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Charlie Preston Project

Decision Notice

St. Joe Ranger District
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

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DECISION NOTICE

CHARLIE PRESTON PROJECT

United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
 Idaho Panhandle National Forests, St. Joe Ranger District
 Benewah County and Latah County, Idaho

I. Decision

After review of the Charlie Preston Environmental Assessment (EA), resource reports, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI; DN Appendix A), comments from the public (DN Appendix B), and the project file I decided to implement Alternative C with all the associated design features and monitoring. The timber harvest in Alternative C is commercial thinning and it has less road construction than Alternative B.

On June 3, 2011 we sent a letter to everyone on the mailing list (PI-84, PI-97) announcing the Charlie Preston EA was available. The legal notice announcing the 30-day comment period was published in the *Coeur d'Alene Press*, the newspaper of record, on June 6, 2011. After the comment period we updated the EA to address comments, provide clarification, and make some corrections. This decision is based on the updated EA and the resource reports it summarizes.

A. Details of Alternative C - The Selected Alternative - Commercial Thinning and Less Road Construction (DN Maps 1 and 2)

Alternative C was designed to address public concerns regarding the proposed action while still addressing many aspects of the purpose and need. Some people said they did not want any clearcuts. This alternative does not include clearcuts or any other type of regeneration harvest that would cause large openings in the tree cover. It only includes commercial thinning. Some people indicated that too much road construction was included in the proposed action because it would increase sediment. This alternative includes 1.6 miles of new system road construction, compared with 4.5 proposed in Alternative B. It would also require less temporary road than Alternative B. It includes many of the same activities as Alternative B, but it does not include any regeneration harvests or final entry harvests.

Table 1 – Comparison of Activities by Alternative

Proposed Activity	Alternative B	Alternative C
Commercial timber harvest	1546 acres	850 acres
	21 MMBF (42,730 CCF)	12 MMBF (24,120 CCF)
New road construction	4.5 miles	1.6 miles
Temporary road construction	1.1 miles	0.4 miles
Road reconstruction	2.4 miles	0.7 miles
Activity fuel treatments	1546 acres	850 acres
Bald Mountain Fuel Reduction	30 acres	30 acres
Prescribed burn no timber harvest of off-site pine	82 acres	82 acres
Reduce fuels along selected roads	120 acres	127 acres
Cavity nesting habitat creation by girdling and inoculating live trees	150 acres	150 acres
Remove or replace fish migration barriers	6 culverts	6 culverts
Planting conifer seedlings in regeneration harvest units	181 acres	0 acres
Pocket gopher control on planted areas	181 acres	82 acres
Roads closed with guardrail barriers (Rx B)	1.0 miles	0 miles
Putting roads into long-term storage (Rx C)	4.4 miles	4.4 miles
Decommissioning roads (Rx D)	0.6 miles	0.6 miles

Alternative C includes the following:

- Timber harvest on 850 acres.
- Activity fuels treatment after timber harvest in all units using the methods described beginning on page 14.
- Prescribe burning on 82 acres with no timber harvest to reduce off-site ponderosa pine and prepare sites to plant early-seral, long-lived tree species. See DN Map 1.
- Pocket gopher control, as needed, to protect regeneration in the off-site ponderosa treatment unit (Rx Burn on DN Map 1).
- Fuels reduction along approximately 7.5 miles (up to 127 acres) of road using methods described beginning on page 15. See details below and Map 1.
- Fuels Reduction in a 30-acre area near Bald Mountain Lookout by lopping, hand piling, and burning piles.
- Removing and selling biomass, where economically feasible, as a by-product of the other proposed vegetation treatments. See Map 1.
- Opening gates on Road 1950 (up to the second gate), Road 1954, and the existing portion of Road 1950C from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend for public firewood gathering for up to three years after the last timber sale contract closes on each road.
- Creating snags by girdling live trees and increasing potential cavity nesting habitat by inoculating live trees with fungus spores on approximately 20-30 trees per year for three to five years on approximately 150 acres.
- Constructing 1.6 miles of system road and 0.4 miles of temporary road to facilitate timber harvest. See Map 1 for locations.
- Reconstructing 0.7 miles of roads to facilitate timber harvest. See Map 1 for locations.
- Putting 4.4 miles of existing road into long-term storage to leave them in a hydrologically neutral state. See Map 2.
- Decommissioning 0.6 miles of existing roads and remove them from the National Forest Road system. See Map 2.
- Removing or replacing six fish migration barrier culverts. Culverts that are replaced would allow fish passage. Migration barrier culverts on roads to be stored would be removed. See Map 2.
- Planting conifer seedlings in riparian areas and placing large woody debris in streams along approximately five miles of streams in Hume Creek, Charlie Creek, and Preston Creek. See Map 2.
- Leaving log landing areas in conditions conducive for dispersed camping, where feasible.

Alternative C Timber Harvest (Map 1)

Timber harvest and associated activities would occur in the following units.

Fuel treatment method abbreviations are: BB=broadcast burn; RTL=remove tops and limbs at landings; GP=grapple pile & remove or burn piles; S= lash vegetation less than 6 inches at d.b.h.; L=leave tops; UB=under/jackpot burn; LS=lop and scatter

Table 2 - Timber Harvest Silvicultural Prescriptions, Logging Systems & Fuel Treatment

Unit	Acres	Silvicultural Prescription	Logging System	Fuel Treatment
1	25	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
2A	15	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
5	50	Commercial Thin	Track Line Machine	RTL,S,GP,UB
8	80	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	L, LS, S, GP, UB
16A	11	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
16B	75	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
17	16	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
19	8	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
23A	20	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
23B	103	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
26	13	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
27A	12	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
27B	62	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
28	11	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,UB
31	9	Commercial Thin	Track Line Machine	RTL,S,GP,UB
32	3	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,UB
33A	17	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
33B	26	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,UB
34	12	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
38	16	Commercial Thin	Track Line Machine	RTL,S,GP,UB
83A	2	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	L, LS, S, GP, UB
83B	12	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
84	28	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
87A	19	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	L, LS, S, GP, UB
87B	8	Commercial Thin	Skyline	L, LS, S, GP, UB
88	44	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
89	26	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
90A	2	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
90B	29	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
100A	8	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
100B	23	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
102A	6	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
102B	48	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB
118A	3	Commercial Thin	Ground-based	RTL,S,GP,UB
118B	8	Commercial Thin	Skyline	RTL,S,GP,UB

Timber would be harvested to achieve project objectives identified in the purpose and need using commercial thins and the following logging systems.

Table 3 – Alternative C Logging Systems

Logging System	Ground-based	Skyline	Track Line Machine	Total
Approximate Acres	353	422	75	850

Alternative C Fuel Reduction

Fuel Treatment in Proposed Timber Harvest Units

The following fuels treatment activities would be used to reduce fuel accumulations that would result from the timber harvesting activities.

Table 4 – Alternative C Proposed Fuel Reduction in Timber Harvest Units

Fuel Treatment in Harvest Units	Leave Tops in Woods, Lop, Slash, Grapple Pile and/or Prescribe Burn	Remove Tops & Limbs, Slash, Grapple Pile and/or Underburn	Remove Tops & Limbs, Slash and/or Underburn	Total
Approx. Acres	109	701	40	850

Other Fuel Treatment

Roadside Fuel Reduction Treatments (DN Map 1)

Roadside fuel reduction treatments would occur along Roads 377, 1479, 1947, 1950, and 1954 for a total of approximately 127 acres. Table 5 shows lengths and areas of roadside fuel treatment along each road.

Table 5 – Alternative C Roadside Fuel Treatment

Road 377 Palouse Divide	Road 1479 Hume Creek	Road 1947 Lacey Creek	Road 1950 Hume Ridge	Road 1954 Fagan Preston Ridge	Total
1.4 miles	3.1 miles	0.8 miles	0.9 miles	1.3 miles	7.5 miles
20 acres	55 acres	15 acres	17 acres	20 acres	127 acres

Bald Mountain Fuel Reduction (DN Map 1)

This area was pre-commercially thinned approximately 10 years ago. Slash from that activity is persisting. Existing downed material would be lopped, hand piled, and the piles would be burned to reduce fuel loads on 30-acres.

Biomass Removal

Biomass removal includes harvesting the wood product obtained from all or portions of trees including limbs, tops, and unmerchantable stems usually for energy production. This would be a by-product of the proposed fuel reduction treatments.

Alternative C Other Vegetation Treatments

Off-Site Ponderosa Treatment (RxBurn on DN Map 1)

Approximately 82 acres would be prescribed burned with no timber harvest to reduce off-site ponderosa pine and prepare sites to plant early-seral, long-lived tree species. Some smaller trees would be slashed to increase ground fuels enough to carry flame. Trees would be planted where appropriate following the prescribed burn. Multiple entries may be required to achieve desired silvicultural objectives. See RxBurn on DN Map 1.

Pocket Gopher Control After Tree Planting

Pocket gophers would be controlled, if needed, in the off-site ponderosa pine treatment unit (Unit 18 / RxBurn).

Personal-Use Firewood Removal

After logging and biomass removal operations, gates on Road 1950 (up to the second gate), Road 1954, and the existing portion of Road 1950C may be opened from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend for public firewood gathering for up to three years after the last timber sale contract closes on each road. Valid personal-use firewood permits would be required. The public would be allowed to gather firewood except where prohibited as shown on maps and/or as posted. See project file document PD-29 for personal firewood considerations.

Snag and Potential Cavity Nesting Habitat Creation

Snags would be created by girdling live trees. Potential cavity nesting habitat would be increased by inoculating live trees with fungal spores.

Alternative C Road Work

Road Construction

Approximately 1.6 miles of new system road construction would be necessary to implement the envisioned timber harvesting systems. See DN Map 1.

Temporary Roads

Approximately 0.4 miles of temporary road would be necessary to implement the envisioned timber harvesting systems (See DN Map 1). A temporary road is a road constructed just for this project that would be obliterated when harvest operations are complete.

Road Reconstruction

Approximately 0.7 miles of road would be reconstructed to their approved traffic service level or would be improved to increase safety, operational efficiency or resource protection (improve drainage and improve water quality). See DN Map 1.

Road Storage

Approximately 4.4 miles of existing road would be put into long-term storage. All newly constructed roads would be put into long-term storage (Road Management Prescription C) or be barriered (Road Management Prescription B) when timber harvest and related contract obligations are complete.

Road Decommissioning

Approximately 0.6 miles of existing road would be decommissioned and be removed from the National Forest Road system.

Alternative C Aquatic Improvements

Fish Migration Barrier Removal or Replacement

Fish migration barriers would be removed or be replaced.

Riparian Planting and Large Woody Debris Placement

Large woody debris would be placed in streams, and trees and shrubs would be planted in association with the woody debris structures and in other areas of the riparian zones where shade lacking.

Alternative C Creation of Dispersed Camping Sites

Log landing areas would be left in conditions conducive for dispersed camping where feasible.

B. Design Features

The following design and mitigation measures will be implemented in full as written. These measures represent all practical means to avoid or minimize environmental effects in the context of taking action to achieve the project’s purpose and need.

I. Design Features for All Proposed Activities

A. Aquatic Resources

1. The project would implement standard riparian habitat conservation area (RHCA) widths specified by Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) (Table 1). These buffer zones are no-entry for harvest and equipment. Exceptions are described in the Standards and Guidelines, General Riparian Area Management (INFS RA-2) that states: “Trees may be felled in Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas when they pose a safety risk.”

Table 6 – Standard Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCA) Widths

INFS Category	Description	RHCA Width
1	Fish-bearing streams	300 feet from either side of channel
2	Permanent, flowing, non-fish bearing stream	150 feet from either side of channel
3	Wetlands > 1 acre	150 feet from wetland
4	Seasonally flowing or intermittent streams, Wetlands <1 acre, Landslide prone areas	50 feet from either side of channel or wetland (non-priority watersheds)

2. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used to achieve water quality standards (Charlie Preston EA Appendix B). The R1/R4 Forest Service Handbook 2509.22 (Soil and Water Conservation Handbook) outlines BMPs that meet the intent of the water quality protection elements of the Idaho Forest Practices Act, Forest Plan Standards and replaces the Forest Plan Appendix S – Best Management Practices. To ensure water quality protection additional site-specific BMPs may be identified and developed during layout, design or implementation of proposed activities.

3. All treatments would meet or exceed requirements and erosion control guidelines of the Rules and Regulations pertaining to the Idaho Forest Practices Act, Title 38, Chapter 13, Idaho Code.

B. Cultural Resources

1. All known cultural resource sites that are eligible or potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places would be protected or mitigated as directed by the National Historic Preservation Act.
2. Any future discovery of cultural resources, archaeological sites or caves would be inventoried and protected if found to be of cultural significance. A provision would be included in all contracts to ensure protection of the sites. A discovery plan for the protection of cultural resources would be included in contracts in case of cultural resource discovery during project implementation.

C. Fuels

Any slash created from proposed activities left after slash treatment would not exceed a depth of 18 inches.

D. Noxious Weeds

1. If new populations of noxious weeds are found treatment would be implemented in accordance with priorities set by the noxious weed program. New invader species would be slated for eradication immediately upon discovery. Other weed infestations would be treated according to the direction in the St. Joe Noxious Weed Project FEIS and ROD and district priorities.
2. All equipment taken off roads (including machinery used in restoration projects and logging and construction equipment) would be cleaned prior to entering the project area to remove dirt, plant parts, and material that may carry weed seeds. A provision would be included in contracts.
3. Seed and mulching agents, such as hay or straw, would be certified weed-free prior to use. On-site slash could be used. A provision would be included in contracts.
4. After implementation, project areas would be reviewed for new populations of noxious weeds. If new populations are found more intensive surveys would be conducted, sites would be mapped, and treatment would be scheduled.
5. All weed treatments would be monitored for effectiveness

E. Plants (Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive)

If Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species are discovered during project implementation, the district botanist would be notified so that measures could be taken to maintain population viability. Measures to protect population viability and habitat for all known and newly discovered occurrences would include altering or dropping proposed units from activity, modifying the proposed activity, or implementing buffers/breaks around plant occurrences. Provisions for protection of Endangered Species, and settlement for environmental cancellation would be included in all contracts.

F. Public Health and Safety

1. Warning signs would be posted and/or temporary road closures may be used to provide safety when project operations occur on or adjacent to roads that are open to motorized vehicles.
2. Dust abatement would be used as needed near homes.

G. Recreation

1. Existing dispersed recreation sites used for project activities would be restored or rehabilitated if motorized access to the sites would remain available after project implementation.
2. Contractors would follow permit provisions required for camping.
3. No project activities would be allowed from December 1 to March 31 on Palouse Divide Road 377 from the junction with Highway 6 to Bald Mountain Lookout and along Hume Creek Road 1479 from the junction with Palouse Divide Road 377 to the junction with Road 1950. These sections of roads are closed to all motorized traffic as part of the Palouse Divide Park n' Ski Cross-Country Ski system.

H. Seeding

Seed mixes would be certified weed-free and of a mix appropriate to the habitat as described in the most current version of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest Native Seed Mix document (project file B-14). The approved seed mix may change by the time seeding is implemented, so the most recent seed mix would be used.

I. Soils

1. To reduce the impacts to soils and soil productivity, the proposed activities would utilize soil and conservation practices as described in the Soil and Water Conservation Practices (SWCP) Handbook (FSH 2509.22) and the Charlie Preston EA Appendix B. This handbook and appendix outline best management practices (BMPs) that protect the soil resources at a higher level than existing Idaho Forest Practices rules and regulations do, thereby incorporating all Idaho state standards.
2. Design features given below were developed to minimize the detrimental impacts of soil compaction, displacement, severe burning, and nutrient and organic matter depletion on long-term soil productivity.
 - a. Existing fine organic matter and large woody debris would be retained on the ground for sustained nutrient recycling in harvest units, consistent with Graham and others (1994).
 - b. Downed woody retention levels would be maintained wherever practical for both high elevation and moist forest habitat types. Graham and others (1994) recommend retaining 17-33 tons per acre for moist and 10-19 tons per acre for high elevation habitat types of downed woody material greater than three inches in diameter. The high elevation areas are Units 27A, 27B and 28, with the remaining units falling into the moist habitat groups.
 - c. The latest soil nutrient management recommendations from the Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrient Cooperative (IFTNC) and Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) would be applied as appropriate to each activity area where organic material is removed. Slash should be left to over-winter nutrients back

into the soil in most cases until fuel reduction treatments occur. In those units in which tops and limbs are to be removed, only the tops, limbs, and branches that break during harvesting operations would be left to overwinter before fuel treatments. Tops and limbs would come out when the logs are yarded.

- d. Those units in which the parent geology is rated relatively poor for nutrient-holding capacity, slash would be left on the ground untreated from 9 to 15 months before prescribed fire activities are to occur (Johnston 2009). The length of time slash needs to remain on the ground before the fuel treatments is based on the season in which the harvest occurs. For winter harvest (December-February), logging slash should remain untreated for up to 15 months to enable all the nutrients to leach out and become usable to other vegetation. Likewise for spring harvest (March- May), untreated slash should remain on the ground for up to 12 months; and for summer and fall harvest (June-November), slash should remain on the ground for up to 9 months. The following units fall on parent geology with low nutrient hold capacity: (south end of Unit 1, south end of Unit 8, north end of Units 27A, 27B and 28).
- e. Prescribed burning and pile burning would occur only when the upper surface inch of mineral soil has a moisture content of 25% by weight, or when duff moisture exceeds 60%, or when other monitoring or modeling indicates that soil productivity will be protected. It is strongly recommended when fuel loads are high and fuel moistures are low that the mineral soil be above 25% moisture content.
- f. When prescribed fire is utilized, post-burn conditions would result in no more than 25 to 30 percent bare soils (excluding natural conditions) within an activity area (burn unit). On sensitive soils or slopes at or greater than 40%, no more than 20% of bare soils (excluding natural conditions) would be exposed within the activity area.
- g. The desired prescribed fire outcome includes retention of organic matter (generally not much less than ¼ of an inch) that protects the soil from rain splash impacts, erosion, a decrease in soil moisture holding capacity, and increased solar surface heating, especially on south-facing slopes.

J. Wildlife

1. Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Wildlife Species Management:

Contract provisions for protection of Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species, and settlement for environmental cancellation would be included. If TES species and/or significant habitat are discovered before or during project implementation the Sale Administrator and the district wildlife biologist would be notified so that if needed, measures could be taken to avoid impacts and meet Forest Plan Standards. Measures could include altering or dropping proposed units, modifying the proposed activity, or implementing buffers.

2. Goshawk:

- a. Nests: Existing nests and those found before and during project implementation would be protected with a 40-acre no-activity buffer (Brewer and others 2007).
- b. Post-Fledging Areas (PFA): Proposed project activities would be suspended in the PFA of active goshawk nests between April 15 and August 15. After August 15th, treatment-related activities may commence within the PFA but outside the nest area (Brewer and others 2007). Restrictions may be removed after June 30 if the nest is determined by the district biologist to be inactive or unsuccessful.

II. Design Features for Timber Harvest

A. Silvicultural Prescriptions

Timber would be harvested to achieve project objectives identified in the purpose and need. All harvest would be on lands identified as suitable for timber production (Forest Vegetation Report). Various harvest methods described below would be prescribed depending on individual stand conditions.

Commercial thin (CT): Any type of thinning producing merchantable material at least equal to the value of the direct costs of harvesting. For Charlie Preston this would be used in an immature stands to increase tree vigor and growth rates and retain the trees with better form, without permanently breaking or opening the canopy. No site preparation or planting would be required. The purpose of the treatment is to regulate stand density to promote tree growth and vigor. Generally, smaller trees would be harvested and larger trees would be retained.

B. Gates

Existing gates would remain in place. Temporary gates would be installed on any road that is not behind a gate but is currently not open. During timber hauling the gate would be closed and locked at the end of each day. For other operations gates would be closed and locked after passage of each vehicle.

C. Sensitive Plants

In Unit 89 two Sensitive plants sites would have 50-foot buffers around them. Timber harvest would not occur at the plant sites or in the buffers.

D. Old Growth

No timber harvest would occur in stands that meet minimum criteria for old growth or in stands allocated for old growth management.

E. Recreation

1. Where skid trails approach or intersect open roads or designated ATV routes, restrictive devices or debris such as logs, brush and rocks would be placed to effectively stop vehicle use.
2. The tread on Trail 228 would be replaced where it intersects Road 377B when the road is no longer needed for harvest activities

F. Silviculture

White pine leave tree guidelines (Schwandt and Zack 1996) would be utilized in all silvicultural prescriptions for timber harvest. The objective of these guidelines is to retain and protect genetic resources which may contribute to long-term white pine restoration.

G. Soils

1. Ground-Based Yarding
 - a. Ground-based yarding would operate on slopes generally under 35% using existing skid trails whenever possible, and the leading end of the log would be suspended. When incidental steeper slopes of up to 40% are encountered, skid trails should not be longer than 200 feet in length along those increased slopes with no excavated trails or turning. Where terrain is conducive, go-back trails (trails used to get back to

- an area where logs would be skidded) should be used to minimize impacts wherever possible.
- b. All new skid trails would be designated and laid out to take advantage of topography and minimize disruption of natural drainage patterns. Where terrain is conducive, trails would be spaced at least 100 feet or more apart. Mechanized felling and skidding would allow skid patterns to be closer, provided slash mats are being utilized. After timber harvest ground disturbance associated with skid trails would be covered with slash and randomly placed logs (on the contour) and be seeded with the latest seed mix recommended at time of implementation (project file document B-14) to help reduce runoff.
 - c. Timber harvest activities including both skidding and mechanized felling in ground-based units and mechanical felling in skyline units would occur when the soil profile is dry to reduce the effects from compaction (Poff 1996 p. 482) unless harvest activities would be conducted during winter conditions as specified below.
2. Skyline Yarding: The leading end of logs would be suspended during skyline yarding. No yarding across designated RHCAs would occur with this project.
 3. Mechanized Felling Operations:
 - a. Mechanized felling operations would be permitted in all tractor units and in skyline/cable units provided the slopes are under 45 percent except for the following units: 33b and 102b where mechanical felling would be prohibited to limit detrimental soil disturbance and protect soil productivity.
 - b. Pivoting of mechanized felling equipment would be limited to slopes of generally 25 percent or less to reduce soil displacement. Pivoting on slopes greater than 25% but less than 35% would be allowed providing the turns are short and any areas of displaced soils are returned to natural conditions.
 - c. Timber harvest activities including both skidding and mechanized felling in ground-based units and mechanical felling in skyline units would occur when the soil profile is dry (unless operations are conducted during winter as specified below) to reduce the effects from compaction (Poff 1996 p. 482).
 4. Log Landings: Existing roads would be utilized as landings where appropriate in order to avoid additional soil compaction. All landings that are free of slash piles, other than existing or newly-constructed system roads, would be decompacted and covered with residual slash within guidelines provided by Graham and others (1994) for coarse-woody debris by habitat type, and seeded upon completion of the sale with the latest seed mix recommended at time of implementation. Those landings that are conducive to dispersed camping as determined by the district recreation specialist are exempt from these restoration activities.
 5. Winter Logging Operations: If any units are to be harvested in the winter the following requirements are to be used depending on current site conditions:
 - a. Operate on a 24-inch snow layer or 18 inches of settled snow or when the ground is frozen to a minimum depth of 3 inches for small equipment and 6 inches for larger equipment.
 - b. Restrict equipment operation to main skid trails or where adequate slash matting exists.
 - c. Suspend operations under wet or thawing conditions.

- d. Snow could be plowed from or packed onto skid trails and/or operations could be delayed until skid trails have sufficiently frozen.
6. Temporary Road Decommissioning
- a. Decompaction of the running surface to a depth not less than 18 inches shall occur before any of the side cast upper horizon soil profiles are placed across the road surface.
 - b. After running surface is decompacted, side cast material can be laid over the running surface matching top of cut slope and bottom of fill slope for proper slope.
 - c. Slash and coarse-woody debris on site from the temporary road construction and adjacent harvest activities would be placed on the newly recontoured sections (within guidelines provided by Graham and others (1994) to promote nutrient cycling and reduce recovery time.
 - d. Weed mitigation measures and prevention practices would occur in accordance with the St. Joe Noxious Weed Management Project (USDA FS IPNF 1999) for all landings and road disturbances.

7. Visual Quality

- 1. Pre-sale and Sale Administration personnel would work closely with the District or Forest visual staff to determine that design criteria are adequate for each application.
- 2. Activities would remain visually subordinate to the characteristic landscape but “appear slightly altered” repeating the form, line, color and texture common to the surrounding area with differences in qualities of size, amount, intensity, direction and pattern.
 - a. Form, line color and textures not frequently found in the characteristic landscape might be introduced in these units. Changes would remain subordinate to the visual strength of the characteristic landscape.
 - b. Openings in these areas would repeat natural openings frequently found in the characteristic landscape so completely they would not be evident, or borrow from other proposed harvest activities.
 - c. Basal area density would transition from unit boundary into harvest unit.
- 3. Units 27A and 27B would have irregular boundaries.
- 4. Units 26, 27A, 27B, and 28 would have skid trails and skyline corridors angled away from the view from State Highway 6 approximately three to five degrees from perpendicular.
- 5. Commercial thin units along Road 377 and Road 377A (Units 16B, 17, 23A, 23B, 26, 27A, 27B, 28, 33A, and 33B) would be cut-tree marked so tree marking paint is not visible after timber harvest and does not detract from the forest visitor’s drive along these roads.

H. Wildlife

- 1. Wildlife Travel and Movement Corridors: Maintenance of landscape-level connectivity and minimization of fragmentation was incorporated into the design of all alternatives with timber harvest. Travel cover along ridges and saddles was identified and considered in terms of connectivity (WL-33). Site-specific mitigation measures for units with proposed vegetation removal in designated travel corridors are found in Table 7.

2. Openings on ridge tops within designated corridors: Travel cover would be maintained and vegetation management would avoid making openings (i.e. areas with <30% canopy cover) within 200 feet of the ridgetop or 400 feet if the other side of the ridge does not provide cover. Where openings would be created on ridges designated as potential travel corridors they would meet the following criteria:
 - a. Less than 300 feet wide (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994)
 - b. Limited to one side of the ridge top (IDFG 1995)
 - c. Minimum of 800 feet between openings (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984])
 - d. None to be situated in a saddle (Heinemeyer and Jones 1994)
3. Big Game Security: To provide big game security, timber harvest in adjacent drainages would have a ridgeline between the disturbance and security areas. In larger contracts, subdivisions or scheduling of harvest units would be utilized to maintain adequate security (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984]).
4. Cavity Nesting Species: Recommendations for snag numbers, size and species from the Northern Region Snag Management Protocol (NRSP) (January 2000) would be met where these or higher levels exist. The retention of snags and snag replacements would be applied at the stand scale of every 5 to 25 acres (Bull and others 1997). Live trees would be retained at five times the number of snags recommended in the NRSP for snag recruitment. To meet the objectives listed below in Table 2 Snag Guidelines:
 - a. Silvicultural and burning prescriptions would protect large diameter snags (unless deemed unsafe) and large green tree replacement snags. This would be accomplished by pulling back slash, constructing firelines, or directed ignition. Prescriptions would also retain recommended levels and distribution of coarse woody debris during site preparation and fuels treatment.
 - b. Snags that show signs of decay, loose bark, or broken tops would not be designated for harvest (Bull and others 1997). Exceptions would be made for safety, road construction, and log landings.
 - c. Specific details on snag and leave tree selection from the Reserve Tree Guide (USDA Forest Service IPNF 1995) and the Snag and Woody Debris Guidelines (IPNF Forest Plan Appendix X) would be followed to reach objectives of the Northern Region Snag Management Protocol; and worker safety.
 - d. The species priority for selection as snags or live leave trees is as follows: western larch, ponderosa pine, western redcedar, Douglas-fir, grand fir, hemlock, lodgepole pine, spruce, alpine fir, and white pine. After size and species, preferred wildlife leave trees would be selected based on showing signs of: wildlife use, decay, broken tops, hollows, rot, brooms, loose bark, and other defects. All hardwood trees would be retained. (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix X)
 - e. Snags cut for safety reasons would be left in the unit, preferably where they fall.

Table 7 – Snag Guidelines

Forest Type	Snags/Acre
Low elevation western redcedar, hemlock: Units 6, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 23, 25, 33, 68, 71,	12 total snags with 4 >20" dbh
Cool, wet & dry spruce, grand fir, hemlock & subalpine fir: All other units	6-12 total snags with 2 >20" dbh

Table 8 –Site-Specific Mitigation Measures and Design Features for Wildlife

Objective	Site-Specific Mitigation Measure and Design Feature
Protect goshawk pair and young	Allow no ground disturbing activities inside known occupied PFAs from April 15 through no sooner than August 15 (Brewer and others 2009). This applies to proposed harvest units in the Post Fledging Area: 100A, 100B, 102A and 102B, and construction of roads NC2 and NC7.
Maintain Connectivity and Minimize Fragmentation	Avoid placing skyline corridors on ridge tops designated as travel corridors. Maintain canopy cover of stands at > 30% for all designated corridors (Heinemeyer and Jones, 1994). The minimum wildlife corridor width would be 400 feet (IDFG 1995). This applies to proposed harvest units in designated travel corridors: 8, 17, 23, 26, 27, 28, 33A, 83A, 83B, 87A, 89, 90A, 100A, 102A, 118A, and Bald Mountain Fuel Reduction.
Facilitate Big Game Movement	Slash depths on ridge tops within designated corridors would be less than 1½ feet depth within 400 feet of ridge top (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984]). This applies to proposed harvest units in designated travel corridors: 8, 17, 23A, 23B, 26, 27A, 27B, 28, 33A, 83A, 83B, 87A, 89, 90A, 100A, 102A, 118A, and Bald Mountain Fuel Reduction. Slash depths along new and reconstructed roads should not exceed 1.5 feet. If this level of slash disposal is not practical, 16-foot wide openings through the slash every 200 feet should be created, especially on ridges and game trail crossings (IPNF Forest Plan, Appendix Y [Leege 1984]).

III. Design Features for Fuel Treatment & Site Preparation

A. Description of Fuel Treatments in Timber Harvest Units

1. Fuels would be treated to achieve objectives identified in the purpose and need for this project. The mix of treatment methods and design criteria described in this section attempt to provide fire managers with options to ensure objectives can be achieved safely, legally, efficiently, and effectively.

Fuels in harvest units may be treated in their entirety across the unit or on strategic portions of the units, with either the harvest activity or following the harvest activity. Assessment of fuel conditions by fire management personnel would be made to determine if additional modification of fuels is necessary following harvest. Depending on the objective for the unit, treatment methods will vary.

Fuel treatments activities are proposed for timber harvest units. See details below. Some or all of the fuel treatments would be implemented depending on the conditions after timber harvest.

Fireline or fuelbreaks would be constructed where necessary to contain prescribed burns as determined by fire management personnel. Topographic and vegetative features of the landscape may also be used for containment of prescribed fires when possible.

Landing piles generated from harvest units and would either be burned or removed for biomass.

Biomass could be removed from any of the proposed landing piles and commercial thins. Biomass includes wood products obtained from all or portions of trees including limbs, tops, and unmerchantable stems, usually for energy production. Biomass would be a by-product of proposed vegetative treatments.

Directional felling would be used:

- a. During harvest activities to minimize the amount of activity fuels in areas where fuelbreaks are required;

Prescribed burns may occur at any time of year, as prescription parameters, burn windows, and smoke emission restrictions permit.

2. Fuel Reduction after Intermediate Harvest (Commercial Thin):

Activity fuels generated by harvest would be treated to reduce hazardous fuel loadings generated by the harvest.

Limbing and topping of harvested trees would be done at landings for units with sufficient coarse woody debris (CWD) levels.

In units where existing CWD levels are deficient, tops and limbs of harvested trees would be left in the unit and that material would be lopped and scattered to minimize slash height. This applies to units 8, 83A, 87A, and 87B.

In addition to the above treatment, assessment of vegetative conditions would be done by fire managers and a silviculturist to determine if additional modification of fuels is necessary to achieve other fuel or silvicultural objectives (surface and ladder fuel reduction, disrupt fuel continuity, enhance early seral component).

Where further treatment is determined necessary the following methods may be applied, either across the unit or in strategically located portions of the unit: under burning or jackpot burning, excavator piling and pile burning along prominent ridges, slashing of sub-merchantable material (less than 6 inches d.b.h.), mulching, chipping, mastication, or biomass removal and utilization.

Multiple entries may be needed to meet desired objectives while maintaining desired stand composition.

B. Other Fuel Treatments Outside Timber Harvest Units

1. Biomass Removal

Biomass removal includes harvesting the wood product obtained from all or portions of trees including limbs, tops, and unmerchantable stems usually for energy production. This would be a by-product of the proposed fuel reduction treatments.

2. Roadside Fuel Reduction Treatments

Roadside fuel reduction treatment in areas shown on Map 1 would include two different treatments: one within five feet of roads and one extending up to 100 feet from the roads. The area closest to the roads (within 5 feet of the edge of the cuts and fills) would be cleared of brush, trees, and down wood. The area beyond the five-foot road maintenance clearing (up to 100 feet) would be thinned from below removing trees and snags less than 6 inches d.b.h. and brush to reduce surface and ladder fuels, increase canopy base height and select for fire-resilient, early-seral species.

Brush would be slashed. Low branches on residual overstory would be pruned to reduce ladder fuels. Surface fuel would be treated and reduced. Treatment would vary with cover type, canopy characteristics, fuel loading, aspect, slope, level of access. Treatment would be applied in multiple entries in order to achieve desired results and/or to maintain desired conditions. Fuels generated would be removed for biomass utilization purposes, mulched/chipped/masticated on site, or piled and burned on site.

Methods to accomplish roadside fuel reduction include hand cutting with chainsaws or other hand tools, or machine cutting with small grapple, mulching, or masticating head. Heavy equipment would only be used on roads and would not be taken off the road surface.

3. Fuel Reduction Near Bald Mountain Lookout

This area was pre-commercially thinned approximately 10 years ago. Slash from that activity is persisting. Existing downed material would be lopped, hand piled, and the piles would be burned to reduce fuel loads on 30-acres.

C. Air Quality

To comply with the Clean Air Act (1977), prescribed burns during any time of the year are regulated by the Idaho State Department of Environmental Quality which issues burning closures when necessary to protect air quality. The Forest Service cooperates with the State by requesting approval to burn through the Montana/Idaho Airshed Management System in compliance with the Idaho State Implementation Plan. Proposed burning activities would follow procedures outlined by the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement. Measures used to reduce effects of prescribed burning on air quality would include:

1. Prescribed burning would be accomplished as much as practical when on-site fuel and weather conditions are less conducive to total consumption of duff and larger fuels, with a resultant reduction in total emissions.
2. Scheduling ignitions when air quality is least likely to be threatened.
3. Slash piles would be constructed as clean as practical and be burned as dry as practical to enhance efficient combustion.

D. Aquatics

1. To avoid adverse effects to fish and redds when using streams for prescribed burning control, water removal may not exceed 90 gallons per minute and pumping sites would be located away from spawning gravels. The intake hose would be screened to prevent accidental intake of small fish. An emergency spill clean-up kit would be on site in the unlikely event of a fuel spill outside the containment system.
2. At road crossings on perennial fish-bearing and non-fish-bearing streams, riparian buffers would be applied (see page 6).
3. At road crossings on intermittent streams, crossings would be reviewed by a fisheries biologist or hydrologist and archaeologist to determine if roadside fuel treatment could be applied within the 50-foot buffer.
4. All firelines, whether constructed by machine or hand tools, would be waterbarred at time of construction to the standard IPNF fire rehabilitation specifications. Firelines would not be constructed through any moist zones or riparian areas in which the micro-site conditions can be relied upon to check the spread of fire during normal prescribed fire conditions. Surface fuels may be removed from these areas as necessary, but fireline construction would not occur.

E. Forest Vegetation

Only surface fuels would be treated in roadside fuel reduction treatment areas through areas that have already been pre-commercially thinned. Trees would not be cut in these areas because we don't want to reduce crop trees.

F. Recreation

Leave trees to act as a screen between dispersed sites and roadside fuel reduction areas.

G. Soils

1. Downed woody retention levels would be maintained wherever practical for both high elevation and moist forest habitat types. Graham and others (1994) recommend retaining 17-33 tons per acre for moist and 10-19 tons per acre for high elevation habitat types of downed woody material greater than three inches in diameter. The high elevation areas are Units 27A, 27B and 28, with the remaining units falling into the moist habitat groups.
2. The latest soil nutrient management recommendations from the Intermountain Forest Tree Nutrient Cooperative (IFTNC) and Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) would be applied as appropriate to each activity area where organic material is removed. Slash should be left to over-winter nutrients back into the soil in most cases until fuel reduction treatments occur. In those units in which tops and limbs are to be removed, only the broken tops and limbs would be left to overwinter before fuel treatments. Tops and limbs would be removed when the logs are yarded.
3. Those units in which the parent geology is rated relatively poor for nutrient-holding capacity, slash would be left on the ground untreated from 9 to 15 months before prescribed fire activities are to occur (Johnston 2009). The length of time slash needs to remain on the ground before the fuel treatments is based on the season in which the harvest occurs. For winter harvest (December-February), logging slash should remain untreated for up to 15 months to enable all the nutrients to leach out and become usable to other vegetation. Likewise for spring harvest (March- May), untreated slash should remain on the ground for up to 12 months; and for summer and fall harvest (June-November), slash should remain on the ground for up to 9 months. The following units fall on parent geology with low nutrient hold capacity: (south end of Unit 1, west half of Unit 3, south end of Unit 8, north end of Units 27A, 27B, and 28).
4. Prescribed burning and pile burning would occur only when the upper surface inch of mineral soil has a moisture content of 25% by weight, or when duff moisture exceeds 60%, or when other monitoring or modeling indicates that soil productivity will be protected. It is strongly recommended when fuel loads are high and fuel moistures are low that the mineral soil be above 25% moisture content.
5. When prescribed fire is utilized, post-burn conditions would result in no more than 25 to 30 percent bare soils (excluding natural conditions) within an activity area (burn unit). On sensitive soils or slopes at or greater than 40%, no more than 20% of bare soils (excluding natural conditions) would be exposed within the activity area.
6. The desired prescribed fire outcome includes retention of organic matter (generally not much less than ¼ of an inch) that protects the soil from rain splash impacts, erosion, a decrease in soil moisture holding capacity, and increased solar surface heating, especially on south-facing slopes.
7. Grapple Piling: Any equipment used for ground-based piling of slash (grapple-piling) would operate on slopes under 35%, would utilize existing skid trails where possible, and would operate on slash mats wherever possible. Burn piles would be small and numerous rather than large and few. Several ground-based units were identified in which grapple piling would be conducted from skid trails only. They include units: 83A and 90A.

H. Sensitive Plants

In Unit 89 two Sensitive plants sites would have 50-foot buffers around the plant sites. Grapple piling would not occur in the buffers. If Unit 89 is prescribed burned 10-foot fuel breaks would be constructed on the outside of the 50-foot buffers around the sites.

I. Range

If prescribed fire/burning were to occur in the project area between June 15th and October 15th the Forest Service range lead would be notified at least 30 days prior to the burning.

J. Wildlife

1. Snags: Burning prescriptions would protect large diameter snags and live trees for snag recruitment. This would be accomplished by pulling back slash, building fireline, or directed ignition. Prescriptions would also retain recommended levels and distribution of coarse woody debris during site preparation and fuels treatment.
2. Small Mammal Habitat: In harvest units where slash piles are created, one pile unburned per five acres would be left to supply potential fisher rest sites, provide cover for small animals (prey habitat) and serve as potential den sites (IDFG 1995). Piles left should be those closest to standing timber, such as the unit edge or a large cluster of leave trees.

IV. Design Features for Other Vegetation Treatments

A. Snag and Potential Cavity Nesting Habitat Creation

Snags would be created by girdling live trees. Potential cavity nesting habitat would be increased by inoculating live trees with fungal spores. Approximately 20-30 trees would be treated each year for three to five years on a total of approximately 150 acres in and adjacent to the following units: 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 96, 105, 136, 138, 139, 140, and 141. Snags would be created in the areas although there is no scheduled timber harvest with Alternative C. Depending on the results of the prescribed burn, some of the larger off-site ponderosa pine may also be potential candidates for this treatment. The maximum inoculation/snag creation density would average one tree per acre.

B. Off-Site Ponderosa Pine Treatment

Approximately 82 acres would be prescribed burned with no timber harvest to reduce off-site ponderosa pine and prepare sites to plant early-seral, long-lived tree species. Some smaller trees would be slashed to increase ground fuels enough to carry flame. Trees would be planted where appropriate following the prescribed burn. Multiple entries may be required to achieve desired silvicultural objectives. See RxBurn on Map 1.

C. Pocket Gopher Control after Tree Planting

The need for pocket gopher control would be evaluated with regeneration surveys for the first, third and fifth year after planting. Only planted areas that have high mortality due to pocket gophers would be treated. The only area identified for planting in Alternative C is the off-site ponderosa treatment area. Plantations would be treated by hand application of grain treated with (2.0%) zinc phosphide or (0.5%) strychnine. This grain would be deposited into the gophers' underground burrows at a rate of 1/4 to 1/2 pound per acre. The project would comply with all registered label instructions for zinc phosphide and strychnine bait including application in accordance with Idaho State law. Follow-up treatments may be necessary in some areas to ensure adequate seedling stocking levels.

The following design features would be followed during gopher baiting project implementation:

1. Product labels and manufacturer's recommendations for use would be followed.
2. Treated bait would be applied by a licensed applicator in accordance with Idaho State law.
3. No gopher baiting treatment:
 - a. within riparian habitat conservation area buffers;
 - b. in areas with saturated soil;
 - c. during periods of, or forecasted periods of, heavy precipitation.
4. Treated bait would not be stored or transferred within 300 feet of any stream or live water.
5. Treated bait would not be directly applied to or discarded in open water bodies such as lakes, streams, ponds, and wetlands.
6. Initial setting of bait would usually occur after July 1.
7. A mandatory provision for bait spill cleanup and disposal would be included in the contract.
8. The application of bait would be monitored by a Forest Service employee, who has been trained in animal damage control.
9. Follow-up gopher control effectiveness surveys would be completed. Any evidence of non-target wildlife or fish mortality would be collected and reported to the District Fisheries Biologist or Wildlife Biologist.

D. Personal-Use Firewood Removal

After logging and biomass removal operations, gates on Road 1950 (up to the second gate), Road 1954, and the existing portion of Road 1950C may be opened from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend for public firewood gathering for up to three years after the last timber sale contract closes on each road. Valid personal-use firewood permits would be required. The public would be allowed to gather firewood except where prohibited as shown on maps and/or as posted. See project file document PD-29 for personal firewood considerations.

V. Design Features for Road Work

A. Road Construction

New system road construction would be necessary to implement the envisioned timber harvesting systems (See Map 1). When timber harvest and associated activities are complete newly constructed roads would be put into long-term storage (Road Management Rx C). Road construction plans, standards and specifications for new system roads would provide for minimum needed road width, drainage and safe operation while incorporating measures for mitigating for resource disturbances. New roads would be single-lane facilities, suitable for log truck or lowboy use.

B. Road Reconstruction

Some roads would be reconstructed to their approved traffic service level or would be improved to increase safety, operational efficiency or resource protection (improve drainage and improve water quality). For this project, reconstruction includes rebuilding roads to their original standards. Road drainage may be improved where needed. Reconstruction may

include the installation of drain dips and culverts, grading, clearing, dust abatement, and resurfacing. All road reconstruction plans, standards and specifications would provide for minimum needed road width, drainage and safe operation while incorporating measures to protect resources.

The overall existing condition of roads to be reconstructed is generally inadequate for resource protection or anticipated use or the road is impassable for the design vehicle. Spot reconstruction on some roads would also occur, where the primary disturbance is confined to a limited area, such as culvert installations, rebuilding a shoulder or addition of turnouts. Areas between the spots generally would need reconditioning (reshaping and processing the road surface and ditches and brushing the shoulders). Most of the work described as reconstruction and reconditioning would actually be maintenance (FSM 7705) to restore the road to its original condition.

Undersized culverts would be replaced on roads that would be reconstructed unless those roads would be stored or decommissioned after this entry. In that case, the culverts would not be upgraded because they would be removed when the road is stored or decommissioned.

Table 9 – Road Reconstruction

Road Number	Miles of Reconstruction
377B	0.2
377JA	0.4
road converted to trail	0.2
Total	0.8

C. Long-Term Storage (Road Management Prescription C)

Approximate 4.4 miles of existing road would be put into long-term storage because after this project there would be no foreseeable use for the road in the next 15 to 25 years, but the roads may be needed at some future date. All newly constructed system roads would also be put into long-term storage. The road would be out-sloped and have the drainage structures removed. The intent of this prescription is to put the road into “long-term storage” where the road is not a sediment source and does not channel water. The road prism is basically left intact but in a condition that would not require any maintenance. All water courses and problem areas would be stabilized. The roadbed may require light scarification, water bars, and/or decompaction. Aggregate surfaced roads would not be decompacted, but road surfaces would be shaped to drain. Roads without an aggregate (gravel) surface may be decompacted to a minimum of 18 inches where possible to facilitate and augment infiltration.

The road may be seeded and/or planted to establish a vegetative cover in the road prism. Roads would remain on the transportation system. The beginning of roads would be left in a condition to effectively block motorized use beyond dispersed camping sites.

Table 10 – Existing Roads to be Stored (Road Management Prescription C)

Road #	Name	Miles to be Stored	Road #	Name	Miles to be Stored
377B	-	0.2	1955A	Mid	0.3
377JA	-	0.5	1955B	Mid	0.9
1950	Hume Ridge	1.9	1955UE	-	0.6
Total					4.4

E. Decommission with Full or Partial Recontouring (Road Management Prescription D)

Approximately 0.6 miles of existing road would be decommissioned because they are not needed for management purposes. The road would be decompacted and major fills, embankments, and higher failure risk areas would be pulled up onto the roadbed and be stabilized. Drainage structures would be removed from stream channels, and the adjacent slopes would be restored to resemble natural conditions. The goal of this prescription is to restore site productivity, eliminate the potential of road failures, and reestablish natural water infiltration and drainage patterns. Recontouring or partial pullback is based on site-specific conditions and could range from about 20 to 100 percent of the roads length.

Decommissioning may require only partial recontouring, only pulling up the amount of fill necessary to stabilize the slope condition. Some cut and fill slopes or parts of cut and fill slopes may be evident in areas of recontouring. Following prescription implementation, roads would be removed from the National Forest Road System.

Table 11 – Existing Roads to be Decommissioned (Road Management Prescription D)

Road #	Name	Miles to be Decommissioned	Notes
377JA	-	0.2	Part of road realignment
1955A	Mid	0.4	
Total		0.6	

F. General

- Existing gates would remain in place. Temporary gates would be installed on any road to be used that is not behind a gate and is currently not drivable. During timber hauling the gate would be closed and locked at the end of each day. For other operations gates would be closed and locked after passage of each vehicle.
- Road Management Prescription C (long-term storage) and Road Management Prescription D (decommissioning) would effectively restrict motorized access with either a guardrail barrier or by recontouring the beginning of the road for at least a site distance.
- The St. Joe Ranger District Administrative Access Policy will be used when administrative access is needed on roads not open to the public (ACT-23).

G. Aquatics

- Road maintenance/reconstruction: Within the RHCA trees greater than 12” diameter at breast height (d. b. h.) would only be limbed unless tree removal is necessary for safety reasons. If trees are felled within the RHCA, they shall be left onsite unless their presence limits sight distance and poses a further safety hazard. Trees felled within the RHCA will require a review by a fisheries biologist.
- Activities in streams: Activities such as culvert replacement, culvert removal associated with road removal, etc. would occur after July 15th and prior to October 15.
- Road Management Prescription C (long-term storage) and Road Management Prescription D (decommissioning) at a minimum would have: all culverts removed, all fill within the stream crossing sites removed, stream gradient and valley side-slopes returned to near natural conditions for 200 feet on both sides of stream. Aggregate surfaced roads would not be decompacted, but road surfaces would be shaped to drain. Roads without an aggregate (gravel) surface would be decompacted to a minimum of 18 inches where possible to facilitate and augment infiltration.

H. Noxious Weeds

To the degree practicable gravel used for road maintenance would be certified from weed free-sources. Gravel sources would be inspected for the presence of noxious weeds prior to utilization of gravel in the project area as appropriate.

I. Recreation

The beginning of newly constructed or reconstructed roads (system or temporary) off open, existing roads would be left in a condition conducive for dispersed camping when the road is barriered, stored or decommissioned, where feasible. Log landing areas on open roads would also be left in a condition conducive for dispersed camping, where feasible.

J. Wildlife

1. Big Game Security:

- a. Road Management Prescription C may require obliteration for a distance of 300 feet, a sight-distance, or whatever distance is effective to eliminate motorized access. The amount and type of obliteration required would be the minimum needed to effectively prevent motorized vehicle use. This would vary depending on the slope and vegetation present. A guardrail barrier may be used if it can be placed to effectively prevent motorized access.
- b. The second gate on Road 1950 just past the junction with Road 1954 would remain closed to public motorized use year-round to provide elk habitat security.

2. Snags: To meet the objectives listed above in Table 2 Snag Guidelines, snags that show signs of decay, loose bark, or broken tops would not be designated for harvest (Bull and others 1997). Exceptions would be made for safety, road construction, and log landings.

VI. Design Features for Aquatic Improvements

A. Fish Migration Barrier Removal or Replacement

Six culverts which are fish migration barriers are located on Road 1950 and Road 1955A. These culverts would be replaced or be removed to ensure aquatic organism passage. Channels would be diverted while culverts are being replaced. See Map 2.

B. Riparian Planting and Large Woody Debris Placement

Large woody debris structures would be constructed in Preston Creek and Charlie Creek. Riparian conifers and shrubs would be planted in association with the woody debris structures and throughout the riparian zones where trees were removed to facilitate past logging and railroad activity. A spider hoe would be used to place the logs. Most of the work would be accomplished from the stream bank, but equipment may operate in the stream. The wood may come from the riparian areas where adequate amounts of down or standing trees exist for this project and for future recruitment. See Map 2.

C. Timing

Culvert removal or replacement and placement of large woody debris will be done during low-flow periods between July 15 and October 15.

D. Seeding

Exposed soil would be seeded and mulched.

E. Snags

No snags would be cut to be used for large woody debris in streams.

F. Permits

Required permits would be obtained before implementation.

VII. Design Features for Creation of Dispersed Camping Sites

- A.** Log landing areas would be left in conditions conducive for dispersed camping where feasible.
- B.** Log landings that are conducive to dispersed camping as determined by the district recreation specialist would be exempt from soil restoration activities in order to leave the site in a condition that would be conducive for camping (for example, a relatively even surface without coarse woody debris).

C. Monitoring

The following monitoring would be included as part of the proposed action:

- Following fuel treatment in intermediate timber harvest units, assessment of vegetative conditions would be done by fire managers, a silviculturist, and a soils specialist to determine what, if any, additional fuel modification is necessary to achieve objectives (surface and ladder fuel reduction, disrupt fuel continuity, enhance early seral component) and still meet coarse woody debris requirements. Where further treatment is determined necessary and coarse woody debris requirements can be met, the following methods may be applied, either across the unit or in strategically located portions of the unit: under burning /jackpot burning, excavator piling and pile burning along prominent ridges, slashing of sub-merchantable material (less than 6 inches d.b.h.), mulching, chipping, mastication, or biomass removal and utilization.
- Soils would be monitored on a sample of units after the harvest and burning activities to determine if design features were implemented and if they were effective and to determine whether coarse woody debris retention complies with Graham and others (1994). A sample of skid trails and temporary roads to be restored would be monitored prior to and the year after restoration. Monitoring would be done according to Soils Report Appendix A.
- At road crossings on intermittent streams, crossings would be reviewed by a fisheries biologist or hydrologist and an archaeologist to determine if roadside fuel treatment could be applied within the 50-foot riparian buffer.
- Road closures would be monitored to determine how effective they are at preventing motorized access. If the closure methods are not preventing motorized access another method would be used to increase effectiveness. For example, a gate may be moved to a better location or a guardrail barrier may be replaced with road recontouring for the first sight-distance.
- A crest gauge and staff gauge installed in Hume Creek will be used to measure and compare water levels. Successive staff and crest gauge readings give a general picture of a stream's behavior in response to water yields and may indicate responses to management activities.
- The St. Joe Ranger District would coordinate with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe for pre-treatment surveys and monitoring of on-site gopher baiting applications.

- A Forest Service employee trained in animal damage control would monitor the application of gopher bait.
- Follow-up gopher control effectiveness surveys would be completed. Any evidence of non-target wildlife or fish mortality would be collected and be reported to the District Fisheries Biologist or Wildlife Biologist.
- After implementation, project areas would be reviewed for new populations of noxious weeds. If new populations are found more intensive surveys would be conducted, sites would be mapped, and treatment would be scheduled.
- All weed treatments would be monitored for effectiveness.

II. Scoping and Public Involvement

Acting District Ranger Kimberly Johnson met with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to discuss projects on the St. Joe Ranger District, including the Charlie Preston Project, on June 4, 2010 (project file PI-1). After we made the EA available to the public, District Ranger Wade Sims discussed the project with staff of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and they did not express concerns (project file document PI-93). The representatives of the tribe expressed no concerns about the project.

On September 2, 2010 Acting District Ranger Cornelia Hudson sent a letter, scoping notice, maps of the proposed action, and a comment form to the public concerning the Charlie Preston Project (project file PI-5). The scoping notice described the purpose and need for action, the proposed action, the environmental analysis process for this project, and how people could provide comments on the project.

This information was sent to about 290 individuals, organizations, and agencies. Two mailing lists were combined for this project. One mailing list includes people who have told us they would like to receive information about projects on the St. Joe Ranger District. The other mailing list was developed by obtaining addresses from the Benewah County Assessor's office for people who own land within about four miles of the town of Emida (PI-2, PI-3).

The scoping information was also posted on the IPNF website on September 3, 2010 (PI-19). Charlie Preston was first listed on the IPNF's Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (PI-59) in October 2010.

In response to comments from the public, the St. Joe Ranger District hosted a public field trip in the project area followed by a public meeting. We sent flyers announcing the field trip and meeting to the original mailing list (PI-65, PI-66). Flyers about the meeting were posted on October 14 and 19 in Emida, Idaho; Santa, Idaho; Fernwood, Idaho; St. Maries, Idaho; and at Forest Service offices in Clarkia, Potlatch and St. Maries, Idaho (PI-70, PI-71). We sent a news release about the public meeting to area media contacts on October 22, 2010 (PI-72). The public meeting was announced in the UpRiver News section of the St. Maries Gazette Record on October 27, 2010 (PI-74). Twenty-five people attended the field trip and/or the public meeting (PI-77).

From these scoping efforts we received written or telephone questions and comments from 44 people, organizations, and agencies. Scoping comments were addressed by having the public meeting (PI-78), adjusting the proposed action to include public firewood gathering, providing more areas for dispersed camping, leaving more trees along the edges of Unit 105 adjacent to the private property boundary (Alternative B), and to provide more explanation in documents. Also, Alternative C was developed to address public concerns about the amount of timber harvest, the types of timber harvest, and the amount of road construction.

On June 3, 2011 we mailed a letter to everyone on the mailing list (PI-84, PI-97) announcing the Charlie Preston EA was available. The legal notice announcing the 30-day comment period was published in the *Coeur d'Alene Press*, the newspaper of record, on June 6, 2011. We received six comment letters from one individual, two state agencies, and three organizations during the 30-day comment period, and one letter from another individual after the comment period ended (see DN Appendix B and PI-87, PI-88, PI-89, PI-90, PI-91, PI-92, and PI-98). The Forest Service updated the EA to address some of the comments, provide clarification, and make some corrections. This decision is based on the updated EA and associated resource reports.

III. Alternatives

This section describes the alternatives considered for the Charlie Preston Project. Three alternatives were studied in detail: No action (Alternative A), the proposed action (Alternative B), and an alternative that only includes commercial thinning for timber harvest that would require less road construction (Alternative C). Other alternatives were considered but were not considered in detail for various reasons. The alternatives that were eliminated from detailed study are discussed first, followed by the alternatives considered in detail.

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

The following alternatives were considered but were eliminated from detailed study for the reasons given.

More timber harvest and road construction: An alternative that would harvest timber on approximately 4,260 acres was considered but was eliminated from detailed study because it would have had unacceptable impacts on goshawk habitat, rare plants, riparian areas, and old growth; and it would have required approximately 11 miles of new road construction. We know from public comments on this project and public comments on previous projects that amount of road construction would be socially unacceptable at this time.

Decommission the upper part of Hume Creek Road 1479: As part of the alternative discussed above with more timber harvest and more road construction a new road higher on the slope in the Hume Creek drainage would have replaced part of the existing Hume Creek Road 1479. Approximately two and a half miles of Road 1479 would have been decommissioned and would not be available for public use. Many people use and enjoy this road next to Hume Creek, so decommissioning the Hume Creek Road was no longer considered when the amount of new road construction was reduced for the proposed action.

No road construction: An alternative with no road construction was also considered (PD-27). It was eliminated from detailed study because the management area designations for timber production indicate that access to these areas may be required. Part of the purpose and need is to provide commercially viable wood products. Leaving the inaccessible area without roads would mean the timber stands could not be treated with commercial timber harvest because that would require expensive helicopter logging systems that are not feasible with the current timber market conditions. Road construction to access lands designated for timber production allows the Forest Service to address multiple parts of the purpose and need. It is important to treat the areas proposed for timber harvest at this time because the stands are overstocked and tree growth is beginning to decrease. Late seral species are increasing in dominance, making the area more prone to disturbance such as insects, disease, and fire. Treatment at this time would allow us to release western larch and western white pine trees and increase their representation, making the area more resilient to disturbances. No road construction is considered as part of the no-action alternative.

Allowing natural fires to burn: An alternative that would allow natural fires to burn in the area to thin or replace stands was not considered in detail because of the potential risk of damage to Emida, nearby residences, infrastructure in the area (signs, power poles, fences, Bald Mountain Lookout, etc.), adjacent private timber land, and actively managed stands on National Forest System lands. In addition, the use of fire as the primary management tool would not meet the purpose and need for vegetation management or for contributing to the economy and timber supply. No one can predict when a natural fire would occur in the project area. It could happen before prescriptions and protection measures could be put in place or it could be decades from now, long after we would want to treat the stands. Allowing natural fires to burn is appropriate under the right conditions other places on the St. Joe District, but this is not the place because of the previously mentioned reasons. The forest plan allows prescribed fire from unplanned ignitions in Management Area 1 and Management Area 4, but it also says that confine, contain, and control are appropriate wildfire responses (Forest Plan p. F-3).

Prescribed burning with no timber harvest: The proposed action includes prescribed burning without timber harvest in Unit 18. Another alternative to use prescribed burning with no commercial timber harvest or burning outside of proposed timber harvest units was not considered in detail because the use of fire as the primary management tool would not address the need for vegetation management or for contributing to the economy and timber supply. Approximately 75 percent of the project area is Management Area (MA) 1 and approximately 25 percent is MA 4. The goal for MA 1 is to provide for long-term growth and production of commercially valuable wood products, and the goal for MA 4 is to provide winter forage to support big game populations through scheduled timber harvest and permanent forage areas. Prescribed burning without timber harvest would not meet the goals for MA 1 and could only partially meet the goals for MA 4. However, prescribed burning without timber harvest would not address the need to reduce fuels because it would kill trees without removing the fuels from the site. With prescribed burning only, we would not be increasing the amount or representation of western larch and western white pine because an adequate seed source for those species does not exist in the proposed regeneration harvest units.

No road decommissioning: An alternative with no road decommissioning was not considered in detail. When we determine a road is no longer needed for management purposes we want to restore site productivity, eliminate the potential of road failures, and reestablish natural water infiltration and drainage patterns. Our road maintenance funds are limited, so we only want to keep roads on the National Forest Road System if we know we will need them in the future. The 1.5 miles of roads identified for decommissioning include 0.2 miles of Road 377JA that would be relocated with the proposed action. The other 1.3 miles of road are not needed and present risks to the environment. Decommissioning these roads is important because it would help reduce sediment sources. We are required to reduce sediment in Santa Creek and the smaller streams that flow into it because they are on the State of Idaho's list of streams that have water quality concerns (303d list of water quality limited segments) due to high sediment levels. Our options for continuing to reduce sediment sources in the area are limited, and in order to manage the vegetation resources in the area we have to show a reduction in sediment.

Maximizing restoration of wildlife habitat, aquatic habitat, soils, natural processes, and areas adversely affected by unauthorized or excessive motorized recreation use: Improving natural conditions is an important component of this project, but it is not the only reason for it. Part of the purpose of the project is to improve conditions so that we have forests that are more resilient, better fish habitat, improved water quality, and larger trees; but the purpose is also to improve conditions for people using the National Forest. It would reduce fuels in the area, make access routes safer; provide additional spots for camping; provide employment opportunities; and provide commercially viable wood products now and in the future. People live and work in and

around the project area and the National Forests are important because of the access and employment they provide and for the natural environment people experience when they visit the forest.

Motorized recreation use is addressed with the St. Joe Travel Management EA; and a decision for that project is expected in the near future. It is not the purpose for this project. Motorized access is addressed with the Charlie Preston action alternatives where the proposed actions may affect existing or expected motorized use. For example, the management of gates during project activities and the prevention of motorized access where roads would be stored or decommissioned are incorporated as part of the action alternatives.

No burning of standing trees: An alternative not including Unit 18 where off-site ponderosa pine would be killed with prescribed fire was eliminated from detailed study because there is a need to remove the ponderosa pine. The seedlings were not from appropriate seed sources for this site (ACT-8). Prescribed fire is a good tool in this location because the timber value of the standing trees is very low and we decommissioned the road that provided access to this area, so we don't have road access to the site. Prescribed fire would also rejuvenate the shrubfield portions of the unit which would improve forage conditions for big game.

Improve elk habitat potential by increasing security areas: An alternative that would increase elk habitat potential by increasing security areas was not considered in detail because it would require closing roads that have been open for public motorized use for decades or roads that would be designated for ATV use in the upcoming St. Joe Travel Management decision (ACT-19). The St. Joe Ranger District meets its overall elk habitat potential targets for the district, and is therefore consistent with the Forest Plan, even though Elk Habitat Unit 6 is below its target level (see *Cumulative Effects for Elk*). Storing some of the gated roads would result in an increase in the elk habitat potential, but these roads are not currently available for public use.

Leave all roads open: An alternative that would leave all roads open to the public was eliminated from detailed study for two main reasons: wildlife security and sediment production.

This area falls within Elk Habitat Unit 6 which is currently below its target for elk habitat potential, although district-wide the St. Joe Ranger District meets forest plan goals for elk habitat potential. An alternative that would leave all roads open for motorized travel would reduce security areas and elk habitat potential. This would move Elk Habitat Unit 6 further from forest plan elk habitat potential goals. The most important factor in use of habitat by elk is disturbance by people. Most disturbance (and hunting mortality) is related to roads (Leege 1984). The elk habitat potential is largely determined by the open road density and amount of secure habitat available in the elk habitat unit. In order to qualify as secure habitat for elk habitat potential, there must be at least 250 contiguous acres that are more than ½ mile from open roads (Leege 1984). Limiting public motorized access on National Forest System roads allows the Forest Service to meet forest plan goals for wildlife security and elk habitat potential.

Opening all roads for motorized traffic would increase sediment levels. We are required to reduce sediment in Santa Creek and the smaller streams that flow into it because they are on the State of Idaho's list of streams that have water quality concerns (303d list of water quality limited segments) due to high sediment levels. Gates and barriers reduce the amount of motorized traffic on roads. Less traffic may mean less rutting and channeling of water and sediment to streams. Storing and decommissioning roads leaves them in a hydrologically neutral state and increases infiltration, so less sediment is produced.

Store Fewer Roads: An alternative that did not include storing Road 1950 was considered but was eliminated from detailed study because it did not eliminate enough sediment sources to result in a direct reduction in sediment from the project.

Correct a Water Diversion: We considered correcting an existing water diversion in Hume Creek, but eliminated that from detailed study at this time. The diversion was created decades ago and was related to the railroad. We will consider this for a future project but did not include it with this project because it would require extensive work with adjacent landowners involving water flows and water rights. Changing water flows that have been in place for decades would reduce water flows to some landowners and increase it to others. Adjacent landowners have told the Forest Service that they have already applied for water rights (PI-52). Removing the diversion and changing water flows would be a very involved process that does not fit with the purpose and need for this project.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED IN DETAIL

Alternative A - No Action

Under the No Action alternative, current management plans would continue to guide management of the project area. Ongoing management activities like road maintenance and fire management would continue. No timber harvest, fuels treatment, snag creation, prescribed burning, biomass removal, additional firewood removal, road construction, road reconstruction, road storage, road decommissioning, fish migration barrier replacement or removal, riparian planting, placement of large woody debris, or improvements for dispersed camping would be implemented. Some people said they would like the Forest Service to leave the forest alone, so this alternative is considered in detail to show effects of no action.

Alternative B - The Proposed Action

The proposed action was designed to meet the purpose and need, address environmental concerns in the project area, and address public concerns and questions. An initial proposal to treat approximately 4,260 acres was screened and adjusted to address goshawk habitat requirements, protect rare plants, protect old growth, reduce the amount of road construction, remove areas with logging systems difficulties, remove small mapping slivers, protect riparian areas, and address soil quality standards by foregoing treatment in some areas and by beginning restoration of soil conditions to aid in recovery in Unit 136A. Based on public comment the proposed action would leave some gates open under specific conditions to allow public firewood gathering and develop areas for dispersed camping.

Alternative B includes the following activities.

- Harvest timber on 1,546 acres. See Map 1 in EA Appendix A.
- Treat activity fuels after timber harvest in all units using the methods described beginning on page 14.
- Plant conifer trees on approximately 181 acres after fuel treatments in regeneration harvest units. See Map 2 in EA Appendix A.
- Control pocket gophers, as needed, to protect regeneration in the proposed regeneration harvest units.
- Prescribe burn 82 acres with no timber harvest to reduce off-site ponderosa pine and prepare sites to plant early-seral, long-lived tree species. See Map 1 in EA Appendix A.
- Reduce fuels along approximately 7.5 miles (up to 120 acres) of road using methods described beginning on page 15. See EA Map 1 in EA Appendix A.
- Reduce fuels in a 30-acre area near Bald Mountain Lookout by lopping, hand piling, and burning piles. See EA Map 1 in EA Appendix A.

- Remove and sell biomass, where economically feasible, as a by-product of the other proposed vegetation treatments.
- Open gates on Road 1950 (up to the second gate), Road 1954, and the existing portion of Road 1950C from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend for public firewood gathering for up to three years after the last timber sale contract closes on each road.
- Create snags by girdling live trees and increasing potential cavity nesting habitat by inoculating live trees with fungus spores on approximately 20-30 trees per year for three to five years on approximately 150 acres.
- Construct 4.5 miles of system road and 0.6 miles of temporary road to facilitate timber harvest. See EA Map 1 EA Appendix A.
- Reconstruct 2.3 miles of roads to facilitate timber harvest. See EA Map 1 in EA Appendix A.
- Put 4.4 miles of existing road into long-term storage to leave them in a hydrologically neutral state.
- Decommission 0.6 miles of existing roads and remove them from the National Forest Road system.
- Remove or replace six fish migration barrier culverts. Culverts that are replaced would allow fish passage. Migration barrier culverts on roads to be stored would be removed. See EA Map 2 in EA Appendix A.
- Plant conifer seedlings in riparian areas and place large woody debris in streams along approximately five miles of streams in Hume Creek, Charlie Creek, and Preston Creek.
- Where feasible, leave the following areas in conditions conducive for dispersed camping:
 - The beginning of newly constructed or reconstructed roads (system or temporary) off open, existing roads when the road is stored or decommissioned.
 - Log landing areas on open roads.

Alternative C - Commercial Thinning with Reduced Road Construction

Alternative C is the selected alternative. See pages 1-23 of this decision notice for a description of activities.

IV. Rationale for the Decision

I have made my decision to implement the proposed action based on:

- Limited environmental consequences as documented in the Finding of No Significant Impact, EA, resource reports, and the project file documents;
- How well the management action addresses the project's purpose and need;
- Consideration of the Forest Plan standards and guidance;
- Consideration of issues.

A. Environmental Consequences

Alternative C will not have significant effects on the quality of the human environment based on the context and intensity of its impacts (see Appendix A of this decision notice: Charlie Preston FONSI).

Additional information about the affected environments and environmental consequences is available in reports for each resource and other supporting documentation cited in those reports.

The resource reports are available online at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/ipnf/projects. Sort by project name.

B. Achievement of Purpose and Need

The Forest Plan designates approximately 75 percent of the project area as Management Area (MA) 1 and approximately 25 percent as MA 4. The goal for MA 1 is to provide for long-term growth and production of commercially valuable wood products, and the goal for MA 4 is to provide winter forage to support big game populations through scheduled timber harvest and permanent forage areas.

The interdisciplinary team reviewed the existing conditions of resources in the project area and compared them with desired conditions to identify potential management needs based on Forest Plan direction. The following purpose and need is the results of that process.

Forest Vegetation: We need forests that are more resilient to natural disturbances such as insects, disease, drought, and fire.

Native western white pine, western larch, and ponderosa pine are better adapted to withstand disturbances than other native tree species because they require less water and fewer nutrients. They can live for hundreds of years and can grow very large when they have enough sunlight, water, and nutrients. When trees have enough space to grow, they are healthier because they are not competing with other trees and they have a better chance of surviving insect attacks, disease, fires, and drought conditions.

Some off-site ponderosa pine trees (seedlings from trees outside the seed zone recommended for this area) were planted in the Charlie Preston area as early as the 1940s and 1950s. Those trees have genetic make-up that was adapted to different environmental conditions than those in the Charlie Preston area. The trees have grown, but they are not thriving as well as native ponderosa; and they are showing signs of stress which include poor form, high susceptibility to insect and disease, thinning crowns, and low cone and seed production.

Large trees are important for the environment whether they are standing, live, dead, or on the ground. They add organic matter to the soil; give birds and animals places to eat, nest, and den; provide shade to keep stream temperatures cool, and help create deep pools for fish.

Currently the Charlie Preston Area has fewer large trees, more small trees, and less white pine, larch, and ponderosa pine than it used to have because of large fires in the 1920s and 1930s, previous logging practices, white pine blister rust, and fire suppression.

White pine, larch, and ponderosa pine were the most valuable trees to use for lumber and building. The tree disease, white pine blister rust, killed most of the white pine. The big dead and dying white pine trees were harvested so the wood could be used while it retained its value. Early timber harvest activities took the largest trees, so smaller trees were left and are now merchantable size.

Before aggressive fire suppression efforts forest fires used to burn more often than they do today. Sometimes fires would burn slowly through the forest, knocking back the brush and small trees. The trees with low fire-resistance (small trees, fir, and spruce) would be killed, but the thick bark on the big larch and ponderosa pine would protect them so they could survive the fires. Other times the fires would get

very large and hot and kill most of the trees, creating favorable growing conditions for trees that require bare ground to germinate and a lot of sun to grow (white pine, larch, and ponderosa pine).

In the early 1900s, we started suppressing fires as quickly as we could. Now the forests are not naturally thinned by fires and are getting crowded, but we still suppress most fires in the area to protect property, homes, timber values, and other values at risk. The trees that need bare ground and a lot of sunlight don't have good growing conditions. Fire suppression is one reason the forest composition has shifted to species that are not as resilient to insects, disease, fire, and drought.

Early-seral tree species representation (primarily western larch) would increase slightly on approximately 625 acres where these species are present but as a minor stand component. On an additional 66 acres, where western larch has a higher representation, the retention of the existing seral component and the reduction of more shade-tolerant species is expected to change the forest type from grand fir, Douglas-fir, and western redcedar to western larch. Approximately 159 acres of existing western larch proposed for treatment would be maintained in western larch forest type in the long term through preferential removal of species other than western larch and western white pine (EA p. 119). Species composition would be altered to include a higher percentage of fire-resilient and long-lived species in areas that would be thinned (EA p. 124).

Treated areas would have more vigorous trees with larger average diameters. Individual tree and stand growth would increase. Commercial thinning would develop mature, large-sized trees over a shorter period compared to no treatment (EA p. 119).

Tree mortality from insects and disease is expected to decrease due to the improved growth and vigor (EA p. 119-120).

Water & Fisheries: We need to improve fish habitat and water quality. The trout that live in these streams need cool water to survive, and shade helps keep streams cool. Streams with less sediment would have better habitat conditions because pools would not fill up with excessive sediment, the space between rocks would not fill with fine sediment, and eggs would not get covered and smothered by sediment. Streams with more in-stream structure diversity would provide fish with more living space and varied habitats to choose from depending on what is needed at different life stages.

Both Charlie Creek and Santa Creek are listed in the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's 2008 Integrated Report as "Waters impaired by non-pollutants – habitat alteration". Total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) are not developed for these types of pollutants.

Santa Creek, including the smaller streams that flow into it, is on the State of Idaho's list of streams that have water quality concerns (303d list of water quality limited segments) because sediment levels and stream temperatures are too high. Santa Creek currently does not meet the TMDLs assigned by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for sediment levels and water temperatures. Shady streams have cooler water temperatures, and shade is 17% below what is desired in this area. Sediment is estimated to be 120% above background levels, and Idaho DEQ requires the Forest Service to reduce sediment.

Currently, some culverts in the project area do not allow fish passage when the water level is low, so the fish have limited areas to live. When fish can access more streams they have more opportunities for spawning and rearing and there are

more fish and they are healthier.

The overall long-term sediment reduction would improve beneficial uses (EA p. 74). Riparian planting and large woody debris placement in Preston Creek, Fagan Creek, and West Fork Charlie Creek would reduce sediment and stream temperatures in the long term (EA p. 75). Sediment reduction from the proposed road closures and decommissioning would improve water quality and stream channel conditions (EA p. 74-75).

The reduction of road densities within riparian areas would improve hydrologic networks, reduce risk of road and culvert failures, reduce sediment inputs, and improve water quality in the long term (EA p. 74). The long-term productivity of the water resource would be protected and improved through reducing sediment, reducing risk of road failures, enhancing shade and stream bank stability, and promoting more resilient forest vegetation (EA p. 82).

As natural and planted vegetation continues to grow and provide shade in riparian areas, stream temperatures may decrease over time (EA p. 82).

The physical integrity of streams would be improved in the long term (EA p. 82-83). Restoration and enhancement of selected stream reaches within the project area in conjunction with protection of RHCAs and the proposed road storage and decommissioning would likely improve overall stream channel function and stability long term within the project area (EA p. 83).

Having more resilient forest vegetation and the protection from extensive high-severity fire would continue to maintain and improve beneficial use support (EA p. 83).

Risks to cold water biota and secondary contact recreation in Charlie Creek and its tributaries would be reduced (EA p. 84).

Eleven miles of stream would move from not meeting the desired future condition for fish habitat conditions to trend toward improving or meeting the desired future condition (EA p. 73 Table 29). Trends for fish habitat conditions would improve in Charlie Creek, Hume Creek, and Preston Creek (EA p. 76 Table 30; p. 108-110).

Migration barrier removals or replacements would create a short, small pulse of increased sediment during the project implementation stage but would benefit the fishery by providing connectivity and increasing the amount of suitable habitat. (EA p. 110). This small amount of sediment would likely not be detectable (EA p. 71, 83).

Large woody debris placement would trend the stream temperature, large woody debris, pool frequency, stream bank stability and RHCA towards an improved and desired condition (EA p. 83).

Riparian planting would trend the stream temperature, large woody debris, pool frequency, stream bank stability and riparian habitat conservation area towards the desired condition (EA p. 110).

Road storage and decommissioning would trend the sediment and road density parameters towards desired conditions (EA p. 91).

Wildlife: We need to have a greater proportion of large live and dead trees than we currently have in the project area because many animal species prefer to use larger trees for feeding, nesting, and denning. Large snags are somewhat scarce in the project area due to past wildfires and past timber harvest. Most of the existing snags are not the higher quality snag species that last the longest and work the best for cavities: ponderosa, western larch, western redcedar, or Douglas-fir.

Treated areas would have more vigorous trees with larger average diameters. Individual tree and stand growth would increase. Commercial thinning would develop mature, large- sized trees over a shorter period compared to no treatment (EA p. 121, 164, 180, 189, 207).

Prescribed burning is expected to increase snags and improve conditions for species that use snags, including pileated woodpeckers (EA p. 189). Snag and cavity habitat creation across 150 acres is expected to benefit species that use snags and trees with decay-related characteristics. As these trees age or die the amount of habitat available for woodpeckers should increase (EA p. 189).

Wildland Fire/Fuels: We need to promote forest conditions that minimize potential fire behavior in order to better manage hazardous fire risk on National Forest System lands, reduce the potential impacts of wildfire to private lands within and adjacent to the project area, and aid fire suppression efforts. Tree species composition and stand structure have changed due to past management activities, fire exclusion, and insect and disease factors. These changes have resulted in high amounts of surface and ladder fuels.

We also need to reduce potential fire behavior along travel corridors. Safe travel routes are important for the public and fire management.

Areas with lower fuel accumulation and fewer ladder fuels would have less intense fires which would be easier to control and would result in less damage to values-at-risk. Values-at-risk from wildland fire include adjacent private land and industrial timber land; numerous homes, businesses, and other structures; local infrastructure such as water system facilities, bridges, power lines, Bald Mountain Lookout and communication site, and signs; recreation access; natural resources on National Forest lands; and the timber and recreation economy of Emida and surrounding communities.

The community of Emida, Idaho is designated as an “Wildland Urban Interface community within the vicinity of Federal lands that are at high risk from wildfires”. Current vegetative conditions prompted Benewah County (ID) to identify an intermix WUI (wildland-urban interface) buffer surrounding Emida (Schlosser, 2004). The southern-most tip of the project area around Bald Mountain Lookout rental cabin and communication site falls within Latah County and is classified by Latah County as rural WUI lands (Schlosser and others, 2004). Approximately 31% of the National Forest System lands within the project area are designated by the counties as WUIs.

Species composition would be altered to include a higher percentage of fire-resilient and long-lived species in areas that would be thinned (EA p. 124). Overall fire resilience of residual stands will increase in the long term (EA p. 127).

Potential fire behavior would be reduced on treated acres and, to some extent, between treatment areas (EA p. 124). Large fire growth and spread potential would be curtailed, and treatments would provide some level of protection to values-at-risk from potential fire (EA p. 124). High stand densities would be reduced, and some thinned areas would have substantial reductions in basal area. This would reduce crown bulk density and could increase canopy base height, which would reduce potential fire behavior (EA p. 124). Areas with reduced potential fire behavior would be more common because proposed activities would treat both naturally occurring surface and ladder fuels as well as activity fuel generated by harvest (EA p. 124).

Safety along travel routes would be improved for the public and fire management, facilitating fire suppression efforts (EA pp. 124-125).

Dispersed Sites for Camping: The public asked for additional dispersed sites for camping in the project area. Currently there are few wide spots along open roads that can be used for camping. There is a need to develop additional dispersed sites along open roads in the project area.

If some of the log landings could provide campsites, they will be left in a condition conducive for that use (EA p. 142).

Social & Economic: The northern Idaho counties exhibit the highest unemployment and dependency on timber supply in Region One of the Forest Service. Timber harvest would provide employment opportunities for local communities while achieving other project objectives.

We need to enhance community stability and resiliency. We need to contribute to local employment, income and lifestyles (Forest Plan II-11) by providing commercially viable wood products (Forest Plan III-2, III-16) now and for the long-term. When our Forest Plan was developed, people living and working near the national forest were told the Forest Service would provide a steady flow of timber, and most of the Charlie Preston Area is on lands designated for timber production (MA 1 and MA 4).

Jobs and income associated with the proposed activities may bring the local economy some increase relative stability during the life of the project. Approximately 12 million board feet (24,117 CCF) of timber would be harvested with Alternative C (EA p. 112).

C. IPNF Forest Plan

Alternative C is consistent with Forest Plan management area direction, does not require any forest plan amendments, and is consistent with direction for specific resources. Forest Plan consistency is discussed in detail below under *National Forest Management Act* and throughout the EA for each resource.

D. Consideration of Issues

An issue is a point of undesirable or unintended effect that would or may occur if the proposal were implemented. Design features were developed to anticipate and reduce the effects from the proposed activities on the environment and address and resolve the main issues. The proposed action was designed to address issues by considering and adjusting, if needed, unit locations, riparian buffers, logging methods, silvicultural prescriptions, design features, and other measures to protect resources. Issues resulting from the proposal include effects of road construction, timber harvest, and specifically regeneration harvests. Alternative C was developed to address these issues. We reduced the amount of road construction and eliminated all regeneration harvests. This reduced the amount of timber harvest that could be economically viable. Alternative B is consistent with the Forest Plan and applicable policies, regulations, and laws, but I am selecting Alternative C to be more responsive to issues and comments raised by the public.

Road Construction

Road construction, in general, can increase the amount of sediment delivered to streams, increase water yields, reduce shade for streams at stream crossings, affect aquatic organisms and their habitat, spread weeds, eliminate habitat for plants, damage cultural resources, affect old growth, change cattle movements, take land out of production, and affect wildlife habitat.

The selected alternative includes 1.6 miles of system road construction and 0.4 miles of temporary road construction. This is less than half the road construction proposed in Alternative B. Some of the public

expressed concern about road construction, so the interdisciplinary team developed Alternative C with less road construction.

The new road will be constructed mid-slope or higher with few water crossings. Two short sections of road construction will replace road that is not in a good location (NC9 and NC10; DN Map 1). After use for timber harvest activities the newly constructed roads will be put into long-term storage.

Sediment yield would increase in the short term from road work, but would decrease in the long term (EA p. 73 Table 29; EA p. 74). The projected sediment increases would be short-term, would not be detectable, and are not expected to impair beneficial uses (EA p. 72-74). New road construction that requires culvert installation would add some sediment, but following culvert removal and stabilization the new roads would not be a chronic source of sediment (EA p. 106). Due to the use of BMPs and the distance to fish-bearing sections of streams, culvert installation and removal would not impact the fish-bearing reach of Charlie Creek (EA p. 107). I recognize that road construction may contribute sediment, but I have determined the effects are not significant, and in the long term the project, overall, will result in a net reduction in sediment (EA p. 74).

I recognize that new weed species may be introduced and existing weeds may spread with the construction of new roads, but Alternative C allows access for the proposed timber harvest and would have less risk for increased weeds than Alternative B.

Storing the roads after use would reduce the risk for increasing and establishing invasive plants, once the roads are revegetated (EA p. 131). Long-term storage would reduce the effectiveness of the road as a pathway for weed spread by reducing the amount of use and limiting the type of use on the road. The opportunities for weed seeds and parts to be moved along the road would decrease. The road would be seeded and/or planted with native species to establish a vegetative cover in the road prism. Seeding the road bed with natives increases the competition with invasive plants by taking up spaces where noxious weeds could grow. Long-term storage may eliminate unauthorized motorized access while still permitting stock and pedestrian access. The reductions in vehicular access would result in a decreased potential for weed transport. No sensitive plant species populations would be threatened in this project area by noxious weeds (EA p. 135-140).

The project was designed to avoid damage to areas where cultural resources are located by completely eliminating potentially damaging activity in areas where known cultural resources are located (EA p. 111).

With this project no road construction is proposed within allocated old growth, and approximately 0.2 miles of existing road through old growth would be decommissioned and 0.6 miles through and adjacent to old growth would be put into long-term storage (EA p. 133).

Cattle use is expected to continue as it currently does (EA p. 140).

New road construction is factored into the effects to soils for determining compliance with the IPNF Forest Plan, and the project is consistent with Forest Plan soil quality standards. After all sale activities have ended, the temporary roads would be recontoured, seeded with native grasses, and organic material would be redistributed over the surface. See EA p. 147.

Road construction in Alternative C would affect about 8.4 acres of forest. It is expected there would be some loss of suitable fisher habitat as a result of this activity. This would be an inconsiderable effect, however, as all proposed roads occur within cutting units (where canopy loss is accounted for), over 2,700 acres of suitable fisher habitat would remain intact, and the moderate quality habitat level would be maintained. The disturbance from the use of these roads is covered in the open road density effects, and there would be no change to open road densities after sale activities are concluded (EA Table 51). All newly constructed roads would be put into long-term storage (or decommissioned, for temporary roads), limiting the time disturbance effects would persist. See EA p. 164-165.

Effects of road construction on wolves are measured by the open road densities (see Table 51), and there would be no change to open road densities after sale activities are concluded. Travel corridors would be maintained; however, there would be a slight reduction in their quality in two areas due to proposed system road construction. One road would be built across a travel corridor with this alternative. Another 400 feet of

road would be constructed within 100 feet of a potential ridge-top travel corridor. Effects are expected to be inconsequential given the relatively narrow width of these roads, their location in commercial thin units which would retain over 30% canopy cover; and the fact that they would be put into long-term storage after use.

Proposed roads are not located in riparian areas, so potential for effects to toads and toad habitat would be minimal. The disturbance from the use of these roads during project activities is covered in the open road density effects. Alternative C proposes two creek crossings with the new system road construction. These would be crossings of small headwaters streams, however, where the potential for toad breeding habitat is low. This new system road would be put into long-term storage with the culverts removed after use. See EA p. 173.

Road building would affect about 8.4 acres of forest with some loss of suitable goshawk habitat. This would be an inconsiderable effect, however, because all proposed roads occur within cutting units (where canopy loss is accounted for) and over 2,400 acres of suitable nesting habitat would remain intact. The disturbance from the use of these roads is covered in the open road density effects, and there would be no change to open road densities after sale activities are concluded. All newly constructed roads would be put into long-term storage (and temporary roads would be decommissioned), limiting the time disturbance effects persist. See EA p. 181.

It is expected there would be some loss of snags as a result of road construction. However, snag guidelines would be met overall for the project area, maintaining the most important aspect of woodpecker habitat. The disturbance from the use of these roads is covered in the open road density effects and would not affect pileated woodpeckers much as there are adequate areas available to disperse to. See EA p. 190.

Effects on elk are expected to be inconsequential given the relatively narrow width of these roads, their location in commercial thin units that would retain over 30% canopy cover; and the fact that they would be put into long-term storage after use or be decommissioned (temporary road). See EA p. 198.

It is expected there would be some loss of suitable marten habitat as a result of road construction, however, this would be an inconsiderable effect as over 4,400 acres of suitable habitat would remain intact, which is enough to support existing habitat conditions for marten. The disturbance from the use of these roads is covered in the open road density effects. All newly constructed roads would be put into long-term storage (or decommissioned, for temporary roads), limiting the time disturbance effects persist. See EA p. 207.

Amount of Timber Harvest

Timber harvest can increase the amount of sediment delivered to streams, increase water yields, damage cultural resources, affect cattle movements and amount of forage available for grazing, spread weeds, reduce soil productivity, increase fuel loads, affect the visual quality of the forest, and affect wildlife habitat.

The selected alternative includes timber harvest on 850 acres. This is almost half the timber harvest proposed in Alternative B. Although Alternative C does not go as far to meet the purpose and need as Alternative B, it does address all aspects of the purpose and need.

Modeling indicates Alternative C may increase water yields over the existing conditions, but water yield increases would likely not be detectable in the project area streams and would likely not be differentiated from normal climatic fluctuations (EA pp. 71-72). If annual water yields increase to modeled levels they would likely have little effect on stream channels due to the streams' morphological characteristics, ability to deal with flow fluctuations, overall stability, wood component, and existing streamside vegetation (EA p. 67, 72, 83). Based on stream channel responses from past disturbances within the project area and based on the stream channel and landtype characteristics within the project area, the estimated changes in flows, sediment yields and the potential increases in flows from rain-on-snow events would not appreciably affect stream channel stability from any of the activities proposed in Alternative C (EA p. 74, 80, 83). The potential effects of activities on peak flows and water yields would be small compared with the modeled changes in flows that occurred from past large canopy openings created by wildfires (EA p. 72). Alternative C would likely indirectly raise peak flows a small amount in the 1st order headwater streams within the project area, however,

these changes would likely be undetectable given the relative small change in ECA, implementation of riparian buffers, best management practices (EA Appendix B), and design features (EA p. 72).

Riparian buffers would protect streams from increased solar radiation by retaining canopy cover (EA p. 72).

The timber harvest in Alternative C will have no effect on cultural resources or historic properties (EA p. 111).

The proposed timber harvest would not affect cattle movement in the project area (EA p. 140).

New invader species of noxious weeds may be introduced by way of existing roads and from proposed ground-disturbing activities which could result in the establishment of new weed populations or the expansion of existing populations (EA p. 132). The project area currently has noxious weeds, but maintaining 50% or more canopy cover would reduce the likelihood of a noxious weed monoculture occurring (EA p. 128). The timber harvest in Alternative C would be commercial thins which would not permanently break or open the tree canopy (EA p. 30, 129, 137), but it would open it more than 50%. Most species of noxious weeds will not persist in the harvest units as the canopy closes over time. Although noxious weeds may displace native species, the majority of this would occur along roadsides. No sensitive plant species populations would be threatened in this project area by noxious weeds. See Sensitive Plants section below and EA p. 136-139.

I recognize timber harvest activities have the potential to cause detrimental soil disturbance, such as compaction and displacement, and reduced productivity (EA p. 144). The timber harvest is designed to protect soils and limit soil disturbance (See design features) and may actually increase organic matter and contribute to the soil surface layer through limbs and tops left on site (EA p. 148). The selected alternative complies with IPNF Forest Plan standards and Regional soil quality standards for maintaining soil productivity (EA pp. 146-147, 149, 150-151).

Fuels resulting from the timber harvest will be treated. The combination of timber harvest and fuel treatments will modify vegetation and fuel loadings such that potential fire behavior will be reduced on acres treated and, to some extent, indirectly between treatment areas (EA p. 124).

The timber harvest is consistent with Forest Plan visual quality objectives (EA p. 152).

The timber harvest was carefully designed to limit effects to wildlife and will, in some cases, even benefit wildlife (EA p. 6, 33-34, 164, 169, 189, 190). The commercial thins will develop larger trees over a shorter period of time when compared to no treatment (EA p. 30, 119-120, 164, 180, 189, 207).

Regeneration Timber Harvest

Regeneration harvest (clearcut, seedtree, and shelterwood) removes most of the trees in an area to establish new regeneration. Openings in the tree canopy can increase water yield, create conditions conducive for noxious weeds, reduce habitat for some plants, affect the visual quality of the forest, or affect wildlife habitat.

Some of the public told us they did not want to see any more clearcuts. The selected alternative only includes commercial thinning with no clearcuts, no other regeneration harvests, and no final removal harvests. This reduced opportunities for converting areas to early-seral, long-lived western larch and western white pine and leaves timber in some areas in Management Area 1 growing at slower than optimal rates. These areas have reached the culmination of mean annual increment, meaning their growth rates are slowing down instead of increasing. In some of these areas the trees may be deteriorating faster than they are growing, but I decided to respond to public comment by leaving these areas untreated at this time.

V. Finding of No Significant Impact

After considering the environmental effects described in the Charlie Preston Environmental Assessment and the associated documents, I have determined that the selected alternative will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment based on context and intensity of impacts (40 CFR 1508.27).

Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. The Finding of No Significant Impact is included as Appendix A of this decision notice.

VI. Findings Required by Other Regulations and Policies

To the best of my knowledge, this decision is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies. See discussions below.

A. National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

On December 18, 2009 the Department of Agriculture issued a final rule reinstating the National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning rule of November 9, 2000, as amended (2000 rule) ([74 FR 242 \[67059-67075\]](#)). The 2000 rule states: Projects implementing land management plans must comply with the transition provisions of 36 CFR §219.35, but not any other provisions of the planning rule. Projects implementing land management plans and plan amendments, as appropriate, must be developed considering the best available science in accordance with §219.35(a). Projects implementing land management plans must be consistent with the provisions of the governing plans. This proposal does not require any forest plan amendments.

Best Available Science

This project was developed and analyzed considering the best available science. The bibliography for the EA is 32 pages long and includes many literature citations from the last ten years. The interdisciplinary team also considered almost 300 references provided by people who commented (DN Appendix B – Consideration of References). My decision is based on the project record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information (see EA Bibliography; all resource reports; biological evaluations and biological assessments; and DN Appendix B - Response to Comments and Consideration of References); and a consideration of responsible opposing views (Response to Comments and Consideration of References).

Forest Plan Consistency

The project is consistent with the Forest Plan for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The EA and record document consistency with the IPNF Forest Plan as follows:

<i>Air Quality</i>	The selected alternative meets the Forest Plan requirements for air quality (EA p. 127).
<i>Water Resources</i>	The selected alternative meets the requirements of the IPNF Forest Plan for water resources standards (EA pp. 82-83).
<i>Aquatic Organisms</i>	The selected alternative meets the requirements of the IPNF Forest Plan for fish standards. Standards 1 and 2 have been replaced with the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) and the selected alternative meets the INFS standards (EA p. 110).
<i>Cultural Resources</i>	All significant cultural resources in the project area will be preserved in accordance with the Forest Plan. The selected alternative includes design features that will protect and preserve all cultural resources in the project area from adverse effects (EA pp. 111-112).
<i>Forest Vegetation</i>	The selected alternative is consistent with Forest Plan goals, objectives and standards. All proposed silvicultural practices comply with Forest Plan Appendix A, Summary of Timber Information and Vegetation Management, providing direction for silvicultural practices on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (EA pp. 121-122).
<i>Fuels</i>	Prescribed burning and mechanical treatment of activity fuels are consistent with direction in the Forest Plan (EA p. 127).
<i>Noxious Weeds</i>	The project complies with the forest plan requirement for moderate control through use of design features to reduce the introduction & spread of noxious weeds (EA p. 132).
<i>Old Growth</i>	Specific goals, objectives and standards for old growth management as described in the IPNF Forest Plan are met with the selected alternative (EA pp. 133-135).
<i>Plants (TES)</i>	The selected alternative will have no direct effect on threatened, endangered plant species, or Forest Species of Concern. The selected alternative also will not trend toward federal listing any sensitive plant species (EA pp. 136-140).
<i>Range</i>	The selected alternative will meet the intent of the IPNF Forest Plan for range (EA p. 140).

<i>Recreation</i>	The selected alternative complies with the management direction for recreation provided in the IPNF Forest Plan (EA p. 143).
<i>Soils</i>	The selected alternative complies with IPNF Forest Plan standards for maintaining soil productivity (EA pp. 146-147, 149, 150-151).
<i>Visual Quality</i>	The selected alternative will meet Forest Plan visual quality objectives (VQOs) with the silvicultural prescription, with design features, or they would have no effect on visual quality and would therefore meet VQOs (EA p. 152).
<i>Wildlife</i>	The selected alternative is consistent with applicable goals, direction, standards, and guidelines from the Forest Plan for the management of wildlife habitat and species populations (EA p. 162-163, 180-181, 182, 185-189, 196, 206).

Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities:

The EA and record show the project provides for diversity of plant and animal communities as follows:

<i>Plants</i>	<p>No federally listed Endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and none were found in the project area (EA p. 136; Botanical BE and BA p. 2) No threatened plants are suspected to occur in the project area and none were found. Habitat for water howellia and Spalding's catch fly does not occur within the affected environment of the Charlie Preston project area. The proposed activities will have no direct effect on Water howellia and Spalding's catchfly and no direct impact on any of the sensitive species that may occur in the project area. If any sites are found in the future that are deemed necessary to ensure species and population viability against a potential trend towards federal listing, those sites would be protected (EA p. 136).</p> <p>New invader species of noxious weeds may be introduced by way of existing roads and from proposed ground-disturbing activities which could result in the establishment of new weed populations or the expansion of existing populations (EA p. 128). This area currently has noxious weeds, but maintaining 50% or more canopy cover would reduce the likelihood of a noxious weed monoculture occurring (EA p. 128). The timber harvest in Alternative C would be commercial thins which would not permanently break or open the tree canopy, but it would open it more than 50%. Most species of noxious weeds will not persist in the harvest units as the canopy closes over time. Although noxious weeds may displace native species, the majority of this would occur along roadsides. No sensitive plant species populations would be threatened in this project area by noxious weeds. See EA p. 136.</p>
<i>Forest Vegetation</i>	The management activities are designed to improve stand health and vigor, and maintain or enhance species composition and stand structure. This would minimize risk of stand loss from forest insects and disease as well as reduce risk of stand loss to weather, fire or other disturbances (EA p. 120).
<i>Fish</i>	The selected alternative would meet NFMA requirements by providing and improving habitat for a diversity of fish communities and other organisms. Bull trout do not currently occur in the watersheds of the project area and westslope cutthroat trout are present. The improvements to the in-stream habitat would benefit westslope cutthroat trout and western pearlshell mussel. In the long term, the improvements could benefit bull trout if they ever become reestablished within the St. Maries drainage (EA p. 108-110).
<i>Wildlife</i>	The selected alternative compiles with Forest Plan direction for wildlife (EA p. 162-163, 180-181, 182, 185-189, 196, 206). It also complies with direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat. The selected alternative complies with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species. The project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and other direction and requirements for the management of wildlife species and habitat. See EA p. 206.

Other NFMA Consistency Requirements

All proposed vegetative treatments integrated other resource needs through project design during alternative development and analysis. The selected alternative does not include regeneration harvest, and openings will not be created.

Suitability for Timber Production: No timber harvest, other than salvage sales or sales to protect other multiple-use values, shall occur on lands not suited for timber production (16 USC 1604(k)).

All proposed units within the project area fall within Management areas 1 and 4, and are suitable for timber production (16 USC 1604(K)).

Timber Harvest on National Forest Lands (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)): A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities to harvest timber on National Forest System lands only where:

a. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(i)).

Harvest methods and design features were identified that would not cause irreversible damage. See the previous discussion of potential beneficial and adverse effects aquatics and soils beginning on page 2.

b. There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(ii)).

The selected alternative does not include regeneration harvest, and openings will not be created.

c. Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment, where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iii)).

Unit layout will be accomplished utilizing existing terrain features and an array of design features to protect streams and streambanks (see EA p. 25 – Design Features for Action Alternatives). No harvest activity will occur in wetlands or on floodplains, and no substantial negative effects are expected (EA p. 84).

d. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iv)).

Harvest systems were determined with a combination of factors including the method that has the least adverse impacts to the environment; the best method to get the volume out of the woods, and economic return.

Construction of temporary roadways in connection with timber contracts, and other permits or leases: Unless the necessity for a permanent road is set forth in the forest development road system plan, any road constructed on land of the National Forest System in connection with a timber contract or other permit or lease shall be designed with the goal of reestablishing vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover has been disturbed by the construction of the road, within ten years after the termination of the contract, permit, or lease either through artificial or natural means. Such action shall be taken unless it is later determined that the road is needed for use as a part of the National Forest Transportation System (16 USC 1608(b)).

Management actions associated with the Charlie Preston project include the construction of approximately 0.4 miles of temporary road on National Forest System land. Temporary roads will be decommissioned and revegetated after use. See Design Feature II. G. 6 and BMP Practice 15.25.

Standards of roadway construction: Roads constructed on National Forest System lands shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources (16 USC 1608(c)).

Management actions associated with the Charlie Preston project include the construction of approximately 1.6 miles of new system road on National Forest System land. The new system road will be constructed to meet all BMP standards and will be stored after use. See Design Features V. A., V. C. V. G. This meets the intent of 16 UCS 1608(c).

B. The Clean Water Act and Idaho Water Quality Standards (EA p. 70-71)

State water quality standards would be met because:

1. The short-term sediment increase would not be detectable and beneficial uses would be maintained because of temporal and spatial scales (i.e. duration and estimated amount to be treated over multiple years, riparian buffers, large total area vs. relatively small treated area, length and surface area of the channel and floodplain network).
2. Net sediment inputs to streams would be reduced in the long term. The overall long-term benefit through sediment reduction would be consistent with the goals identified in the TMDL and would improve beneficial uses.
3. Riparian plantings and other stream restoration/enhancement activities proposed with the action alternatives would eventually increase stream shading, reduce stream temperature, protect stream banks from erosion and would improve beneficial uses long term.
4. Stream temperatures would continue to improve due to the maintenance and protection of RHCAs.
5. The overall long-term benefit of having more resilient forest vegetation and the protection from extensive high severity fire would continue to maintain and improve beneficial use support.
6. The estimated changes in flows, sediment yields, and potential increases in peak flows from ROS events would not appreciably affect stream channel morphology or stability. This conclusion is based on assessed stream channel responses from recent disturbances, flow fluctuations, and past flood events within the watershed and based on the existing stream channel characteristics, stability, stream side vegetation, and local landtype characteristics along with the implementation of stream buffers (INFISH 1995), design features and BMPs.
7. There are no municipal watersheds in the cumulative effects area.

The selected alternative is consistent with the requirements of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act as amended by the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1251. Water temperature and sediment, the principal pollutant of concern, would not increase within the Charlie Creek watershed. Through implementation of design features, BMPs, and the net sediment reduction that would take place, risks would be reduced to beneficial uses designation for support of cold water biota and secondary contact recreation in Charlie Creek and its tributaries. The net reduction of sediment and long-term temperature improvement would likely improve conditions that led to the 303(d) listing and would meet the intent of the TMDL. The St. Joe Ranger District contacted the Environmental Protection Agency about this project and did not receive any input from them (PI-73). The Forest Service will obtain any necessary permits required for implementation.

C. Floodplain and Wetland Protection Executive Orders 11988 and 11990

The activities would meet Executive Order 11988 and Executive Order 11990 related to floodplains and wetlands because no activity is proposed in wetlands or on floodplains (other than proposed enhancement or restoration work with riparian planting, large woody debris placement or culvert upgrades) and no substantial negative effects are expected. Design features and best management practices would be implemented to protect riparian areas (EA p. 84).

D. Idaho Forest Practices Act

Best management practices or soil and water conservation practices that meet or exceed requirements of the Idaho Forest Practices Act would be applied, and all activities would comply with the guidelines in the R1/R4 Soil and Water Conservation Handbook. See design features and EA Appendix B (EA p. 84).

E. Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act

The selected alternative is consistent with the requirements of this act. Inland Native Fish Strategy criteria incorporate specific protections for stream channels, and are included in this project. The activities are expected to meet the Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act because no activity is proposed in stream channels

(other than proposed enhancement or restoration work with riparian planting and large woody debris placement or culvert upgrades) and no substantial negative effects are expected to stream channels. Design features and BMPs would be implemented to protect riparian areas (EA p. 84). The Forest Service will obtain any necessary permits required for implementation.

F. Executive Order 12962 (June 7, 1995)

The selected alternative will maintain habitat and the fishery potential, which in turn will maintain the potential for recreational fishing opportunities. The project includes culvert replacements or removals, large woody debris placement, riparian planting and road decommissioning. These activities will increase recreational fishing opportunities by improving habitat thus improving the carrying capacity of the streams (EA p. 111)

G. Clean Air Act

The project will comply with the Clean Air Act (1977). Prescribed burns during any time of the year are regulated by the Idaho State Department of Environmental Quality which issues burning closures when necessary to protect air quality. The Forest Service cooperates with the State by requesting approval to burn through the Montana/Idaho Airshed Management System in compliance with the Idaho State Implementation Plan. Proposed burning activities would follow procedures outlined by the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement (EA p. 37, 127).

H. Endangered Species Act

The project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act. It will not jeopardize the continued existence of bull trout, which historically occurred in the project area but does not currently occur there. No critical bull trout habitat is designated in the analysis area. The project will have no effect on bull trout (EA p. 84, 110-111). No federally listed Endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and none were found in the project area. No Threatened plants are suspected to occur in the project area and none were found. Habitat for water howellia and Spalding's catchfly does not occur within the affected environment of the Charlie Preston project area (EA p.135). The project would have no effect on Threatened or Endangered plant species. There would be no effect to woodland caribou, grizzly bear, or Canada lynx (EA p. 153-155; Wildlife Report 9-12).

- The project **will have no effect** on Threatened or Endangered plant species. No federally listed Endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and none were found in the project area. No Threatened plants are suspected to occur in the project area and none were found. Habitat for water howellia and Spalding's catchfly does not occur within the affected environment of the Charlie Preston project area (EA p.135).
- The project **will have no effect** on bull trout. The project will not jeopardize the continued existence of bull trout, which historically occurred in the project area but does not currently occur there. No critical bull trout habitat is designated in the analysis area (EA p. 84, 110-111).
- The project **will have no effect** on woodland caribou because the recovery area for the population is in the Selkirk Mountains of northern Idaho, northeastern Washington and southern British Columbia, Canada, this project is not within the Southern Selkirk Mountains Caribou Recovery Area, and there has been no caribou occupation of the St. Joe District for well over 100 years. See EA p. 153.
- The project **will have no effect** on grizzly bear. The Fish and Wildlife Service has surveyed in the North Fork of the Clearwater drainage and the upper St. Joe drainage to assess if there are any grizzly bears in the area. The potential for grizzly bear occurrence on the St. Joe Ranger District and in the project area cannot be totally dismissed, but there is nothing to suggest any occurrence other than the possibility of transient individuals; and that is considered to be unlikely. No grizzlies were detected via DNA or by cameras at 91 sites in the Bitterroots during the surveys in 2008-09. There is no known grizzly bear population occupying the St. Joe Ranger District; and

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has determined that a resident population of grizzly bears does not exist in the Bitterroot Ecosystem at this time. There is no evidence or reason to suspect that grizzly bears are present in the Charlie Preston project area or the St. Joe Ranger District. See EA p. 153.

- The project **will have no effect** on Canada lynx. Habitat analysis for lynx is based on the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD). Objectives, standards and guidelines for the maintenance of lynx habitat and populations apply only to lynx habitat on federal lands within Lynx Analysis Units (LAUs). The Charlie Preston project area is not within an LAU due to the low amounts of suitable habitat on the western half of the St. Joe Ranger District. The nearest LAU is about 30 miles away from the project area (WL28). The species is not known or suspected in the project area. The project area lacks suitable habitat and Canada lynx are not known to occur in the area. See EA p. 153.

I. Migratory Bird Act

The selected alternative is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, made the taking, killing or possessing of migratory birds unlawful. Executive Order 13186 of 2001 clarified the responsibilities of Federal agencies regarding migratory bird conservation and directed Federal agencies to evaluate the effects of Federal actions on migratory birds with an emphasis on species of concern. The Executive Order also directed Federal agencies to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding their role with respect to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In December 2008, the Forest Service entered into a MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that further clarified the responsibility of the Forest Service to protect migratory birds. In the MOU the Forest Service agreed to consider the most up-to-date U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service list of Birds of Conservation Concern when developing or amending land management plans and to evaluate the effects of agency actions on migratory birds within the NEPA process, focusing first on species of management concern along with their priority habitat and key risk factors. For the IPNF, the bird species of management concern are those species designated as sensitive and MIS. Consequently, the IPNF is in compliance with the MOU by analyzing the potential effects to these bird species and their habitat at the project level. See the updated Charlie Preston Wildlife Report (p. 2).

J. National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) directs all Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings (actions, financial support, and authorizations) on properties included in or eligible for the National Register. Qualified archaeologists systematically inventoried and analyzed the Charlie Preston Project Area. All appropriate design criteria and mitigation measures are in place. No cultural resources would be adversely affected by this project. Consultation with Native American groups has been completed as in accordance with the NHPA, and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office will be completed in accordance with the NHPA. See EA p. 112.

K. Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898

The selected alternative complies with Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898. No disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified through public involvement efforts over the course of this analysis. Acting District Ranger Kimberly Johnson discussed the project with representatives of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe during a meeting on June 2, 2010 (PI-1), and they did not express concerns. District Ranger Wade Sims discussed the project with staff of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe after the EA was made available to the public, and they did not express concerns (project file document PI-93).

L. Idaho Roadless Rule (October 16, 2009)

The Idaho Roadless Rule does not apply because the project area does not fall within an Idaho Roadless Area, and no activities will occur in an Idaho Roadless Area (updated Recreation Report).

M. Idaho Noxious Weed Act

Continued treatment of invasive plant species meets the intent of the State of Idaho's Noxious Weed Act (EA p. 132).

VII. Contact Person & Responsible Official

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Lynette Myhre (project leader) or Wade Sims (District Ranger) at the St. Joe Ranger District, 222 S. 7th Street, Suite 1, St. Maries, Idaho 83861; (208) 245-2531.

I, Mary Farnsworth, Forest Supervisor of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, am the Responsible Official for this decision.

VIII. Appeal Information

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.11. A written appeal must be submitted within 45 days following the publication date of the legal notice of this decision in the *Coeur d'Alene Press*, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. It is the responsibility of the appellant to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the *exclusive* means for calculating the time to file an appeal. Appellants should not rely on date or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Paper appeals must be submitted to:

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

or

USDA Forest Service, Northern Region
ATTN: Appeal Deciding Officer
200 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Office hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.

Electronic appeals must be submitted to: appeals-northern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

Faxed appeals must be submitted to: (406) 329-3411

In electronic appeals, the subject line should contain the name of the project being appealed, in this case, **Charlie Preston**. An automated response will confirm your electronic appeal has been received. Electronic appeals must be submitted in MS Word, Portable Document Format (PDF), Word Perfect, or Rich Text Format (RTF).

It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project- or activity-specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why my decision should be reversed. The appeal must be filed with the Appeal Deciding Officer in writing. At a minimum, the appeal must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14, and include the following information:

- The appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
- A signature, or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the appeal);
- When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
- The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official (Mary Farnsworth, IPNF Forest Supervisor), and the date of the decision;
- The regulation under which the appeal is being filed: 36 CFR 215;

- Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes;
- Any portion(s) of the decision with which the appellant disagrees, and explanation for the disagreement;
- Why the appellant believes the Responsible Official's decision failed to consider the comments; and
- How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy.

If an appeal is received on this project there may be informal resolution meetings and/or conference calls between the Responsible Official and the appellant. These discussions would take place within 15 days after the closing date for filing an appeal. All such meetings are open to the public. If you are interested in attending any informal resolution discussions, please contact the Responsible Official or monitor the following website for postings about current appeals in the Northern Region of the Forest Service: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/r1/appeal-meetings>.

IX. Implementation Information

Implementation of the selected alternative will begin no earlier than 5 days following the 45-day appeal period or 15 days following the appeal disposition if an appeal is filed.



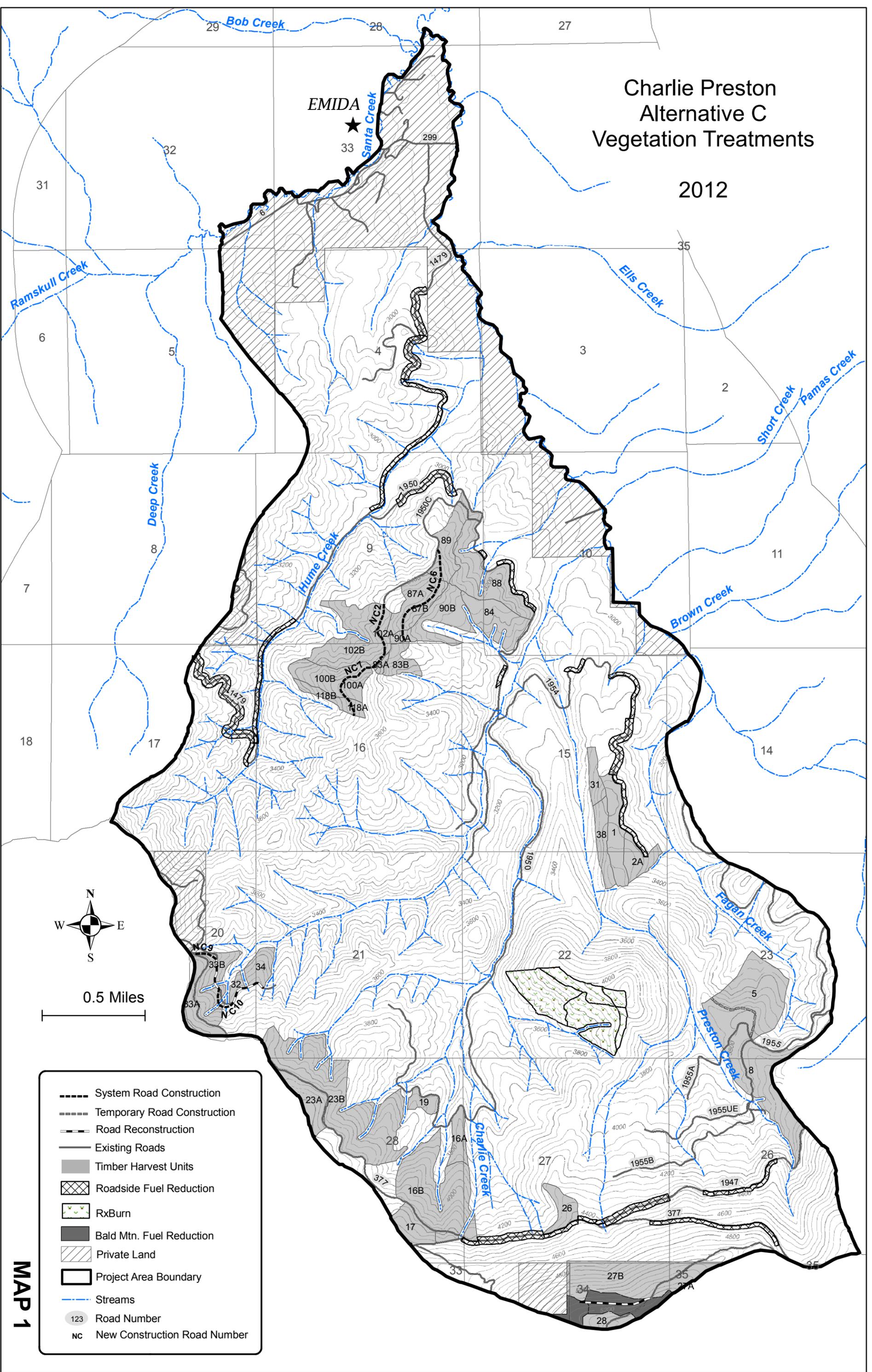
MARY FARNSWORTH
Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forests

2/6/12
Date

Charlie Preston Alternative C Vegetation Treatments

2012

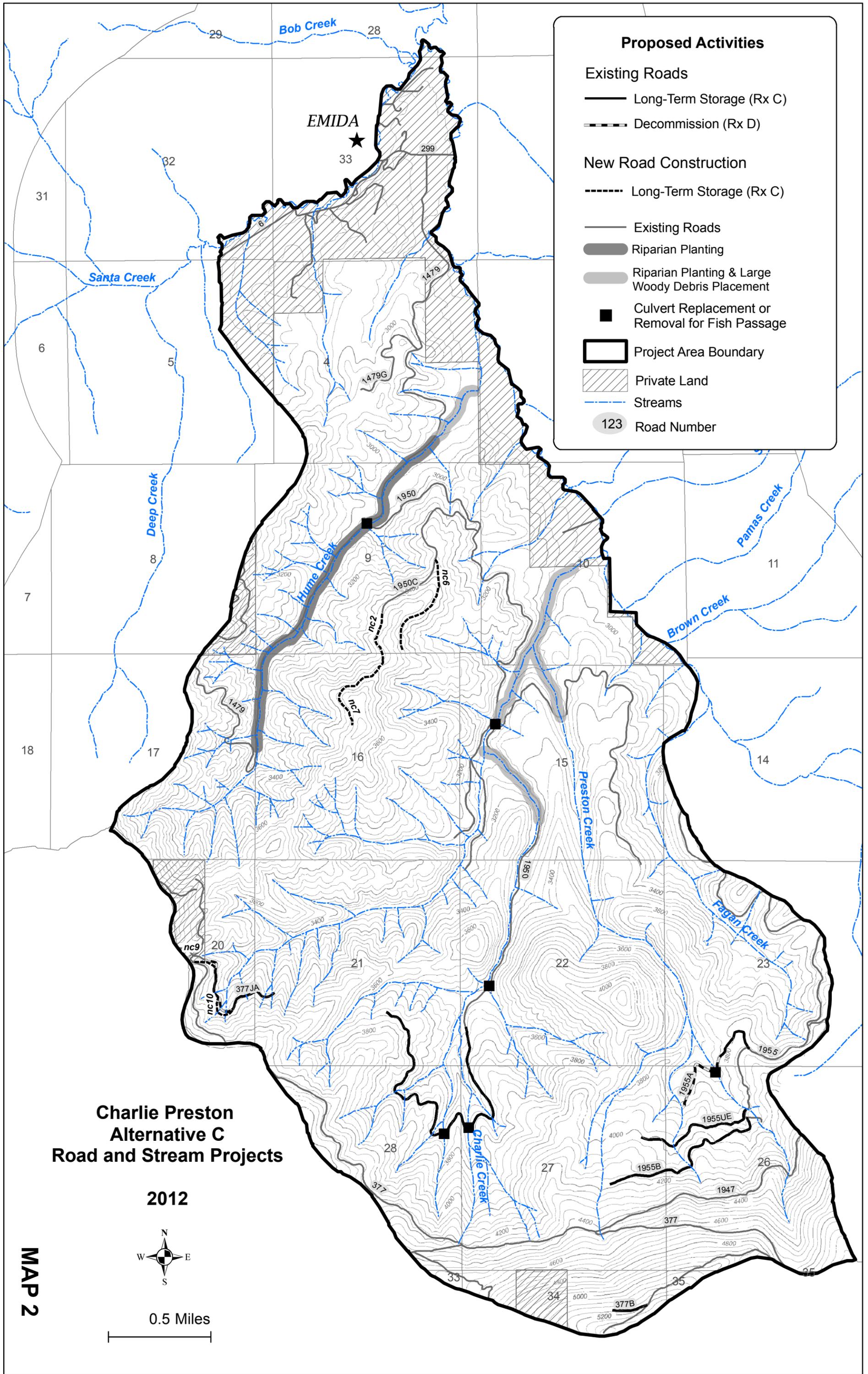
EMIDA



0.5 Miles

- System Road Construction
- . - . - . Temporary Road Construction
- - - - Road Reconstruction
- Existing Roads
- Timber Harvest Units
- ▨ Roadside Fuel Reduction
- RxBurn
- Bald Mtn. Fuel Reduction
- ▨ Private Land
- Project Area Boundary
- Streams
- 123 Road Number
- nc New Construction Road Number

MAP 1



Charlie Preston Decision Notice

Appendix A

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for

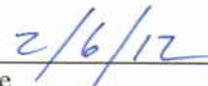
Charlie Preston

United States Forest Service
Idaho Panhandle National Forest
St. Joe Ranger District
Benewah County, Idaho

After considering the environmental effects described in the Charlie Preston Environmental Assessment (EA) and the associated resource reports and project file documents, I have determined that Alternative C will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment based on the context and intensity of its impacts (40 CFR 1508.27). Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.



MARY FARNSWORTH
Forest Supervisor
Idaho Panhandle National Forest



Date

I base my finding on the following:

A. Context:

The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27).

The activities are of limited scope and duration, and they would affect only the immediate area around the proposed treatment areas. The project would be implemented over a period of eight to nine years and was designed to minimize environmental effects through harvest unit location, riparian buffers, logging methods, silvicultural prescriptions, and design features (EA pp. 26-45). The project will improve conditions within the project area, but the benefits and the possible adverse effects are not likely to be noticeable outside the project area. Effects would be local in nature and are not likely to significantly impact resources beyond the project area.

Timber harvest, in the form of commercial thins, would occur on approximately 850 acres, or about 13 percent, of the 6,560 acres of National Forest System lands in the project area. Timber harvest is proposed on less than five percent of the 17,280-acre Charlie Creek watershed.

Our records show a long history of human use and natural changes in the project area (EA p. 47-51; Activities Report). Today, after decades of human use, large fires, and floods, the project area continues to have highly

productive ground with stable stream channels (EA p. 74) and habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species (EA p. 156-208).

B. Intensity:

This refers to the severity of impact. The following are considered in evaluating intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the balance of effects will be beneficial:

I considered beneficial and adverse impacts associated with activities as presented in the Charlie Preston EA (EA pp. 47-208) and resource reports. The size, location, and design of the project limits the intensity of the beneficial and adverse effects that may result. These impacts are within the range of effects identified in the IPNF Forest Plan. I conclude that the specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed activities are not significant.

Alternative C would have no effect to many aspects of human environment, so I'd like to summarize those to frame the level of potential beneficial and adverse effects. Project scope and design features will effectively eliminate or reduce to negligible most of the potential impacts; therefore, implementation of Alternative C will result in **no effect** to:

Aquatics

Alternative C would result in no effect to chemical constituents of the water (EA p. 82); municipal watersheds (EA p. 84); bull trout or designated critical habitat (EA p. 84, 110, 111; Fisheries Biological Assessment); or the fishery potential or the potential for recreational fishing opportunities (EA p. 111).

Cultural Resources

Alternative C would result in no effect to cultural resources or historic properties (EA p. 111).

Plants

Alternative C would result in no effect to federally listed threatened or endangered plants because no endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and no threatened or endangered plants were found in the project area (EA p. 135). It would result in no effect for plant Species of Concern. Two occurrences are known within the analysis area, but they are outside the activity areas and will not be impacted by this project (EA p. 136). Alternative C would have no impact on sensitive plant species other than *Buxbaumia viridis* (EA p. 136-140).

Livestock Grazing

Alternative C would result in no effect to cattle use (EA p. 140).

Recreation

Alternative C would result in no effect to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classification (EA p. 140, 143); long-term public recreation access (EA p. 141), or outfitting and guiding services (EA p. 142).

Soils

Alternative C would result in no effect to mass failure potential (EA p. 67-68, 72, 149-150).

Unique Characteristics

Alternative C would result in no effect to parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (EA p. 152).

productive ground with stable stream channels (EA p. 74) and habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species (EA p. 156-208).

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This refers to the severity of impact. The following are considered in evaluating intensity:

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the balance of effects will be beneficial:

I considered beneficial and adverse impacts associated with activities as presented in the Charlie Preston EA (EA pp. 47-208) and resource reports. The size, location, and design of the project limits the intensity of the beneficial and adverse effects that may result. These impacts are within the range of effects identified in the IPNF Forest Plan. I conclude that the specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the proposed activities are not significant.

Alternative C would have no effect to many aspects of human environment, so I'd like to summarize those to frame the level of potential beneficial and adverse effects. Project scope and design features will effectively eliminate or reduce to negligible most of the potential impacts; therefore, implementation of Alternative C will result in **no effect** to:

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Alternative C would result in no effect to cultural resources or historic properties (EA p. 111).

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Alternative C would result in no effect to federally listed threatened or endangered plants because no endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and no threatened or endangered plants were found in the project area (EA p. 135). It would result in no effect for plant Species of Concern. Two occurrences are known within the analysis area, but they are outside the activity areas and will not be impacted by this project (EA p. 136). Alternative C would have no impact on sensitive plant species other than *Buxbaumia viridis* (EA p. 136-140).

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Alternative C would result in no effect to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classification (EA p. 140, 143); long-term public recreation access (EA p. 141), or outfitting and guiding services (EA p. 142).

Soils

Alternative C would result in no effect to mass failure potential (EA p. 67-68, 72, 149-150).

Unique Characteristics

Alternative C would result in no effect to parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (EA p. 152).

Wildlife

Alternative C would result in no effect to woodland caribou, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, bald eagle, black swift, Coeur d'Alene salamander, common loon, flammulated owl, fringed myotis, Harlequin duck, northern bog lemming, peregrine falcon, pygmy nuthatch, Townsend's big-eared bat, and wolverine (EA p. 152-208; Wildlife Report p. 9). It would also have no effect on the potential for the area to support fisher (EA p. 156-201); any known wolf den or rendezvous site (EA p. 167); goshawk local or regional habitat quality or population status (EA pp. 176, 180-184); the overall ability of the project area to support goshawk (EA p. 179); or pileated woodpecker local or regional habitat quality or population status (EA p. 190-191).

Alternative C would have no effect on acres of wildlife security areas or percent of security (EA p. 142, 143); open road/trail density (EA p. 166, 170, 195); elk population trend (EA p. 199); marten local or regional overall habitat quality or population status (EA p. 206-208); persistence of marten on the St. Joe Ranger District, in northern Idaho, or in Idaho (EA p. 206); or the ability of the project area to provide marten habitat (EA p. 206-208).

Beneficial Effects

This project would have both beneficial and adverse effects and I have considered both when making a determination of significance. The proposed actions will result in the following **beneficial effects**:

Aquatics

The Forest Service is required to show a reduction in sediment when projects are proposed in watersheds with assigned total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) for sediment. Although this project will result in beneficial effects to the watershed, I did not rely on the beneficial effects of sediment reduction to determine that there would be no significant effects from the project. The potential adverse effects of the activities that may result in sediment increases are, by themselves, not significant. The projected sediment increases would be short-term, would not be detectable, and are not expected to impair beneficial uses. The estimated short-term increases in sediment yield associated with this project (all road work and harvest) are expected to be routed through the stream channels and would not be of a magnitude that would cause changes to stream channel stability (e.g., migration, braiding, and widening of channels) and would likely be too small to measure. New road construction that requires culvert installation would add some sediment, but following culvert removal and stabilization the new roads would not be a chronic source of sediment. Due to the use of BMPs and the distance to fish-bearing sections of streams, culvert installation and removal would not impact the fish-bearing reach of Charlie Creek (EA pp. 91, 101). See discussion of potential adverse effects below and EA pages 83 and 105.

Sediment reduction from the proposed road closures and decommissioning would improve water quality and stream channel conditions, meet the intent of the total maximum daily load (TMDL) which requires sediment reduction, and move the streams toward improving conditions of beneficial uses (EA p. 74). The lower road density, especially within the riparian habitat conservation areas (RHCAs) would help decrease the overall effects of roads on flows and decrease the overall potential for sedimentation into stream networks (EA p. 74).

Stream temperatures would decrease throughout the project area over the long term. Planting riparian vegetation along Hume Creek, Preston Creek, and the West Fork Charlie Creek would promote riparian shade and reduce stream temperatures in the long term, and RHCA buffers would maintain existing vegetation that provides shade (EA p. 75).

The long-term productivity of the water resource would be protected and improved through reducing sediment, reducing risk of road failures, enhancing shade and stream bank stability, and promoting more resilient forest vegetation (EA p. 82). The physical integrity of streams would be improved in the long term (EA pp. 82-83). Restoration and enhancement of selected stream reaches within the project area in conjunction with protection of RHCAs and the proposed road storage and decommissioning would likely improve overall stream channel function and stability long term within the project area (EA p. 83).

The overall long-term sediment reduction would improve beneficial uses (EA pp. 74, 80). Having more resilient forest vegetation and the protection from extensive high-severity fire would continue to maintain and improve beneficial use support (EA p. 83).

Eleven miles of stream would trend toward improving or meeting the desired condition (EA p. 73 Table 29). Trends for fish habitat conditions would improve in Charlie Creek, Hume Creek, and Preston Creek (EA p. 76 Table 30; p. 108-110). Migration barrier removals or replacements would create a short pulse of increased sediment during the project implementation stage but would benefit the fishery by providing connectivity and increasing the amount of suitable habitat. (EA p. 110). Large woody debris placement and riparian planting would trend the stream temperature, large woody debris, pool frequency, stream bank stability and riparian habitat conservation area towards an improved and desired condition (EA p. 110). Road storage and decommissioning would have an indirect positive effect on the trend for fish habitat and for populations of westslope cutthroat trout and western pearlshell mussel (EA p. 91).

Forest Vegetation

Species composition would be altered to include a higher percentage of fire-resilient and long-lived species in areas that would be thinned (EA p. 119-122). Composition of long-lived, early-seral species would increase approximately two percent (EA p. 113 Table 39, p. 120). There would be a slight increase in early-seral representation, predominantly western larch, on approximately 625 acres where this species is present but in a minor/lesser stand component. On an additional 66 acres where western larch has a higher representation the retention of the existing seral component and the reduction of more shade-tolerant species, the forest type is expected to change from grand fir, Douglas-fir, and western redcedar to western larch. Approximately 159 acres of existing western larch proposed for treatment would be maintained in the forest type in the long term through preferential removal of species other than western larch and western white pine (EA p. 119).

Treated areas would have more vigorous trees with larger average diameters. Individual tree and stand growth would increase. Commercial thinning would develop mature, large sized trees over a shorter period compared to no treatment (EA p. 120). Tree mortality from insects and disease is expected to decrease due to the improved growth and vigor (EA p. 120).

Fire and Fuels

Potential fire behavior would be reduced on treated acres and, to some extent, between treatment areas (EA p. 124). Large fire growth and spread potential would be curtailed, and treatments would provide some level of protection to values-at-risk from potential fire (EA p. 124). High stand densities would be reduced, and some thinned areas would have substantial reductions in basal area. This would reduce crown bulk density and could increase canopy base height, which would reduce potential fire behavior (EA p. 124). Areas with reduced potential fire behavior would be more common because proposed activities would treat both naturally occurring surface and ladder fuels as well as activity fuel generated by harvest (EA p. 124). Safety along travel routes would be improved for the public and fire management, facilitating fire suppression efforts (EA p. 124-125). Overall fire resilience of residual stands will increase in the long term (EA p. 127).

Noxious Weeds

Storing and decommissioning roads would reduce the risk for increasing and establishing invasive plants (EA p. 131).

Old Growth

Approximately 0.2 miles of road through old growth would be decommissioned, and 0.6 miles of road through and adjacent to old growth would be put into long-term storage, reducing access to these stands (EA p. 133).

Forage Production

Forage production for livestock and wildlife would increase slightly in the short term (EA p. 140).

Recreation

Illegal or unauthorized public motorized access would be reduced (EA p. 141). If some of the log landings could provide campsites, they would be left in a condition conducive for that use (EA p. 142). The public would have some more access for personal-use firewood gathering on Road 1950, Road 1950C, and Road 1954 (EA p. 142).

Soils

Approximately 0.6 miles of road would be decommissioned, putting 2.5 acres of National Forest System land on the path to recovery towards a productive land base (EA p. 147). Timber harvest may actually increase organic matter and contribute to the soil surface layer through limbs and tops left on site (EA p. 148).

Wildlife

Road decommissioning and storage, removing or replacing fish migration barriers, and planting trees along riparian areas would restore more natural conditions to streams and accompanying riparian vegetation and improve habitat for fisher in the long term (EA p. 163).

Conditions for wolves and wolf prey would improve because the elk habitat potential would increase when roads are stored and decommissioned (EA p. 168-169).

The project would be beneficial for western toads because:

- road decommissioning and storage may tend to decrease mortality of western toads, especially along riparian areas (EA p. 171),
- removing or replacing fish migration barriers is expected to be beneficial for riparian habitat (EA p. 171), and
- planting seedlings along streams and placing large woody debris in streams would improve riparian conditions (EA p. 172).

The project would be beneficial for pileated woodpeckers because prescribed burning is expected to increase snags and improve conditions for species that use snags (EA p. 189, 191), and snag and cavity habitat creation across 150 acres is expected to benefit species that use snags and trees with decay-related characteristics. As these trees age or die the amount of habitat available for woodpeckers should increase (EA p. 191).

Elk habitat potential (EHP) would increase from .50 to .59 within compartment 417 and increase from .36 to .40 in Elk Habitat Unit (EHU) 6 (EA p. 194 Table 58; EA pp. 195-196, 198-199). The off-site ponderosa pine burn would rejuvenate shrubs and improve forage conditions for ungulates (EA p. 196). Storing and decommissioning roads would improve the effectiveness of the closures for wildlife and increase the elk habitat potential (EA p. 196).

This project would restore more natural conditions to the streams and accompanying riparian vegetation, improving habitat for marten in the long term (EA p. 207-208).

Potential Adverse Effects

The proposed management activities may result in the following potential **adverse effects**:

Aquatics

Modeling indicates Alternative C may increase water yields over the existing conditions, but water yield increases would likely not be detectable in the project area streams and would likely not be differentiated from normal climatic fluctuations (EA pp. 71-72). If annual water yields increase to modeled levels they would likely have little effect on stream channels due to the streams' morphological characteristics, ability to deal with flow fluctuations, overall stability, wood component, and existing streamside vegetation (EA p. 67, 72, 83). Based on stream channel responses from past disturbances within the project area and based on the stream channel and landtype characteristics within the project area, the estimated changes in flows, sediment yields and the potential increases in flows from rain-on-snow events would not appreciably affect stream channel stability from any of the activities proposed in Alternative C (EA p. 74, 80, 83). The potential effects of activities on peak flows and water yields would be small compared with the modeled changes in flows that occurred from past large canopy openings created by wildfires (EA p. 72). Alternative C would likely indirectly raise peak flows a small amount in the 1st order headwater streams within the project area, however, these changes would likely be undetectable given the relative small change in ECA, implementation of riparian buffers, best management practices (EA Appendix B), and design features (EA p. 72).

The short-term sediment increase would not be detectable and is not expected to impair beneficial uses because of temporal and spatial scales (i.e. duration and estimated amount to be treated over multiple years), riparian buffers, large total area vs. relatively small treated area, length and surface area of the channel, and floodplain network. The estimated short-term increases in sediment yield associated with this project (all road work and harvest) are expected to be routed through the stream channels and would not be of a magnitude that would cause changes to stream channel stability (e.g., migration, braiding, and widening of channels) and would likely be too small to measure at the Charlie Creek watershed scale. See EA p. 72-74.

New road construction that requires culvert installation would add some sediment, but following culvert removal and stabilization the new roads would not be a chronic source of sediment (EA p. 106). Due to the use of BMPs and the distance to fish-bearing sections of streams, culvert installation and removal would not impact the fish-bearing reach of Charlie Creek (EA p. 107).

Forest Vegetation

The proposed stand treatments have a potential to increase the current incidence of root and stem decays in susceptible species within the treatment areas; however, increased representation of western larch and western white pine is expected to reduce the impacts of root and stem decays in the treated stands (EA p. 116).

Fire Suppression

Road storage and decommissioning reduce access for fire suppression activities which could cause longer fire suppression response times, making fires more difficult to suppress (EA p. 126).

Noxious Weeds

New invader species of noxious weeds may be introduced by way of existing roads and from proposed ground-disturbing activities which could result in the establishment of new weed populations or the expansion of existing populations (EA p. 128). The project area currently has noxious weeds, but maintaining 50% or more canopy cover would reduce the likelihood of a noxious weed monoculture occurring (EA p. 129). The timber harvest in Alternative C would be commercial thins which would not permanently break or open the tree canopy (EA p. 30, 129, 137), but it would open it more than 50%. Most species of noxious weeds will not persist in the harvest units as the canopy closes over time. Although noxious weeds may displace native

species, the majority of this would occur along roadsides. No sensitive plant species populations would be threatened in this project area by noxious weeds. See Sensitive Plants section below and EA p. 135-140.

Sensitive Plants

Individuals, populations, and/or habitat of sensitive plants are not likely to be directly affected by the proposed activities because project design would protect known plants (EA p. 136-139). Indirectly, sensitive plants may be affected by canopy reductions (EA p. 136). Alternative C may impact individuals or habitat for *Buxaumia viridis* but will not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species because meta-populations would persist (EA p. 139).

Recreation

Public access may be temporarily affected during implementation because some roads may be closed or traffic may be delayed to accommodate management activities and because traffic, especially log hauling traffic, will increase (EA p. 141). Use of Trail 228 will be impacted because reconstruction on Road 337B will obliterate a section of trail where it intersects with the road, but the trail tread will be replaced when the road is no longer needed for harvest activities (EA p. 142).

Soils

Timber harvest activities have the potential to cause detrimental soil disturbance, such as compaction and displacement, and reduced productivity on an estimated 105 acres under the Regional standard and 107 under the Forest Plan standards; however, full productivity potential would be maintained on at least 85% of the activity areas under the Regional standards and on at least 81% of the activity areas under the Forest Plan standards (EA p. 144).

In some cases, burning of slash piles may create localized patches of hydrophobic soils but the areas are generally not large or extensive enough to alter slope hydrologic responses or long-term soil productivity (EA p. 148). On an unpredictable site-specific basis, some drier sites may burn at a severity level that removes all of the protective duff and litter layers, even under managed fire conditions. Direct effects of prescribed burning could potentially remove woody debris that would otherwise provide long-term nutrients to the soil as the decay process occurs. Timing of prescribed burns would limit detrimental effects (EA p. 148).

Residual timber would remain on site providing needle shed for soil nutrients. Breakage of tops, limbs, and branches is expected. This material would remain in the unit then be overwintered to provide leaching of nutrients (EA p. 125).

Soil erosion is not expected because of residual canopy and ground cover, operation of mechanical equipment on slash mats combined with other BMPs, and the overall low risk of surface erosion for the landtypes in this area (EA p. 148, 149).

Wildlife

The protection of potential travel habitat along streams and only minor changes to suitable timbered habitat fisher may use, coupled with the low probability of fisher presence, means this alternative may impact individuals or habitat but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. The impacts from proposed federal actions under this alternative would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts and would not affect the persistence of fishers on the St. Joe Ranger District (EA p. 165). Suitable fisher habitat would be reduced from 2886 acres to 2715 acres, a 2.6% decrease in the total capable habitat, and the project would maintain its moderate quality for fisher (EA p. 164). Roadside fuel reduction would have minimal effects on fisher (EA p. 164). Road building would affect about 8.4 acres of forest, and it is expected there would be some loss of suitable fisher habitat as a result of this activity. This effect, however, would be inconsiderable as over 2,700 acres of suitable habitat would

remain intact. All newly constructed roads would be put into long-term storage (or decommissioned, for temporary roads), limiting the time disturbance effects would persist (EA p. 164). This alternative maintains 42% suitable fisher habitat, which exceeds the 20-30% threshold of historic habitat thought to be needed for population persistence (EA p. 164).

The project may impact individual wolves or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the wolf population or species (EA p. 169). The potential exists for disturbance from project activities to any wolves that may be in the project area, however, there is inconsiderable potential for adverse effects due to the likely transitory occurrence of wolves in the project area as well as their ability to easily disperse long distances (EA p. 167).

The impacts to western toads from proposed federal actions would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts. Proposed activities may impact individual toads or habitat; but they will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species because toad mortality is unlikely, potential adverse effects would not appreciably exceed existing levels of risks to the species, potential breeding habitat along streams would be protected, changes to timbered habitat that toads may use would be minor, and the probability of western toad presence is low (EA p. 172).

Alternative C may impact individual goshawks and goshawk habitat, but is not likely to adversely affect the use of the project area by goshawks. The retention of active, alternate, and potential nest stands (Table 54), the maintenance of desired levels of large timber structure and cover (Tables 40, 41), and only minor changes (<5%) to the size class distribution within the home range (EA Tables 40, 41), along with active nest stand protection and PFA timing restrictions (see EA Design Features), mean Alternative C may impact individuals or habitat but would not indicate a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status (EA p. 181-183). A minimum of 240 acres or 4% of suitable nest habitat in an average 6,000-acre home range is required for a suitable goshawk territory. At least 37% of the home range would remain in suitable nesting condition, and it would continue to sustain the ability of the project area to provide nesting habitat for goshawks (EA p. 180-181). Road building would affect about 8.4 acres of forest with some loss of suitable goshawk habitat. This would be an inconsiderable effect because over 4,000 acres of suitable nesting habitat would remain intact (EA p. 179, 181). The amount of goshawk foraging area in both the >10" and >5" and >40% canopy cover size classes would still be above the desired 60% level (EA p. 181).

Alternative C may impact individual pileated woodpeckers or their habitat, but would not indicate a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status for the pileated woodpecker (EA p. 190). Alternative C could potentially reduce suitable pileated woodpecker habitat through the incidental loss of snags, so it may impact individuals or habitat, but would not indicate a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status for the pileated woodpecker. The ability of the cumulative effects areas to provide suitable home ranges would not be changed by this project. The recommendation to maintain at least three suitable home ranges within this project area would continue to be met. The impacts from proposed federal actions would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts (e.g. from firewood cutting, private logging and road building) and would not affect population viability (EA p. 190). Based on the best available science summarized in the *Management Indicator Species Considerations for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests* (EA Appendix C), the pileated woodpecker population trend is increasing and their habitat appears to be abundant and well-distributed across the Region. The IPNF contains far more than enough large snag habitat than required by the Forest Plan and recommended by the scientific literature to support a minimum viable population of pileated woodpeckers (Samson 2006b). Pileated woodpeckers and their foraging sign are commonly seen and documented across the Forest (EA p. 190).

Elk that may be in the project area may be disturbed by timber sale related activities; however, the potential for adverse effects would be inconsiderable because elk would be able to disperse to other parts of the project area and elk habitat unit during sale activities (EA p. 199). This alternative would treat 16 units along wildlife travel corridors with commercial thins, and even though at least 30% of the canopy would be retained in designated travel corridors the cover reduction along the ridgetop portions of these units could decrease

travel corridor quality. The reduction in canopy in these proposed treatment units, particularly in the two adjacent to existing openings, is likely to decrease the travel habitat quality for elk over the short term (ten years) (EA p. 198). The roadside fuel treatment would reduce cover on 127 acres along roads, and some of this decrease would be along roads that are open during hunting season. Given the well-timbered condition of most of the project area (75% cover), this action is not expected to have consequential effects on elk (EA p. 198). Road construction would cause a slight reduction in travel corridor quality in two areas. One road would be built across a travel corridor and another 400 feet of road would be constructed within 100 feet of a potential ridge-top travel corridor. Effects on elk are expected to be inconsequential given the relatively narrow width of these roads, their location in commercial thin units that would retain over 30% canopy cover; and the fact that they would be put into long-term storage after use (EA p. 198).

The protection of potential travel habitat along streams, and only minor changes to suitable timbered habitat marten may use, coupled with the low probability of marten presence (Table 60), means this alternative may impact individuals or habitat, but would not likely indicate a local or regional change in overall habitat quality or population status. The impacts from proposed federal actions under this alternative would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts and would not affect the persistence of martens on the St. Joe Ranger District. Suitable habitat to support two marten home ranges within the project area would be maintained. Marten would remain common, widespread, and abundant in Idaho (IDFG 2005); and the species would remain stable throughout northern Idaho (IDFG 2008b) (EA p. 204-205).

Suitable marten habitat would be reduced by 68 acres to 4407 acres of suitable habitat in the project area (EA p. 202 Table 60). The proposed commercial thins would be unlikely to cause the mesic timbered habitat to become unsuitable for marten. Some overhead cover would be retained in these units which would keep the timbered conditions intact; although there could be some incidental loss of snags through logging operations (EA p. 207). It is expected there would be some loss of suitable marten habitat as a result of road construction which would affect about 8.4 acres of forest, however, this would be an inconsiderable effect as over 4,400 acres of suitable habitat would remain intact (EA p. 207). The overall quality of the CEAs would not appreciably change, and it is unlikely the 1% reduction in the amount of suitable habitat for each CEA would reduce the ability of the project area to support marten. By maintaining the current habitat quality, this alternative is considered capable of contributing to the marten population on the district. The degree of change in timbered vegetation is not expected to adversely affect the ability of the project area as a whole to provide marten habitat (EA p. 208).

2. *The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety:* It is my determination that the proposed activities will have no significant effects on public health and safety. Public and worker safety is an integral part of project design. See examples below.

Part of the purpose for the project is to provide safe travel routes for the public (EA p. 7).

Warning signs would be posted and/or temporary road closures may be used to provide safety when project operation occurs on or adjacent to roads that are open to motorized vehicles (Design Feature I.F.1. EA p. 27).

No project activities would be allowed from December 1 to March 31 on Palouse Divide Road 377 from the junction with Highway 6 to Bald Mountain Lookout and along Hume Creek Road 1479 from the junction with Palouse Divide Road 377 to the junction of the 1950. These sections of roads are closed to all motorized traffic as part of the Palouse Divide Park n' Ski Cross-Country Ski System (Design Feature I.G.3. EA p. 28).

Snags may pose a safety risk to workers and the public. Recognition of this is an integral part of project design. Silvicultural and burning prescriptions protect snags unless they are deemed unsafe (Design Feature II.I.4. a. & b.; EA p. 34, 191). Snags may be cut for worker safety (Design Feature II.I.4.c. & e., V.J.2.). Trees may be cut and felled in RHCA's when they pose a safety risk (Design Feature I.A.1., V.G.1.).

Dust abatement would be used as needed near homes (Design Feature I.F.2.).

Fuel treatment methods and design features provide fire managers with options to ensure objectives can be achieved safely (Design Feature III.A.1., EA p.36).

Road construction and reconstruction plans, standards, and specifications for new system roads would provide for safe operation (Design Feature V.A., V.B. EA p. 42). Road reconstruction would increase safety (EA p. 21, 25, 41; Design Feature V.B., EA p. 42; EA p. 248). During road maintenance/reconstruction trees greater than 12” diameter at breast height (d. b. h.) within the RHCA would only be limbed unless tree removal is necessary for safety reasons.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farms, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical area:

The project area does not contain any parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas (EA p. 152). Proposed activities would not adversely affect any known cultural resources or historic properties. The project was designed to avoid damaging known cultural sites and historic properties (EA p. 111). All known Cultural resource sites that are eligible or potentially eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, would be protected or mitigated as directed by the National Historic Preservation Act (Design Feature I.B.1.). No activity is proposed in wetlands or on floodplains (other than proposed enhancement or restoration work with riparian planting, large woody debris (LWD) placement or culvert upgrades), and no substantial negative effects are expected (EA p. 84).

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial: The term “controversial” refers to whether substantial dispute exists as to the size, nature or effect of the major federal action rather than to the existence of opposition to a use.

The effects of proposed activities are not highly controversial. Similar projects have been implemented in the project area and in other places on the St. Joe Ranger District for decades, and the results have generally coincided with expected effects (M-1, M-16, M-22, M-23, M-24).

The record shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information and consideration of responsible opposing views (DN Response to Comments and Consideration of References). Resource reports use of the best available science with references to scientific literature. The bibliography provides a listing of literature used in the analysis, as appropriate (EA Bibliography). The interdisciplinary team reviewed references and scientific literature provided by the public (DN Response to Comments and Consideration of References). The project file includes relevant literature citations, references to science, biological assessments, and monitoring results that were used in the project analysis to support this decision.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk: The effects on the human environment are not uncertain and do not involve unique or unknown risk. The proposed management actions are similar to actions implemented without significant impacts in the project area, in other areas on the St. Joe Ranger District, and on other districts of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. Past successes with similar projects are documented in the IPNF’s annual monitoring reports and in monitoring reports specifically for projects on the St. Joe Ranger District (USDA Forest Service, IPNF Monitoring Reports). Analysis of the proposed management actions considered the effects of past actions, as a frame of reference in conjunction with best available science, available information, and best professional experience and judgment to estimate effects to the human environment. I conclude that there are no uncertain or unique characteristics in the project area which have not been previously encountered or that would constitute an unknown risk to the human environment.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or presents a decision in principle about future consideration: The proposed activities will not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects. The Charlie Preston project is a site-specific project that does not set precedence for future actions or present a decision in principle about future considerations. Any proposed future project must be evaluated on its own merits and effects. The proposed actions are similar in nature and

effects to other projects that the Forest Service has implemented in the immediate area and are consistent with the IPNF Forest Plan.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts: The combined effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions were considered and are documented in the Charlie Preston EA. Past and ongoing actions considered in cumulative effects analysis include those that contributed to establishing the baseline conditions of the project area today (EA p. 47-58; Activities Report). There is no indication of significant cumulative effects to the environment.

Aquatics

Sediment yield would increase in the short term but would decrease in the long term (EA p. 69 Table 27). The estimated short-term increases in sediment yield associated with this project would be too small to measure at the Charlie Creek watershed scale (EA p. 68, 72, 78). The limited amount of sediment estimated from models is expected to be routed through the stream channels and be dissipated and diluted and would not diminish aquatic habitat (EA p. 78). Proposed activities would not appreciably affect stream channel stability. This conclusion is based on stream channel responses from past disturbances, stream channel and landtype characteristics, the estimated changes in flows, sediment yields, and the potential increases in flows from rain-on-snow events (EA p. 74, 80, 83). The estimated short-term increases in sediment yield associated are expected to be routed through the stream channels and would not be of a magnitude that would cause changes to stream channel stability and would likely be immeasurable at the Charlie Creek watershed scale (EA p. 68, 72, 78). New road construction would add some sediment during culvert installation and removal, but following culvert removal it would not be a chronic source of sediment. The small, short-term increase in sediment is unlikely to reach fish-bearing segments of Charlie Creek because of the locations and use of best management practices (EA p. 101, 107) and it will dissipate and dilute out before it reaches Charlie Creek (EA p. 78, 81).

The estimated short-term increases in sediment yield associated with this project (all road work and harvest) would be immeasurable at the Charlie Creek watershed scale. The limited sediment modeled to be generated is expected to be routed through the stream channels and be dissipated and diluted out in manner that would not diminish habitat. Sediment that could be generated would not be of a magnitude that would cause changes to stream channel stability (e.g., migration, braiding, widening of channels and filling of pools) and would likely be immeasurable at the Charlie Creek watershed scale. See EA p. 77.

The combination of direct and indirect effects with past, present and reasonably foreseeable activities within the cumulative effects area would result in an overall long-term net decrease in sediment yield to the Charlie Creek watershed after project completion (EA p. 78).

Cumulative effects of past, present and foreseeable activities are not expected to appreciably affect stream channel characteristics or stability because existing streams are generally stable channel types and because existing stream channels have adjusted to their current water and sediment yield as evidenced by the relative stability of stream channels, the current riparian vegetation and the amount of large woody material present in many stream reaches (EA p. 80-81). Based on assessed stream channel responses from recent past disturbances, flow fluctuations, and flood events within the watershed and based on the existing stream channel characteristics, stability, stream side vegetation, and local landtype characteristics along with the implementation of stream buffers (INFISH 1995), design features and BMPs, the estimated changes in flows, sediment yields, and potential increases in peak flows from ROS events would not appreciably affect stream channel morphology from any of the activities proposed and therefore would not affect stream channel stability within the cumulative effects area (EA p. 80).

In project area streams the direct effects of proposed activities combined with effects from past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities would maintain or improve aquatic habitat parameters (EA p. 110).

The fish habitat and westslope cutthroat trout and western pearlshell mussel populations of Charlie Creek would trend toward meeting desired conditions. This would occur, in part, due to the limited effects of the timber harvest and associated road building; however, this would primarily be due to the proposed projects that would directly or indirectly benefit the aquatic habitat: migration barrier correction, LWD placement, riparian planting, and road storage. These activities would benefit the main stem of Charlie Creek downstream of the project area by reducing sediment (due to reduced stream crossings) and reducing stream temperatures (cooler water entering Charlie from the tributaries). There is a potential for increasing the fish population in Charlie Creek by increasing the habitat diversity and accessibility of spawning and early rearing habitat within the project area tributaries. The improvement in upstream habitat would potentially increase aquatic populations in Charlie Creek. See EA p. 110.

Cultural Resources

Past activities in the project area have caused damage and/ or deterioration to some cultural sites in the area, however, the proposed activities would not contribute to any new, or continued damage to sites (EA p. 111).

Forest Vegetation

There would be a two-percent increase in the composition of long-lived, early-seral species from vegetation management activities within this project area. This would improve resiliency to disturbances in these areas. Harvest activities of the recent past in the project area (last 10 to 20 years) have resulted in some stands having a higher percent of early seral species present (specifically western larch, western white pine, and some ponderosa pine). Other past vegetation management activities include pre-commercial thinning over the last 10 to 15 years which has also promoted a higher percentage of early seral species in some stands by removing the mid to late seral species (which includes Douglas-fir, grand fir, western redcedar, western hemlock, Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir). See EA p. 120.

Overall tree mortality from insects and disease is expected to decrease due to the improved growth and vigor resulting from management activities. An exception to this is the loss of western white pine due to blister rust which is expected to continue at or near current rate in untreated stands (EA p. 120).

Fuels and Potential Fire Behavior

The proposed activities would continue to reverse the long-term trends in fuel accumulation and departure in fire regime condition class by treating dense stands and reducing fuel build-ups, and encouraging composition changes to more fire resilient species. Vegetation would become less homogeneous across the Forest Service lands within the project area. Potential fire behavior across the analysis area would be reduced, providing some measure of protection for values-at-risk (EA p. 126-127).

Noxious Weeds

The cumulative effects on noxious weeds would be a slight increase in weeds within the area over time. The St. Joe Ranger District would continue to conduct an annual program of noxious weed inventory and control. In units where the cumulative effects of ground disturbance from harvest activities, fire, and grazing occur together, noxious weed risk would be the highest. Current and reasonably foreseeable activities include grazing, timber harvest and related activities on other lands, recreational activities, road maintenance, noxious weed treatments, and fire suppression activities. These types of activities could result in new disturbed sites available for colonization by weeds, and they do offer the possibility of introduction of new species of weeds to the analysis area. A longer term schedule of treating all weed locations across all ownerships (multiple years) followed by monitoring and rehabilitation of those sites on all ownerships with native plants is needed to greatly reduce the long-term presence of noxious weed species in the Charlie Preston area (EA p.131-132).

Old Growth

No road construction, timber harvest or other activities are proposed within allocated old growth. Road management prescription changes may have indirect positive effects for old growth. There would be no noticeable effects from current and reasonably foreseeable activities including weed control, road and trail maintenance, and public recreation (i.e. berry picking, hiking, hunting, wood gathering and similar activities). No cumulative effects on allocated old growth are expected (EA p. 133).

Sensitive Plant Species

Alternative C may impact individual plants or habitat for *Buxbaumia viridis* (green bug-on-a-stick moss) but will not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species because meta-populations would persist. The actions would have no impact on any other sensitive plant species (EA p. 139).

Range

Cattle use is expected to continue as it does currently. Forage production would be increased slightly in the short term. Eventually some grazing areas would be lost as regeneration continues in previously harvested units (EA p. 140).

Recreation

With the implementation of the Charlie Preston project, illegal public motorized access would be reduced because road closures would be monitored to determine how effective they are at preventing motorized access (EA p. 142-143). The project would have no other cumulative effects to recreation.

Soils

Few cumulative effects to soils are anticipated in the proposed activity areas because the majority of units have little evidence of disturbance or the disturbance has recovered to below detrimental conditions (EA page 144-145; 149). Combining the existing and predicted detrimental impacts of activities, long-term cumulative soil impacts would affect no more than 14% in any of the activity areas. When existing system roads are incorporated, cumulative soil impacts would affect no more than 19% of any of the activity areas (EA p. 144-145; 149), so productivity would be maintained on at least 81% of the activity areas.

Visual Quality

All proposed activities would meet Forest Plan visual quality objectives (VQOs) with the silvicultural prescription or with design features or they would have no effect on visual quality and would therefore meet VQOs. The visual characteristics of the area would constantly change as the natural vegetation proceeds through normal life cycles. The areas that have been previously harvested would continue to appear more natural as the trees and other vegetation develop (EA p. 152).

Wildlife

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has concluded “that the best available scientific and commercial information does not indicate that current or future forest management practices and timber harvest threaten the fisher now, or in the foreseeable future” (USDI 2011a). The protection of potential travel habitat along streams and only minor changes to suitable timbered habitat fisher may use, coupled with the low probability of fisher presence, means this alternative may impact individuals or habitat but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. The Charlie Preston project area contains enough suitable fisher habitat to be classified at the moderate-quality level. Based on the maintenance of the potential fisher home range as moderate-quality habitat, Alternative C in conjunction

with past actions, ongoing activities and the reasonably foreseeable actions discussed above would not result in a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status for the fisher. See EA p. 162.

Alternative C would not cause any adverse cumulative effects to gray wolves because of the maintenance or improvement of the prey base, (as shown by the maintenance or increase in EHP), design criteria which would avoid adverse impacts (e.g. by maintaining corridors/linkages, avoiding known den and rendezvous sites), lack of critical habitat, and no consequential change in the likelihood of human wolf interactions. The activities may impact individual wolves or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. Historically, gray wolf occurred throughout northern Idaho. Although there is evidence of occasional use of the area by wolves, there has not been the consistent, repeated amount of use that would indicate pack activity. Existing conditions for wolves are a result of previous management activities and natural conditions, and the proposed activities are unlikely to affect wolves due to their wide ranging nature and the relative lack of preference for special habitat (EA p. 166).

The impacts from proposed federal actions on western toads would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts. Alternative C may impact individual toads or habitat but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the western toad population or species because toad mortality is unlikely, potential adverse effects would not significantly exceed existing levels of risks to the species, potential breeding habitat along streams would be protected, changes to timbered habitat that toads may use would be minor, and probability of western toad presence is low (EA p. 170).

Alternative C, in conjunction with the past actions, ongoing activities and reasonably foreseeable actions, may impact individuals or habitat, but would not indicate a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status for the northern goshawk. Alternative C is not likely to adversely affect the use of the project area by goshawks. Based on the best available science summarized in the *Management Indicator Species Considerations for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests* (EA Appendix C), the northern goshawk population trend appears to be stable and their habitat appears to be abundant and well-distributed across the Region. Additionally, the IPNF contains substantially more than enough habitat distributed throughout the Forest to support a minimum viable population of northern goshawk. Northern goshawks and active nest sites are documented across the Forest, including territories that have had multiple years of documented occupancy and reproductive success, and surveys periodically locate new territories and nest sites. Existing goshawk habitat conditions are a result of previous management activities and natural conditions. Proposed activities, when added to the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future management activities, would not change the overall ability of the project area to support goshawk. There is an abundant amount of nesting habitat in the project area. As a minimum, a suitable home range needs at least 240 acres in six suitable nest stands or areas. With enough suitable habitat for 54 potential nest stands, this home range has well over the necessary amount. Given the retention of the six alternate nest stands and the amount of other suitable nesting habitat (2,150 ac.) present, the loss of a few potential nest stands would be inconsequential. In addition, any active nest would receive a 40-acre no-activity buffer to comply with direction from the Northern Region Goshawk Overview. There are approximately 32,967 acres of suitable nesting habitat on the IPNF; so this alternative would not noticeably affect forest-wide viability. See EA pp. 180-183.

Alternative C could potentially reduce suitable pileated woodpecker habitat through the incidental loss of snags; so it may impact individuals or habitat, but it would not indicate a local or regional change in habitat quality or population status for the pileated woodpecker. The ability of the cumulative effects areas to provide suitable home ranges would not be changed by this project. The recommendation to maintain at least three suitable home ranges within this project area would continue to be met. The impacts from proposed federal actions would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts (e.g. from firewood cutting, private logging and road building) and would not affect population viability. Based on the best available science summarized in the *Management Indicator Species Considerations for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests* (EA Appendix C), the pileated woodpecker population trend is increasing and their habitat appears to be abundant and well-

distributed across the Region. The IPNF contains far more than enough large snag habitat than required by the Forest Plan and recommended by the scientific literature to support a minimum viable population of pileated woodpeckers (Samson 2006b). Pileated woodpeckers and their foraging sign are commonly seen and documented across the Forest. Existing pileated woodpecker habitat conditions are a result of natural conditions and previous management activities, and pileated woodpeckers have been able to persist through ongoing management of NFS and nearby industrial timberlands as well as activities on private lands in and around the project area. Proposed activities, when added to the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable activities and continuing timber growth and mortality, would not consequently impact pileated woodpecker populations. Most treated habitat would still remain suitable, although at a lower quality. The retention of moderate canopy levels, large timber structure, and the application of snag and leave tree guidelines mean most treated stands could still provide suitable habitat. The ability of the cumulative effects areas to provide suitable home ranges would not be changed by this project. The recommendation to maintain at least three suitable home ranges within this project area would continue to be met. The amount of nesting and foraging habitat remaining and the design features (e.g. snag retention levels, RHCA buffers) and prescriptions (only commercial thinning) would maintain the overall suitability of the project area for pileated woodpeckers. See EA p. 190-191.

The proposed actions would not cause any adverse cumulative effects to elk because the maintenance or improvement of conditions for elk, (as shown by the maintenance or increase in EHP), design criteria which would avoid adverse impacts (e.g. by maintaining travel corridor habitat, use of a seasonal ATV route), and no major changes in elk habitat. There would be a potential for a slight improvement in conditions for elk because of the increase in elk habitat potential. Alternative C may impact elk and elk habitat, but it is not likely to result in persistent detrimental effects. Elk are expected to persist both in the project area and across the district, and population trends would remain stable (EA p. 198-199).

The protection of potential travel habitat along streams, and only minor changes to suitable timbered habitat marten may use, coupled with the low probability of marten presence, means this alternative may impact individuals or habitat, but would not likely indicate a local or regional change in overall habitat quality or population status. The impacts from proposed federal actions under this alternative would not contribute appreciably to existing impacts and would not affect the persistence of martens on the St. Joe Ranger District. Suitable habitat to support two marten home ranges within the project area would be maintained. Marten would remain common, widespread, and abundant in Idaho; and the species would remain stable throughout northern Idaho. Existing forest habitat conditions are a result of previous management activities and natural conditions. The proposed activities, when added to the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities, are not expected to adversely affect the ability of the project area as a whole to provide marten habitat. See EA p. 207-208.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highway structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources: There are known cultural sites and historic properties within the project boundary. The project was designed to avoid damaging those areas by completely eliminating potentially damaging activity in areas where known cultural resources are located (EA p. 111). Acting District Ranger Kimberly Johnson met with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe to discuss projects on the St. Joe Ranger District, including the Charlie Preston Project and they expressed no concerns about the project (EA p. 11). After we made the EA available to the public, District Ranger Wade Sims discussed the project with staff of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, and they did not express concerns (project file document PI-93).

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973: The project was designed to protect wildlife, fish, and plants and will not significantly adversely affect Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat.

The project will not jeopardize the continued existence of bull trout, which historically occurred in the project area but does not currently occur there. No critical bull trout habitat is designated in the analysis area. The project will have no effect on bull trout (EA p. 84, 110-111).

No federally listed Endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and none were found in the project area. No Threatened plants are suspected to occur in the project area and none were found. Habitat for water howellia and Spalding's catchfly does not occur within the affected environment of the Charlie Preston project area (EA p.135). The project would have no effect on Threatened or Endangered plant species.

There would be no effect to woodland caribou, grizzly bear, or Canada lynx (EA p. 153; Wildlife Report 9-12).

10. Whether the proposed action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:

National Forest Management Act:

On December 18, 2009 the Department of Agriculture issued a final rule reinstating the National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning rule of November 9, 2000, as amended (2000 rule) (74 FR 242 [67059-67075]). The 2000 rule states: Projects implementing land management plans must comply with the transition provisions of 36 CFR §219.35, but not any other provisions of the planning rule. Projects implementing land management plans and plan amendments, as appropriate, must be developed considering the best available science in accordance with §219.35(a). Projects implementing land management plans must be consistent with the provisions of the governing plans. This proposal does not require any forest plan amendments.

Best Available Science

This project was developed and analyzed considering the best available science. The bibliography for the EA is 32 pages long and includes many literature citations from the last ten years. The interdisciplinary team also considered almost 300 references provided by people who commented (DN Appendix B – Consideration of References). My decision is based on the project record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information (see EA Bibliography; all resource reports; biological evaluations and biological assessments; and DN Appendix B - Response to Comments and Consideration of References); and a consideration of responsible opposing views (Response to Comments and Consideration of References).

Forest Plan Consistency

The project is consistent with the Forest Plan for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The EA and record document consistency with the IPNF Forest Plan as follows:

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| <i>Air Quality</i> | The selected alternative meets the requirements of the IPNF Plan for air quality standards (EA p. 127). |
| <i>Aquatics:
Water
Resources</i> | The selected alternative meets the requirements of the IPNF Forest Plan for water resources standards (EA pp. 82-83). |
| <i>Aquatics:
Organisms</i> | The selected alternative meets the requirements of the IPNF Forest Plan for fish standards. Standards 1 and 2 have been replaced with the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) and the selected alternative meets the INFS standards (EA p. 110). |
| <i>Cultural
Resources</i> | All significant cultural resources in the project area will be preserved in accordance with the Forest Plan. The selected alternative includes design features that will protect and preserve all cultural resources in the project area from adverse effects (EA pp. 111-112). |

<i>Forest Vegetation</i>	The selected alternative is consistent with Forest Plan goals, objectives and standards. All proposed silvicultural practices comply with Forest Plan Appendix A, Summary of Timber Information and Vegetation Management, providing direction for silvicultural practices on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (EA pp. 121-122).
<i>Fuels</i>	Prescribed burning and mechanical treatment of activity fuels are consistent with direction in the Forest Plan (EA p. 127).
<i>Noxious Weeds</i>	The project complies with the forest plan requirement for moderate control through use of design features to reduce the introduction & spread of noxious weeds (EA p. 132).
<i>Old Growth</i>	Specific goals, objectives and standards for old growth management as described in the IPNF Forest Plan are met with the selected alternative (EA pp. 133-135).
<i>Plants (TES)</i>	The selected alternative will have no direct effect on threatened, endangered plant species, or Forest Species of Concern. The selected alternative also will not trend toward federal listing any sensitive plant species (EA pp. 136-140).
<i>Range</i>	The selected alternative will meet the intent of the IPNF Forest Plan for range (EA p. 140).
<i>Recreation</i>	The selected alternative complies with the management direction for recreation provided in the IPNF Forest Plan (EA p. 143).
<i>Soils</i>	The selected alternative complies with IPNF Forest Plan standards for maintaining soil productivity (EA pp. 146-147, 149, 150-151).
<i>Visual Quality</i>	The selected alternative will meet Forest Plan visual quality objectives (VQOs) with the silvicultural prescription, with design features, or they would have no effect on visual quality and would therefore meet VQOs (EA p. 152).
<i>Wildlife</i>	The selected alternative is consistent with applicable goals, direction, standards, and guidelines from the Forest Plan for the management of wildlife habitat and species populations (EA p. 162-163, 180-181, 182, 185-189, 196, 206).

Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities:

The EA and record show the project provides for diversity of plant and animal communities as follows:

Plants No federally listed Endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and none were found in the project area (EA p. 136; Botanical BE and BA p. 2). No threatened plants are suspected to occur in the project area and none were found. Habitat for water howellia and Spalding's catch fly does not occur within the affected environment of the Charlie Preston project area. The proposed activities will have no direct effect on Water howellia and Spalding's catchfly and no direct impact on any of the sensitive species that may occur in the project area. If any sites are found in the future that are deemed necessary to ensure species and population viability against a potential trend towards federal listing, those sites would be protected (EA p. 136).

New invader species of noxious weeds may be introduced by way of existing roads and from proposed ground-disturbing activities which could result in the establishment of new weed populations or the expansion of existing populations (EA p. 128). This area currently has noxious weeds, but maintaining 50% or more canopy cover would reduce the likelihood of a noxious weed monoculture occurring (EA p. 128). The timber harvest in Alternative C would be commercial thins which would not permanently break or open the tree canopy, but it would open it more than 50%. Most species of noxious weeds will not persist in the harvest units as the canopy closes over time. Although noxious weeds may displace native species, the majority of this would occur along roadsides. No sensitive plant species populations would be

threatened in this project area by noxious weeds. See EA p. 136.

<i>Forest Vegetation</i>	The management activities are designed to improve stand health and vigor, and maintain or enhance species composition and stand structure. This would minimize risk of stand loss from forest insects and disease as well as reduce risk of stand loss to weather, fire or other disturbances (EA p. 120).
<i>Fish</i>	The selected alternative would provide and improve habitat for a diversity of fish communities and other organisms. Bull trout do not currently occur in the watersheds of the project area and westslope cutthroat trout are present. The improvements to the in-stream habitat would benefit westslope cutthroat trout and western pearlshell mussel. In the long term, the improvements could benefit bull trout if they ever become reestablished within the St. Maries drainage (EA p. 108-110).
<i>Wildlife</i>	The selected alternative complies with Forest Plan direction for wildlife (EA p. 162-163, 180-181, 182, 185-189, 196, 206). It also complies with direction and recommendations regarding management of the various components of wildlife habitat. The selected alternative complies with applicable conservation strategies for wildlife species. The project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and other direction and requirements for the management of wildlife species and habitat. See EA p. 206.

Other NFMA Consistency Requirements

All proposed vegetative treatments integrated other resource needs through project design during alternative development and analysis. The selected alternative does not include regeneration harvest, and openings will not be created.

Suitability for Timber Production: No timber harvest, other than salvage sales or sales to protect other multiple-use values, shall occur on lands not suited for timber production (16 USC 1604(k)).

All proposed units within the project area fall within Management areas 1 and 4, and are suitable for timber production (16 USC 1604(K)).

Timber Harvest on National Forest Lands (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)): A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities to harvest timber on National Forest System lands only where:

a. Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(i)).

Harvest methods and design features were identified that would not cause irreversible damage. See the previous discussion of potential beneficial and adverse effects aquatics and soils beginning on page 2.

b. There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(ii)).

The selected alternative does not include regeneration harvest, and openings will not be created.

c. Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment, where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iii)).

Unit layout will be accomplished utilizing existing terrain features and an array of design features to protect streams and streambanks (see EA p. 25 – Design Features for Action Alternatives). No harvest activity will occur in wetlands or on floodplains, and no substantial negative effects are expected (EA p. 84).

d. The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iv)).

Harvest systems were determined with a combination of factors including the method that has the least adverse impacts to the environment; the best method to get the volume out of the woods, and economic return.

Construction of temporary roadways in connection with timber contracts, and other permits or leases: Unless the necessity for a permanent road is set forth in the forest development road system plan, any road constructed on land of the National Forest System in connection with a timber contract or other permit or lease shall be designed with the goal of reestablishing vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover has been disturbed by the construction of the road, within ten years after the termination of the contract, permit, or lease either through artificial or natural means. Such action shall be taken unless it is later determined that the road is needed for use as a part of the National Forest Transportation System (16 USC 1608(b)).

Management actions associated with the Charlie Preston project include the construction of approximately 0.4 miles of temporary road on National Forest System land. Temporary roads will be decommissioned and revegetated after use. See Design Feature II. G. 6 and BMP Practice 15.25.

Standards of roadway construction: Roads constructed on National Forest System lands shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources (16 USC 1608(c)).

Management actions associated with the Charlie Preston project include the construction of approximately 1.6 miles of new system road on National Forest System land. The new system road will be constructed to meet all BMP standards and will be stored after use. See Design Features V. A., V. C. V. G. This meets the intent of 16 UCS 1608(c).

The Clean Water Act and Idaho Water Quality Standards

State water quality standards would be met (EA p. 83-84) because:

1. The short-term sediment increase would not be detectable and beneficial uses would be maintained because of temporal and spatial scales (i.e. duration and estimated amount to be treated over multiple years, riparian buffers, large total area vs. relatively small treated area, length and surface area of the channel and floodplain network).
2. Net sediment inputs to streams would be reduced in the long term. The overall long-term benefit through sediment reduction would be consistent with the goals identified in the TMDL and would improve beneficial uses.
3. Riparian plantings and other stream restoration/enhancement activities proposed with the action alternatives would eventually increase stream shading, reduce stream temperature, protect stream banks from erosion and would improve beneficial uses long term.
4. Stream temperatures would continue to improve due to the maintenance and protection of RHCAs.
5. The overall long-term benefit of having more resilient forest vegetation and the protection from extensive high severity fire would continue to maintain and improve beneficial use support.
6. The estimated changes in flows, sediment yields, and potential increases in peak flows from ROS events would not appreciably affect stream channel morphology or stability. This conclusion is based on assessed stream channel responses from recent disturbances, flow fluctuations, and past flood events within the watershed and based on the existing stream channel characteristics, stability, stream side vegetation, and local landtype characteristics along with the implementation of stream buffers (INFISH 1995), design features and BMPs.
7. There are no municipal watersheds in the cumulative effects area.

The selected alternative is consistent with the requirements of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act as amended by the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. §1251. Water temperature and sediment, the principal pollutant of concern, would not increase within the Charlie Creek watershed. Through implementation of design features, BMPs, and the net sediment reduction that would take place, risks would be reduced to beneficial uses designation for support of cold water biota and secondary contact recreation in Charlie Creek and its tributaries. The net reduction of sediment and long-term temperature improvement would likely improve conditions that led to the 303(d) listing and would meet the intent of the TMDL. The Forest Service will obtain any necessary permits required for implementation (EA p. 84).

Floodplain and Wetland Protection Executive Orders 11988 and 11990

The activities would meet Executive Order 11988 and Executive Order 11990 related to floodplains and wetlands because no activity is proposed in wetlands or on floodplains (other than proposed enhancement or restoration work with riparian planting, large woody debris placement or culvert upgrades) and no substantial negative effects are expected. Design features and best management practices would be implemented to protect riparian areas (EA p. 84).

Idaho Forest Practices Act

Best management practices or soil and water conservation practices that meet or exceed requirements of the Idaho Forest Practices Act would be applied, and all activities would comply with the guidelines in the R1/R4 Soil and Water Conservation Handbook. See design features and EA Appendix B (EA p. 84).

Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act

The selected alternative is consistent with the requirements of this act. Inland Native Fish Strategy criteria incorporate specific protections for stream channels, and are included in this project. The activities are expected to meet the Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act because no activity is proposed in stream channels (other than proposed enhancement or restoration work with riparian planting and large woody debris placement or culvert upgrades) and no substantial negative effects are expected to stream channels. Design features and BMPs would be implemented to protect riparian areas (EA p. 84). The Forest Service will obtain any necessary permits required for implementation.

Executive Order 12962 (June 7, 1995)

The selected alternative will maintain habitat and the fishery potential, which in turn will maintain the potential for recreational fishing opportunities. The project includes culvert replacements or removals, large woody debris placement, riparian planting and road decommissioning. These activities will increase recreational fishing opportunities by improving habitat thus improving the carrying capacity of the streams (EA p. 111)

Clean Air Act

The project will comply with the Clean Air Act (1977). Prescribed burns during any time of the year are regulated by the Idaho State Department of Environmental Quality which issues burning closures when necessary to protect air quality. The Forest Service cooperates with the State by requesting approval to burn through the Montana/Idaho Airshed Management System in compliance with the Idaho State Implementation Plan. Proposed burning activities would follow procedures outlined by the North Idaho Smoke Management Memorandum of Agreement (EA p. 37, 127).

Endangered Species Act

The project is consistent with the Endangered Species Act. It will not jeopardize the continued existence of bull trout, which historically occurred in the project area but does not currently occur there. No critical bull trout habitat is designated in the analysis area. The project will have no effect on bull trout (EA p. 84, 110-111). No federally listed Endangered plants are suspected to occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forest

and none were found in the project area. No Threatened plants are suspected to occur in the project area and none were found. Habitat for water howellia and Spalding's catchfly does not occur within the affected environment of the Charlie Preston project area (EA p.135). The project would have no effect on Threatened or Endangered plant species. There would be no effect to woodland caribou, grizzly bear, or Canada lynx (EA p. 153; Wildlife Report 9-12).

Migratory Bird Act

The selected alternative is consistent with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, made the taking, killing or possessing of migratory birds unlawful. Executive Order 13186 of 2001 clarified the responsibilities of Federal agencies regarding migratory bird conservation and directed Federal agencies to evaluate the effects of Federal actions on migratory birds with an emphasis on species of concern. The Executive Order also directed Federal agencies to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding their role with respect to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. In December 2008, the Forest Service entered into a MOU with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that further clarified the responsibility of the Forest Service to protect migratory birds. In the MOU the Forest Service agreed to consider the most up-to-date U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service list of Birds of Conservation Concern when developing or amending land management plans and to evaluate the effects of agency actions on migratory birds within the NEPA process, focusing first on species of management concern along with their priority habitat and key risk factors. For the IPNF, the bird species of management concern are those species designated as sensitive and MIS. Consequently, the IPNF is in compliance with the MOU by analyzing the potential effects to these bird species and their habitat at the project level. See the Charlie Preston Wildlife Report (p. 2).

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) directs all Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings (actions, financial support, and authorizations) on properties included in or eligible for the National Register. Qualified archaeologists systematically inventoried and analyzed the Charlie Preston Project Area. All appropriate design criteria and mitigation measures are in place. No cultural resources would be adversely affected by this project. Consultation with Native American groups has been completed as in accordance with the NHPA, and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office will be completed in accordance with the NHPA. See EA p. 112.

Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898

The selected alternative complies with Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898. No disproportionate impacts to minority or low-income populations were identified through public involvement efforts over the course of this analysis. Acting District Ranger Kimberly Johnson discussed the project with representatives of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe during a meeting on June 2, 2010 (PI-1), and they did not express concerns. District Ranger Wade Sims discussed the project with staff of the Coeur d'Alene Tribe after the EA was made available to the public, and they did not express concerns (project file document PI-93).

Idaho Roadless Rule (October 16, 2009)

The Idaho Roadless Rule does not apply because the project area does not fall within an Idaho Roadless Area, and no activities will occur in an Idaho Roadless Area (Recreation Report).

Idaho Noxious Weed Act

Continued treatment of invasive plant species meets the intent of the State of Idaho's Noxious Weed Act (EA p. 132).