resource specialists, as necessary.
- 2) Within the firewise area designated skid trails would be utilized for yarding trees to the landing.

Fuels

- 1) To avoid potential problems with pine engraver beetles (*Ips*), slash would not be created (through harvest activity or follow-up fuels treatments) and left on site from January 1st through June 1st.
- 2) Thinning or slashing in the visual buffer area would be coordinated as necessary between a silviculturist, fuels specialist, landscape architect, and wildlife biologist.

Recreation and Scenery

- 1) Consider breaking up consecutive spaces in the employee office parking lot in order to reduce visual impact and minimize adverse effects to the viewshed from employee work spaces, adjacent housing units and the Centennial trail system.

Safety

- 1) A six foot tall chain-link fence with electronically controlled gate would be installed to restrict public and unauthorized employee access into the area where nursery operations occur.
- 2) In cooperation with the City of Coeur d'Alene, trail guards would be utilized when necessary during tree felling operations that is occurring within two tree lengths of the Prairie Trail.

Monitoring

The project would also include the following monitoring actions.

- 1) The project area would be monitored to provide for control of newly established invasive plant populations and follow-up treatment for previously treated infestations.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Analysis

Alternate Location within the Nursery

The Forest Service considered constructing the facilities at a different location within the nursery to reduce impacts associated with the viewshed/noise, recreation and socio-economic issues identified in the EA. This alternative was not given detailed consideration because while the proposed action location is not currently being used for nursery operations, the remainder of the nursery is. If new facilities were to be located elsewhere on the nursery grounds, the currently unused area would have to be converted to nursery use to compensate for the loss associated with facilities construction. The conversion and use would likely result in more impacts than the proposed action alone as increased ground disturbance would result at both sites, rather than just the area included in the proposed action. There would also be increased costs associated with this alternative, versus the proposed action, as site conversion would be required at both sites.

The socio-economic analysis in the EA examines the effects on adjacent property values resulting from the facility construction proposed under the Alternative 2. While appraisers from the Kootenai Assessor's Office have noted that changes to adjacent property sale values can result when commercial facilities are constructed next store, such effects on property values have not been observed in cases such as this, given the type of facilities proposed and the 80-foot open space buffer to be implemented with the proposed action (Kootenai County 2014a, 2014b).

While development of the site under Alternative 2 would allow for a view into the site as seen from neighboring residences, maintenance of the visual buffer area along the southern perimeter of the site is expected to reduce changes in neighborhood view and provide for a noise reduction emanating from the construction site and traffic along Kathleen Avenue. To ensure that the view of the site from the south property line was minimized we photographed the view of the lot from the south property line.

As discussed under the Public Involvement section (above), the Forest Service worked with the City of Coeur d'Alene on annexation and zoning, which included opportunities for public comment on the proposed zoning and annexation requests. Working with the Coeur d'Alene

Planning Commission and concerned neighbors, language for retaining a vegetative buffer adjacent to the southern property boundary was refined and agreed upon.

For the reasons stated above this alternative would not be substantially different with respect to impacts on adjacent property values, noise and view, than Alternative 2 and therefore, was not given detailed consideration.

Lease other Existing Facilities

The Forest Service researched opportunities for leasing other existing facilities but found that this would result in an increase in costs. Therefore, this alternative would not meet the purpose and need element for lowering facility costs and was therefore, eliminated from detailed analysis.

Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives

This section summarizes the potential impacts of the proposed action and alternatives.

The project area lies within a unit of land managed by the Forest Service's Coeur d'Alene Nursery. The active Nursery operations occur where a dryland farm was previously located. The stand of trees which comprises the project area, and which is adjacent to the nursery fields, has been used by the Forest Service for thinning demonstrations and educational purposes. The stand has had at least two harvest entries of varying levels; most recently, in the early 2000s. (Eramian, pers. comm.)

Vegetation

Affected Environment

The project area forest stand is nestled between the Coeur d'Alene nursery, Kathleen Avenue, and housing developments. The stand location is in the urban center of town; therefore, wholly in the wildland-urban interface (WUI). This 90 year old stand was likely established a few years following a disturbance in the early 1900s. The disturbance was most likely timber harvest, possibly followed by some farming activities. Since establishment, human disturbance has probably been wide and varied, and more recently has consisted of timber harvest and timber stand improvement activities. The last known harvest was a commercial thinning, which occurred in 1996; approximately 17 thousand board feet (MBF) was removed (1.7 MBF/acre).

The project stand is comprised of an almost pure ponderosa pine overstory. The understory consists of abundant ponderosa pine, lesser amounts of Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and trace amounts of grand fir regeneration in the seedling and sapling stage. The herbaceous vegetation is composed of drier site shrubs and grasses (Douglas-fir/ninebark habitat type). Oceanspray and snowberry are abundant, and a smaller percentage of shiny-leaf ceanothus is present. A layer of grasses are also consistent across the site.

The project stand is a two-age stand with a ponderosa pine overstory ranging in size from 10" to > 20" diameter at breast height (dbh) (average 16" dbh); canopy cover is approximately 55% to 65%. The average basal area (BA) is between 100 to 120 square feet per acre. The age of the overstory is 90 years. The understory cohort is in the seedling and sapling size class with the average dbh of 1" to 2". The stand exam data collected in the project area found that when

compared to the average historical situation, the areas of small sized trees have increased and become more uniformly dense than prior to fire suppression and other human management actions.

Bark beetles such as the western bark beetle and mountain pine beetle attack stressed trees. Conditions leading to stress can include competition due to overcrowding in stands that have become too dense. Lack of available moisture is also a cause of stress, which can be due to or compounded by densely populated stands. If trees have free room to grow it decreases the likelihood of attack from some of these insects.

Western gall rust is prevalent in the project area. While not usually a direct cause of tree mortality, it will cause limbs and tops to die, decreasing tree vigor and making the tree more susceptible to attack from insects and pathogens. Dead limbs and tops can fall causing hazards to those below and increase fuels loads. Removing some trees with high levels of gall rust could help reduce some of these risks.

Environmental Consequences

Across a project area of approximately 14 acres we are proposing:

- About four acres (firewise area) of an intermediate treatment timber harvest, followed by chipping of slash and shrubs that contribute to ladder fuels, lower risk of wildfire, and promote a more resilient stand.
- An 80 foot wide open space/visual buffer area would be maintained along the southern property line. The buffer would be composed of the 20 foot wide utility access area and the 60 foot wide two-aged forest area, maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. The intent is to plant and maintain trees and shrubs within the first 20 feet past the 20 foot utility corridor and overtime have them grow to provide additional dense screening. The open space/buffer area would be managed for fuel loadings and forest health in accordance with best forest land management practices.

We are proposing intermediate-cut treatments on about four acres in the firewise area, where the healthier more resilient and/or longer-lived trees (primarily ponderosa pine) will be favored. Removing the less healthy trees with low vigor, small crown ratios, or high amounts of western gall rust. Later-seral, less-resilient trees (i.e., grand fir, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine) would be removed where they exist (mostly understory). We would follow up by chipping slash and brush, which contribute to ladder fuels.

The firewise prescription is designed to encourage the growth and health of the residual stand while reducing hazardous fuels, and leaving a visual buffer for local residents. Most snags will probably be removed for safety reasons, except those needed for wildlife habitat and coarse woody debris recruitment - if deemed safe.

Within the open space/visual buffer area, a two-aged forest area would be maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. Native shrubs or trees would be planted. Specific areas, numbers, and species composition for planting would be decided when final site-specific stand prescriptions are written, in conjunction with the wildlife biologist and landscape architect.

Alternative 1: No Action

This alternative would result in no activity at this time. Existing conditions would remain unchanged by management action. The effects of this alternative are measured against those of the proposed action (i.e., Alternative 2).

Forest Composition

The no-action alternative would result in slow, but perceptible, changes to the existing forest composition at the project site. The existing and desired conditions would shift away from desirable if no action is taken. Without management of the current western gall rust disease and increasing regeneration contributing to ladder fuels, the ponderosa pine-dominated stand would begin to be dominated by Douglas fir and other species in the understory (Cooper et al. 1987). This would cause the early-seral cover type to fall below desired conditions, while the grand fir/Douglas fir mix would increase further above the desired conditions.

Forest Structure

Under the no-action alternative, there would be no proposed activities to change forest structure, so differences between the existing and desired conditions would persist. As the stand continues to grow over the next 10 to 20 years, the seedling/sapling-size and small-size classes would increase as these stands grow towards the medium class. This would result in more competition for growing space, increasing the likelihood of increases in insect and disease in the stand as well as causing increases in overstory tree mortality. This increase in density will also result in increased amounts of ladder fuels; increasing the likelihood of higher severity fires if exposed to wildfire.

Cumulative Effects

There would be no cumulative effects associated with Alternative 1 because the direct and indirect effects from vegetation activities associated with the proposed action would not take place.

Alternative 2: Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

The treatment activities proposed within the firewise area under Alternative 2 are designed and intended to create conditions favorable to the establishment or continuance of:

- Existing stands where ponderosa pine is dominant;
- Improve and promote overall stand health;
- Decrease hazardous fuels in the WUI;
- Produce increased forage for wildlife; and

It is anticipated that within the firewise area, the treatment activities would remove nearly all of the later-seral species in treated areas.

The footprint of the office, warehouse facilities and associated entrance road and parking areas would require vegetation removal on about 7.5 acres of the site.

Forest Composition

The proposed combination of intermediate harvest, understory removal, and chipping and planting of shrubs for the firewise area in Alternative 2 would: (1) help improve the health of the stand, (2) maintain the area dominated by desirable long-lived, seral-tree species, (3) reduce hazardous fuels, and (3) increase wildlife forage.

Existing desirable species composition would be preserved. About 20 square feet of basal area per acre would be removed; taking the basal area from 100 - 120 to 80 - 100. Trees to be retained would include healthy ponderosa pine (>25% crown ratio). Removing competing trees and trees with high amounts of gall rust would improve desirable stand components, improve tree vigor and encourage their future growth. Snags which are deemed safe would be left for snag recruitment and coarse woody debris.

Coniferous natural regeneration, including ponderosa pine, grand fir, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine could occur due to existing dispersed seed. This within-stand compositional variability would provide habitat variety for wildlife and contribute to aesthetic variety; however, future treatments would be needed as these species grow and contribute to increased hazardous ladder fuels.

The forest composition changes within the firewise area affected by the proposed activities in Alternative 2 would enhance forest health and maintain the dominance group, in line with desired future condition. This would more closely reflect historic vegetative conditions, increase resilience to disturbance agents and climatic variability, and effectively increase future vegetation management options. It would also enhance the variety of habitat available to wildlife.

Forest Structure

Stand structures within the firewise intermediate treatment area would move the overstory into the large size class, by reducing competition and increasing available resources. The understory tree cohort would be selectively removed; resulting in reduced fuel loading, lower canopy density, and reduced horizontal and vertical fuel continuity - relative to existing stand structures. Among other benefits, these changes in fuel characteristics would result in less intense fire behavior and make a fire easier to control.

In addition to the retention of most of the healthy overstory trees, some leave patches of diverse shapes and sizes would be retained within the firewise area. These leave areas would be centered on existing concentrations of shrubs, trees, large coarse woody debris, snags, or other unique structural and/or habitat features. These areas would include representation of all tree species that are present in the pre-harvest stand. Retention of individual trees and untreated areas would promote the diversity of the early-successional stands that would become established (Franklin and Johnson 2011), and would provide continuity in structural, functional, and compositional elements from the pre-harvest to the post-harvest forest (Gustafsson et al. 2012).

Within the visual buffer area, the existing two-aged forest would provide for a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. The intent is to plant and maintain trees and shrubs within the first 20 feet past the 20 foot utility corridor and overtime have them grow to provide additional dense screening. The open space/buffer area would be managed for fuel loadings and forest health in accordance with best forest land management practices.

Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects analysis discusses cumulative effects as changes in the existing condition due to past, present, and future activities - including the effects of the alternative. Past activities are what have created the existing condition. As such the effect of these past activities is described in the existing condition of this document.

Under Alternative 2, the maintenance of a stand of early-seral species and the desirable stand structural elements (particularly existing large trees) would be maintained. Intermediate thinning (improvement cut), within the firewise area, would remove trees that are competing with desirable stand components, and would “release” them to grow and increase in vigor. Over time, these ever-larger trees would provide a source of large snags and eventually coarse woody debris. Over the planning horizon of 60 years, the project area will be enhanced by the proposed vegetation treatments and move toward future old-growth conditions.

It is reasonable to expect that there will be follow-up treatments, such as pre-commercial thinning, in the firewise area. Pre-commercial thinning would target later-seral species individuals that can be expected to naturally regenerate. Together, follow-up treatments would enhance and prolong the desired effects of the initial management actions.

Within the visual buffer area, the existing two-aged forest would be maintained to provide for the 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. The open space/buffer area would be managed for fuel loadings and forest health in accordance with best forest land management practices.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Both alternatives are consistent with the National Forest Management Act and Forest Service Manual and Handbook direction and guidance (Silviculture Specialist Report, pp. 6-16).

Native Plants

Issues related to native plants that were identified during scoping were:

- Will construction and use of the new INRC facilities affect the native plant community, including suitable habitat for rare plant species, in the project area?

Threatened and Endangered Species

There are no federally listed endangered plants for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (USDI 2015); therefore, endangered plants are dismissed from further analysis. Threatened species, as determined by the USFWS, is any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Currently, the USFWS (USDI 2015) lists two species as Threatened for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*) and Spalding’s catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*). There are no documented occurrences of these species on the Forest, although suitable habitat is suspected to occur. No suitable habitat for water howellia was found in the project area. Areas with a grassy understory were searched for Spalding’s catchfly, and no suitable habitat or plants were found.

Candidate species are plants for which the USFWS has sufficient information on biological vulnerability and threats to support proposals to list them as Endangered or Threatened. Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) was listed as a Candidate species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2011 (USDI 2015). No suitable habitat for whitebark pine was found in the project area.

Sensitive Species

Sensitive species are determined by the Regional Forester as those species for which habitat may occur on Forest Service-managed lands, and for which population viability is a concern, as indicated by a current or predicted downward trend in population numbers, or in habitat capability, that would reduce the species' existing distribution.

Affected Environment

Thirteen acres or less of suitable habitat for the dry forest rare plant guild was found during field inventories. Field surveys were conducted in the project area on September 8, 2014; September 30, 2014; December 2014; and July 2015. No rare plant individuals or populations were discovered during inventories.

Clustered lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium fasciculatum*) (Region 1 Sensitive) is a rhizomatous, perennial orchid. As in other members of the orchid family, this species requires a symbiotic relationship with fungi in the soil for reproduction and development. It reproduces mainly by seed, but also may increase to a limited extent by rhizome. Because of its dependency on fungal associates, reproduction is typically low. Clustered lady's-slipper requires shade, either from overstory trees and/or shrubs, and a level of duff or litter. The amount of shade and duff necessary to sustain the species has not been established, and probably varies depending on habitat type and other site factors. (Lichthardt 2003)

While this species was not found during field surveys, moderately suitable habitat within the project area may be present.

Environmental Consequences

Effects to Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plants and suitable habitat, from proposed activities are generally described as very low, low, moderate, or high, with the following definitions:

very low = no measurable effect on individuals, populations, or habitat

low = individuals, populations, and/or habitat not likely affected

moderate = individuals and/or habitat may be affected, but populations would not be affected; and habitat capability would not be reduced over the long term below a level which could support sensitive plant species

high = populations may be affected and/or habitat capability may be reduced over the long term below a level which could support sensitive plant species

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

Under this alternative, there would be no change from current management activities on Coeur d'Alene Nursery lands in the project area. Because there would be no construction, timber harvest, or associated slash disposal, there would be no changes to the native vegetation's species' composition, vertical structure, horizontal density, forest canopy cover, or no soil disturbance. Therefore, there would be no direct impacts to rare plant suitable habitat and the surrounding plant community. Weeds would still be present in the project area. There would be a threat of

weeds invading the 14 acres from existing, adjacent infestations and the Coeur d'Alene Nursery would continue to treat and monitor weeds in the project area.

Cumulative Effects

There would be no cumulative effects associated with Alternative 1 because direct and indirect effects, such as a change in forest canopy; native vegetation species' composition, vertical structure, or horizontal density, due to proposed project activities, would not occur.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

This alternative would comply with Executive Order 13112 because no actions would be authorized or carried out that would be likely to cause the introduction or spread of invasive species into the existing native vegetation.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

There would be no direct or indirect effect to any known individual or population of Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive plant species, because none are known to exist within the project area.

Implementation of the proposed action in conjunction with project design features may result in low to high impacts to moderate-quality, suitable habitat for clustered lady's-slipper due to the level of development associated with the office complex footprint. The proposed activities for the firewise area may cause short-term impacts (10 years or less) to lady's-slipper habitat, but as the site recovers from disturbance, beneficial microsite features such as shade and an appropriate duff layer would be expected to redevelop. Following hazardous fuels treatment, the surrounding native plant community would be more resistant and resilient to human- or lightning-caused fire disturbance.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects associated with Alternative 2 are related to land development that has occurred in the Coeur d'Alene area. With establishment, population growth, and expansion of the city, native, and in some cases, non-native, vegetation has been cleared for housing, commercial, industrial and other types of facilities and uses. The project area is surrounded by urban development including a residential neighborhood to the south; a recreation trail (previously, a railroad corridor) bordering the east side; and on the west, by the Coeur d'Alene Nursery fields that were part of a dryland farm, prior to acquisition by the Forest Service. Urban development continues to occur beyond the immediate vicinity of the project area.

When combined with and considered with the above past activities and events, current and ongoing activities, and reasonably foreseeable actions, the proposed action would have very low to moderate cumulative effects to native vegetation, including suitable habitat for rare plants, within the dry forest guild. In other words, cumulative effects could range from “no measurable effects” to “individuals plants or habitat may be impacted but would not result in loss of population viability”.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Forest Plan requirements do not apply to the Coeur d'Alene Nursery site.

This proposed project would comply with all applicable federal laws, such as The Endangered Species Act (1973), as amended. There are no federally listed threatened or endangered plant species known or suspected to occur in the project area (USDI 2015). Furthermore, neither habitat for, nor occurrences of, threatened or endangered plant species were observed during intensive floristic surveys of the project area. Therefore, the project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act.

At the project level, and in accordance with Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2672.1-2672.43 and National Forest Management Act (NFMA), suitable habitat has been identified and surveyed and the appropriate level of analysis has been conducted. There are no documented rare plant occurrences in the project area. Suitable habitat of moderate quality is present in the project area for one Forest Service Region 1 species.

Invasive Plants

Issues related to invasive plants that were identified during scoping were:

- Will construction result in spread of invasive species or noxious weeds?

Affected Environment

Field surveys of the project area were conducted in September 2014 and July 2015. Survey results indicated that there were non-native plant species within the project area. For example, spotted knapweed and Dalmatian toadflax occur along a “two-track” trail that begins near the northwest corner and extends into the central part of the stand of trees. St. John’s-wort and several of the other non-native species are also found near this trail. Non-native species have established along the south and west edges of the tract as well, especially where overstory vegetation is less dense and allows sunlight to reach the forest floor, creating habitat that can promote weed establishment and growth. There was an invasive weeds treatment done in 2001, on about approximately 2 to 4 acres of the stand.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

Under this alternative, there would be no change from current management activities on NFS lands in the project area. As a result, existing and future weed infestations within the project area would be treated and monitored under auspices of the Coeur d’Alene Nursery.

Because there would be no construction, timber harvest or associated slash disposal, there would be no changes to forest canopy cover or soil disturbance. Therefore, there would be no direct impacts to invasive weeds, the risk of weed spread would not change from current levels, and weed occurrence and spread would likely continue to occur adjacent to edge of the timber and the Kathleen Avenue corridor.

Cumulative Effects

There would be no cumulative effects associated with Alternative 1 because the direct and indirect effects from ground disturbing activities associated with the proposed action would not take place.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

This alternative would comply with Executive Order 13112 because no actions would be authorized or carried out that would be likely to cause the introduction or spread of invasive species.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

The footprint of the proposed office, infrastructure, parking and other facilities would be approximately 7.5 acres. There would also be road widening of Kathleen Avenue adjacent to the Nursery for the purposes of constructing both east and west bound turn lanes. Preparing the areas would involve vegetation removal and ground clearing and leveling, which would provide habitat for invasive plants to establish and potentially spread. The design features included as part of the proposed action would limit this potential for establishment and spread as development proceeds over the next five years.

Within the firewise area, the decrease in tree canopy cover from implementing the vegetation and slash disposal treatments are considered temporary. Basal area is currently around 120 square feet per acre, which is considered high for stands of ponderosa pine. The high stocking level results in increased competition among the trees for light, water and nutrients, making them more susceptible to succumbing to insect infestations and drought. Proposed thinning operations in the firewise area would reduce the overstory stocking level to about 80-100 square feet of basal area per acre. The reduction in canopy shading would allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor, which potentially increases the stand's susceptibility to establishment of invasive plant species from surrounding areas, including Kathleen Avenue corridor, adjacent residential areas and the nursery grounds. Over the next 10-20 years, as tree canopy closes, this area would once again have decreased susceptibility to invasive plant infestation and spread.

Within the visual buffer area, the existing two-aged forest would be expected to provide sufficient shade cover to prevent or reduce establishment of invasive plant species under the tree canopy.

Prior to beginning ground disturbing activities, existing invasive plants/plant populations on the site would be treated using integrated treatment methods to lessen the potential for their spread when development activities begin. Other design features incorporated into the proposed action, such as requiring equipment washing, weed free material, and re-establishment of vegetation during the life of the project would effectively reduce the potential for invasive plant occurrence and spread within the project area. During and after completion of construction activities, monitoring would be conducted to provide for control of any newly established invasive plant populations and follow-up treatment for previously treated occurrences within the project area. The recommended design features are accepted practices based upon best management practices for the prevention and control of invasive plants as determined by public land management agencies and university cooperative extension offices and promoted by weed management organizations (e.g. Sheley et al. 2002, Drlik et al. 1998, USDA Forest Service 2001).

Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects resulting from Alternative 2, would be associated with susceptibility to invasive plant establishment and spread within the project area resulting from the ground disturbing activities proposed under this alternative, the nursery operations, the Kootenai Electric powerline and the Kathleen Avenue corridors. Moderate levels of invasive plant species are already present on the periphery or adjacent to project area. Kootenai Electric is responsible for

controlling invasive plant vegetation within the powerline corridor along the southern property boundary and the City of Coeur d'Alene is responsible for weed control within the Kathleen Avenue/Centennial Trail corridor. The Nursery site is cultivated so bare soil is normally present. The project area was last thinned in the 1990s, since that time the canopy has filled in and shaded the forest floor, inhibiting invasive plant establishment.

The ground disturbance associated with the proposed action and from ongoing nursery operations would contribute to an expected moderate risk for weed establishment and spread. However, the design features along with ongoing monitoring within the project area for invasive plants would be expected to reduce the existing invasive plant presence and the potential for future spread within the project area. As the site is developed and the tree canopy in the firewise area fills in, the risk of invasive plant establishment and spread would be expected decrease. Therefore, the cumulative effects of Alternative 2 (and its associated design features) on existing invasive plant infestations would be moderate.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Forest Service Manual direction requires that Noxious Weed Risk Assessments be prepared for all projects involving ground-disturbing activities (FSM 2903.03, December 5, 2011). For projects that have a moderate to high risk of introducing or spreading invasive plants, Forest Service policy requires that decision documents must identify noxious weed prevention practices and control measures that will be undertaken during project implementation. A risk assessment has been prepared for this project and the proposal has been identified as having a moderate risk of introducing or spreading invasive plants. As a result, design features and monitoring actions have been identified that would provide for control of any existing or newly established invasive plant species.

Executive Order 13112 implemented on February 3, 1999 requires Federal agencies to use relevant programs and authorities to prevent the introduction of invasive species and not authorize or carry out actions that are likely to cause the introduction or spread of invasive species unless the agency has determined, and made public, documentation that shows that the benefits of such actions clearly outweigh the potential harm, and all feasible and prudent measures to minimize risk of harm will need to be taken in conjunction with the actions. The USDA Forest Service Guide to Noxious Weed Prevention Practices (2001) supports implementation of Executive Order 13112 on invasive species. Based upon the risk assessment, there is the potential for the spread or introduction of invasive plants under the proposed action. The risk is proportional to the area of ground disturbance planned in the proposed action. The recommended design features and monitoring actions would be followed to address and reduce occurrences and spread of invasive plants.

Idaho Code, Chapter 24, 22-2407 states that landowners within the State are responsible for control noxious weeds on their land. The treatment and prevention actions contained in this alternative are consistent with these requirements.

Recreation and Scenery

Issues related to the scenic and recreation resources identified during scoping were:

- Will noise and changes in the view resulting from construction and use of the new facilities affect neighboring residents?

- Will construction and use of new facilities affect recreational use of the adjacent bike Trail (The North Idaho Centennial Trail)?

Affected Environment

The existing natural landscape character of the project area, although within an urban, highly developed setting, consists of gently sloping forested land with primarily middle aged to young Douglas fir, ponderosa pine and western larch with a diverse range of shrubs and forbs (see Silviculture Report for more detail). Past management activities in the project area have been wide and varied, with the most recent consisting of timber harvest and stand tending in 1996. The main recreation opportunity in the vicinity is the Prairie Trail which runs adjacent to the project area boundary. The Prairie Trail is an urban paved trail which is mainly utilized by city dwellers for daily exercise and as a link to the larger Centennial Trail, a 23 mile long trail extending from the Idaho/Washington state line to Higgins Point, 6 miles east of Coeur d'Alene. The Prairie Trail starts at Beebe Boulevard and runs northwest 4 miles through town, ending at Huetter Road.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

This alternative forms a basis for describing and comparing the effects of the proposed action. Under this alternative there would be no consolidation of the work force through construction of a new interdisciplinary office building and participating agencies would continue to use their existing workspaces. There would be no effect to the recreation experience of those who utilize the adjacent trail and no effect to the scenic resource and viewsheds due to construction activities and the development of the INRC facilities. There would be no additional noise generated as a result of construction. Therefore, there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative effects as a result of the No Action alternative.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Will noise and changes in the view resulting from construction and use of the new facilities affect neighboring residents?

Direct effects to the neighboring residents would be likely during the construction phases of the proposed action. A change in the existing landscape character of the site would allow a view into the site as seen from neighboring residents. However, as part of the silvicultural prescription for the site, a visual buffer zone, consisting of a two-aged forest area would be maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer along the southern perimeter of the site and targeted plantings for the purpose of noise reduction and enhancing the visual buffer would be implemented during project implementation. The greatest effect to the residents would be expected to be during the time the site is under of construction (approximately from Spring 2017 to 2022).

Will construction and use of new facilities affect recreational use of the adjacent bike Trail (The Prairie Trail)?

Construction activities, including the felling of trees during site preparation, could temporarily disrupt the use and flow of people using the Prairie Trail, however design features would help minimize this effect and assure safe passage for trail users in the immediate vicinity during

construction. The times when the trail would be directly affected would vary and depend on when trees are being felled within the firewise area and when heavy equipment is being used near the portion of the trail that runs directly adjacent to the site. Once construction is complete, the change in the landscape character of the site (from natural to unnatural or developed) would likely change the setting, or experience, for people utilizing the trail while on the short section that runs along the north edge of the site. However, the Prairie trail is an urban connector trail, so the change in setting in this area would not likely effect the overall experience of trail users.

Within the firewise treatment area, some regenerating understory trees would be maintained in groups or ‘clumps’, but thinned or slashed between the groups. This would break up the fuel continuity while also providing for visuals, wildlife habitat, etc. Removal of sub-merchantable trees would focus on individuals or small groups of trees growing in close proximity to desired overstory trees and which would otherwise not contribute to visual screening needs in order to maintain the health and vigor of the stand.

The two-aged forest visual buffer area along the southern property boundary would provide sight buffering. The objective is to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. To further enhance the functionality of the existing buffer, trees and shrubs would be planted within the first 20 feet past the 20 foot utility corridor. Overtime, as shrub and tree growth occurs, additional dense screening would be provided. The buffer zone would reduce impacts to recreation, scenery and decrease adverse impacts due to noise once construction is complete and the facilities are occupied.

Cumulative Effects

Foreseeable actions that have the potential to overlap in time and space with those of the INRC development are recreational trail use of the adjacent Prairie Trail system, school traffic, general business traffic along Kathleen and Ramsey Roads, residential traffic and the proposed firewise treatment. When combined with the potential impacts associated with the proposed action, cumulative impacts from increased traffic and noise in the project vicinity during construction and after construction is completed would be likely but in conformance with the City of Coeur d’Alene’s Comprehensive Plan policies.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Because the new INRC is proposed for construction on a Forest Service administrative site, and the 2015 Revised IPNF Forest Plan contains no recreation or scenery related standards or guidance for administrative sites, the proposed development of the INRC would be in compliance with the Forest Plan.

Social and Economic Conditions – Property Values

Issues related to social and economic conditions that were identified during scoping were:

- Would the construction and use of new facilities affect values of adjacent properties?

Affected Environment

There are 12 residential properties on Nicklaus Drive, south of and directly adjacent to the east end of the Forest Service Nursery which could be affected by the proposed action. These properties and those in the surrounding neighborhood are large family homes on large lots (Kootenai County, 2014). The view from the backyards of these properties includes the existing stand of trees in the project area and (for properties on the west end) a portion of the open

operational nursery grounds. A six-foot chainlink fence bounds the Forest Service Nursery and separates it from the private properties. A transmission line on wood poles parallels the fence just inside the Nursery and is also visible from the backyards.

Environmental Consequences

The actual value of a residential property can only be determined when sold. Therefore, this analysis focuses on qualitatively describing the potential view and experience by adjacent property owners that would result from removal of some of the existing trees and construction and use of a new office and facilities. This will then be compared to factors that have affected values of similar properties in the recent past to provide context and consideration of the magnitude of the effects from the proposed action.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

This alternative would result in no change in the value of adjacent nursery properties related to the view of, or noise from new facilities. Therefore, there would be no direct, indirect or cumulative effects as a result of this alternative.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

During construction, the adjacent property owners would have a view of the excavated area and other construction activities. They would also hear sounds, generally between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., from construction activities. However, these disturbances would be temporary (about five years) and end upon completion of construction. In addition, generally between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., the adjacent residents would be able to see and hear activities associated with the vegetation treatment occurring within the firewise area. However this would be of short duration (one to two months). Since these disturbances would be short-term, they will likely have no effect on property values.

Upon completion of construction and vegetation treatments, the adjacent resident properties on the west end of the southern property boundary would be able to see the new facilities and some of its lighting. For those residences along the southern boundary, adjacent to the visual buffer, it is expected that there would be reduced views of the new facilities and associated outdoor lighting. The existing vegetation within visual buffer area would be maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer of the site. Trees and shrubs would be planted adjacent to the powerline corridor as part of project implementation in order to enhance the existing level of screening. While residents would also see and hear employees, vehicles, and other equipment, sounds would be lessened by the vegetative screen and the distance between the residents and the nearest portions of the new facilities. Most activities at the new facilities would occur between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The new facilities would meet Green Globe design standards which would reduce the visibility of lighting to adjacent properties.

Experienced residential property appraisers from the Kootenai Assessor's Office have noted that changes to adjacent property sale values sometimes occur when commercial facilities are constructed next door. However, the appraisers have not observed effects on property values in situations such as this, given the type of facilities and uses proposed, and the 80-foot open space

buffer (Kootenai County 2014a, 2014b). Considering this, it is unlikely that the proposed action would have a measurable effect on the value of adjacent residential properties.

Cumulative Effects

Changes in the economic, demographic, and housing inventory characteristics of the housing market area (Kootenai County) would likely affect sales and prices of these adjacent residential properties. The 22 percent drop in sale values between 2007 and 2011 is likely an extreme case resulting from the nation-wide market drop in 2008 and the associated economic recession that followed. In addition to changes in the market and the economy, other factors, such as size, quality, age, condition, and location of these properties, would continue to influence their values. In the context of these other influential factors, it is more apparent that the proposed action would not have a measurable effect on the value of adjacent residential properties.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Alternative 2 would be consistent with the requirements outlined in the findings and order for the Planned Unit Development of the site (City of Coeur d'Alene 2015).

Soils and Hydrology

Issues related to soils and hydrology that were identified during scoping were:

- Would there be potential for erosion and/or sedimentation potential during and after construction?

Affected Environment

The site is located within the Purcell Trench within the city of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. The site is described in detail in Forest Nursery Soils of Northern Idaho and Western Montana (S-5). They describe the site as follows:

The southern portion of the Purcell Trench is locally called the Rathdrum Prairie. The Coeur d'Alene Nursery is in the southeastern part of the Rathdrum Prairie. The nursery area is nearly level with a few gentle to moderate slopes adjacent to the few dry drainage ways.

The Coeur d'Alene Nursery property was acquired in 1960. Prior to development of the Nursery, a soil survey was conducted at the site using standard soil survey methods (S-5). Laboratory analysis of sampled soils was also completed to aid in development of the Nursery. Since then, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has completed additional soil surveys of the area as part of the Kootenai County Soil Survey (S-6). Soils from both survey efforts align well and do not differ meaningfully from each other in regards to soil properties. The area where the proposed INRC building and associated facilities would be constructed has been managed as a small timber stand since the acquisition of the property. A limited amount of ground-based logging has occurred there in the past.

The proposed construction site is located within the city of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. It is bordered to the west by the U.S. Forest Service Coeur d'Alene Nursery; to the north and east by Kathleen Ave., a pedestrian/bicycle trail, and a housing development; to the south by another housing development. The building site is in an urbanized area which contains above and below ground engineered drainage structures. The urban development has altered the natural characteristics of the area with increased impervious surfaces (roof tops, roads, cement covered driveways and

sidewalks) and storm water runoff structures. There are no natural stream channels in the project area or bodies of open water.

Soils within the proposed construction site are mapped as unit 149 McGuire – Marble Association, 0 – 7 percent slopes. The predominant soil is most closely related to the McGuire soil which formed on outwash terraces created through the multiple flooding events of Glacial Lake Missoula. As is common on outwash terraces the soils have a high rock fragment content throughout the profile. These soils are rated as somewhat excessively drained with a very low rating for water storage capacity. There are no common events of flooding or ponding in these soils. Typical vegetation is consistent with the current site production of Ponderosa pine (*pinus ponderosa*) and common snowberry (*symphoricarpos albus*). These soils have a low surface runoff potential that results in a low potential for erosion of the surface soil and associated sediment yield from these sites.

Environmental Consequences

The area used to assess effects to the soil resource includes the site of the proposed construction of the INRC office building within the administrative site for the Coeur d'Alene Forest Nursery and any overlapping activities.

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

There would be no direct or indirect effects to the soil or hydrologic resource since there would be no change in the amount of the soil and hydrologic resource committed to administrative lands. The area would continue to be managed as a forested stand for the foreseeable future. Because there are no direct or indirect effects, there would be no cumulative effects. This no action alternative would be in compliance with the Forest Land Management Plan, and other things and the CWA.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Alternative 1 would be in compliance all laws and regulations.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

For the soil resource, the building construction would be a direct effect. The only expected disturbance to soils would occur within the construction footprint of the buildings, roads and surrounding traffic area for equipment. Construction of a new office and warehouse buildings would result in a change in use for the soil resource from one that functions for vegetative growth to one in which the primary function is as a stable construction medium. This is a change in use that is consistent with the expected functions for which we rely on soils. The area is already part of an administrative site so there is no reduction in what is considered the productive land base.

Soils in the project area are ideally suited to building construction. They are less suitable to lawns and landscaping, where they are rate somewhat limiting due to the high gravel content of the soil and droughty nature. There is no irrigation planned for the site as xeriscaping with native species would be used.

Hydrology would experience a direct effect through the increase in impervious surfaces on the site. This is not expected to have detrimental effects due to soil properties that have been previously mentioned, and the engineered storm water retention structure that will be constructed on the south side of the property. This structure will allow water to collect and percolate into the soil profile.

Cumulative Effects

The following activities have been identified as having potential to create cumulative effects with the proposed project for the soil and hydrology resources: Nursery operations; agricultural operations in the fields to the west; and housing developments (past, present, and future). None of these activities are expected to have an overlapping effect for the purpose of soil and hydrology determinations.

There are no cumulative effects for soils because actions taken on soils are discrete and unique in this setting. The use of one area of soil as a building medium does not have effects on the use of another area as agricultural land. Therefore soils are not further evaluated in regards to past, present and reasonably foreseeable activities.

Hydrology is also seen as discrete and unique in an area that is already heavily modified by urban development. Soils are flat to relatively flat in the proposed project area and the soils have such a high infiltration rate and water movement in the profile that there are no anticipated effects from drainage and water management on site and with surrounding use. Housing developments increase the impervious surfaces and in many locations can create drainage issues because of soil behavior, but this site is ideal for managing increased drainage flows. With the inclusion of City of Coeur d'Alene best management practices pertaining to construction sites, which could include silt fences and wattles around storm drains, there are no anticipated cumulative effects to hydrology.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

Forest Plan requirements do not apply to the Coeur d'Alene Nursery. The proposed action would be in compliance with federal, state and local laws, regulations and ordinances. The proposed action would utilize and apply Best Management Practices found in the Catalog of Stormwater Best Management Practices for Idaho Cities and Counties (IDEQ, Water Quality Division, 2005) (EA p. 7) and would be compatible with the natural features of the site, would not create soil erosion or flooding problems, and would prevent surface water degradation (City of Coeur d'Alene 2015).

Wildlife

Issues related to wildlife that were identified during scoping were:

- Will the construction and use of the new facilities affect wildlife or special status wildlife?

Affected Environment

The site consists of ponderosa pine forest with smaller amounts of young Douglas fir in the middle canopy. The understory is composed of native shrubs, non-native grasses, some native forbs, and non-native weeds. The site is bordered to the east and south by commercial and residential development. To the west lies open space used by the USFS Nursery. The Forest Service Nursery site is managed as an agricultural area with frequent disturbance and human

activity. However, the Nursery does provide habitat for some animals, largely small mammals and birds. The north side of the parcel is bordered by Kathleen Avenue and the Centennial Bike Trail. The area is currently fenced which deters some, but not all, use by the public. This area functions as an island of forested habitat amidst a sea of urban development. The tree and shrub cover provide a relatively secure area for some wildlife species. The trees, understory grasses and forbs, as well as the shrubs, provide forage for birds and deer, as well as small mammals such as voles and mice.

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

Federally protected wildlife species in the Idaho Panhandle National Forest include woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*), grizzly bear (*Ursos arctos horribilis*), and Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*). None of these species are found in the project area and there is no potential for the project area to provide habitat for any of these species. The project site contains no lynx critical habitat, is not within a grizzly bear management unit, and does not contain grizzly bear core habitat.

Sensitive Species

Two field site visits in the fall of 2014 did not result in documentation of any USFS sensitive species. The Idaho Conservation Data Center database was searched for known occurrences of rare animals (Federally listed, BLM Type 1 or 2, USFS Sensitive, Species of Greatest Conservation Need) and none were documented in the project area.

Migratory Birds

Migratory birds are present year round and would be expected to use the project area for nesting in the spring and summer months. There are two Birds of Conservation Concern that may use the project area, Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) and Cassin's Finch (*Haemorhous cassinii*). While these species were not encountered on the site, the habitat in the project area may be suitable for use by these species.

Calliope hummingbirds are associated with ponderosa pine forests during the breeding season where they build their nests on overhanging branches or on the base of a pine cone. Like all hummingbirds, their main diet consists of insects and nectar (Rodewald 2016). The proximity of landscaped gardens and ornamental plants in residential neighborhoods may make the project site suitable habitat for nesting for this species.

Cassin's finch are associated with mature ponderosa pine stands and feed on the buds of pines in spring and the seeds of pines in the winter. Most nests are built on a lateral branch or near the top of a pine tree (Rodewald 2016).

The site provides forested habitat adjacent to agricultural fields where small mammal numbers are likely higher than the surrounding developed land. Thus, it is particularly valuable to raptors. While no raptor nests were found, the site currently provides good habitat for raptors that are tolerant of more urban and disturbed conditions. Examples of raptors that may use the site include red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), and great-horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*).

Other Wildlife

Bats, particularly those that roost in structures, may use the site for foraging or day roosting. Examples include little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*), and Yuma

bat (*Myotis yumanensis*). Small mammals such as deer mouse (*Peromyscus spp.*), meadow vole (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), and red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) are also likely to use the area, though no formal mammal inventory has been conducted. White-tail deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), and bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) may also use the site though none were encountered during site visits.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 – No Action

Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects

There would be no impacts to any federally protected species, sensitive species, migratory birds, or other wildlife. No direct impacts to habitat would occur and there would be no loss of active bird nests or disturbance or mortality to small mammals that may use the forest floor or subterranean habitats on the site.

The project area would remain an island of low suitability habitat for native and non-native wildlife species, mostly birds and small mammals. The vegetation there would continue to provide nesting and hiding cover, as well as a food source for birds and small mammals. Weeds would continue to reduce habitat value in some portions of the project area. Understory shade tolerant trees would eventually become dominant on the site, creating a denser stand of mixed conifers.

Alternative 2 – Proposed Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

Impacts to Habitat

Over all, there would be a net loss of about 7.5 acres of habitat. While the habitat is currently marginal and not suitable for many wildlife species because of its location and the small size of the site, the project area does provide habitat for some species.

Reducing the density of trees and moving the stand towards a mature ponderosa pine site with a more open understory would benefit some wildlife species and be a negative impact on those species that prefer a more closed canopy, a more vigorous understory, and require more hiding cover. The visual buffer area, which would be maintained as a two-aged forest area would function as the habitat for those species that prefer a brushier site or use shrubs for forage or hiding cover.

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

Because there are no Federally Protected species on the site, no direct impacts to these species are expected if Alternative 2 is implemented. Because of its small size and location, this project area is not likely to become suitable habitat for any federally listed species, regardless of which Alternative is selected. Thus, no indirect impacts to threatened, endangered or candidate species would be expected from this project.

Sensitive Species

No sensitive species occur on the site, therefore no direct impacts to these species are expected. Because of its small size and location, this project area is not likely to become suitable habitat for

any sensitive species, regardless of which alternative is selected. Thus, no indirect impacts to sensitive species would be expected from this project.

Migratory Birds

While it is not known whether Calliope Hummingbirds or Cassin's finches currently use the site, any migratory bird species present and breeding on site during implementation could be directly affected by land clearing and construction of the buildings, storage, fencing, parking areas, and access road. Removal of vegetation would disturb birds that currently use the site causing displacement. However, if suitable habitat still remains, and after the disturbance has finished, some birds would return to the site. If vegetation is removed and ground disturbance occurs during the nesting season for birds, mortality of eggs and nestlings due to nest destruction or nest abandonment could be expected for nests that are in the project area. While it is less likely, there could be mortality to adult birds as well. Vegetation and ground clearing associated with the construction of the building and facilities would have similar effects to the silvicultural and fire wise treatments.

While the reduction in available habitat would be detrimental to any current or future use by Calliope Hummingbirds or Cassin's Finches, the silvicultural treatment would help move forest conditions within the firewise treatment area towards greater habitat suitability for these species. Other bird species that are associated with or utilize mature ponderosa pine stands, and can be found in urban areas, would be negatively affected by the reduction in ponderosa pine habitat but would also benefit from the silvicultural treatment proposed under Alternative 2. Examples include pygmy nuthatch, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, and northern flicker.

Species that prefer more closed canopy or brushy habitats, such as black-capped chickadees, song sparrows, and spotted towhees would not benefit from the firewise vegetation treatment under Alternative 2. Nesting and foraging habitat for species that nest on the ground or in shrubs would be removed from much of the site, except for the buffer area. Within the visual buffer area, a two-aged forest structure would be maintained and native shrubs and forbs would be planted as part of project implementation in the buffer area. This would benefit some migratory birds during the breeding and non-breeding season. Plantings would be as suitable, if not more suitable than the vegetation that is being removed to make room for the building, parking, and storage buildings.

The effects of this project, though potentially negative for some species, are not expected to rise to the level of significance or move any migratory bird species towards a future need for protection under the Endangered Species Act for the following reasons:

- The number of individuals affected by this project would be small compared to the population size for the species in the larger analysis area
- The area of habitat to be affected is small compared to the available habitat within the larger analysis area.

Other Wildlife

Other wildlife species using the site would likely be permanently or temporarily displaced, depending on their habitat needs and their tolerance of disturbance. Any larger animals that might use the site, such as white-tailed deer or coyote, would respond to the disturbance by leaving the area during the period of construction. Displaced wildlife would likely to move to other nearby sites that provide similar habitat characteristics.

Although there would be less habitat available if this alternative was implemented, there would be improvements to remaining habitat. Shrubs and trees would be planted near the southern border of the property, which would compensate for the loss of some mid-canopy vegetation in the firewise treatment area. These shrubs as well as the planted trees, grasses, and forbs would provide some of the hiding cover and foraging habitat that remains after construction and the silvicultural treatments.

The landscaping plans that would be implemented within the footprint of development include use of native shrubs, trees, and forbs; many species of which would be beneficial to native wildlife that continue to use the site. In addition, any non-native plants would be selected for their benefit to wildlife, especially pollinators and birds (i.e. crabapple trees). Planting native shrubs and perennials that provide a food source or cover for wildlife would benefit species that continue to use the site. The proposed monitoring would help ensure that noxious weeds are treated which would ensure that remaining habitat has higher value to native species.

Though some species would be negatively affected by the implementation of the proposed action, none of the impacts are expected to rise to level of significance because:

- The number of individuals affected by this project would be small compared to the population size for the species in the larger analysis area
- The area of habitat to be affected is small compared to the available habitat within the larger analysis area.
- The current population information for the species discussed does not indicate a downward trend or any vulnerability to extinction

Cumulative Effects

The ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions that would impact wildlife include continuing urban development, continuing operations of the USFS Nursery, ongoing maintenance of the power line corridor at the southern edge of the property, and continued agricultural activities on lands to the west of the project area.

The analysis area for cumulative effects to wildlife is a four mile radius circle around the project area. This area represents the distance that some animals would have to travel to find similar habitat nearby. There are still small forested parcels within the City of Coeur d'Alene, though it is likely that many of them will become developed within the temporal scope of the analysis.

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

The proposed action would have no direct or indirect effects on federally listed or Special Status Species. Thus, there would be no contribution to cumulative impacts for these species.

Migratory Birds and Other Wildlife

About 7.5 acres of habitat would be developed. While this area is high in value, it represents a very small proportion of habitat for the populations of the species, including Birds of Conservation Concern, in the analysis area. For example, the developed habitat could potentially sustain three breeding pairs of black-capped chickadees (Rodewald 2016). If one assumed that all three pairs were displaced as a result of the project (which is unlikely) this, combined with reasonably foreseeable actions, would not reach the level of significance for the population of black-capped chickadees within the analysis area. Therefore impacts to species populations, even

under the assumption that all individuals within the project area would not successfully disperse upon implementation would still not reach the level of significance. The impacts of the proposed action, combined with reasonably foreseeable actions, as well as proposed improvements to the remaining habitat would not result in significant impacts to any wildlife population that could result in downward trending population numbers or move any populations within the analysis area towards a need for federal protection.

Compliance with Forest Plan and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans
Forest Plan requirements do not apply to the Coeur d'Alene Nursery site.

Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Species

The Endangered Species Act requires the Forest Service to assist in recovery of threatened, endangered, and proposed species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Section 7 of the Act directs federal agencies to ensure that actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of their critical habitat. The Forest Service is required to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service if a proposed activity may affect individuals or habitat of a listed species. The direction requires the Forest Service to complete biological assessments to document whether projects would likely have adverse effects on identified habitats or individuals of threatened or endangered animals. No threatened or endangered species occur within the project area (EA p. 26), therefore proposed action would have no direct or indirect effects on federally listed or Special Status Species. A biological assessment for the INRC Project will be prepared prior to a decision being issued for the project.

Sensitive Species

The Forest Service Manual directs the regional forester to identify sensitive species for each national forest where species viability may be a concern. The direction requires the Forest Service to manage the habitat of the species listed in the regional sensitive species list to prevent further declines in populations, which could lead to listing under the Endangered Species Act. No sensitive species occur within the project area (EA p. 27), therefore no direct or indirect impacts to these species are expected from either alternative. Because of its small size and location, this project area is not likely to become suitable habitat for any Sensitive Species, regardless of which Alternative is selected. Thus, no impacts to sensitive species would be expected from this Alternative 2.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, directs Federal agencies to evaluate the effects of agency actions on migratory birds within the NEPA analysis process, focusing on species of management concern along with their priority habitat and key risk factors. Priority habitats identified in Idaho for migratory birds are riparian habitat, non-riverine wetlands, sagebrush shrub, and dry ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir/grand fir forests. Riparian habitat, non-riverine wetlands and sagebrush shrub habitats do not occur within the project area. The activities proposed in Alternative 2 would impact an inconsequential amount of dry forest habitat, which represents a very small proportion of habitat available within the larger analysis area (EA p. 28).

Agencies and Persons Consulted

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, State, and local agencies during the development of this environmental assessment:

Agencies

Bureau of Land Management

City of Coeur d'Alene

Idaho State Historic Preservation Office

Kootenai County Assessor's Office

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Individuals

Robert Lee Aho

Steve Bailey

Judy Bealer

Mike Becker

John Crews

Davidson Trust Company Trustee

Mary Ann Garringer

Leonard Hodge

Jim and Colleen Hoffman

Michael Kempton

Mike and Jackie Maiser

Mike Martin

Kevan McCrummen

Douglas and Philana McInnis

George and Marilyn Reames

Anne and Jonathan Sedgwick

Kent Setty

Bruce Shuh

Mark Snow

Warren Wilson

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Response to Comments

Comments from Mr. Kevan McCrummen

My property directly abuts the land that is proposed for development. My first thought is to remind you that the City of Coeur d'Alene planning commission Failed - Without Prejudice the proposal to annex and develop that land due to impact on property value, traffic impact, auditory and light noise, lack of currently available financing, and lack of a construction plan/ schematics (among others).

I will also remind you that the Coeur d'Alene City Council passed the annexation to city land by a thin margin; A.) Pending studies on street and traffic light design by the street department, and B.) Pending application of the intended provision of adding a 150' PUD buffer between our homes and your construction. I am curious as to the status of those findings and your intent to provide a visual/ auditory buffer to all the homes along the fence line.

Response: On April 14, 2015, the City of Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission approved the request for approval of the Forest Service's application for a Planned Unit Development in the C-17L zoning district. Special conditions to the approval included an 80 foot wide open space buffer area along the southern property line composed of a 20 foot wide utility access area and a 60 foot wide two-aged forest area designed, planted and maintained to provide a 50% or more sight obscuring buffer.

The plans that I have seen at the informational meeting and at the City Council meeting, (and currently hold in my hand) appear to impact less than the listed 8 acres of excavation. I wonder if your proposal will pass future council meetings if you have increased your excavation area to 60% of the land mass from what had seemed to be 30% at previous meetings.

Response: The City of Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission has approved the request for approval of the Forest Service's application for a Planned Unit Development in the C-17L zoning district. The developed footprint (buildings, parking, access, etc...) would total about 7.5 acres.

Will the proposed construction damage or destroy cultural resources? My understanding is that this land has been, and could be, used as an education tool for area students. There are three schools within walking distance to the forested land, and no other site like it within town. The discussion at previous meetings that it has been under-utilized is really neither here-nor-there for this discussion. Yes, it could damage cultural resources.

Response: A cultural resource survey of the project area was conducted in 2014 by the Forest Cultural Resource specialist. No cultural properties were located within the area of potential effect (Project Completion Memo, Project File). Alternative 2 includes a design feature that would provide for protection of any items of archeological or historical value that may be reported or discovered prior to or during construction work (see page 7).

How will the construction affect special status plants and native vegetation? Well, there's the leveling of 8 acres of mature ponderosa pine trees?

Response: Surveys for threatened, endangered and Forest Service sensitive plants by a qualified botanist were conducted on the site in summer and fall of 2014 and 2015. No rare plant individuals or populations were discovered during these inventories (see page 14).

Your nursery property is huge. I, and my neighbors, believe the location for your building would best be served further up Kathleen Ave where your Nursery Superintendent stated you are growing weeds for planting in forests. There is a largely open, and what appears to be vastly under-utilized, section of land right along Kathleen directly adjacent to Time Warner Cable, and access into Coeur d'Alene Place residential neighborhood. It would make much more sense to place a traffic light and commercial structure at that location.

Response: If the proposed office site were relocated further up Kathleen Avenue across from Time Warner Cable, the current proposed site would have to be converted to nursery use to compensate for the loss in cultivated nursery associated with the relocated facilities construction. The conversion and use would likely result in more impacts than the proposed action alone as increased ground disturbance would result at both sites, rather than just the area included in the proposed action. There would also be increased costs associated with this alternative, versus the proposed action, as site conversion would be required at both sites.

The socio-economic analysis in the EA examined the effects on adjacent property values resulting from the facility construction proposed under the Alternative 2. While appraisers from the Kootenai Assessor's Office have noted that changes to adjacent property sale values can result when commercial facilities are constructed next store, such effects on property values have not been observed in cases such as this, given the type of facilities proposed and the 80-foot open space buffer to be implemented with the proposed action (Kootenai County 2014a, 2014b).

For these reasons an alternative considering a different site within the nursery grounds was considered but not given detailed consideration (see page 9).

Will construction result in spread of invasive species or noxious weeds? I suspect not. Possibly, if FS vehicles are being washed there after trips into the forests.

Response: Non-native invasive plant species have been located within the project area. Prior to beginning ground disturbing operations, existing invasive plants/plant populations on the site would be treated using integrated treatment methods to lessen their potential for spread. Other design features (see page 8) incorporated into Alternative 2 would effectively reduce the potential for invasive plant occurrence and spread within the project area. During and after completion of construction activities, monitoring would be conducted to provide for control of any newly established invasive plant populations and follow-up treatment for previously treated occurrences within the project area (see page 18).

Will construction and use of the new facilities affect wildlife of special status wildlife? I have a lot of quail and squirrels that enter my yard from your property. I'm guessing that would be negligible wildlife impact.

Response: While some existing habitat would be developed and wildlife could be displaced, the effect from the amount of proposed development represents a small proportion of habitat for populations of wildlife species within the area. Although there would be less habitat available with implementation of Alternative 2, there would be improvements to remaining habitat. Shrubs and trees would be planted near the southern border of the property, which would compensate for the loss of some mid-canopy vegetation. These shrubs as well as the planted trees, grasses, and forbs are expected to provide some of the hiding cover and foraging habitat that remains after construction and the silvicultural treatments (see page 29).

Will there be excessive runoff or sediment from the site during and after construction? Doubtful.

Response: To address the potential for runoff or sediment from the site, Best Management Practices found in the Catalog of Stormwater Best Management Practices for Idaho Cities and Counties (IDEQ, Water Quality Division, 2005) would be applied (see page 7).

How will noise, light, and changes in the view resulting from construction and use of the new facilities affect neighboring residents? One of my concerns for environmental impact on our homes is the decreasing of the natural sound buffer between our homes and Kathleen, and the increase of light noise in our back yards. 6 acres of paved surface "with street lights within parking areas and external lighting on buildings," makes it sound like it will be eternally daytime in our back yards. That is not acceptable, nor does it sound energy efficient for a LEED certified building. Somebody within your ranks had mentioned the possibility of using motion detector, and less tall, and low light-noise light covers. That would be preferable.

Response: Changes from noise, light and view resulting from construction and use of the new facilities included in the proposed action are discussed in the EA (see page 20). As stipulated in the approved Planned Unit Development, an 80' wide open space/ buffer area along the southern property line composed of a 20 foot wide utility access area and a 60 foot wide two-aged forest area, designed to provide a visual buffer is included as a component of the proposed action (see page 6). The new building will receive a Green Globes certification from the Green Building Initiative. Prior to certification, the building will be assessed on site by a professional from the Green Building Initiative to document that the building complies with their Guiding Principles. Green Globe certification includes criteria for implementing energy efficient practices to decrease overall energy consumption and focusing on practices to reduce pollution from noise and light (<http://greenglobe.com/standard/>).

My view as I type this is of mature and immature pine trees and forest floor vegetation. In addition to the paved surfaces, two story building, and parking lights mentioned, you also reference in your plans (and I quote) & 14,000 foot chain linked security fence with barbed wire along the top with two electric gates around the warehouse and government-vehicle parking area." So we're going from being backed up against a forest, to being backed up against a prison? Yes, that would be a change in view.

Response: We apologize for the typographical error. The amount of fencing to be installed would be about 1,580 feet (see page 6). The security fencing would be installed around the around the warehouse and government-vehicle parking area only, not around the entire facility.

How will construction and use of the new facilities affect recreational use of the adjacent bike trail? It looks like you have this covered, and I imagine that impact will be minimal depending on if, or where, pedestrian/ bike traffic crosses your access to the buildings/ lots. I don't think that bike trail users need a '5,000 square foot paved parking area' in that location. That just increases your concrete footprint and possibly the setback toward homes. Most of the people that access the trail live in the nearby neighborhoods, and simply bike or run to it.

Response: Access to the Prairie Trail and the existing pedestrian crossing of Kathleen Avenue would be maintained. The 5,000 square foot parking area is included in Alternative 2 and would provide parking for users not residing within the immediate area that may wish to utilize the trail.

Will the construction and use of the new facilities affect adjacent property values? ABSOLUTELY! No doubt about it. I recently purchased my house for a large amount of money. More than a couple of the property owners along the fence line are physicians, and this is a desirable golf course neighborhood. We purchased at this location because of its proximity to town, the natural barrier the trees provided to traffic on Kathleen, its proximity to the elementary and junior high schools nearby, and because most of our rooms and bedrooms look out into the back yard and the trees. Of course nothing in real estate is certain, but we purchased this land (Zoned R-3 - three residential occupancies per acre) abutting Forest Service land not expecting that it would be zoned commercial and then having razor wire installed along it. You will definitely kill our property values. Move your building further up Kathleen, and you avoid all of these problems.

Response: As discussed in a previous comment, the amount of fencing to be installed would be about 1,580 feet. The security fencing would be installed around the warehouse and government-vehicle parking area only, not around the entire facility. The EA included an analysis of the potential effects to adjacent property values from implementation of Alternative 2 (page 22). While there could be effects to adjacent property values, it was considered unlikely that Alternative 2 would have a measurable effect on those values due to distance and retention of vegetation.

I fully understand and support both your need for a building, and the need for the nursery land to improve the forests. You and your representatives have stated repeatedly that you want to be good stewards, and good neighbors. I would like to see you move the structure, and if there is a give and take, make that forested land an area that you plant more trees for forestation. Put your well-lit, barb-wired, 8 acres of concrete where it doesn't impact homes. Is the land slated for planting bushes and weeds really more important than not ruining the property values on 17 homes? Caring for the Land and Serving People's printed at the bottom of your notice paperwork, and I hope you consider those words as you move forward.

Response: The Forest Service has been and will continue to be a good neighbor.

Comments from Mr. and Mrs. Reames

Notice of proposed project published on October 17, 2014 in Coeur d'Alene Press. Notices were mailed on October 30, 2014, giving 30 days to respond, from the newspaper publication. This is typical government maneuvering.

Response: We apologize for the late mailing. All comments received, have been considered.

There are many other sites to build the office within the nursery, acres of weeds without impacting the value of the 13 homes with the large growth trees behind us (it's the only beautiful forest area in the nursery).

Response: The Forest Service considered constructing the facilities at a different location within the nursery to reduce impacts associated with the viewshed/noise, recreation and socio-economic issues. This alternative was not given detailed consideration for the reasons discussed on page 9.

We expect the 150 foot buffer to be observed.

Response: The findings and order for the Planned Unit Development that was approved by the City of Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission on April 14, 2015, includes retention of an

80 foot wide open space/ buffer area along the southern property line composed of a 20 foot wide utility access area and a 60 foot wide two-aged forest area designed, planted and maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer. As included in the description of activities to take place under Alternative 2, provision has been made for retention of a visual buffer along the southern property boundary (see page 6).

Comments from Mr. Kent Setty

Your comparison of what you intend to build is confusing and cannot be compared directly. This is either the result of careless composition, or an attempt to intentionally confuse the issue.

The square footage of the proposed building appears to be only slightly more than half the size of the existing building (43,041 v. 23,000 square feet). This size differential means that the available office space will be reduced from 331 square feet per employee to 154 square feet per employee taking into account the addition of 19 more employees.

Response: The square footage of the new office building would be 30,750 ft². A new 28,000 ft² warehouse would also be constructed. The warehouse would provide for storage as well as a dispatch center. The current office contains 43,041 ft², but because both Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have reduced the number of employees assigned to the organizations in the current office, the building has more space than either agency needs.

The change from 68,084 feet of ware yard to 14,000 feet of chain link and barb wired fence is nonsensical. Math says you could enclose 10,000,000 square feet or 229 acres with that much fence. Since the proposed site is only 8 acres, I have a serious question about what exactly the fence is for.

Response: We apologize for the typographical error. The amount of fencing to be installed would be about 1,580 feet.

The Supervisor's Office currently has parking for 182 cars, which converts to slightly more than an acre of parking. The proposal states that you now intend to pave 6 acres of the site, converting to over 800 parking spaces or some other use. I have a hard time figuring out what all the pavement is for. In the time the Supervisor's Office has been in its current location, I can only remember a couple of times the whole parking lot was full.

Response: There would be surface paving of about 3.5 acres for visitor, employee, and government vehicle parking

The absence of even a proposed plot plan is disturbing in that you submitted one to the City for the planning process. I would like to see one now with dimensions included.

Response: An overall site plan has been provided in the EA. See Figure 2.

Comments from Mr. and Mrs. McInnis

Please keep in mind the set back from the southern fence line (100'). The storage parking lot to be moved further from the line. If the lighting in both parking lots could be minimized for least impact on all neighbors to the south as well as north across Kathleen.

Existing conceptual drawings indicate that I will have only 8-12 trees > 6" diameter between my home and the motor pool parking lot. I would prefer that the motor pool be moved due north leaving around 150' buffer (20-25 trees) from the fence line, rather than the 75' as drawn.

Response: As included in the findings and order for the Planned Unit Development for the site that was approved by the City of Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission, retention of an 80 foot wide open space/ buffer area along the southern property line composed of a 20 foot wide utility access area and a 60 foot wide two-aged forest area designed, planted and maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer is required. The Forest Service has incorporated this buffer area into the proposed action (see page 6). The site plan has been revised to move the storage parking 80 feet from the southern property line (see Figure 2). The new facilities would meet Green Globe design standards which would reduce the visibility of lighting to adjacent properties (see page 22).

The number of parking spots drawn seems excessive and the setback from the fence line would increase considerably if the number of parking stalls was reduced. Please look seriously at the number of spots that are necessary and make the parking lots as small as allowable by code.

Response: We are continuing to evaluate the number of parking stalls to meet the minimum requirements to support the BLM, USFW, USFS, and Fire Operations.

Comments from Mr. Steve Bailey

Relocate project to a different part of the nursery.

Response: The Forest Service considered an alternative that would construct the facilities at a different location within the nursery. However, this alternative was not given detailed consideration for the reasons discussed on page 9.

Comments from Mr. and Mrs. Sedgwick

Suggest that the buffer zone be at least 125' from the western fence in order to protect the value of the properties abutting the tree farm.

Leave a wider buffer of trees. At least 150'.

Response: Per the findings and order for the Planned Unit Development for the site that was approved by the City of Coeur d'Alene Planning Commission, the proposed action provides for the retention of an 80 foot wide open space/ buffer area along the southern property line. Sixty feet of this buffer would consist of a two-aged forest area designed, planted and maintained to provide a 50 percent or more sight obscuring buffer (see page 6).

Definitely move the motor pool parking lot further east.

I would like to see the parking lots moved further back from the neighbor's fence line so we won't have to look at it from my back deck.

Response: The site plan has been revised to move the fleet parking area 80 feet (north) from the southern property line (see Figure 2).