Forest Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests | R1-24-07 | November 2023

Draft Record of Decision

Revised Land Management Plan

Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Latah, Shoshone and Benewah Counties, Idaho

We make every effort to create documents that are accessible to individuals of all abilities; however, limitations with our word processing programs may prevent some parts of this document from being readable by computer-assisted reading devices. If you need assistance with any part of this document, please contact the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests (208) 935-4239.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Draft Record of Decision for the 2023 Land Management Plan for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Latah, Shoshone and Benewah Counties, Idaho

Lead Agency:

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)- Forest Service

Responsible Official:

Cheryl Probert
Forest Supervisor
USDA Forest Service
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
1008 Highway 64, Kamiah, Idaho 83536

For More Information Contact:

Zach Peterson
Public and Government Relations Staff Officer
1008 Highway 64 Kamiah, ID 83536
208-935-4239 or zachary.peterson@usda.gov

Sara Daugherty
Forest Planner
1008 Highway 64, Kamiah, Idaho 83536
208-963-4206 or sara.daugherty@usda.gov

https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Commonly Used Acronyms

CAA	Clean Air Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CWA	Clean Water Act
DC	Desired Condition
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
FRN	Federal Register Notice
FS	Forest Service
FW	Forest Wide
GA	Geographic Areas
GDL	Guideline
GIS	Geographic Information System
GL	Goal
LN	Legal Notice
MA	Management Areas
MMBF	Million board feet
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NFS	National Forest System
NFMA	National Forest Management Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOI	Notice of Intent
NOO	Notice of Opportunity to Object
NPCLW	Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests
NPTEC	Nez Perce Tribe Executive Council
NRV	Natural Range of Variation
OBJ	Objective
PTSQ	Potential Timber Sale Quantity
RNA	Research Natural Area
ROD	Record of Decision
ROS	Recreation Opportunity Spectrum
SA	Special Area
SCC	Species of Conservation Concern
STD	Standard
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SYL	Sustained Yield Limit
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Office
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USDOI	United States Department of Interior
USFS	United States Forest Service
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Introduction

This Draft Record of Decision (Draft ROD) documents my decision and rationale for approving the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Land Management Plan. The plan is a strategic framework and vision for the management of this national forest, informed by an evaluation of existing conditions and trends and with consideration of a wide body of scientific information and a robust public input process. The plan reflects the unique values of this place and what these lands provide, both intrinsic values and human use and enjoyment for current and future generations.

The decision is consistent with the Forest Service's 2012 National Forest System Land Management Planning Rule at 36 CFR Part 219. The plan addresses ecological sustainability in the context of a changing climate, social and economic sustainability, environmental justice, honoring Tribal Treaty rights and interests, and cooperation with Tribes, states, counties, and other Federal agencies. This plan fosters productive and sustainable use of this national forest in a manner that will improve the overall health and resilience of the Forests. It contributes to the national goal to conserve at least 30 percent of our country's lands and waters through a thoughtful network of conservation designations and management guidance. The plan implements many of the action items in the Tribal Action Plan[1] and Equity Action Plan[2] through engagement and developing a shared vision of co-stewardship with the Nez Perce Tribe and collaboration with local communities to provide equitable access to resources on the Forests. The plan supports increased resilience to wildfires and disturbance events, reforestation, and improved access to recreation, while protecting wilderness and other sensitive areas. Implementation of the plan will further the Agency's goals of addressing the wildfire crisis and implementing the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy[3], will increase resiliency to climate change, sustain old growth and mature forests, and help implement the Forest Service's Tribal Action Plan and Equity Action Plan.

The Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests were administratively combined in 2013. This plan revises and replaces the two existing Nez Perce and Clearwater National Forests Land and Resource Management Plans. This revised one plan will cover the administratively combined national forests. The plan describes desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines, as well as land suitability for project and activity decision making. The plan will guide resource management activities on the national forest for the next 10 to 15 years, or until it is amended or revised.

Forest Setting

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is located in the heart of north-central Idaho, in a seven-county region, comprising Idaho, Clearwater, Latah, Shoshone, Benewah, Lewis, and Nez Perce counties. The plan area encompasses six ranger districts: Palouse, North Fork, Lochsa-Powell, Moose Creek, Salmon River, and Red River. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is responsible for managing approximately four million acres across this landscape. The Clearwater River drains most of these acres within both forests and rugged mountain ranges, pristine rivers and streams, and extensive

[1] https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fs_media/fs_document/Strengthening-Tribal-Relations.pdf
[2] https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fs-equity-action-plan.pdf
[3] https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/

forested landscapes combine to create diverse ecosystems that provide spectacular recreational opportunities; substantial fish and wildlife habitat; and numerous forest, mineral, and range products.

The ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce Tribe, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests play an integral part in the past, present, and future culture of the Nez Perce people. The Nez Perce ceded this territory to the U.S. Government in the Treaty of 1855. The Treaty of 1855 is supreme law. Under the Treaty of 1855 and the Treaty of 1863, the U.S. Government is obligated to protect treaty reserved resources and meet trust responsibilities. Trust responsibilities arise from the United States' unique legal relationship with Native American Tribes. It derives from the Federal Government's consistent promise in the treaties that it signed to protect the safety and well-being of the Native American Tribes and Tribal members. Federal Indian Trust responsibility is now defined as a legally enforceable fiduciary obligation, on the part of the United States, to protect Tribal lands, assets, resources, and reserved rights, as well as a duty to carry out the mandates of federal law with respect to American Indians and Alaska Native Tribes. This responsibility requires that the Federal Government consider the best interests of the Native American Tribes in its dealings with them and when taking actions that may affect them. The trust responsibility includes protection of the sovereignty of each Tribal government. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is responsible for the government’s trust responsibility by ensuring actions do not diminish rights of Native American Tribes and Tribal members and by treating National Forest System resources as trust resources where fiduciary rights exist. Maintaining Tribal Trust is interwoven into every action and consistent with Joint Secretarial Order 3403, we manage these lands in consultation with Tribes, consistent with the treaty and other reserved rights. Native American use of the national forest since time immemorial is manifest in hundreds of archaeological, sacred sites, and other areas of traditional cultural importance, many of which are listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Significant spiritual, traditional use, and ceremonial sites are located on the national forest and are in use today by Tribal members and this Plan emphasizes sustaining these uses into the future.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests play a critical role in sustaining rural economies, contributing to social systems, and providing for sustainable ecosystems. Up to 84 percent of the counties land base is administered by the Forest Service, and up to 16 percent of local economies are dependent on the timber industry. Vast wild areas and miles of wild rivers define the area. These counties and communities are underserved as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool for health, climate change, energy, and legacy pollution (see Environmental Justice section, below).

The Forests have the potential to contribute 4,000 jobs to the local rural area, supporting annual income of over $163 million. These jobs and employment income result from timber harvest, fuels reduction, fire suppression activities, Forest Service expenditures and restoration contracts, grazing and mineral receipts, payments to Counties as well as expenditures by the public during recreation, hunting and fishing activities. Due to the rural nature of the counties, the economic and social importance of the area is much greater when viewed in the regional context. Many visitors to the Forest do not contribute economically to the communities within the Forests boundaries; however, the Forests are essential to the lifestyle and economies of those surrounding areas such as Missoula and Ravalli Counties in Montana and many other areas. Inaction also has an economic relationship to our communities and counties. For example, not addressing the wildfire crisis or failing to continue restoration of upland and aquatic ecological systems would have a negative impact on the social and economic systems in our area.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is home to 11 listed, candidate or proposed species under the Endangered Species Act including anadromous salmon and steelhead that migrate to the Pacific Ocean and back during their lifecycle. The Forests provide clean water and clean air, timber products, and recreation opportunities for area residents and visitors. Hunting and fishing opportunities abound on the Nez Perce-Clearwater supported by an emphasis on healthy fish and game populations and a variety of access opportunities from passenger vehicle access to multi-day hiking or horseback opportunities.

Need for Change

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans to emphasize integrated restoration of terrestrial and aquatic resources to restore vegetation composition, structure, and landscape patterns; reduce fuel loading; and improve watershed conditions to support wildlife and other resource values while contributing to the social and economic sustainability of local and regional communities.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans to provide for ecological, social, and economic sustainability in an integrated manner. Additionally, the plans need to be revised to better consider multiple uses and ecosystem services desired by local, regional, and national publics.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans to provide for a proactive and comprehensive approach for the stewardship of the land, to ensure Tribal Treaty rights are protected, and Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) is considered. Co-stewardship of the Forest's resources with the Nez Perce Tribe needs to be emphasized.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans based on best available scientific information to update direction from the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH) and Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy (PACFISH) with forest-specific aquatic conservation strategies. There is a need to update lynx habitat boundaries from the 2007 Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction. In addition, there is a need to incorporate direction established in the Idaho Roadless Rule.

There is a need to revise the two 1987 Forest Plans under the provisions of the 2012 planning regulations to provide the combined forests consistent, adaptable management guidance in consideration of best available scientific information while continuing to provide a range of social, economic, and ecological benefits for the present and into the future.

The purpose is to revise the 1987 plans for the Clearwater and Nez Perce Forests into a single revised land management plan under the 2012 Planning Rule.

Engagement and Consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe

At the time of release of this draft Record of Decision, we are continuing to work with the Nez Perce Tribe, through government-to-government consultation with their sovereign nation’s elected officials. This effort has been ongoing for over a decade. Through the years the Forest and Tribe have developed and worked through many plan components to ensure that this Revised Plan protects Tribal Treaty rights in the way that respects the views of the Nez Perce Tribe. The Plan reflects this cooperative relationship throughout its components and within the direction. In the weeks leading up to this release we have continued our consultation and come to consensus

on a number of additional specific items, described below. While we are in agreement on concepts, we will continue to collaborate and coordinate on the specific wording especially, but not limited to, how the revised plan will ensure we meet our treaty obligations over the life of the plan from the perspective of the Tribe. In order to do that, I will include a standard relative to treaty rights in the Plan. The draft land management plan now includes a placeholder reflecting my commitment to develop language for these standards in cooperation with the Nez Perce Tribe's Office of Legal Counsel. We have included similar language already as a goal along with multiple desired conditions so that all projects recognize our responsibility to manage the land consistent with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights from the very inception. Upholding our Treaty obligations is a solemn duty I have as the responsible official and am committed to ensuring this plan does that in working with the Nez Perce Tribe's government. Some of these changes to plan components, arising from government-to-government consultation, were not incorporated into the analysis in the FEIS. These plan component changes, in general, result in more certainty and protection for specific ecological values and less flexibility managing in the future, as requested by the Tribe. Unless noted otherwise, it can be assumed that the analyzed impacts are less than or equal to the impacts described in the FEIS. These changes will be incorporated into the FEIS prior to the publication of the Notice of Availability following the objection period.

Our government-to-government obligations do not end, even with a decision on this Revised Plan, nor is our co-stewardship work with the Nez Perce Tribe limited to these words on paper. We continue to work together outside of the planning process to implement restoration projects, build a collective understanding of the vast ecological knowledge of the Tribe, restore traditional Place Names across the Forest, increase visitor awareness and appreciation for past, present, and future Nez Perce culture, recognize and support Nez Perce business enterprises, and much more. As we move forward to the next step in the public process of revision of our land management plan, I am committed to continuing collaboration and consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe. As the Objection Reviewing Official contemplates changes based on the administrative public process, we also will continue to consult on any items outstanding now as well as any requested or considered changes that may result from the pre-decisional objection process. We endeavor to be standing together with the Tribe at the signature of the ROD knowing that we have fully met our obligations under the treaty of 1855 and perpetuated our desire to exceed our general trust responsibilities into the future. Projects developed under this Plan will begin with the general Tribal Trust at the forefront and be designed and constructed to meet those expectations socially, ecologically, and economically.

In addition to the Tribal Trust plan components, and the over three hundred other plan components that ensure protection of and access to treaty reserved resources, we have made the following specific changes and additions during government-to-government consultation since August of 2023:

- A re-wording of the Tribal Trust Standard 01 to better convey the Forest's commitments related to the Treaty of 1855--in development.
- The addition of a desired condition in the Tribal Trust section to document our intent to co-steward the land and resources of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests together with the Nez Perce.
- The addition of a guideline and a desired condition in the Tribal Trust section to ensure access to treaty reserved resources associated with eh Tribe's reserved Treat rights are not impaired by permitted commercial and personal forest products uses.

- The conversion of twelve (12) guidelines to standards- primarily related to aquatic conditions, wildlife habitat and cultural resources.
- An introduction to the land management plan written by the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Director to set the context and importance of the Forests as the Nez Perce ancestral homeland. —in development

Coordination with the Nez Perce Tribe has been ongoing since prior to the announcement the Nez Perce-Clearwater plan and we would be among the first Forests to revise a plan under the 2012 Planning Rule. Informal and formal government to government consultation has occurred throughout the process including during the development of the assessment and the proposed action, scoping, development of alternatives, prior and after the release of the DEIS, prior to the release of the FEIS, and during development of the Biological Assessment. At each step, staff to staff meetings have worked to address issues and provide each government with a better understanding of their processes and perspectives. We have convened Nez Perce Tribal gatherers in order to include their perspectives in the social analysis. These efforts have also allowed the Forest to begin to develop an understanding of some of the vast wealth of knowledge the Nez Perce people have with respect to the land. We have woven this knowledge into plan components as well as the plan itself. While the Nez Perce Tribe originally responded they would like to be an official Cooperating Agency, a formal Cooperating Agency Agreement was never finalized at the Tribe's request. However, the Tribe was invited to all cooperating agency meetings held over the nine-year period this plan was being developed and attended those Cooperating Agency Meetings as a sovereign government that must be consulted during the development of land management plans. Government to Government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe Executive Committee has occurred periodically during the development of the revised plan and the EIS. This government-to-government consultation will continue up to, and after, the final signing of this Record of Decision.

Our relationship with the Nez Perce Tribe is unique, thus we also consider novel approaches in how we honor the Treaties with the Nez Perce, how we discharge our general trust responsibilities, and how we honor and help sustain their ability to practice their culture in the past, present, and future. We hope that this land management plan, with components throughout that honor the reserved Treaty rights and uphold our general trust responsibilities will become a blueprint for co-stewardship across the Nez Perce ancestral homelands.

Engagement with State and Local Governments, other Federal Agencies, and the Public

The Nez Perce-Clearwater began public participation activities in 2012 and facilitated numerous public and interagency meetings to bring together information for the Nez Perce-Clearwater to consider in preparing the assessment, developing the proposed action, and developing alternatives to the proposed action. There were 22 rounds of public meetings between 2012 and 2014 to develop the 2014 Proposed Action. The first meeting was a summit to introduce the concepts of forest plan revision to the public. The next meetings discussed the Need to Change, the Desired Conditions, and Forest Resource Management, including wilderness and timber suitability and other plan components. Public input was compiled at each meeting, as well as throughout the process. The dialogue and recommendations from this public involvement process were used to help develop the proposed action.

In addition to postal mail and email, public meeting information was announced via the forest plan revision website.[4] The website also included a means for public comment using electronic or printed comment forms or submitting comments via an electronic database and posted meeting results and other information. Updates were posted periodically.

The notice of intent for the proposed action to prepare an environmental impact statement was published in the Federal Register on July 14, 2014. The notice of intent asked for public comment on the proposal for a 60-day period, which was extended to 120-days based on public requests. The Nez Perce-Clearwater held five public meetings to provide opportunities to better understand the proposed action so that meaningful public comments could be provided by the end of the scoping period. Using the comments from the public, other agencies, Tribes, and organizations, the Nez Perce-Clearwater interdisciplinary team developed a list of issues to address through changes to the proposed action, development of alternatives, or in analysis of impacts of the proposed action. A corrected notice of intent was published on September 5, 2019, to correct the anticipated dates of availability of the draft environmental impact statement from 2015 to 2019 based on changes to the timeline.

Since the scoping period, public involvement has been ongoing. Stakeholders have been defined as any individual, organization, government, or Tribe that is interested in our planning process. The forest plan revision team met with thousands of individuals from hundreds of organizations since 2012. Following the scoping period, the team continued to meet with any and every organization that invited the team to meet with them. This included attendance at well over 100 meetings between 2014 and the release of the draft environmental impact statement. The Nez Perce-Clearwater convened meetings on several occasions, including a meeting in May 2015 to update the public on what has happened since scoping, a webinar in December 2017 to prepare the public for alternative development, a meeting in January 2018 to solicit input on alternatives over three days in two locations, and another meeting in the summer of 2018 to share the alternatives being analyzed with the public over six meetings across the Nez Perce-Clearwater, coined “Coffee with the Planners”. Additionally, in 2018, County Commissions were briefed in public county commission meetings in the counties of Idaho, Clearwater, Latah, Lewis, Nez Perce, Benewah, and Shoshone in Idaho and the counties of Ravalli, Superior, and Missoula in Montana. Forest plan revision team members have set up displays at Nez Perce Tribe General Council meetings during key points in the process.

Comments have been accepted at any time during the process and that acceptance will continue throughout the process. As noted in the previous section, we continue government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe and will make adjustments based on that process. These comments have helped the interdisciplinary team develop plan components and alternatives, conduct analysis, determine the best available scientific information, conduct wilderness evaluations, create wild and scenic suitability reports, and develop a monitoring plan. Comments have also been used by the Regional Forester in development of the Species of Conservation Concern (SCC) list.

Collaboration with various diverse organized groups also provided the Nez Perce-Clearwater with information that was used the same as other comments. Forest Service staff attended meetings at their invite but did not give any decision-making authority to these collaborative groups.

[4] https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5447338

However, input from groups of people with diverse perspectives working towards consensus on management issues is taken very seriously and is highly valued by the Forest Service, whether it comes from an organized collaborative or from elsewhere. The interdisciplinary team has met with the following collaborative groups since 2012:

- Forest Plan Collaborative 2012-2014, U.S. Forest Service convened.
- Clearwater Basin Collaborative (CBC) 2014-current, at their invitation
- Efficiency in Public Collaborative (EPC) 2019-current, at their invitation

The State of Idaho has been involved with forest planning since 2012. Various state agencies have been present at public meetings, met with the interdisciplinary team, provided information and data, and assisted in the development of plan components.

State agencies, offices, and commissions that have been involved include:

- Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation (lead agency)
- Idaho Governor’s Office of Energy and Mineral Resources
- Idaho State Department of Agriculture
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game
- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
- Idaho Department of Water Resources
- Idaho Geological Survey
- Idaho Governor’s Idaho Roadless Commission
- Idaho Governor’s Lewis and Clark Trail Commission

Three agencies or governments have signed a cooperating agency agreement for plan revision with the Forest Service. These cooperating agencies participated in the development of the Land Management Plan and final environmental impact statement with regards to their areas of specialized expertise. Cooperating agency participation in the forest plan revision is not an endorsement of the Land Management Plan nor does cooperating agency status limit their ability to participate during the public involvement process. Cooperating agencies include:

- Idaho County
- Clearwater County
- State of Idaho by and through the Idaho Governor’s Office of Species Conservation

The Forest Service has consulted with the Nez Perce Tribe through the life of the revision of the land management plan. The Tribe has been influential in the preparation of both the draft and final environmental impact statements. Staff to staff meetings between the Tribe and the Forest Service began in 2012 and are ongoing. Forest Leadership has also met with the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee to provide updates and incorporate important components to the land

management plan. The Tribe has also received documents and analysis during the Cooperating Agency reviews as well as throughout the process. See previous section for a more thorough (but not exhaustive) summary of our engagement with the Tribe.

Following the release of the draft environmental impact statement, the publication of the Federal Register Notice on December 20, 2019, initiated a formal 90-day comment period. The comment period was extended for 30 days, concluding on April 20, 2020, for a total comment period duration of 120 days. Public meetings were held in Kamiah, Grangeville, Orofino, Elk City, Lowell, Coeur d'Alene, Lewiston, Moscow, Riggins, McCall, and Boise in Idaho and Superior, Missoula, and Hamilton in Montana. Comments were accepted through the Forest Plan Revision commenting site, by e-mail, and by written mailed or hand delivered comment.

During the formal comment period, 19,837 comments were received in total. 1,329 unique comment letters were received. Within these letters, 4,134 individual substantive comments were identified. The substantive comments were grouped into 133 concern categories with over 400 concern statements developed from these substantive comments. See Appendix M of the FEIS for additional information and a response to the concern statements.

Decision and Rationale for the Decision

Decision

I have reviewed the environmental analysis disclosed in the FEIS, the planning record, and comments from our government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, local and State government partners, engagement with other Native American Tribes, other Federal agencies, and the public. I also considered how the revised land management plan meets the identified needs to change and the requirements of 36 CFR 219. The Draft EIS did not include a Preferred Alternative and our commenters reviewed the full array of alternatives. This allowed our Forest leadership and revision team to build a Preferred Alternative that was shaped by stakeholder input and based on analysis trade-offs. After review of the analysis, listening to and reading comments from the public and the Nez Perce Tribe, considering the legal and ethical obligations of the Agency, the Forest Leadership crafted an alternative using the building blocks of the four action alternatives in the DEIS. In a process spanning months of preparation and review, culminating in a week of discussion and collaboration, the team reached consensus on an alternative that best addresses governmental and public comments and concerns. We were able to utilize the large expanse of the Forest to provide for the myriad of uses people want and contribute in a meaningful way to our local communities. The Preferred Alternative is predicated on sustaining the ecological, social, and economic resources to honor the past and provide for the present and future of the Nez Perce people. In order to address climate change and embrace fire as an essential ecological process, our leadership team considered landscape level restoration needs in applying suitability determinations. The team overlaid different land management allocation options with habitat needs of specialized species such as wolverine, anadromous fish, grizzly bear, and unique ecosystems such as the coastal disjunct. With this layering of ecological, social, and economic values and needs, we were able to apply land allocations across the vast 4 million acres of the Forest to sustain all resources at that scale.

It is not appropriate, possible, or realistic to provide for everyone and everything on every acre. For instance, in order to improve the health of the forested and meadow vegetation, we need to

rebuild more resilient stands and move towards the historic range of variability. Without taking those actions to restore resiliency and species diversity to the uplands, all the work within the stream will be for naught. Yet, some of the tools available to manage the upland vegetation can have impacts to other resources. In crafting the Preferred Alternative, we considered these short and long-term trade-offs. Less than 25 percent of the entirety of the Forest is considered suited for timber harvest as a tool to move towards NRV. These areas are generally in the rural, motorized areas near communities where the need for fuels reduction and precise restoration techniques is the greatest. On over 75 percent of the Forests, wildland fire will be the primary tool and movement towards NRV will be less precise or predictable. This vast acreage, over 3 million acres, will remain less developed or undeveloped with more secure habitat. We considered the specific language and protections of different land allocations in our Wild and Scenic Rivers suitability to determine the best management to sustain the outstandingly remarkable values of the eligible rivers in consideration of the larger landscape. Underlying ALL those land allocations, are a suite of forest plan components that ensure ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The foundation of the plan, those forestwide plan components meet the Agency's obligations under law and regulation.

The Preferred Alternative was developed from the range of alternatives in the DEIS, considering Tribal and public comments coupled with knowledge based on the actual analysis, not assumptions of impacts. On behalf of the leadership team of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest, I have selected the Preferred Alternative as described in the FEIS and the accompanying Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Land Management Plan.

My decision, as described in this ROD is to implement the Preferred Alternative including content required by the planning rule and other plan content identified. Language not specifically incorporated into this ROD, or otherwise specifically incorporated into the Preferred Alternative, does not constitute a decision, and should not be viewed as being a part of the decision on this land management plan. Appendices to the FEIS provide analysis only and do not represent a decision unless specifically incorporated into the decision by this ROD.

Land management planning can be an abstract process, with rules, procedures, and language that are difficult to understand or relate to. At its core, this new plan is our new "contract" with the Nez Perce Tribe and public for how this national forest will be managed into the future. In reflecting on our conversations throughout this process, the one area of consensus has been about the incredible value that these lands hold for so many people and for so many reasons. There is also agreement that these lands deserve our best efforts in shared stewardship.

My role as the decision maker is to put forth a plan that provides for long-term sustainability (ecological, economic, and social), meets obligations within the Treaty of 1855 with the Nez Perce Tribe and considers the richness of interests and the uniqueness of affected communities. I also wished to develop a plan that reflects the ITEK of the Nez Perce Tribe blended with the knowledge the Forest Service has gained through 100-plus years of management experience across the national forest while providing for continuing evolution of our social and ecological scientific understandings. I want everyone who participated in the process to see their fingerprints somewhere in this plan for the future. This plan is our plan.

As my staff and I have engaged with communities, partners, Native American Tribes, cooperators, and many, many people who care about this national forest, we have been humbled by the knowledge, commitment, energy, and passion that has been shared. We appreciate the respectful manner with which people have interacted with our team and with others who hold

different views. The common desire is for a plan that recognizes and protects what people care about now and into the future. We are also keenly aware there is no way to satisfy all interests, nor a way to bridge all values held by our public.

I look forward to working with all our stakeholder citizens, who value this landscape, each in their own way, and for their own reasons. This is a momentous step towards our common goal of sustaining the health, diversity, and productivity of this Forest for current and future generations. Thank you to those who collaborated with us and each other to find common ground and raise all the ships in the harbor. Your passion, wisdom, and energy helped me make this decision. I realize that there are endless permutations of how I could have applied the management direction, that is the nature of long-range planning. I put this puzzle together in my own way, informed by analysis and comments from all of you, in consideration of those who do not have a voice.

Key Elements of the Decision

Key elements of the selected alternative include:

- A suite of plan components that provide for social, economic, and ecological sustainability; diversity of plant and animal communities; and multiple uses within the inherent capability of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.
- A Tribal Trust section of plan components that help ensure the U.S. Government Treaties with the Nez Perce of 1855 and 1863 and Tribal Trust are upheld. Additionally, the plan components honor the past and present and future culture of the Nez Perce by articulating a collective vision of co-stewardship as a best practice in land management for the duration of the revised land management plan. There are over 300 plan components that contribute to and ensure that all activities under this plan honor Tribal Treaty rights incorporate ITEK and uphold our solemn trust relationship.
- Programmatic plan components, informed by the natural range of variability, that maintain the forest's ecological integrity and resilience to key stressors such as climate change and preserve rare and unique habitat types, including old growth forests and the coastal disjunct.
- Fire and fuels management direction that emphasizes active vegetation management within the wildfire crisis strategy landscape, while embracing the role that wildfire can play in moving toward resilient ecological conditions. Plan components help move the Forests towards the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and reduce risk in the natural and human ecosystems. Desired conditions are predicted to be met within 35-40 years.
- Land Allocation decisions shaped through Tribal and public engagement and collaboration, and in consideration of the need to restore resilient ecosystems, including:
    - Recommending for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System the:
        - Mallard Larkins Recommended Wilderness Area (82,286 acre)- modified and expanded from the 1987 boundaries (66,377 acres).
        - Hoodoo Recommended Wilderness Area (108,276 acres)- modified and slightly reduced from the 1987 boundaries (111,986 acres).
        - Meadow Creek Recommended Wilderness Area (72,795 acres)- a new area recommended through this land management planning process.

- Wild and Scenic River Eligibility and Suitability
  - Finding eligible and suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system, thereby applying Interim Protection Measures in addition to hundreds of plan components to protect and enhance Outstandingly Remarkable Values:
    - Cayuse Creek
    - Fish Creek
    - Hungery Creek
    - Weitas Creek
    - Kelly Creek
    - North Fork Kelly Creek
    - Middle Fork Kelly Creek
    - South Fork Kelly Creek
    - Colt Killed Creek
    - Meadow Creek
    - Salmon River (undesignated portion)
  - Finding the Little North Fork Clearwater River eligible with no decision on suitability for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.
  - Finding eligible, but not suitable, 77 rivers and continuing to protect these systems through hundreds of plan components which will sustain the resources within and surrounding these eligible rivers.
- Proposing two new Research Natural Areas.
- A Geographic Area, Pilot Knob, to preserve, protect and restore the cultural importance to the Nez Perce Tribe.
- Proposing six new Special Areas, including wispin'iitpe (as one travels out of the timber, upon coming over the divide) at Packer Meadow and Lolo Pass area where the focus will be on enhancing and restoring Tribal interests.

- Creating Management and Geographic Areas, including:
  - Three Management Areas reflecting varied uses of the Forests, and
  - Four Geographic Areas including: the Lower Salmon River Geographic Area, Pilot Knob Geographic Area, Gospel Hump Geographic Area, and the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark Geographic Area.
- Making suitability determinations for a variety of uses, including timber suitability, suitability for motorized vehicle use, and suitability of uses in recommended and designated areas. These suitability determinations overlay the vast landscape of the Forests, like the pieces of a quilt which when stitched together, provide ecological, social, and economic sustainability across the entirety of the 4 million acres.
- Establishing a Projected Timber Sale Quantity (PTSQ) of 190-210 million board feet annually, resulting from up to 10,000 acres of timber harvest annually, predominately as a byproduct of restoration activities to address the wildfire crisis, meet desired conditions for forested vegetation and manage landscapes to be within the natural range of variability. The Preferred Alternative predicts an additional estimated 50,000 acres of disturbance annually from planned and unplanned fire ignitions work with the timber harvest projected volumes to meet desired conditions within 35-40 years. The plan includes an objective to restore 3,300 to

4,700 acres of aquatic systems and 65 to 175 miles of streams every five years, ensuring that projects are integrated, and we restore landscapes from ridgetop to ridgetop. Soils impacts from past disturbance will be mitigated on up to 200 acres annually, in addition to requirements to rehabilitate and reestablish soil function on all new soil disturbance resulting from our actions over the life of the plan.

- A suite of aquatic and riparian plan components that contribute to the recovery of ESA listed species, improve aquatic conditions, and provide the ecological conditions to support the persistence of all aquatic dependent species on the Forest and use these same principles to enhance habitat at the Forest scale. These plan components replace the 1995 Pacific Anadromous Fish Strategy (PacFish) and Inland Native Fish Strategy (InFish) interim direction resulting from the listing of salmon and steelhead. These components, coupled with the plan components designed to restore resiliency to forests, meadows and rangelands, represent the full suite of management within the control of the Forests to support salmon and steelhead recovery and meet the Presidential Memorandum of September 27, 2023 "Restoring Healthy and Abundant Salmon, Steelhead, and other Native Fish Populations in the Columbia River Basin", sections 1 and 2 (88 FR 67617).
- Deliberate identification of motorized vehicle suitability to provide for habitat connectivity of wide-ranging species and species sensitive to winter motorized use, including grizzly bear, wolverine, elk, fisher and more, while considering how critical those uses are to rural community social and economic sustainability.

Nature of Land Management Plan Decisions

The purpose of this plan is to guide future projects, practices, and uses to assure sustainable multiple-use management on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests over the next 10 to 15 years or until amended or revised. In contrast to site-specific Forest Service projects, land management plans do not authorize site-specific activities such as where to put a recreation trail or what timber will be harvested, but instead provide a framework to guide management activities across the national forest. A land management plan establishes goals, desired conditions, objectives, standards, guidelines, and land suitability to assure coordination of multiple uses (such as outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish, and wilderness) and sustained yield of products and services. Carefully identifying an appropriate mix of multiple uses are an important part of land management planning to protect resources, support sustainable uses, and maintain healthy ecosystems. Planning in national forests and grasslands ensures thoughtful use and protection of the many resources of public lands. Like pieces to a puzzle, the land management plan determines suitability of the many uses, fitting them across the landscape in a cohesive tapestry.

The plan does not authorize projects or activities, commit the Forest Service to take any specific action, or dictate internal operations (such as personnel matters, law enforcement, budget, or organizational changes). Management direction will be implemented through site-specific activities that must be consistent with the plan (36 CFR 219.15).

As we begin to implement the Plan, it will be critically important for all of us to remember that the plan is only as successful as the sum of its parts. We intend to wholeheartedly propose actions to move towards all the desired conditions, with equal emphasis and resources. Our goal of sustainable ecological, social, and economic systems depends on us implementing the Plan in its entirety. If we only collaborate to implement one piece of this plan and ignore or refuse to work on the other pieces, we will not complete the puzzle. Integration is critical to actually provide for

the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of this 4,000,000-acre landscape or the communities and cultures, which rely upon it.

The national forest will also follow all treaties, laws, regulations, and policies that relate to managing National Forest System lands. The plan is designed to supplement, not replace, direction from these sources. The final environmental impact statement lists and considers this direction for each of the revision topics and specific resources, but the plan generally does not repeat treaties, laws, regulations, or program management policy, practices, or procedures.

Rationale for the Decision

Based upon my review of all alternatives, I have decided to implement the Preferred Alternative which provides for a wide array of multiple uses, promotes long-term sustainability of plant and animal species, recognizes the unique role and perspectives of Tribal sovereign government and local elected officials, puts forth a thoughtful scheme for protecting the existing character of wild places, and provides sound scientific guidance with appropriate management flexibility for managing these lands into the future.

I have carefully considered the requirements to avoid or minimize environmental harm in selecting the Preferred Alternative. This alternative reflects the best overall arrangement of multiple uses while providing plan components to guide management activities in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental effects.

An explanation of my decision rationale is organized below by the ecosystem services the Forests provide to local, regional, and national interests.

Providing Ecosystem Services

The Preferred Alternative optimizes the ecosystem services the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests provided to the American public. Ecosystem services are the benefits people obtain from nature. Ecosystem services encapsulate what the public, both local and national, ask for from the management of National Forests. This decision is described and framed through an ecosystem services lens as ecosystem services are how the public interacts with our Forests. It gives an opportunity to speak directly to the issues people care about rather than couch them in terms typically used by the agency to describe decisions. The specific categories of ecosystem services, described below, were validated, and tailored to our Forests by social scientists and economists specializing in ecosystem services through meetings with the public, the interdisciplinary team, and collaboratives on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. The Preferred Alternative provides what people ask of the National Forest System lands by supporting the broad categories of ecosystem services including: Cultural Values that include Tribal values, historic and prehistoric cultural values as well as protection of and access to cultural resources; Recreationist Values including motorized, non-motorized, general visitors, consumptive activities and non-consumptive activities; Regional Economy Values including timber, ranching, energy and mineral, and general economies; Resident Values including clean air, clean water, consumptive uses, flood protection benefits, soil stabilization, erosion control, and protection of life and property; and Non-use Values including existence and bequest values, wildlife, diverse ecosystems, carbon sequestered, climate regulation, recommended and designated areas.

Cultural Values

The Nez Perce-Clearwater has a rich cultural history. The ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce Tribe—our Forests are inseparable from the culture and history of the Nez Perce people. The Corps of Discovery traversed our landscape as Lewis and Clark made the journey to the Pacific Coast and back again. The Forest Service history on the Forest is also notable—we have a showcase of early ranger stations, lookout towers, the first jump by a smokejumper and some of the first wilderness areas and wild and scenic rivers in the Nation. Acknowledging, protecting and, when appropriate, showcasing this rich history and contemporary Tribal culture is a key piece of my decision.

The Nez Perce have impressed upon me how they see themselves in relation to their ancestral homeland. They do not differentiate between the land and themselves. They are deeply and inseparably interconnected with the land and the resources. To the Nez Perce, there would not be one without the other. In the words of one Nez Perce elder "Our traditional relationship with the earth was more than just a reverence for the land. It was knowing that every living thing had been placed here by the Creator, and that we were part of a sacred relationship…entrusted with the care and protection of our Mother Earth. We could not stand apart from our environment" (Elise Maynard, Salmon and His People). Recognizing this connection, the planning team set out to ensure that the Nez Perce values and the land and resources the Forest Service manages, were integrated in the plan revision from the onset. Development of the Assessment, Need for Change and the Proposed Action were done with a representative of the Tribe attending many meetings. As plan components were developed for the draft revised plan for the DEIS, the planning team met regularly with staff of the Tribe. I met with Tribal staff, leadership, and Tribal members both formally and informally. Over this decade of developing the plan, I have listened, and I have learned. Early on I acknowledged that Tribal Trust are not tied solely to either the physical landscape nor to human uses of the forest and asked the planning team to work with the Tribe in creating of a new section in the plan titled Tribal Trust. This section is located between the ecological and human uses sections- just as the Nez Perce look at themselves as an integration of the land and people, our plan is also structured to highlight this relationship.

Nez Perce staff participated in developing plan components for elk and for aquatic and riparian habitat aimed at protecting recovering fish populations. The planning team continued to meet with the Tribe during plan development and while every topic was discussed, specific changes were made to address concerns with invasive species, shrubs and grassland management, air quality, wildlife, the Regional Forester's Species of Conservation Concern list, general wildlife management, aquatic and fish management, wild and scenic rivers, access and recreation and recommended wilderness. Two Geographic Areas (GA) are directly tied to the Nez Perce's values- the Pilot Knob GA and the Lolo National Historic Trail. The plan components in these GA's recognize the importance of these areas from a cultural and spiritual aspect and provide direction to reduce impacts of modern infrastructure on those uses, as technological advancements allow. Special areas including séewisníme (Musselshell Meadows), and wispin'iitpe (Packer Meadows and Lolo Pass) were also identified to highlight the important value to the Nez Perce Tribe. The names of these two special areas have been changed in our documents and in our maps to reflect their Nez Perce name. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we developed the section on Tribal Trust in concert with the Nez Perce Tribe and incorporated direct language from Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee (NPTEC) proclamations.

The Nez Perce are strongly connected to water and fish; salmon in particular are the topic of many Tribal legends and folklore. In the words of elder Del White, “People need to understand that the salmon is part of who the Nez Perce people are. It is just like a hand is part of your body” (Salmon Return, page 156). Another elder explains, “We are taught that if anything happens to the birds, elk, deer, land, or fish that we need to pay attention because the same thing could happen to humans” (Donna Powaukee, Salmon Return, page 156). As a modern testament to that connection, the Nez Perce Tribe is a major partner and key contributor to the effort to recover anadromous fish species on their ancestral homeland. The Nez Perce Tribe was part of a group chartered by the Regional Forester to assist in developing a proactive strategy to incorporate recovery of anadromous fish within the larger revised plan and overall restoration goals and multiple use mandate. This effort resulted in the aquatic and riparian plan components for this plan. The Nez Perce Tribe, along with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Forest Service were the charted members of the group that collaborated on and came to consensus on the plan components needed to meet our goal to sustain fish and wildlife populations, recover threatened and endangered species and manage resources consistent with our unique legal and political relationship with. As I write this decision, our government-to-government consultation continues as we collaborate on language for a standard to provide certainty to the Nez Perce Tribe that the plan will honor both their treaty rights and culture.

People have traversed the lands now known as the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests for millennia. Starting with the Nez Perce and other Tribes, continuing through exploration of the West, including the Corps of Discovery, through development of mining, trading, and trapping routes, to settlement of rural communities, the development and popularization of the automobile and to modern day, people have moved and crossed these lands. Some of these routes are considered historic travel ways. Some have formal designation, such as the Nimiipuu National Historic Trail, the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, and the Lolo National Historic Trail. The Southern Nez Perce Trail is the oldest trail in the world that is in its original footprint and still used today. Other travel routes, such as the Elk City Wagon Road and Magruder Corridor, do not have national designation but are no less important to historic and modern movement of people through time and space. This decision not only acknowledges these travel ways in both their historic and modern context, but emphasizes their importance to people, past, present, and future. Our aim is to preserve the historic integrity of these routes, to highlight their National, Regional and Local significance, and to ensure they are available for use today. The plan components allow for them to be maintained in a way that highlights and compliments their historic integrity while providing access for a variety of vehicle types, accessible regardless of social or economic status.

The Forests also contain some remarkable examples of early Forest Service history. Historic Ranger Stations, guard stations, fire lookouts and workstations are scattered across the Forests. A tribute to a time when Forest Service employees aimed to be as close to the resource as possible-when Districts were the size of postage stamps and Proclaimed Forests were smaller as well, the Nez Perce-Clearwater is home to a great deal of early history. From the historic Moose Creek and Fenn Ranger Stations to a showcase of different lookout construction types over the years, from the guard stations at Kelly Forks and Canyon Creeks, to the location of the first smokejumper fire in the Nation, our Forests contain a lot of agency history. Lochsa Historical Ranger Station and Elk Summit Guard Station, run by stalwart volunteers, provide visitors with a glimpse into the characters and places that shaped our collective past. This decision honors that history and

intends to highlight the importance to ourselves, the historians of the Forest Service and to the rural communities that were, and in most cases still are, so dependent on the work we do.

The decision to implement the Preferred Alternative not only supports, but really highlights the importance of cultural and historic values across these areas. The diversity and context of cultural history in this area is perhaps second to none in the National Forest System. The geographic and special areas highlight the connection of the Nez Perce Tribe to this land since time immemorial and plan components perpetuate that connection. I am proud to implement this plan that honors these cultural and heritage values and ultimately protects them for future generations.

Recreationist Values

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests are unique and remarkable in the number of different activities that you can do on the Forests and that you can get to remote locations to do these activities using a wide variety of transportation modes. Locations for rafting, hiking, skiing, solitude, vast wilderness, foraging, hunting, and fishing among many others are accessible by foot, by motorized vehicle, by mountain bike, by raft, by horseback and more. A transportation system of roads and trails for both motorized and non-motorized use provides access to some of the most remote locations in the lower 48 states. Continued use of stewardship tools to reduce resource impacts of the transportation system has resulted in more equitable access to our underserved communities. Visitors do not need expensive and technical gear or transportation to enjoy the health and lifestyle benefits of the Forests. The Preferred Alternative continues to guide management of this unique combination of access opportunities, continuing to ensure there is something for everyone, and the Forests are accessible to all people, regardless of social or economic status while making deliberate decisions to adjust opportunities where needed. My decision to select the Preferred Alternative considers and acknowledges the critical role motorized transportation has in sustaining local economies and rural communities. The opportunity for motorized access is increased in some areas for this explicit purpose. These additional areas suitable for motorized use, and corresponding plan components, are included to be responsive to local government and public comments expressing desire for the recreation and economic benefits of motorized road and trail access. We heard area residents and visitors speak about how their ability to visit the land is dependent on being able to get there. In total, approximately 2.3 million acres of the Forests are suitable for motorized use in the winter and approximately 2.1 million acres in the summer. Motorized access is the lifeblood of many rural communities and the ecological benefits of continuing to reduce the motorized transportation network need to be considered in the context of the real negative impact closures have on people, communities, and economies. The analysis in the FEIS shows, and I am confident in the fact, that potential significant ecological impacts are mitigated by the plan components in the revised forest plan. The sheer size of the Forest and the fact that 55 percent of the Forest will remain unsuitable for motorized use in the summer and about 60 percent in the winter ensure there are opportunities for all types of recreationists.

While neither the Preferred Alternative, nor any other alternative, maximizes motorized access, the Preferred Alternative sets the stage for consideration of specific areas to provide for additional access during travel planning and during project development, which has the benefit of allowing people that cannot access lands without motorized vehicles to be able to enjoy these lands. The many plan components related to reducing negative impacts of the transportation system on the natural environment also improve access to all user groups. For example, roads with graveled surfaces and culverts at stream crossings reduce sediment delivery to streams and also improve access for the people who cannot afford expensive, specialized equipment like UTVs and

pickups. In the underserved communities that surround the Nez Perce-Clearwater, it is critical that all people, regardless of ability, knowledge, or station, can experience the physical, economical, and spiritual values of the natural world. Providing access so that the public can enjoy their public lands and awaken their own connections is one of the central tenets of the Forest Service's Equity Action Plan. This revised plan pieces together different land management allocations to insure that into the future.

While the Preferred Alternative does provide for additional opportunities for motorized access, it also continues the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests long history of being a wild place with lands available to non-motorized users with plentiful opportunities for solitude. The Preferred Alternative identifies 263,357 acres of recommended wilderness, and an additional 1.6 million acres of lands where motorized use is unsuitable in the summer. All alternatives include 1.1 million acres of designated Wilderness where motorized use is prohibited. In total, about 40 percent of the forest in the Winter and 45 percent of the Forests in the summer are not suitable for motorized use.

Hikers, equestrian users, and other non-motorized and non-mechanized user groups will see no loss in areas suitable for their preferred activities, though they may have to share the trail with motorized users on trails in areas that change from non-motorized to motorized in the summer after site-specific travel management planning is completed.

Bicycle users, specifically mountain bike users, are a subset of non-motorized users that often were not planned for during past strategic planning efforts. We heard from many mountain bike users and advocacy groups on the importance of being specific in the suitability of this use. While perspectives differ on whether users prefer to align more closely with the motorized or non-motorized communities, we heard regardless that they want to be able to access areas within all recreation opportunity classes from rural to primitive. While they may not be able to cycle within all classes, they, as do other user groups, want to have the ability to access a variety of areas and have a variety of experiences. As with motorized users, loop opportunities are particularly desired to the mountain bike community. In the Preferred Alternative, all trails other than trails closed to mechanized use would be suitable for mountain bike access. The only trails found not suitable for mechanized use at the Forest Plan level in the Preferred Alternative, are trails in recommended wilderness and trails in designated wilderness. Additionally, all trails in areas suitable for motorized use would also be available for e-bike users. The boundary of recommended wilderness areas specifically considered the desires of mountain bike users and boundary changes were made specifically to allow for this use in some areas (see Administrative Recommendations for more information).

General visitors to the Forest enjoy an opportunity to connect with a working forest and the ability to discover a rich heritage and history. The Preferred Alternative provides a mix of roaded natural, semi-primitive and primitive opportunities across the landscape. Plan components for education, interpretation, and public information help to ensure that visitors have a positive and informative experience. Users will still be able to visit very primitive areas without specialized equipment. Promoting creative stewardship and working with partners, the plan components protect wild spaces and keep them accessible to people, regardless of social and economic status.

Consumptive uses are critical to the social and economic fabric of North Central Idaho. These uses, including hunting, fishing, foraging, firewood gathering and more, are part of the way of life for many. Many do not consider these activities "recreation" but rather part of a subsistence lifestyle. Hunting, fishing, and gathering are all part of the physical and spiritual fabric of Nez

Perce culture. The Treaties of 1855 and 1863 reserved these rights for the Nez Perce Tribe and they are integral to current and future culture of the Tribe. Providing for these consumptive uses requires a high level of integration between resource areas and is not simple to do, but the Preferred Alternative optimizes the many factors that go into providing for these uses. Plan components in the Tribal Trust section provide for Tribal uses and incorporating the Nez Perce Tribe's vast ecological knowledge into how areas are managed in the future. Ecological plan components ensure the resources are present and in harvestable populations. The Preferred Alternative ensures that fish and wildlife populations are healthy and harvestable. Desired conditions for vegetation aim at managing within the natural range of variation (NRV), which would provide resources in the amounts they have historically been available. The plan includes components for improving habitats integral to Nez Perce culture and provide certainty that Tribal gathering will not be impaired at the Forest scale. Firewood collection and foraging for huckleberries, mushrooms and others will be benefited by managing within NRV. However, providing for consumptive uses requires more than just ensuring the resource is plentiful; access and the ability to successfully harvest is also critical. Maintaining a transportation network that reaches the resources is part of providing for the consumptive use and subsistence resources. Ecosystem Services and infrastructure plan components in the Preferred Alternative ensure that Tribal members and the public can access important and traditional areas for hunting, fishing, and gathering; while plan components for aquatic and riparian habitats, wildlife, soils, and more ensure access can occur in a manner that minimizes environmental harm. The Preferred Alternative includes plan components to uphold treaty obligations and to give primacy to Tribal use of forest products. The new plan components set the stage for incorporating ITEK into our projects and analyses. The Preferred Alternative provides opportunities for additional motorized access within areas traditionally used for consumptive purposes. The integration between the plan components, as discussed in the FEIS, carefully overlay the ecological needs of the species with the need to provide access for area residents and visitors. The Preferred Alternative is successful in doing this and optimizes the relationship between access and ecological sustainability, allowing this revised plan to provide more of all opportunities we hear the Tribe and public asking for. Non-consumptive uses, such as wildlife viewing, are benefited from and provided for by the same suite of plan components as the consumptive uses.

As noted throughout my decision and rationale, one particularly important part of consumptive uses is providing for the traditional cultural resources and treaty reserved rights of the Nez Perce Tribe. For the aforementioned reasons, these treaty-reserved rights and access to traditional resources will be maintained into the future through over 300 plan components. In addition to this resource allocation optimization, an additional section of plan direction is included in the Preferred Alternative and analyzed in Chapter 3 in the FEIS under the "Tribal Trust" section. This section focuses on providing for fish, wildlife, vegetation, and access to spiritual places at levels sufficient to meet and exceed our general Tribal Trust. This section sets the stage for incorporating Nez Perce traditional ecological understanding through co-stewardship. As the Nez Perce do not differentiate themselves from the land, this section was deliberately placed between the Biophysical Environment and Human Uses of the Forest sections as a bridge between the land and people, a position the Nez Perce have held since time immemorial.

Non-consumptive uses, such as wildlife viewing, are benefited from and provided for by the same suite of plan components as the consumptive uses.

Regional Economy Values

The Forest Service's contribution to the regional economy includes benefits to jobs and income. Job and labor income contribution comes from industries providing recreation experiences, harvesting, and processing timber into forest products, grazing, mineral resources and raw material production, Forest Service expenditures and payments to Counties.

The Forest Service and the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests are a significant part of the local and regional economy. The Preferred Alternative recognizes this critical contribution while balancing for other social and ecological needs.

Two primary contributions to regional economies are contributions to the forest products sector as well as contributions to recreation-based economies and the indirect benefits of those activities. While the tie between National Forest System Lands and the forest products industry is well documented, well studied, and easy to quantify (See Economic Sustainability section in the FEIS), contributions to the recreation related resources are harder to define and harder to quantify. However, they are real, and this decision positively impacts the economic sustainability of rural economies in real ways, as discussed in the FEIS, Economic Sustainability section, Potential Indirect Qualitative Economic Contributions. Two primary economic contributions from recreation related resources include those associated with consumptive uses, primarily hunting, fishing, and gathering as well as motorized recreation-based users.

Benefits of the selected alternative to contribute to and improve the economies of rural communities over time are focused on providing harvestable levels of fish, wildlife and plant species, opportunities for motorized recreation and access to a variety of recreation opportunities by motorized vehicles and maintaining forest vegetation in a healthy condition informed by the natural range of variation and by predicted impacts of climate change.

Specific decisions made to benefit rural communities in the Preferred Alternative include:

- Emphasizing providing for motorized recreation that connect communities and provide for loop opportunities (FW-DC-REC-08 and FW-DC-REC-11)
- Ensuring that motorized access to areas continues to be provided for and that alternate access is considered anytime a route is closed due to ecological concerns (FW-GDL-ES-01).
- Emphasizing salmon and steelhead recovery through over 120 plan components in the Aquatic Riparian Conservation Strategy and identification of priority watersheds for restoration.
- Increasing the amount of timber sold annually to 190-210 million board feet over the life of the plan (FS-OBJ-TBR-01) using Forest capacity along with Tribal, state, and local government partnerships.
- Ensuring that minerals are available for prospecting, exploration, and development to contribute to local employment (FW-DC-EM-01).
- Allowing for grazing of transitory forage created by forest vegetation moving towards desired conditions (FW-DC-GRZ-02).
- Opportunities for hunting and fishing are present across the Forests and wildlife are distributed across the area (FW-GL-WLMU-01 and FW-OBJ-WTR-05).

- Emphasizing recovery of elk populations in the Clearwater region and across the Forests (FW-DC-ELK-01).
- Restoration of degraded watersheds and impaired soil on the Forests (FW-OBJ-SOIL-01, MA2 and MA-GDL-SOIL-03).

Leaders, business owners and residents in rural communities across the Forests shared their concerns with us as part of this revision process, and motorized recreation and quality hunting and fishing opportunities were economic contributions from Forest Service lands that came up time and time again as being critical to the long-term economic health of businesses and communities. The most rural communities, such as Elk City, are most dependent on these contributions. While increases in timber harvest help the regional economy, the economy of these most rural communities and individuals' livelihoods are intimately tied to motorized recreation, hunting and fishing. This is substantiated by my own experiences as a former rural small business owner dependent on national forest ecosystem services.

Grazing and mineral resource job and income contribution is expected to remain static under the revised plan as compared to the no action alternative. Some increased in grazing may be possible as additional animal unit months are allowed in some allotments due to increases in transitory range as a function of vegetation management practices creating additional openings of early seral vegetation (forage) within allotments. However, suitability restrictions to provide for bighorn sheep and Tribal cultural practices could reduce grazing contributions at a fine scale. Some plan components associated with mitigating impacts of mining activities on critical resources are likely to reduce profit margins.

Resident Values

Providing Resident Values (clean air, clean water, consumptive uses, flood protection benefits, soil stabilization, erosion control, and protection of life and property) of ecosystem services are engrained in the mission and history of the Forest Service. Since the inception of the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, the U.S. Forest Service has been a leader in providing resident values. The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests have followed this trend. The 1987 Forest Plans were developed as a rulebook to provide for clean air, clean water, healthy populations of fish and wildlife, healthy soils and protection of life and property against wildfire. The Preferred Alternative continues this important tradition while focusing on moving towards healthy ecosystems utilizing desired conditions, including desired conditions to: manage forested and non-forested vegetation within the natural range of variability; to manage aquatic ecosystems and riparian areas to provide clean water and recover salmon and steelhead populations; to reduce and prevent invasive weeds; to protect sensitive ecosystems; to reduce impacts to wildlife species and to minimize impacts to air quality. Integrating best available scientific information into plan components, for instance basing forested vegetation desired conditions on the modelled natural range of variability considers best available scientific information for climate change, fire spread and insect and disease, with a renewed comprehension of ecosystem services, the Preferred Alternative optimizes resident values while providing for economic and social sustainability. The plan components in the revised plan acknowledge that our understanding of ecological and social systems change over time, especially considering a changing climate, and allow for changing science rather than 'locking in" antiquated assumptions and outdated analysis methods as the 1987 Plans did.

Clean air is provided by the land management plan by continuing important partnerships with local, regional, and Tribal partners to reduce cumulative air quality impacts. It is the stated

desired condition to meet applicable federal, state, and Tribal air quality standards. Additionally, by managing vegetation towards the desired conditions, the fire-adapted ecosystem functions more similarly to how it evolved. While smoke in the summer may always be a part of living with fire-adapted ecosystems, managing for the desired conditions, over time, should reduce the intensity and duration of the smoke. Compared to the no action alternative, smoke impacts from wildfire are expected to be increasingly less over time as vegetation moves to desired conditions.

Providing clean water is a central theme of the plan. The aquatic and riparian plan components were designed by an interagency working group to ensure that clean water is provided now and in the future. This interagency group included the Nez Perce Tribe, Idaho Fish and Game, NOAA Fisheries, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service. The group developed over 120 plan components to ensure clean water and restore healthy fish habitats. Clean water is essential to communities and downstream users—and it is also critical for native fish species including ESA-listed anadromous fish. These fisheries are dependent on clean water. The aquatic and riparian plan components put significant bounds on the activities that can occur near riparian areas. This strategy builds on the 1995 PacFish interim strategy designed to prevent further degradation and incorporates the “Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project to the Revision of Land Use Plans and Project Implementation (ICBEMP)” agreement made by the Regional Forester of Regions 1, 4 and 6, the West Coast Region NOAA Fisheries, BLM of Oregon/Washington and Idaho, the USFWS, Pacific Region and the EPA, Region 10. The revised plan’s strategy includes riparian management zones, limitations on sediment producing activities and specific restrictions within the riparian management zone for timber harvest, infrastructure, energy and minerals activities, livestock grazing, lands and special uses and recreation. Additionally, the aquatic and riparian plan components define a conservation watershed network intended to support recovery of listed aquatic species. Although it began years before the September 27th, 2023 Presidential memorandum, “Restoring Healthy and Abundant Salmon, Steelhead, and Other Native Fish Populations in the Columbia River Basin”, came out, the Forest Plan Revision process and especially the interagency aquatic working group really exemplifies the process that is directed in the White House memo, to "pursue effective, creative, and durable solutions, informed by Indigenous Knowledge, to restore healthy and abundant salmon, steelhead, and other native fish populations in the Basin". This revised plan represents a durable and creative solution, informed by collaboration and cooperating with the Nez Perce Tribe and other stakeholders, that satisfies and embodies the direction in Section 1 and 2 of the Presidential Memorandum. I’ll acknowledge this restrictive compilation of plan components places bounds on the Forests’ ability to achieve all the public’s desired social, economic, and ecological potential outcomes for a plan the size of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, meeting the obligations of the Endangered Species Act to support recovery of ESA-listed species provides an ultimate benefit to clean water and all that depend on clean water. This restrictive framework within the aquatic systems makes it more important to restore uplands to within the HRV so the entire system is more resilient in the face of climate change. Flood protection and erosion control are also benefited by the aquatic and riparian plan components through plan components designed to greatly reduce if not eliminate sedimentation that results from management actions.

Protecting property adjacent to National Forest System lands is fundamental obligation. Private property is always and will always be a critical value at risk for planning during any emergency event. While much attention is placed on the management of individual events while in the moment of crisis, the land management plan sets the stage for ensuring life and property is prioritized. The revised land management plan takes into careful consideration the boundaries and

inholdings within the administrative area. The need to restore fire into the ecosystem was a key factor in both land allocations and allowable uses within those allocations.

While wildfire is the greatest risk to life and property, other natural events are also possible. Second to wildfire, the next most impactive natural event that is likely to initiate on Forest Service administered lands and cause harm to adjacent property are mass movement events. These events are often triggered by rainfall and especially during rain on snow events that cause rapid melting. When these events occur on disturbed landscapes, especially in burn scars left by wildfire, they have the potential to travel great distances and impact roads, flow onto private property and cause significant sedimentation into waterbodies that affect downstream properties, as well as other resources such as fish and clean water.

My decision to implement the Preferred Alternative best addresses risk to both adjacent property and life and human safety on and off National Forest System lands. The desired conditions for our Forests are the foundation for this. By moving our forested lands and shrub lands towards the desired conditions, informed by the natural range of variability, we are creating a more resilient and resistant ecosystem. The desired conditions were developed using climate change models and represent our best prediction of a forested landscape that continues to be resilient in the face of a changing climate. By focusing restoration efforts on shrublands and mollisol soils, we can address the concerns on the lower elevation lands most likely to abut private property. An increase in timber harvest as a management tool as we move lands, particularly within management area 3 and within community protection zones, towards the desired conditions will help address the wildfire crisis and allow for suppression of fire to be a tactic that is successful when deemed appropriate during the incident. Across the Forests the desired conditions acknowledge the interdependence with wildfire and the need to restore fire back onto the landscape. By increasing fire under appropriate conditions, we can restore the landscape, realign with the fire disturbance ecology that created our Forests and do so with much less risk to life and property. This need is foundational to my decision on both recommended wilderness and Wild and Scenic River suitability. When considering those land allocations, my leadership team and I adjusted boundaries, allowable uses, and suitability determinations to promote the re-introduction of disturbance across the Forest. The additional constraints on management activities that accompany these recommendations and designations could have the unintended consequence of preserving the uncharacteristic condition that is widespread across the Forests due to fire suppression and past management activities. Especially in consideration of a changing climate and the need to incorporate ITEK into our management, I have concluded that restrictive land allocations are not warranted in many instances, see Appendix I and Appendix II. The Fire Risk Assessment prepared to support this revision effort that will be used to assist fire managers in making decisions during fire events and in prescribed fire planning identified all adjacent property as a very high value at risk with severe consequences. We will continue to work with our partners, including local governments, to address concerns within the wildland urban interface as this work continues. While disturbance processes such as fire will always be a part of the Nez Perce-Clearwater, setting ourselves up for disturbance that is within the natural range of variability by meeting our desired conditions is at the forefront of my decision. Through this, we will continue to be good neighbors, and protect life and property on and off NFS lands, using the best mix of tools.

An unavoidable tenet of risk management is that choices made today affect all future options. Successful risk management not only minimizes unnecessary exposure but also depends on how well we can recover from or tolerate the consequences of undesirable outcomes. When applying a

Life Safety lens of risk management to land management planning, we must recognize how the choices we make now will affect the safety of employees, wildland fire responders, forest visitors, and local communities today and into the future. Accepting increased risk today with a capacity to manage exposure is preferable to transferring risk into the future and hoping that those who inherit our decisions are adequately equipped to deal with the consequences, whatever they might be.

Latent risk associated with management of Nez Perce-Clearwater lands and resources involves the loss of life and property of individuals and communities exposed to hazard trees, hazardous fuels accumulation, wildfire and other natural events exacerbated by a landscape that has severely departed from its natural condition. In this context, risk also involves the loss of options available to land managers for restoring and maintaining fire resilient landscapes and safely and effectively responding to a variety of natural events. Managing this risk in the near term, while at the same time reducing risk in the long-term, is in and of itself full of uncertainty and in conflict.

The need to assume some level of risk now to lessen future risk regarding life safety in the management of public lands is at its core a “wicked problem.” A wicked problem is a problem that is difficult to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize. Moreover, because of interrelated and interdependent parts, the effort to solve one aspect of a wicked problem may reveal or create other problems. Fundamental to this is that land management organizations ultimately are sociotechnical systems that are complex and adaptive. Adapting to demands in one area may create unexpected outcomes in another, whether positive or negative. These systems are characterized by uncertainty, meaning it is an identifying trait of the system and is irreducible. Uncertainty in our Forest Service system cannot be eliminated. In the past, there has been little integration of a formal risk management process with the specific intent of addressing life safety in National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents. However, when considering resident values, as well as other recreationist values, I have deliberately asked my leadership team and the revision team to consider risk. A first of its kind analysis of risk and safety from a programmatic planning level has informed my decision.

My decision has levels of recommended wilderness, lands available to active management, and use of a full range of fire management activities, including both prescribed and natural fire in all management areas that would allow for movement to desired conditions within 35 to 40 years. This also allows for potentially less impact on workforce capacity through utilization of opportunities for allowing fire as a restoration tool across all management areas, however active management activities will still have a sizable impact on workforce capacity. My decision to select the Preferred Alternative also allows for maintenance of infrastructure such as roads and administrative sites to provide safe access and egress to wildland fire responders and to communities within community protection zones, and maintenance of trails. It also addresses snag retention within community protection zones and egress routes, allowing snags to be removed during fuels mitigation projects within these areas. Pilot Knob communications site will be retained but phased out as suitable technology allows removal of the site.

Non-Use Values

The Forest Service mission “to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations”, is well represented in non-use value ecosystem services (existence and bequest values, wildlife, diverse ecosystems, carbon sequestered, climate regulation, recommended and designated areas). Non-use values sustain, conserve, and preserve natural resources for their own benefit, not for the benefit of

people. Functioning ecosystems, a preservation system, limits on where and when humans interact with the natural world and thoughtful planning for a changing climate, including maintaining the productivity of soils, restoring, and retaining old growth forests, and sequestering carbon are all important components of my decision made for this revised plan.

While Congress designates Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers, this plan provides for management of these congressionally designated areas consistent with their enabling legislation. Over one quarter of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, consisting of the entirety of the Gospel Hump Wilderness Area and parts of both the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, are set aside for preservation "in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness". It is on these lands that the revised plan provides plan components to preserve the wilderness character and manage "as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain". We also acknowledge that the Nez Perce people have been an indistinguishable part of the land, and the legislative definition of Wilderness contradicts how the Nez Perce lived harmoniously with the land, including in what are now Wilderness Areas since time immemorial.

The revised plan also provides management direction for three designated Wild and Scenic Rivers, including the Lochsa, Selway and Middle Fork Clearwater Rivers, a portion of the Salmon River and Rapid River, consistent with their enabling legislation, to "preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations." The value of these congressionally designated areas is immense. As Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Vice Chairman Miles states, "the streams and rivers in Nez Perce country are among the most beautiful in the world. My grandmother used to say that you can count every rock on the bottom. When I go to other places, I feel sorry for them because their rivers are not as beautiful as the rivers we enjoy" (Salmon and His People, page 22, and pers. comm.). This decision finds 11 more rivers suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system and other plan components ensure that the rivers found eligible, but not suitable, retain their outstanding characteristics. In terms of ecosystem services, they provide much more than existence and bequest values. They make important contributions to diverse ecosystems, provide research values, and in many cases showcase the natural role fire historically played in the ecosystem.

My decision also recommends three areas to Congress for inclusion in the Wilderness Preservation System, finds 11 rivers suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system, and proposes establishing two new Research Natural Areas. These recommended and suitable areas, combined with the Idaho Roadless Areas and lands previously designated by Congress ensure that there are areas of the Forests set aside from modern human development—and these lands total nearly 75 percent of the total lands within the administrative boundary of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. These lands provide a bequest value to future generations. Coupled with the 25 percent of the Forest that is open to sustainable multiple use management, the revised plan ensures that future generations have access to Forest Service lands that have been managed to provide a wide range of ecosystem services well into the future. Additionally, we are providing an existence value to citizens of the US near and far, as well as to the world—contributing wild lands, clean water, habitat for fish and wildlife species, and opportunities to learn from a variety of management techniques for the Nation and for the world.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests, since the first land management plans in 1987, have all been managed as sustainable forests and for the conservation of natural resources. This revised plan continues that. In total, 4 million acres will be managed for the long-term health and sustainability on natural systems, as described in the 2021 report "Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful" implementing Executive Order 14008 that called on the US to conserve 30 percent of the land and water by 2030 (30x30). While the initiative specifically includes working lands, lands managed for multiple uses, and lands managed for outdoor recreation as contributing towards the 30 percent goal, it also should be noted that the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests also contribute 2.7 million acres towards lands that are generally managed in a passive manner with restrictions on actions such as road building, timber harvest, discretional minerals activities and motorized recreational access.

The entirety of the Nez Perce-Clearwater provides habitat for wildlife and fish. Using the ecosystem/species-specific plan component approach to species conservation, our analysis demonstrates that the revised plan will both maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities and support the persistence of native species in the plan area. This includes supporting recovery of ESA listed species such as salmon and steelhead and maintaining viable populations of species of conservation concern. See the Requirements of the Planning Rule section for more information.

Similarly, the Nez Perce-Clearwater is home to a wide variety of diverse ecosystems. This revised plan sustains and conserves those ecosystems. From dry grasslands and shrublands on the Salmon River to highly productive timber lands of the Palouse to Coastal Refugia ecosystems disjunct from the Pacific coast range in the North Fork Clearwater drainage to the subalpine ecosystems of the Selway Bitterroot wilderness, the Nez Perce-Clearwater has immense diversity. Sustaining diverse ecosystems is reliant on both managing for a natural range of variation and incorporating climate change adaptation strategies into management activities and project planning. Generally, the forests, grasslands and shrublands of the Nez Perce-Clearwater evolved with and were created by disturbance, primarily fire. Since time immemorial the Nez Perce people have been a part of landscape, including using fire. Recognizing this historic land management is critical to moving forward to sustain the diversity and ecosystems while mitigating effects of climate change. This decision clearly and loudly reaffirms our current understanding that forests developed in, through, and from fire and must be managed with fire to preserve the diverse ecosystems, adapt through climate change, and protect critical values at risk, including homes and private property. The plan includes components valuing indigenous traditional ecological knowledge and codifies co-stewardship with the Nez Perce Tribe to continue their relationship with this land.

To reduce departure from the natural range of variability, our analysis and science shows that in order to return to a more appropriate condition that are resilient to climate change, we must do work. The revised plan focuses on maintaining diversity of ecosystems, improving sustainability, and adapting to climate change in the long term. The Preferred Alternative will move the forests, grasslands and shrublands of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests to within the range of desired conditions in 35-40 years utilizing a combination of wildland fire, timber harvest, aquatic and meadow restoration, and soils rehabilitation.

My decision regarding which areas and rivers to administratively recommend (see below) considered the sensitivity of the ecosystems being proposed for administrative recommendation in each alternative and how they might respond to a changing climate with the additional layers of protection the respective recommendations would provide. Some areas, like the Hoodoo area, are

well suited to a more passive management regime and being a recommended wilderness area, or designated wilderness in the future should Congress act, would be an overall benefit to the diversity of the area. Action needed to implement a climate change adaptation strategy would be consistent with the management regime of the recommended areas. Yet other areas of the Forest, such as the coastal disjunct refugia on the North Fork Clearwater River could ultimately be lost without active management. Coastal disjunct ecosystems remain intact due to the lack of stand-replacing disturbance events over thousands of years. Without mitigation of fuels in the uplands and areas surrounding these ecosystems, a single large fire event could spell disaster for these most sensitive ecosystems. For these reasons and others, some areas proposed for administrative recommendation were not selected in the Preferred Alternative in acknowledgement of the work we must do to prepare these most sensitive ecosystems for the effects of a changing climate.

The revised plan components, suitability determinations and land allocations, combined with utilization of the Climate Change Adaptation Plan (Appendix G of the FEIS), will help to position the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests to be resilient to the effects of a changing climate.

The recommended wilderness area and suitable wild and scenic river determinations are made within the context and connected to the other desired outcomes of the plan. The plan will not succeed if we do not implement ALL parts. Approximately 80 percent of the 4,000,000-acre forest is not suited for timber harvest and within the 20 percent that is, there are hundreds of plan components dictating how that will be done that will restrict the amount and nature of these projects. Given that, I felt it necessary to work at the highest level of organizational capability to meet forested vegetation desired conditions to move into the range of variability in 35 to 40 years. I have listened to Tribal elders' concerns about the dead trees spreading through our forests like a cancer. I have watched as wildfires threatened our communities time and again. I have seen our collective success in saving habitats and people from uncharacteristically severe wildfire in areas where we have previously treated the vegetation. This plan sets forth desired conditions and integrated plan components to do that at a larger scale than many are used to. However, this is a necessary trade-off for the land allocations that leave 80 percent of the landscape up to a much less predictable and less precise tool of prescribed fire and natural ignitions. Just as recommended wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and the Idaho Roadless Rule have been stitched together to provide a cohesive blanket of more restrictive land uses, in management area 3, where timber harvest road and motorized trail access are suitable; where the Forests are accessible to all people regardless of their ability and socioeconomic status; where areas most critical to public safety, community protection, and sensitive resources including WUI, critical ingress/egress routes, visitor infrastructure and critical fish habitat; and where more control over the outcomes is needed. These are areas where it is also most necessary to have the benefits of reforestation to restore more resilient ecosystems in the face of the wildfire crisis and climate change. From this small area comes the vast majority of the economic contributions that are SO vital to the rural, underserved communities, providing the basis of stable social systems such as schools and health care.

Tribal Trust

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests is wholly within the ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce Tribe and the land managed under this plan was ceded to the US Government in the Treaties of 1855 and 1863. It is a great responsibility and humbling endeavor to develop a land management plan that honors the moral and legal responsibilities that result and to honor the past, present, and future culture of the Nez Perce People.

Some key decisions I have made regarding Tribal Trust include:

- A separate Tribal Trust section of the revised plan was developed with plan components that honor and signify our obligation to uphold the treaties and honor the Nez Perce culture. A first in the realm of forest planning, this section is a deliberate action to highlight our solemn responsibility. As the Nez Perce do not differentiate themselves from the land, this section was deliberately placed between the Biophysical Environment and Human Uses of the Forest sections as a bridge between the land and people, a position the Nez Perce have held since time immemorial.
- Introduction paragraphs to many of the resource sections in the revised plan highlighting and conveying to readers of the plan in the future the importance and meaning of these resources to the Nez Perce. Call out boxes in throughout the plan include published quotes of Nez Perce Tribal members and leaders, reminding all who read the plan that this is, considered by the Tribe to be the Nez Perce ancestral homeland.
- Co-stewardship of the land and resources is codified through a desired condition and management approach that demonstrate our intent to steward the land with the Nez Perce. By working together, I am confident the Forest Service can better meet its general trust responsibilities, honor the treaties and Nez Perce culture, meet the multiple use mandate, and provide ecosystem services to everyone.
- The Pilot Knob geographic area was developed to acknowledge the cultural importance of that specific area to the Nez Perce. While there are likely hundreds of similar locations on the Forest, this area in particular has been the focus of numerous Nez Perce resolutions and brought to us as a potential place where the land could be managed hand in hand with the Nez Perce. The existing infrastructure and management of the area has an impact on Nez Perce traditional uses. The plan components provide a framework for working together to reduce the negative impacts while improving access for Tribal members.
- Additional special areas specific to the Nez Perce and the Nee-Me-Poo National Historic Trail were proposed to the existing list of special areas carried over from the 1987 plans, which included wispin'iitpe (as one travels out of the timber, upon coming over the divide) for its cultural importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. We have included the original place names for some of these areas, in Nimiipuu, as a reminder that these areas are part of the Nez Perce present and future and to serve as a bridge between cultures.
- Considerable engagement over the Regional Forester's Species of Conservation Concern list has occurred with the Nez Perce Tribe since 2014. The list was heavily informed by the Tribe's additional scientific information and monitoring data. For two species, bighorn sheep and lamprey, this additional data provided sufficient information to indicate there is substantial concern for the species persistence in the plan area. Thus, they were added to the final SCC list. The Tribe also provided species specific data regarding fish populations and habitat data that augmented the data available from the State of Idaho, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and our own data. This data was used for several purposes including development of the aquatic and riparian plan components and defining and applying "Outstandingly Remarkable Values" for wild and scenic river inventory and eligibility evaluation.
- The Nee-Me-Poo (Nez Perce) National Historic Trail, a part of the Lolo National Historic Landmark, is included as part of Management Area 1 signifying the National designation of the trail.

- A decade of work with the Tribe's technical staff resulted in collaboration on plan components of many resource areas important to the Nez Perce Tribe. While collaboration occurred for many sections of the plan, two exemplary examples include the aquatic and riparian section plan components and the elk plan components. The Nez Perce Tribe participated in a group, chartered by the Regional Forester, to help develop a suite of plan components that would provide for recovery of ESA-listed aquatic species. This "ARCS" group worked for several years and reach consensus on over 120 of the aquatic and riparian components contained in this plan. Similarly, an elk working group consisting of our cooperating agencies, Tribe staff and representatives from research, met for several months to ensure that the plan components address the most important aspects of elk habitat to meet the shared objective of increasing elk herd numbers by developing desired conditions for high quality habitat through improving nutritional resources for elk.
- The Nez Perce Tribe was consulted as part of both the recommended wilderness evaluation and the wild and scenic river evaluation processes. The Tribe did not provide formal comment on recommended wilderness but did provide very helpful input in the wild and scenic rivers evaluation—specifically in the development of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) definitions as well as provided data to demonstrate river segments having ORVs. The Tribe provided data to help determine which rivers were the best of the best for several resource areas, including fish, botany, hot springs, and others. We also used their information to develop a seventh category of ORVs, as provided for in the planning rule handbook, titled "Nez Perce Cultural". This ORV goes hand in hand with the previously defined "Cultural" ORV but looks at it from the Tribe's perspective rather than through an archeologist's lens. The addition of the ORV category allowed the process to be more responsive to factors such as having Nez Perce Tribe creation sites, hunting, and fishing camps, other folklore sites, etc. The application of this Nez Perce Cultural ORV to rivers was done solely by the Nez Perce Tribe and any river with this ORV was automatically deemed "eligible" as are any rivers having any one or more ORV.

I invited the Tribe's leadership to brief our national leaders on this revised plan. Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Vice-Chairman Miles spoke to the Chief of the Forest Service about the relationship between the Tribe and the Forest as well as their remaining concerns with the plan. This historic event was the first time a Tribe had been invited to participate in the planning process at that level. I sincerely appreciate the Nez Perce Tribe's willingness to engage at this level of detail for a prolonged period. The amount of time and resources spent helping us to craft a plan consistent with our Tribal Trust and forward co-stewardship as the new way of planning and implementing projects moving forward was immense. Our plan itself, this decision and our process is much improved based on the cooperation, collaboration, and consultation the Nez Perce Tribe has provided thus far and will continue to provide as we co-steward these lands.

Administrative Recommendations

In fitting the pieces of areas analyzed for administrative recommendations together, I looked at the underlying reasons that our analysis and public comments indicated were the most important and special. This allowed us to use the many varied land allocations including recommend wilderness, wild and scenic river suitability, motorized vehicle suitability, and others to best manage and highlight those key features. We also considered what those designations would do to benefit or harm other resources. For example, we used the more stringent management requirements for recommended wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and Idaho Roadless Areas to provide secure habitats for large mammal dispersion along the east side of the Forests. Along the

Highway 12 corridor and north of the Selway we used motorized vehicle suitability through the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum to provide secure winter habitat for elk, wolverine and to support outfitter and guide activities. When pieced together like a puzzle, these allocations provide a secure corridor for wildlife to disperse north and south and east and west across the forest.

We chose not to layer these different managements schemes on top of each other, instead, we fit them together across the landscape to build an integrated and cohesive, suite of management objectives that better provides for all uses, while focusing on the outstanding features of different areas. For example, many commenters talked about, the Weitas Creek Idaho Roadless Area and its values. Weitas Creeks is also an eligible, wild and scenic river segment. My team evaluated the comments and the ecological features of the area, and we determined that the stream itself was the highest held value even in those comments about the area being recommended wilderness. Given the other land management designations already in the area, such as being an Idaho Roadless Area, we felt the best management for the future would be to focus on those outstanding remarkable values of the river itself. Thus, we found Weitas Creek suitable for designation in the wild and scenic river system but did not recommend the entire area for wilderness since existing land allocation took care of those non-river-based values.

To provide for connectivity of habitats for wide ranging species, from the Mallard Larkins, all the way to the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, we have created a landscape that will largely, with a few exceptions, be managed in a way that allows natural processes as the most prevalent form of management. The area has sparse motorized access currently, and through this decision will continue to provide large blocks of secure area for animals such as grizzly, bear, wolverine, and elk. We have all also protected small, rare, habitat features, such as year-round mountain goat habitat. Wolverine denning habitat needs were considered as we overlaid both recommended wilderness and winter motorized recreation opportunity spectrum suitability determinations onto the landscape. With the more restrictive land allocations of Recommended Wilderness and Wild and Scenic River suitability, we considered what, if anything, they would improve in terms of management over those plan components in the plan. In many cases addition recommendation as a suitable wild and scenic river or recommended wilderness area would hamper our ability to sustainably manage and retain many of the important attributes in the face of climate change while embracing fire ecology and traditional ecological knowledge. I realize that some people may not agree with that assertion, yet our team evaluated each specific area in drawing our conclusions. I relied upon that analysis and leadership discussion in making my decision. The local governments and citizens have firmly and resoundingly stated that they do not support any additional wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. And indeed, at the local level, on this forest the vast majority--75 percent or 3,000,000 acres--is already managed as designated wilderness or Idaho Roadless. These land allocations have both negative and positive effects on local economies, and one can argue that they limit access for our underserved community members. Yet, this is a plan for the Nation, and I must consider the regional and national social and ecological needs. I considered this, along with my obligation to contribute to the ecological, social, and economic sustainability of our communities, in making this decision.

Recommended Wilderness

Through the planning process, I considered each of the 33 Idaho Roadless Rule Areas as well as other unroaded areas identified by the planning team and brought forward by the public for their appropriateness to be recommended to Congress for Wilderness Designation. One Idaho Roadless Area, Lolo Creek, was not evaluated as the total area of this roadless area on the Nez Perce-

Clearwater National Forest is 100 acres with the remaining 17,400 acre being on the Lolo National Forest—evaluation of this roadless area will be done with the Lolo National Forest land management planning process. The topic of what to recommend or not recommend for wilderness designation was the single largest recipient of comments during the DEIS formal comment period, resulting in 18 percent of the total comments. We heard social, ecologic, and economic rationale in support of and against many of the areas evaluated. Based on the analysis, and leadership team discussions, and informed by public comments, I am recommending three areas to Congress for addition to the designated wilderness system. These three areas will be shown as Recommended Wilderness Areas (RWA) in the revised land management plan.

Table 1. Recommended Wilderness Areas on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Recommended Wilderness Area	Acres recommended	First recommended in:	Original acres recommended in previous plan:	Difference between original and revised recommendations:
Hoodoo a.k.a. “Great Burn”	108,276	1987 Land Management Plan	111,986	- 3,710 acres
Mallard-Larkins	82,286	1987 Land Management Plan	66,377	+ 15,909 acres
East Meadow Creek	72,795	2023 Land Management Plan	N/A	+ 72,795 acres

I have also decided that these recommended areas will be managed such that uses not allowed in the Wilderness Act will also not be suitable uses by the public in recommended wilderness areas on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. This includes motorized travel and mechanized transport not being suitable year-round. I made this decision after consideration of public comments on the range of options in the DEIS, in conference with my forest leadership team. Instead of allowing motorized and mechanized travel that would be nonconforming to the wilderness act if designated in recommended wilderness, we considered those uses when determining which areas were recommended and which were not. Boundary adjustments were utilized, when appropriate, to provide for desired uses that would be non-conforming in areas where the impacts of those uses were acceptable. This ensures that the presence of uses that would be nonconforming would not influence potential future Congressional designations, thereby maintaining the integrity of the ecological and social wilderness characteristics.

Administrative use of mechanized and motorized equipment, as well as administrative uses related to management responsibilities, including but not limited to monitoring, landing of aircraft, and research will continue to be a suitable use consistent with Forest Service policy and directives.

I am also no longer recommending Sneakfoot Meadows or North Fork Spruce, commonly known as the “Selway Additions” for designation as wilderness. These two areas adjacent to the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness in the 1987 plans totaled 19,330 acres and through this decision will now be managed through the management area 2 plan components and the Idaho Roadless Rule, which will protect the roadless characteristics these areas possess while making them available for additional management opportunities, including for motorized over-snow use in the winter. My finding to not recommend these areas is also based on the need to introduce fire into these areas to reduce risk to the infrastructure and resource values at Lolo Pass. Due to the number and length of roads excluded from the designated and previously recommended areas, commonly referred to

as “cherry stems”, and the existing Research Natural Area, I find that recommend wilderness is not conducive to the management needed for sustainability of the larger area.

Appendix E of the FEIS documents the wilderness evaluation process and this Record of Decision documents my decision.

This recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. The Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on wilderness designation. Plan implementation is not dependent upon subsequent action related recommendations for wilderness designation.

Hoodoo

The Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, also known as the Great Burn, received more public and collaborative interest than any other single topic or area on the Forests. Despite varying perspectives on how the full area should be managed, all agree that this is a special place and that some portion of the area warrants recommendation as wilderness. A variety of social and ecological perspectives were mentioned in public meetings, in comment, and as I talked with the public, organizations and governments about the Hoodoo area. I heard the need to protect sensitive ecosystems and habitat for at-risk species, including wolverine and grizzly bear. Mountain goat populations in the area are also a great concern of the public, conservation groups, and State and Tribal governments. I heard from over the snow winter motorized users that legally used portions of the area up until 2012 and they inform me that there are no replacements for the opportunities provided here. I spoke with many about the solitude this area provides, regardless of the mode of transportation, motorized or nonmotorized, or the season of use. I spoke with my counterparts on the Lolo National Forest and wilderness managers at the Regional Office, and I spoke with many individuals and organizations concerned about how the decisions I make here will impact future planning efforts on adjacent units.

I asked these groups to come together and propose an alternative solution that everyone could live with, and promised to analyze an action alternative with those boundaries should they be provided. Yet, no collaborative compromise solution was reached. Therefore, as the responsible official, I made this decision after considering all alternatives (including those not analyzed in detail), review of all the comments, the science, after talking with partner organizations, collaborative agencies, the Nez Perce Tribe, and adjacent Forest Service units. The Forest leadership team and revision team looked at all the options, each bringing forward unique perspectives based on their role in the process, community representation and professional experience. This diversity of perspectives allowed us to craft boundaries that provided for ecological and social uses.

First and foremost, I decided that the entirety of the area, less the Fish Lake Trail #419, should not be suitable for summer motorized use. The benefits to roadless and wilderness character are clear and there is no group specifically asking for the area to be suitable for summer motorized use outside the Fish Lake trail corridor. I have also decided that maintaining a motorized recreation opportunity along the Fish Lake Trail corridor would be responsive to the high value some members of the public hold for access to this area, while not adversely affecting the Forests' ability to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for the broader Great Burn area's suitability for wilderness designation. This is consistent with the public comments and environmental analysis in the Clearwater Travel Plan administrative record.

Additionally, I have decided to implement the recommended wilderness boundary identified in the Preferred Alternative which excludes the Divide Trail #738. This 150-foot corridor area will continue to be managed as not suitable for summer motorized use, but is suitable for mechanized use, allowing for bicycle and mountain biking opportunities along the State Line trail.

Larger boundary adjustments were made to allow winter over-snow motorized use to continue to occur in locations that were utilized legally prior to my 2012 Clearwater Travel Plan decision. This includes an area from Blacklead Mountain, following the North Fork Ranger District boundary north of Williams Peak, Goat Lake, and Williams Lake, then southeast along Williams Creek to Road 595. The Final EIS considers the impacts of winter motorized use across the entire Hoodoo Roadless Area. I have concluded that two areas in particular could be managed for over-snow motorized use while meeting all regulatory obligations for maintaining the diversity of plant and animal communities and the persistence of native species in the plan area. Thus, I have decided to find suitable for winter motorized use a portion of the Hoodoo Roadless Area in the south of Williams Peak near Goat Lake, Williams Lake and Williams Creek and exclude that area from the portion I'm recommending for wilderness designation. Similarly, the area North of the Fish Lake trail was excluded for the same rationale. There is ample space across the 4-million-acre Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest to provide additional over snow winter motorized opportunities while also providing for quiet recreation and wildlife habitat. These winter motorized recreation opportunities are unique. Finding other areas of the Forest suitable for winter motorized use does not replace the highly valued, and unique recreation opportunities available in the Hoodoo Area. In fact, within a several State area, there are no opportunities that replace the terrain, snow condition, elevation, access, and treelessness combination found here. Thus, while looking at multiple use opportunities and desires, it would be extremely difficult for me to conclude that winter motorized use in a portion of the Hoodoo area is inappropriate provided we are meeting our other regulatory and legal requirements at the plan level. Specifically, this decision is providing habitat for wildlife, providing for wildlife connectivity, and supporting recovery of ESA listed species. The Final EIS demonstrates we are meeting all obligations for providing for recovery of species under the Endangered Species Act and providing habitat for native and at-risk species under the 2012 Planning Rule, so it is clear that allowing for this valid recreation opportunity is the responsible decision to make given our multiple use mandate.

These areas excluded from the Hoodoo Recommended Wilderness Area also provide opportunity for non-motorized mechanized use such as mountain biking, in an area that was popular for this activity prior to closure through the 2017 travel management decision. These adjustments provide opportunity for this non-motorized activity in the future, while allowing the portions of Hoodoo recommended for wilderness to be managed in a manner that protects and maintains the social characteristics that provide the basis for its suitability for wilderness designation.

Mallard-Larkins

The Mallard-Larkins Recommended Wilderness Area, Idaho Roadless Area and Secretary's Pioneer Area have benefited from some level of designation since before the first land management plans were written. These areas are special and unique, as exemplified by the long history of documents calling attention to this area in the North Fork Clearwater River Basin. Unlike the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Rule Area, there is very little controversy of the Mallard-Larkins. While some are opposed to any recommended wilderness additions, I heard very little if any disagreement on the recommendation of Mallard-Larkins. This decision expands the previous recommended wilderness area boundary and adds approximately 16,000 acres. Several boundary

adjustments were made from the existing Idaho Roadless Area boundary, to allow for better manageability of the area and to allow for connections for motorized recreation opportunities in the far eastern and far western portions of the IRA, including a potential future location for the Gem Trail. These boundary adjustments will positively affect wilderness characteristics by making the boundaries easier to manage on the ground by tying to easily identifiable natural and constructed features. An adjustment on the western portion of the area will increase the size of the recommended wilderness area from what was analyzed in other alternatives. This 3,900-acre addition moves the line to be more distinguishable on the ground in all seasons and adds in an area north of Minnesaka Creek in the Bear Creek drainage.

East Meadow Creek

The Meadow Creek drainage has long been looked at as potentially being suitable for wilderness designation. East Meadow Creek in particular, bounding the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, exemplifies many of the criteria evaluated for during recommended wilderness evaluations. This decision adds a new recommended wilderness area, titled East Meadow Creek, that includes a large portion of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area and a smaller portion of the West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area. Combined, this nearly 73,000-acre area provides opportunities for solitude, has ecological value and is natural in appearance, as considered in the wilderness evaluation.

The Preferred Alternative excludes the southern portion of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area from recommended wilderness area. This excluded area includes all the roadless area east of Road 285 and south of Road 357 and Trail 533 to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary, approximately 32,700 acres. A corridor 300 horizontal feet either side of center line along Road 285 from the junction with Road 357 north to the terminus of the road at the intersection with Trail 517 is also excluded from the recommended wilderness. Road 285 and Road 357 are important travel routes for the public and for administrative use of the area and provide access in the summer to a fire lookout and trailheads used to access the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, especially by outfitter and guides. Road 285 and Road 357 would remain suitable for summer motorized use, but beyond that the area encompassing the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area would be in a summer recreation opportunity spectrum class of semi-primitive non-motorized, not suitable for summer motorized use. The 32,700-acre excluded area would be in a winter semi-primitive motorized classification suitable for motorized over snow vehicle use as currently available under the 1987 Nez Perce Forest Plan.

This decision also excludes approximately 107,000 acres of the 115,973-acre West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area from recommended wilderness. This area is currently open to and popular for summer and winter motorized recreation. The excluded area would be in a summer and winter semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunity spectrum classification, suitable for year-round motorized activities. Additionally, the Fire Risk Assessment identified this excluded area as being critical to protecting private land and other values at risk near the Elk City Township. The West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area borders the township and, in some cases, private land. Prescribed fire, and mechanical fuels treatments as pre-treatment to planned and unplanned ignitions, are necessary for the long-term sustainability of the area and the protection of Elk City from wildfire events.

These boundary decisions were made based on the input of hundreds of groups, individuals, organizations, and governments. Outfitter and guides described the importance of having motorized access to trailheads accessing the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness. This, coupled with the

need for administrative use to fire lookouts, was factored into my decision to exclude roads 285 and 357 from the recommended wilderness boundary and retain summer motorized use as a suitable. Speaking with local over-snow motorized users it became apparent that the southern portions of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area is a valued winter motorized area, however, it is acknowledged that use becomes very infrequent as you get further away from local communities and from groomed routes and closer to the Selway-Bitterroot wilderness boundary. The southern boundary provides a compromise between managing for over-snow use in the winter and preserving wilderness characteristics by excluding from recommendation areas that have moderate to high levels of historic over-snow motorized use rather than allowing uses that would be non-conforming if designated under the Wilderness Act. Similarly, the western boundary of the new recommended wilderness area was carefully selected to decrease conflicts with summer and winter motorized uses, keeping motorized and mechanized transport as not suitable within the recommended wilderness area but being deliberate in the boundaries to allow these uses to continue where they are established uses.

Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers

While recommendation of areas to be considered as wilderness is required in the planning rule, recommending rivers as suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system is not required. The 2012 planning rule only requires eligibility findings in the revision of land management plans. Following a comprehensive evaluation process, including public engagement in the definitions of Outstandingly Remarkable Values, I found 88 rivers to be eligible. At the urging of our partners, including State and Local governments, collaboratives, non-governmental organizations, and the public, we decided to complete a suitability study as part of this land management plan revision. Our primary rationale is that through this process we have the public and other stakeholders engaged and ready to put their time into our planning process. We have a dedicated team convened and the resources to complete detailed study of alternatives. We had an informed, engaged leadership team to look at land allocation across the entirety of the Forest. The rule provides us the option to complete the process up through administrative recommendation and with the right engagement already occurring, now is the time. History of the agency shows that stand-alone suitability studies are rare and incredibly expensive. Through this process we demonstrated that completing the process during the revision process is possible, even preferable. Evaluating suitability at the same time as all the other land allocations allowed us to mix and match the best plan components to sustain the ecological and social values. This is the right time and place to complete our obligation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and make a recommendation to Congress. I firmly believe that our suitability recommendation is better and more integrated than it ever would be if done outside of a comprehensive planning process, and it did not add extra time or cost to the process.

Eleven rivers were determined to be suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system. These include: Cayuse Creek, Colt Killed Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Kelly Creek, Meadow Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, the undesignated portion of the Salmon River and Weitas Creek.

Appendix I- , of this Record of Decision documents the rationale for each eligible wild and scenic river being determined suitable or not suitable for inclusion in the wild and scenic river system. Each eligible river segment was analyzed in detail in the EIS and the suitability process is documented in the appendix.

Of all eligible rivers, it is the South Fork Clearwater River and North Fork Clearwater River that received the most attention from stakeholders. I have decided these rivers are not suitable for inclusion based on the five questions and 13 factors, as explained in Appendix I. While many factors contributed to this decision, it was the potential of wild and scenic river-specific protections limiting necessary management actions to protect the river values in the future that raised to the top. Especially for the North Fork Clearwater River, I have determined that interim protection measures aimed at maintaining all Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) may be too restrictive to maintain and enhance the most sensitive ORV- the coastal disjunct ecosystem (Botany ORV). This ORV is at the most risk of disappearing due to climate change. The coastal disjunct ecosystem has the least ability to be resilient to climate change and management in support of resistance to the effects of a changing climate may be what is needed to perpetuate this important and defining ORV on the landscape in the long term. Options limited by the interim protection measures will be needed to keep this sensitive ecosystem on the landscape in the face of climate change. Table 2 shows the 11 suitable wild and scenic rivers by classification and ORV. These 11 rivers, plus the Little North Fork Clearwater River, in which no suitability determination was made as part of this planning process, will be subject to the interim protection measures in the Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers portion of the land management plan. The rivers found not suitable, will not be subject to these measures. Our analysis shows that each of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values can be maintained for the rivers found not suitable through the entirety of the suite of land management plan components and the interim wild and scenic river-specific protection measures are not needed to protect and maintain ORVs.

Table 2: Summary of Nez Perce-Clearwater Suitable Wild and Scenic River Segments by Classification

Stream	Classification	Miles	Acres	ORVs
Cayuse Creek	Scenic	4.5	1,440	R, F
Cayuse Creek	Recreation	1.7	544	R, F
Cayuse Creek	Wild	29.7	9,504	R, F
Colt Killed Creek	Scenic	13.7	4,383	R, S, F, W
Colt Killed Creek	Wild	9.6	3,072	R, S, F, W
Fish Creek	Scenic	20.2	6,464	F, W
Fish Creek	Recreation	0.9	288	F, W
Hungery Creek	Scenic	5.6	1,792	F
Hungery Creek	Wild	8.2	2,624	F
Kelly Creek	Recreation	11.2	3,584	R, S, F, C, NP, W
Kelly Creek	Wild	15.0	4,800	R, S, F, C, NP, W
Meadow Creek	Recreation	2.0	640	R, C, NP, F, W
Meadow Creek	Scenic	16.5	5,280	R, C, NP, F, W
Meadow Creek	Wild	25.9	8,288	R, C, NP, F, W
Middle Fork Kelly Creek	Wild	4.9	1,568	S
North Fork Kelly Creek	Wild	5.9	1,888	S
South Fork Kelly Creek	Wild	6.2	1,984	F
Salmon River	Recreation	23.2	7,4241	R, S, W
Weitas Creek	Scenic	28.5	9,120	NP

Stream	Classification	Miles	Acres	ORVs
Total	n/a	233.4	74,867	n/a

ORV (Outstandingly Remarkable Value) key: R= recreation, S= scenery, F= fish, C= cultural, NP= cultural Nez Perce Tribe, W= wildlife, G= geology, B= botany.

1 Includes lands administered by the Payette National Forest

This suitability recommendation is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, Secretary of Agriculture, or the President of the United States. Congress has reserved the authority to make final decisions on designation of rivers as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Through the suitability process described above, 11 suitable rivers, plus the Little North Fork Clearwater River will be managed under interim protection measures as identified in the land management plan. The Little North Fork Clearwater River forms the boundary between the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, and as such, it was not appropriate to conduct a suitability study without the Idaho Panhandle National Forest's participation. The Idaho Panhandle National Forest's 2015 land management plan also finds the Little North Fork Clearwater River eligible, and that plan did not conduct a suitability study. This is the only eligible river on the Forests that now does not have a suitability determination made.

The remaining 76 rivers found eligible but not suitable will be managed under the forestwide and applicable management area or geographic area plan components but will not be managed under the interim protection measures for the life of this plan. While these streams and rivers would not have the interim protection measures, they will be managed to insure ecological sustainability. Most of the ORVs would not have any different management except, perhaps, the visuals ORV. The interim protection measures for the visual ORV would likely be more restrictive on actions outside of the eligible wild and scenic river corridor primarily because the Scenic Integrity Objectives defined for an area consider whether an area is within a corridor of a suitable wild and scenic river managed under interim protection measures. This has played out in numerous situations on the Forests over the past decade where management activities needed to address insects and disease, wildfire mitigation, or improve recreational access were reduced or eliminated to maintain the visual status quo. Other ORVs such as fisheries, wildlife, botany, geology, recreation, cultural and Nez Perce cultural ORVs are protected and enhanced through the plan components at an equivalent level as they would be with the interim protection measures. The aquatic and riparian plan components provide more protection than the interim protection measures for all resources other than scenery. While Riparian Management Zone widths are less than the ¼ mile corridor applied to suitable wild and scenic rivers, additional aquatic and riparian plan components prohibit negative impacts from fish bearing streams and ESA listed species critical habitat regardless of the distance these activities occur from the water.

Table 3. Nez Perce-Clearwater Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Potlatch River	6.4	W	No	No
Beaver Creek	1.5	B	No	No
Bostonian Creek	5.0	F	No	No
Boundary Creek	3.1	F	No	No

Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Caledonia Creek	0.5	F	No	No
Cave Creek	4.6	S	No	No
Cayuse Creek	35.9	R,F	Yes	Yes
Chateau Creek	2.6	S	No	No
Cliff Creek	3.9	G	No	No
Elk Creek	4.9	R,S,B	No	No
Elmer Creek	0.4	B	No	No
Falls Creek	2.1	G	No	No
Graves Creek	2.0	F	No	No
Isabella Creek	5.4	B	No	No
Kelly Creek	26.2	R,S,C,NP,F,W	Yes	Yes
Lake Creek	11.7	R,S,F	No	No
Little North Fork Clearwater River	4.3	R,S,NP,F,B	Decision Deferred	Yes
Lost Pete Creek	4.0	G	No	No
Middle Fork Kelly Creek	4.9	S	Yes	Yes
North Fork Kelly Creek	5.9	S	Yes	Yes
North Fork Clearwater River	78.9	R,S,C,NP,F,W,B	Yes	Yes
South Fork Kelly Creek	6.2	S	No	No
Weitas Creek	28.5	NP,F	Yes	Yes
Clear Creek	0.9	F	No	No
Lolo Creek	19.8	R,NP,F,W	No	No
Musselshell Creek	2.1	C,NP	No	No
South Fork Clear Creek	7.0	F	No	No
Big Sand Creek	19.9	S,F	No	No
Brushy Fork	4.9	S,W	No	No
Canyon Creek	0.6	W	No	No
Colt Killed Creek	23.3	R,S,F,W	Yes	Yes
Crooked Fork	23.2	F,W	No	No
Fish Creek	21.1	F,W	Yes	Yes
Glade Creek	3.3	W	No	No
Hopeful Creek	4.7	F	No	No
Huckleberry Creek	0.8	R	No	No
Hungery Creek	13.8	F	Yes	Yes
Imnamatnoon Creek	1.3	W	No	No
Lake Creek	5.6	F	No	No
Lowell Creek	1.0	W	No	No
North Fork Storm Cr	3.2	S	No	No
Old Man Creek	8.3	S	No	No
Rye Patch Creek	2.7	W	No	No
South Fork Storm Creek	3.7	S	No	No

Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Storm Creek	10.8	S	No	No
Upper Lochsa River	1.8	R,F,W	No	No
Warm Springs Creek	6.4	R,S,G	No	No
Waw'aalamnime Creek	2.1	F,W	No	No
Bear Creek	22.8	S,C,NP,F,W	No	No
Brushy Fork Creek	8.0	S	No	No
Buck Lake Creek	12.0	F	No	No
Cub Creek	16.6	S	No	No
East Fork Meadow Creek	7.0	F	No	No
East Fork Moose Creek	34.6	S,C,F	No	No
Gedney Creek	9.1	F	No	No
Meadow Creek (Selway)	44.3	R,C,NP,F,W	Yes	Yes
Moose Creek	3.8	S,C,F	No	No
North Fork Moose Creek	20.8	S,C,F	No	No
O'Hara Creek	2.3	W	No	No
Rhoda Creek	16.3	S,F	No	No
Running Creek	16.9	NP	No	No
Three Links Creek	14.7	S	No	No
West Fork Gedney Creek	10.0	S	No	No
West Fork Three Links Creek	6.0	S	No	No
West Moose Creek	9.1	F	No	No
Wounded Doe Creek	9.2	F	No	No
American River	3.0	W	No	No
Gospel Creek	7.0	S	No	No
Johns Creek	18.3	S,F	No	No
Meadow Creek (S.F. Clearwater)	14.7	NP	No	No
Mill Creek	0.9	W	No	No
Red River	6.5	R,NP,F,W	No	No
Silver Creek	12.2	NP	No	No
South Fork Clearwater River	34.5	R,S,C,NP,F,W	No	No
West Fork Crooked River	5.4	F	No	No
West Fork Gospel Creek	5.6	S	No	No
Allison Creek	8.4	NP,W	No	No
Bargamin Creek	25.6	S,F	No	No
Big Mallard Creek	3.6	S,G	No	No
Noble Creek	8.9	S,F,G	No	No
North Fork White Bird Creek	5.6	NP	No	No
Papoose Creek	0.6	W	No	No
Sabe Creek	15.3	F	No	No
Salmon River	23.2	R,S,W	Yes	Yes

Stream	Segment Miles	ORVs	Suitable?	Managed under interim protection measures?
Slate Creek	11.4	NP,F,W	No	No
South Fork White Bird Creek	12.4	NP	No	No
Van Buren Creek	5.3	F	No	No
Yeva Agai Naokwaide	1.2	F	No	No

ORV (Outstandingly Remarkable Value) key: R= recreation, S= scenery, F= fish, C= cultural, NP= cultural Nez Perce Tribe, W= wildlife, G= geology, B= botany.

Research Natural Areas

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 directs the Forest Service to establish research natural areas typifying important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, and aquatic ecosystems. Eighteen RNAs have been designated on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Two proposed research natural areas that were in the 1987 Land Management Plans, one expansion of a designated research natural area, and two new candidate research natural areas are included in this decision, Table 4.

Table 4. Designated, Proposed and Candidate Research Natural Areas

Research Natural Areas	Designated	Proposed	Candidate	Acres
Aquarius	●			3,709
Bald Mountain	●			369
Bull Run Creek	●			383
Bull Run Creek Expansion			●	370
Chateau Falls	●			198
Dutch Creek	●			302
Elk Creek	●			6,957
Fenn Mountain		●		603
Fish Lake	●			753
Four-Bit Creek	●			392
Grave Peak	●			379
Lochsa River	●			1,508
Moose Meadow Creek	●			940
Mud Springs Ridge			●	288
No Business Creek	●			1,385
O'Hara Creek	●			7,049
Rhodes Peak		●		307
Sneakfoot Meadow	●			1,946
Square Mountain Creek	●			704
Steep Lakes	●			797
Fred Rabe Upper Hemlock Creek			●	1,378
Upper Newsome Creek	●			1,192

Research Natural Areas	Designated	Proposed	Candidate	Acres
Warm Springs Creek	•			537

A description of the location and value of the candidate and proposed Research Natural Areas included in this decision is documented below and in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Proposed Research Natural Areas

Fenn Mountain Proposed Research Natural Area

This previously proposed research natural area is located 18 air miles east-northeast of Lowell, Idaho, in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness of the Lochsa-Powell Ranger District. Selection is based upon Regional Office direction to include high elevation aquatics, subalpine vegetation communities, and rocky habitats not represented in the research natural area system. This research natural area was formally proposed by the 1987 Forest Plan and retained here.

Rhodes Peak Proposed Research Natural Area

This previously proposed research natural area is located 11.5 air miles north-northwest of Powell, Idaho, in the Hoodoo, also known as Great Burn, roadless area on the Lochsa-Powell Ranger District. Selection is based upon Regional Office direction to include high subalpine and alpine habitats and uncommon vegetative communities not represented in the research natural areas system. This research natural area was formally proposed by the 1987 Forest Plan and retained here. A preliminary establishment record has been written but has not been formally completed.

Candidate Research Natural Area

Bull Run Creek Expansion

See the general description provided under the Bull Run Research Natural Area in the above Existing Research Natural Areas discussion. The best representation of many of these features were excluded at the time of original designation because they occurred on adjacent private land. In the mid-1990s this ground came to the Forest Service in a land exchange. Internal and external interest have been calling for an expansion to include these areas since that time. With this expansion, the total acreage of the Bull Run Research Natural Area will be 753 acres.

Mud Springs Ridge Proposed Research Natural Area

This candidate research natural area on the Salmon River Ranger District is approximately 3.5 air miles northwest of Lucile, Idaho. The intact and unusually diverse grassland communities of Mud Springs Ridge are not represented in the research natural areas system. One federally threatened plant species, one sensitive species, and at least four local endemic plant species are well represented here. The site also includes under-represented ponderosa pine forests and shrub communities. This area is the site of ongoing monitoring and provides substantial opportunities for range and invasive species research. The Mud Springs Ridge Proposed RNA totals 288 acres.

Fred Rabe Upper Hemlock Creek Proposed Research Natural Area

This candidate research natural area is in the Hemlock Creek basin, within the Big Horn–Weitas roadless area of the North Fork Ranger District, approximately 10 miles east of Pierce, Idaho. The proposal is based upon aquatics and various meadow communities within the Grand Fir mosaic

forest, as well as a core, high priority vegetative community called for in the regional research natural areas assessment. This research natural area was recommended in the mid-1990s with local vetting completed at that time; however, proposal in a forest plan or an amendment to such has never occurred. The total size of the Fred Rabe Upper Hemlock Creek Proposed RNA is 1,378 acres.

Special Areas

Special areas are a category of administratively designated areas defined as an area or feature managed to maintain its unique special character or purpose (36 CFR 219.19), including those that may be botanical, geological, recreational, scenic, zoological, paleontological, or historical in nature. Such areas are protected and managed for public use and enjoyment and are identified due to their unique or special characteristics. Special areas are not congressionally designated but are administratively designated by the Chief of the Forest Service, regional forester, or forest supervisor (FSM 2372). Table 5 lists the designated special areas and the six proposed special areas under the Preferred Alternative.

Table 5. Special Area by theme and approximate acreage.

Special Area Name	Year Designated5	Theme	Acres
Giant Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	44
Morris-Perkins Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	48
Devoto Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical and Historical	15
Heritage Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	153
Colgate Licks	1987 Forest Plan	Geological and Historical	39
séewisníme (Place of Mussels)	1987 Forest Plan	Historical2	163
Walde Mountain	1987 Forest Plan	Botanical	82
Lewis and Clark Cedar Grove	1987 Forest Plan	Historical	58
Sing Lee Fen	2023 Land Management Plan	Botanical	25
Clear Creek Basalt Glades	2023 Land Management Plan	Botanical	267
wispin'iitpe (as one travels out of the timber, upon coming over the divide)	2023 Land Management Plan	Botanical and Historical	336
Elk Creek Falls	2023 Land Management Plan	Recreational	443
Colt Killed Creek Campsite	2023 Land Management Plan	Historical	159
Smoking Place	2023 Land Management Plan	Historical	173

Requirements of the Planning Rule

The Land Management Plan has been prepared in compliance with the Forest Service's 2012 Land Management Planning Rule at 36 CFR Part 219. The Land Management Plan meets the specific Rule requirements at sections 219.8 through 219.12 as follows.

[5] Special Areas new in the 2023 Land Management Plan are proposed until designated by the appropriate official per FSM2372).

219.8 Sustainability

Ecological Sustainability

The plan provides ecological sustainability by including plan components that address ecosystem integrity: air, soil, and water, and riparian areas. The plan includes plan components that address the composition, structure, function, and connectivity of vegetation types. The plan also describes management direction focused on potential vegetation types, system drivers, ecological processes, and stressors and threats (see plan Physical and Biological Ecosystems).

Plan components are designed to provide for the maintenance and improvement of vegetation conditions within the fire-adapted ecosystems that are prevalent on the national forests. Plan components promote vegetation and landscape conditions that reflect the natural range of variation and are resilient in the face of future stressors and threats such as fire, drought, or invasive species (plan, terrestrial vegetation section). For example, plan direction emphasizes managing for large trees that can survive low to moderate fire severities and contribute to the regeneration of the national forest after disturbance, thereby promoting resilience and providing long-term structural diversity and wildlife habitat.

Multiple resources, including wildlife, fish, soil, and water benefit from managing for vegetation conditions for a natural range of variation and resiliency. Plant and animal species benefit by providing healthy and sustainable habitat that supports the full diversity of native species, including federally designated threatened, endangered, candidate, and proposed species and species of conservation concern (see Chapter 3 of the final environmental impact statement for lists of these species). Forestwide plan components address maintaining and (or) restoring key ecosystem characteristics associated with terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and rare aquatic and terrestrial plant and animal communities.

The plan will maintain the existing high quality of the water, wildlife, and forest resources across the entire national forests. Large, relatively undeveloped areas will be maintained, mainly within designated wilderness, Idaho roadless areas, and recommended wilderness areas, which together comprise about 75 percent of the national forests. These areas have limited human impacts, and the vegetation will continue to be influenced largely by natural disturbances such as fire or insect activity. Accordingly, these disturbances will largely determine the vegetation conditions and patterns that will exist, and the associated wildlife habitat conditions and diversity. The plan articulates the role of fire, including both planned and unplanned ignitions, as a tool to achieve desired vegetation and wildlife habitat conditions, and provides direction related to its use and management. The plan also provides direction for fuel management to protect identified values, such as in wildland-urban interface areas.

Social and Economic Sustainability

The plan contributes to social and economic sustainability by addressing social, cultural, and economic conditions; sustainable recreation; multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and the national economy; ecosystem services; areas of Tribal importance, and cultural and historic uses.

Plan direction is designed to manage for resilient and resistant forest conditions so forests can adapt to whatever pressures and uncertainties the future may hold. Resilient forest conditions also provide important social and economic benefits, including enhancing the diversity of recreational

opportunities, maintaining scenic integrity objectives, and contributing to a sustainable production of timber and other forest products.

The benefits to people (the goods and services provided) include clean air, water quality and quantity, carbon sequestration, and climate regulation; forest products such as timber and firewood; forage for livestock; minerals; outdoor recreation; scenery; cultural and heritage values, inspiration, spiritual values, and solitude; habitat for fish and wildlife; hunting, trapping, fishing, and wildlife viewing; and research and education, income, and jobs. See Providing Ecosystem Services section, above.

219.9 Diversity of plant and animal communities

The plan provides for the diversity of plants and animals and provides for ecological integrity by:

- Supporting ecological integrity through plan components designed to maintain or restore key ecological characteristics for ecosystem composition, structure, ecological processes, and connectivity within the natural range of variation, as well as providing for the retention of key features such as old growth, snags, large trees, and coarse woody debris (plan, forestlands; meadows, grasslands and shrublands; wildlife, and soils sections).
- Supporting the recovery and persistence of the 12 threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species (4 terrestrial, 5 aquatic, and 3 plant species) and 36 species of conservation concern (5 terrestrial, 1 aquatic, and 30 plant species) through plan components that promote the necessary habitat conditions and minimize threats and stressors (plan, terrestrial ecosystems; aquatic ecosystems; and wildlife sections).
- Including species-specific plan components to support or promote species whose needs may not be met by ecosystem-level plan components, such as bats, elk, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, lamprey, western pearlshell mussel, Coeur d'Alene salamander (plan, wildlife; across the landscape; water and aquatic resources; section).

The plan uses the tiered approach to conserve and maintain species diversity, which first involves an analysis of the ecosystems on the national forest and the species whose habitats are dependent on them. The plan then further supports species-specific approaches, which include the protection of sensitive habitats such as riparian zones and wetlands and habitat for threatened and endangered species. I find that the plan has the appropriate components to restore and maintain the diversity of ecosystems. The desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines were developed based on best available scientific information and will restore or maintain key habitat characteristics for all vegetation groupings.

The Northern Region regional forester identified 36 species of conservation concern on the national forest. Species of conservation concern are species known to occur in the plan area and for which there is substantial concern for the persistence of the species. Most habitat needs for these species are met through the plan components for aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and those that promote the key ecosystem characteristics required by each species. For some species or species groups, plan components to meet species-specific habitat needs are included in accordance with 36 CFR 219.9(b).

After review of the plan and final environmental impact statement, I find that the plan components will provide the ecological conditions necessary to maintain viable populations of all identified species of conservation concern within the plan area.

219.10 Multiple use

The plan provides integrated resource management for multiple uses (219.10(a)) by including plan components at the forestwide level and the geographic-area scale that establish suitability for a variety of compatible uses. Each geographic area has unique characteristics, and specific plan components provide for and manage multiple uses within that area. The plan emphasizes working closely with partner agencies, Native American Tribes, Federal, State, and county government, universities, permittees, nongovernmental organizations, and private landowners to achieve joint management goals. The plan provides for multiple uses by:

- Supporting a variety of multiple uses and ecosystem services across the national forests and in each management area through an array of plan components that establish suitability for various uses and guide those uses in order to be compatible with each other as well as ecosystem integrity and social and economic sustainability (plan, human uses of the forests).
- Providing clean water and water quantity, as well as improving watershed conditions where needed, through plan components that support aquatic ecosystem integrity and limit potential negative impacts to these resources, support important ecological and social services such as productive soils, plant and animal diversity, wildlife habitat, and water supplies (plan, aquatic ecosystems sections).
- Recognizing and protecting historical, cultural, and Tribal uses associated with the Nez Perce-Clearwater (plan, Tribal Trust; geographic areas; and cultural resources sections). Upholding the legal and moral obligations of the United States as articulated in the 1855 and 1863 Treaties with the Nez Perce Tribe.
- Providing rangeland for livestock grazing to support livelihoods while also supporting ecological integrity of rangelands and riparian management zones (plan, livestock grazing and livestock grazing (aquatic and riparian) sections).
- Providing a supply of forest products in a sustainable manner, which in turn supports local economies and communities, through plan components that establish suitability and guide the extraction of timber from National Forest System lands (plan, timber section).
- Providing opportunities for the development of mineral resources, where appropriate (plan, energy and minerals section).
- Including plan components that guide the management of infrastructure (plan, infrastructure section).
- Providing economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable recreation opportunities though an array of plan components that support a variety of recreation uses. Recreation opportunities also considered tourism, ecosystem integrity and capacity, recreation access, and changes in local demographics (plan, sustainable recreation; designated areas and plan land allocations sections).
- Providing opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing along with associated cultural and socioeconomic benefits (plan, aquatic and riparian ecosystems; and wildlife sections).
- Including plan components that establish desired scenic integrity (plan, scenery section).
- Including plan components that emphasize consolidated land ownership and improved access to National Forest System lands (plan, land ownership and Land Uses section).

- Maintaining the wilderness character of the three existing designated wilderness areas, the wilderness characteristics of three recommended wilderness areas through plan components to protect and maintain the ecological and social characteristics that provide the basis for their suitability for wilderness designation (plan, designated areas section).
- Protecting the free-flowing nature and outstandingly remarkable values of 3 designated, 11 suitable, and 1 eligible wild and scenic rivers (plan, designated areas section) through interim protection measures. Sustaining the free-flowing nature and outstandingly remarkable values of 76 eligible, but not suitable, rivers through hundreds of plan components.

219.11 Timber requirements based on NFMA

The plan identifies lands suited and not suited for timber production (36 CFR 219.7(c)(2)(vii) and 219.11). The lands suitable for timber production and the role of timber harvest as a tool to meet ecosystem management and social and economic objectives has changed since the Nez Perce and Clearwater 1987 plans were developed. The plan presents new plan components for lands suitable for timber production and for timber harvest. These plan components will facilitate an active vegetation management program that meets both ecosystem and socioeconomic objectives.

Lands suitable for timber production were determined following 36 CFR 219.11(a) and Forest Service Handbook direction (1909.12 chap. 61). First lands are identified that may be suitable for timber production and are those that are legally available and technically feasible for harvest (forested lands with no potential for irreversible soil or watershed damage and where regeneration can be ensured). Then, identification of lands that are suited and not suited for timber production is based on compatibility with desired conditions and objectives stated in the plan (plan components). In lands suitable for timber production, active vegetation management and some regular flow of timber products is expected to occur. Unless prohibited by other plan components, timber harvest may occur on lands unsuitable for timber production to meet other resource objectives.

Under the plan, about 1,042,519 acres (26 percent of the national forests) are suitable for timber production, with the remaining approximately 2,896,537 acres are not suitable for timber production. Of the 2,896,537 acres not suitable for timber production, about 197,821 acres are suitable for timber harvest for such purposes as fuel reduction or wildlife habitat enhancement.

The 2012 Planning Rule requires that land management plans provide information regarding possible actions that may occur on the plan area during the life of the plan, including the planned timber sale program, timber harvesting levels, and the proportion of probable methods of forest vegetation management practices expected to be used (16 U.S.C. 1604(e)(2) and (f)(2)). The plan addresses this requirement through establishing objectives, and description of possible management actions and strategies (see appendix 4 of the plan).

Timber harvest is conducted to provide for societal goods and to maintain or move vegetation on the national forest toward desired conditions. Under the plan, the projected timber sale quantity is 190-210 million board feet per year and the projected wood sale quantity is 37-43 million cubic feet per year.

Alternatives considered a range of potential timber sale quantities, from 60 million board feet annually (alternative Z) up to 261 million board feet, a departure from the Sustained Yield Limit for a period of 20 years in alternative X. All alternatives were modelled to be possible to achieve and consistent with all plan components, provided funding is available. Each alternative's PTSQ

is predicted to achieve forest vegetation desired conditions in varying timeframes, from 20 years to more than 100. My decision to implement the Preferred Alternative factors in the need to meaningfully respond to the wildfire crisis and to consider ecologic, social, and economic sustainability. The Preferred Alternative is not the lowest nor the highest predicted output but does move our Forests to be within NRV within 35 to 40 years.

As required by the 2012 Planning Rule, the estimated timber outputs consider the fiscal capability of the planning unit and can be achieved consistent with all plan components. However, the estimates of timber outputs may be larger or smaller on an annual basis, or over the life of the plan, if budget or other constraining factors change in the future. I remain concerned that our ability to meet identified outputs will be difficult in the face of declining budgets and the increasing cost of litigation related to forest management activities. However, opportunities for shared stewardship, additional legislative authorities, or partnerships could potentially increase the timber output capacity.

Maximum Quantity of Timber

The plan also identifies the maximum quantity of timber that may be removed from the plan area (36 CFR 219.7 and 219.11 (d)(6)). Based on Forest Service Handbook direction (1909.12 chap. 64.3), this maximum is termed the sustained yield limit and is the volume of timber that could be produced in perpetuity on lands that may be suitable for timber production. The timber suitability analysis used in plan development identified about 1,042,519 acres on the national forests that may be suitable for timber production. The calculation of the sustained yield limit is not limited by plan desired conditions, other plan components, or the national forest's fiscal and organizational capabilities. The sustained yield limit and maximum quantity of timber that may be removed from the plan area is determined to be 241 million board feet average annual volume.

219.12 Monitoring

I have reviewed and determined that the plan provides adequate monitoring to inform the progress of achieving plan desired conditions, goals, and objectives (plan appendix 3). The monitoring plan addresses the eight requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule in the form of questions, indicators, data sources, collection frequency, and associated plan components that are all included in appendix 3 of the plan. The monitoring plan addresses what I believe to be the most critical components that inform management and is within the financial and technical capability of the agency. Every monitoring question links to one or more of the desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, or guidelines. However, not every plan component has a corresponding monitoring question.

The monitoring plan was designed to be cost effective and can be implemented during rising and falling budget cycles. Incorporating monitoring data from other agencies and partners will help ensure that our program is more independent and objective than solely relying on Nez Perce-Clearwater staff that often have other program priority work.

This monitoring program is not intended to depict all monitoring, inventorying, and data-gathering activities undertaken on the national forest, nor is it intended to limit monitoring to just the questions and indicators listed. Consideration and coordination with broader-scale monitoring strategies adopted by the regional forester, multi-party monitoring collaboration, and cooperation with state and private forestry or research stations will increase efficiencies and help track changing conditions beyond the national forest boundaries. In addition, project and activity

monitoring may be used to gather information for the plan monitoring program if it will provide relevant information to inform adaptive management.

Response to Public Comments

A review of comments received on the proposed action highlights that some stakeholders have differing, and often conflicting priorities in relation to the types of recreation opportunities, such as motorized, mechanized, and quiet; level of economic opportunity and timber harvest the Nez Perce-Clearwater should provide; and different perspectives on which areas and rivers should be recommended as Wilderness or eligible or suitable for Wild and Scenic River designations. Appendix M of the FEIS includes a response to each of the concern statements developed from the voluminous public comments.

The majority of comments were in regard to levels of recommended wilderness, suitable wild and scenic rivers, or motorized/non-motorized opportunities in the summer and winter. These comments were addressed through analysis in Chapter 3 of the EIS and in the development of the Preferred Alternative, including land allocations, suitability determinations and plan components. Comments also assisted in a refinement of the old growth plan components and analysis, carbon change analysis and carbon sequestration analysis. Comments from cooperating agencies and regulatory agencies aided in the refinement of plan components for listed species, elk, and aquatic habitat. Literature references provided by the public were reviewed in detail and incorporated into the analysis when I deemed them to be best available scientific information—and a rationale of the major themes of literature provided, and why they were not included, if applicable, is documented in the project record.

Changes from DEIS to FEIS

The Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act require an agency to assess and consider comments on a draft environmental impact statement, both individually and collectively; and for the final environmental impact statement, respond to substantive comments by:

1. modifying alternatives,
2. developing and evaluating new alternatives not previously given serious consideration,
3. supplementing, improving, or modifying the analyses,
4. making factual corrections, or
5. explaining why comments do not warrant further agency response.

The primary change between the DEIS and FEIS was the development of the Preferred Alternative for the final environmental impact statement. At the time of release of the DEIS, I clearly told the public that no alternative in the DEIS was a Preferred Alternative, but that a Preferred Alternative would be developed based on public comments from the range analyzed in the DEIS alternatives. True to that promise, the Preferred Alternative includes parts of each alternative analyzed in the DEIS but is not based on any one alternative in particular. It responds to public comment and internal comments raised on the DEIS. I find the Preferred Alternative to be qualitatively within the spectrum of alternatives and effects discussed in the draft environmental impact statement. The components of the Preferred Alternative fall within the scope of analysis previously provided to the public for comment. Appendix M of the final

environmental impact statement includes the summary response to the substantive comments received.

After carefully considering the comments received on the draft environmental impact statement, minor adjustments were made to plan components in all alternatives including the Preferred Alternative; and the analyses were clarified or corrected as needed and described in the individual resource sections of chapter 3 in the final environmental impact statement.

In response to comments on the DEIS, continued work with the Nez Perce Tribe and Cooperating Agencies and further internal review, the following is a summary of the key changes to the final environmental impact statement and the plan, excluding minor editorial and organization changes, clarifications, and typographical errors:

- Updated and new plan components in the Tribal Trust section to ensure Tribal Treaty rights are maintained and our general trust responsibilities met. A standard is being revised through government-to-government consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe (FW-STD-TT-01). A Desired Condition was added to show the intent of the Forests to honor and preserve cultural practices of past, present, and future Nez Perce people. The plan components that protect access to first foods and life sources, commonly referred to as special forest products for non-Tribal members, were updated to reduce conflict with gathering by Nez Perce Tribal members. Twelve plan components were modified from guidelines to standards during government-to-government consultation and additional plan components to protect access to resources associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights were added.
- Through consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, aquatic plan components were modified to ensure habitat is available to assist in recovery of ESA listed species. This includes modification to several plan components as they appeared in the DEIS version of the draft plan, and two additional plan components that are new since the DEIS version of the draft plan. One requires a plan of operation for suction dredge mining activity in stream with ESA listed species or critical habitat (FW-GDL-AREM-05), while the other ensures the transportation network will adapt with changing climates and the potential for increased runoff (FW-DC-ARINF-02). Numerous other plan components were edited for readability, implementability and to respond to internal, external, cooperating agency, regulatory agency, and Nez Perce Tribe comments. Additional watersheds, Musselshell Creek, and Crooked River, were added to the priority watershed list to acknowledge the importance of these watersheds to ESA listed species and species of conservation concern, as well as the ongoing work by the National Marine Fisheries Service and Nez Perce Tribe in these watersheds.
- The Wildlife section was updated. Plan components were added for grizzly bear. The elk plan components in the multiple use wildlife section were updated through discussion with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Nez Perce Tribe, USFS Research Stations and the public. Plan components discussing livestock grazing in relation to bighorn sheep were modified, including FW-STD-WL-02 and FW-GDL-WL-05. Changes to the fisher fine filter plan component also were made to ensure the availability of habitat to support viable populations of fisher.
- An additional goal for invasive species was added to emphasize working with other agencies, groups, and adjacent landowners to support integrated invasive species management. The desired conditions were consolidated with more focus on retaining ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.

- Three additional Special Areas were proposed based on discussions with the National Park Service and the Nez Perce Tribe to acknowledge high potential historic sites on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail. Names of special areas were changed to the Nimiipuu names for areas designated because of their Tribal importance.
- Glover Creek was inadvertently identified as eligible and included in the Draft EIS. Its eligibility was based solely on the presence of the Coeur d'Alene salamander. The Coeur d'Alene salamander was reviewed for its potential as a wildlife species outstandingly remarkable value but was determined not to be a wildlife species that warrants identification as an outstandingly remarkable value. This species did not meet the screening criteria as a wildlife ORV for the following reasons: the species is water dependent but not river dependent; it is not a species of conservation concern and therefore was not identified as having regional or national significance; while it has narrow habitat characteristics it has an area of distribution from the Selway River north into southern British Columbia, including parts of western Montana; and, a study by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game determined that populations were present at 95 percent of previously surveyed locations and the populations are stable. Since the Coeur d'Alene salamander was the only element that determined Glover Creek's eligibility, and this species was not a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value, Glover Creek was removed from eligible status, and no further analysis of eligibility or suitability was conducted.
- The eligible status identified for the Salmon River in the draft EIS was changed to suitable status in the final EIS. Consistent with Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 80, 83.11, river segments previously found suitable through earlier study but not yet congressionally designated do not need to be reevaluated unless changed circumstances warrant consideration of a change in river status. Upon review as documented in the FEIS Appendix F, there are no changed conditions in the Salmon River segment that would warrant further consideration. Given that there are no changed conditions, BLM affirmation of suitability, and congressional direction to manage the lower Salmon under Wild and Scenic guidelines, this segment of the lower Salmon River retained its status as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- Management approaches for all resource areas were modified to aid in implementation of the plan in the future.
- The monitoring section was modified to ensure indicators were meaningful, data sources were available and that the monitoring plan will be able to be completed biannually with anticipated budgets and staffing levels, as required by the planning rule.
- Chapter 3 of the FEIS was updated to reflect best available scientific information, additional analysis, respond to public comments and analyze the Preferred Alternative and changes to plan components including:
    - Included additional discussions relating the current distribution of old growth types to natural disturbance regimes including wildfire. The old growth discussion has been expanded to include a discussion relating old growth types to old growth forest cover types and the relationship to dominance types and habitat type groups and included tables to illustrate both the metrics used to define old growth, old growth forest cover types and the disturbance processes which give both rise and decline of old growth on the forest.

- Updated desired condition ranges for dominance type and size class based on updated natural range of variation (NRV) analysis which incorporated an updated climate model with improved predictive performance of regional climate scenarios.
- An updated baseline carbon assessment was conducted, utilizing new available tools from the USDA Forest Service Office of Sustainability and Climate and has been included in Appendix D.
- Additional analysis of fire regimes using mean fire return interval to determine expected amount of fire to be within a fire regimes natural range of variability. The associated analysis in the final environmental impact statement highlights where fire deficits are most pronounced and how the current conditions of fire severity compare to what would historically have been expected, based on the fire regime.
- In the wildlife section, more rigorous spatial overlays in nearly every section of the wildlife analysis to evaluate the effects of land allocations, improved vegetation modeling and queries to evaluate the effects on habitat, a more robust grizzly bear analysis, and changes in response to plan component changes. There was a more refined habitat model to evaluate the trend in fisher habitat including the development of a spatial query to evaluate how the plan would affect the spatial distribution of preferred female home ranges. The elk query was combined with a nutrition potential model to evaluate the changes in available high-quality nutrition as a result of the plan which should support higher elk and other ungulate populations for multiple uses. Appendix C provides a new cross walk of species, their habitat, key ecosystem characteristics of habitats, and how plan components provide for those habitats. It also provides a cross walk of how plan components address threats to at-risk species.
- In the sustainable recreation section, corrections to the misapplication of ROS classes as presented in the DEIS were made. The ROS maps for the No Action alternative have been removed and replaced by maps that accurately portray the areas open and closed to summer and winter motorized recreation under the 1987 Plans. The corrected acreages were then used for comparative purposes of the effects of ROS classifications in the action alternatives.
- The timber analysis added an indicator of “coarse woody debris retained” as a measurement indicator for use in evaluating the effectiveness of each action alternative to achieve desired conditions and to correlate sustainability of harvest measurement indicator to long-term site productivity.
- Updated PRISM and SIMPPLLE model analysis to incorporate the Preferred Alternative and changes to plan components.
- The Economic Sustainability section of the FEIS has been updated to include an economic contribution analysis with additional Preferred Alternative and changes to total wood sale quantities estimated in the Sustained Yield Limit Tables of the Timber subchapter. Additional qualitative discussion has been included covering in greater detail topics of Tribal, recreation, ecosystem services and other economic value concerns not fully represented in the quantitative economic contribution analysis. Additionally, the IMPLAN model in the FEIS includes changes to agriculture and grazing, national employment multipliers.

    - The Social Sustainability section of the FEIS has been updated to include additional relevant policies and executive orders, an update to the term traditional industries to land-based livelihoods, and an analysis of the Preferred Alternative.
- Updated analyses throughout the final environmental impact statement using updated data layers, such as new ownership and trails layers. Numbers and acres were updated throughout the documents based on these changes in analysis and layers.

Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected "preferred" alternative, I considered five other alternatives, which are discussed below. The Preferred Alternative was the environmentally Preferred Alternative. A more detailed comparison of these alternatives can be found in the FEIS, Chapter 2.

References to acreages in any alternative, including the Preferred Alternative, are approximate and based on Geographic Information System technologies available. Decisions and analyses should not be construed to assume that illogical boundaries or exact acreages are binding into the future. As technology improves and Geospatial systems evolve, acreages and boundaries will be modified to reflect our current understanding, consistent with the decisions made in this Record of Decision.

Four action alternatives were developed based on input, including comments received since the release of the proposed action in July 2014, and through collaboration on alternative development during the winter of 2017-2018. All alternatives analyzed in the final environmental impact statement met a minimum bar of being ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable per the 2012 Planning Rule. Furthermore, each alternative contributes to rural prosperity and other Department of Agriculture strategic goals. Alternative themes and their relation to the significant issues are described below.

The action alternatives were developed based on the Nez Perce-Clearwater's Assessment (2014), the need for change, desired conditions, implementation and monitoring of the current forest plan, public meetings, and comments received during the public involvement period, interagency meetings, and meetings with the Nez Perce Tribe. The alternatives represent a range of possible management options from which to choose. Each alternative emphasizes specific land and resource uses and de-emphasizes other uses in response to the revision topics. Some components may vary between alternatives to address the issues identified during scoping; see the description of the alternatives for specific details. Much of the plan direction for desired conditions, standards, and guidelines remains constant for all action alternatives. Where plan direction varies by alternative, the text indicates such. A table of plan components that vary by alterative is included in Appendix H of the FEIS.

A fifth action alternative, titled the Preferred Alternative, was added, and analyzed in the FEIS in response to public comment. This alternative was developed using the range analyzed in the DEIS. Using the analysis from the DEIS as the base, the Forest Leadership Team and planning team worked together to build an alternative that best addressed public comments on the four alternatives in the draft. See Decision section for more details on the process used to develop the Preferred Alternative.

For each resource area or land allocation that varies by alternative, the Preferred Alternative is within the range of effects of what was analyzed in the DEIS.

Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

Preferred Alternative

The Preferred Alternative was developed following the comment period on the draft environmental impact statement. This alternative integrates concerns from the public and attempts to find the appropriate mix and compromise with the major issues. This alternative responds to public comments and is a compilation of portions of all other alternatives analyzed in detail in the draft environmental impact statement. The Preferred Alternative integrates ecological, social, and economic sustainability while responding to Tribal, local, and national interests.

The forest leadership crafted the Preferred Alternative using the building blocks of the four action alternatives in the DEIS. To develop the Preferred Alternative, they reviewed the analysis, listened to, and read comments from the public and the Nez Perce Tribe, and considered the legal and ethical obligations of the Agency. The process spanned months of preparation, culminating in a week of discussion and collaboration to reach consensus on an alternative that best addresses governmental and public comments and concerns. The Preferred Alternative utilizes the large expanse of the Forest to provide for the myriad of uses people want and contribute in a meaningful way to our local communities. It addresses climate change and embraces fire as an essential ecological process, integrating the landscape level restoration into suitability determinations. To develop the Preferred Alternative, the leadership team overlaid different land management allocations options with habitat needs of specialized species such as wolverine, anadromous fish, grizzly bear, and unique ecosystems such as the coastal disjunct across the vast 4 million acres of the Forest to sustain all resources at that scale.

The Preferred Alternative is designed to move the forest to within the Natural Range of Variation (NRV) within 35-40 years. Less than 25 percent of the Forest is considered suited for timber harvest as a tool to move towards NRV. These areas are generally in the rural, motorized areas near communities where the need for fuels reduction and precise restoration techniques is the greatest. On over 75 percent of the Forests, over 3 million acres, fire will be the primary restoration tool and movement towards NRV will be less precise or predictable. This alternative integrates terrestrial vegetation and aquatic system restoration in a wholistic, ridgetop to ridgetop approach. It includes more Recommended Wilderness acres than the No Action and finds 11 rivers suitable for designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. It responds to public comments and underserved community needs through application of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum suitability which would allow increased motorized opportunities in key locations. Underlying ALL the land allocations, are a suite of forest plan components that ensure ecological, social, and economic sustainability.

No Action

Under the no-action alternative, the two current management plans would continue to guide management of the plan area. The no-action Alternative includes plan components developed under the 1982 planning rule that offer protections and restrictions on management. It includes three designated wild and scenic rivers, one suitable wild and scenic river and 29 eligible rivers. It includes three designated wilderness areas, and three recommended wilderness areas. The no action alternative allows motorized use on 61 percent of the Forests in the summer and 63 percent of the Forests in the winter. Additional information on the specifics of the No Action Alternative is available in the FEIS.

Alternative W

Alternative W acknowledges that resources and land allocation on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are not mutually exclusive. It may be possible to have high levels of timber harvest, sustain rural economies, recover listed fish and wildlife species, provide clean air, and clean water, and provide habitat for viable populations of wildlife species all at the same time. For instance, areas evaluated for recommended wilderness are independent from most areas that provide for timber harvest due to the Idaho Roadless Rule. As such, it is possible to recommend all or nearly all Idaho Roadless Rule Areas for recommended wilderness and have a very high level of timber outputs. This thought process led to the idea of a "have it most" alternative. This alternative has higher levels of recommended wilderness coupled with a higher timber output and a faster rate of movement towards forest vegetation desired conditions. The analysis anticipates Forest vegetation desired conditions would be minimally achieved within 30 years. Areas not selected as recommended wilderness are suitable for motorized use, including in the roadless areas. Wild and Scenic Rivers suitability stem from a collaborative approach that looks at rivers outside the wilderness. The intent of this alternative is to couple management strategies that are often viewed as being mutually exclusive to take an analytical look at the scope of possibility on a 4-million-acre landscape.

Alternative X

Alternative X responds to several state and local land use plans which call for fewer or no areas of recommended wilderness, fewer or no suitable wild and scenic rivers, and higher timber outputs. In this alternative, zero areas are recommended as wilderness. The Idaho State Rivers Program is used as a surrogate to continue to protect key tributaries to the North and South Fork Clearwater Rivers while not pursuing Wild and Scenic River Suitable status on any river. Modelling indicates Forest vegetation would be within the lower bound of the desired conditions within 20 years.

Alternative Y

Alternative Y provides for intermediate level of recommended wilderness and moves towards forest vegetative desired conditions for size class distribution and species composition in 50 years. Historic snowmobiling areas in the Great Burn are removed from consideration as recommended wilderness resulting in a boundary change from the 1987 plan recommendation, but within the areas recommended for wilderness uses that may preclude designation as wilderness in the future are not suitable. This alternative also looks at the major rivers not designated in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including the North Fork Clearwater and South Fork Clearwater, as suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system.

Alternative Z

Alternative Z was crafted to respond to requests to have an alternative in which natural processes dominate over anthropogenic influence. In this alternative, a proposal for recommended wilderness that was brought forward by a group of national and state wilderness advocacy groups was mostly carried forward. Additionally, rivers were viewed as part of a larger system, and major tributaries to our largest rivers are analyzed as being suitable for inclusion in the wild and scenic rivers system. Reliance on natural process would warrant a slower movement toward achieving forest vegetation desired conditions in an anticipated 100 years or longer. Timber outputs would also be lower and near a lower threshold needed to provide for economic sustainability and sustain rural economies. Additional plan components related to snag guidelines,

live tree retention, and elk security are included that limit uncertainty regarding how and where these features will be located on the landscape.

Comparison of Alternatives Analyzed in Detail

Table 6. Comparison of Alternatives analyzed in Detail in the FEIS- land allocations by estimated acreage.

Management Area	No Action1	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
1(a)-Designated Wilderness	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059	1,139,059
1(b)-Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers	57,891	57,891	57,891	57,891	57,891	57,891
1(c) National Historic Landmark	55,760	55,760	55,760	55,760	55,760	55,760
MA1 subtotal	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638	1,231,638
2(a) Idaho Roadless Areas	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636	1,481,636
2(b) Recommended Wilderness	197,695	856,932	0	309,332	569,755	263,357
2(c) Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers	155,477	74,646	0	110,252	166,176	61,849
2(d) Gospel-Hump-MA2	30,164	28,498	28,498	30,164	28,498	28,498
2(e) Designated RNA	29,499	29,499	29,499	29,499	29,499	29,499
2(f) Proposed RNA	2,946	2,946	2,946	2,946	2,946	2,946
MA2 subtotal	1,489,736	1,468,505	1,463,081	1,487,434	1,472,364	1,467,078
MA3 subtotal	1,217,683	1,238,913	1,244,337	1,219,984	1,235,055	1,240,340
Forest Acreage2	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832	4,074,832

Table 7. Comparison of Alternatives-land allocation and objectives

Resource Topic	No Action	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
Recommended Wilderness	Hoodoo, Mallard-Larkins, Portions of: North Fork Spruce-White Sands and Sneakfoot Meadows	Bighorn-Weitas, Hoodoo, North Lochsa Slope, Mallard-Larkins, East Meadow Creek, Moose Mountain, Rapid River, North Fork Spruce-White Sands, Sneakfoot Meadows, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork	None	East Meadow Creek; Hoodoo with Boundary change to create GA for snowmobiling; Mallard Larkins; Rapid River	East Meadow Creek, West Meadow Creek, Hoodoo, Mallard-Larkins, Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork; North Fork Spruce-White Sands, Rapid River, Rawhide, Sneakfoot Meadows, Pot Mountain	Mallard Larkins (82,286 acres); Hoodoo (108,276 acres) and East Meadow Creek (72,795 acres)
Mechanized/Motorized Recreation Uses in Recommended Wilderness	No over-snow motorized travel. No summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use.	No over-snow motorized travel. No summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use	n/a	No over-snow motorized travel. No summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use	Winter over-snow motorized travel allowed. Summer mechanized travel allowed. No motorized summer travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use.	No winter motorized travel, no summer motorized or mechanized travel. Motorized and mechanized equipment suitable for administrative use.

Resource Topic	No Action	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
Wild and Scenic Eligible and Suitable Rivers	0 Suitable, 29 Eligible: Bargamin Creek; Bear Creek Complex (Bear, Brushy Fork, Cub, Paradis, Wahoo); Cayuse Creek; Fish Creek; Hungery Creek; Johns Creek; Kelly Creek; Lake Creek; Little North Fork Clearwater River; Meadow Creek (Selway); Moose Creek Complex (East Fork Moose, Moose, North Fork Moose, West Fork Moose Creek, Rhoda); North Fork Clearwater River; Running Creek; Salmon River; Slate Creek; South Fork Clearwater River; Three Links Creek Complex (Three Links, West Fork Three Links); West Fork Gedney Creek; White Bird Creek; White Sand Creek (renamed Colt Killed Creek)	12 Suitable: Cayuse Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Johns Creek, Kelly Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River, Meadow Creek (Selway), Middle Fork Kelly, North Fork Kelly, Salmon River, South Fork Kelly, Weitas Creek	0 Suitable: manage 21 rivers consistent with the Idaho Department of Water Resources “State Protected Rivers” direction. North Fork Clearwater River Subbasin: North Fork Clearwater River, Weitas Creek, Elk Creek, Isabella Creek, Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, Cayuse Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River South Fork Clearwater Subbasin: American River, Johns Creek, Gospel Creek, West Fork Gospel Creek, Meadow Creek, Red River, Silver Creek, South Fork Clearwater River, West Fork Crooked River	14 Suitable: Cayuse Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Johns Creek, Kelly Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River, Meadow Creek (Selway), Middle Fork Kelly Creek, North Fork Clearwater River, North Fork Kelly Creek, Salmon River, South Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Kelly Creek, Weitas Creek	37 Suitable: Systems Approach: Bargamin Creek, Bear Creek, Big Sand Creek, Bostonian Creek, Boundary Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, Buck Lake Creek, Caledonia Creek, Colt Killed Creek, Crooked Fork Creek, Cub Creek, East Fork Meadow Creek (Selway), East Fork Moose Creek, Fish Creek, Graves Creek, Hungery Creek, Johns Creek, Kelly Creek, Little North Fork Clearwater River, Meadow Creek (South Fork Clearwater River), Middle Fork Kelly Creek, Moose Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, North Fork Moose Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, Rhoda Creek, Running Creek, Sabe Creek, Salmon River, Silver Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Storm Creek, Storm Creek, Upper Lochsa River, Weitas Creek, West Moose Creek, Wounded Doe Creek	11 Suitable: Cayuse Creek, Fish Creek, Hungery Creek, Weitas Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek, Colt Killed Creek, Meadow Creek (Selway) and the Salmon River. 1 Eligible: Little North Fork Clearwater River

Resource Topic	No Action	Alt W	Alt X	Alt Y	Alt Z	Preferred
Access	Clearwater travel plan; site specific closure orders in some areas on the Nez Perce Forest (no travel plan in place)	All Backcountry Restoration IRA's motorized ROS in summer; most areas open in winter	More summer motorized access, Motorized loop opportunities expanded in MA2	Motorized loop opportunities expanded in MA2	Similar to existing condition in summer, increased winter motorized	More summer and winter motorized access. Important areas for non-motorized access in the future delineated.
Percentage of Forest in Motorized ROS Category	Summer: 61 percent	Summer: 47 percent	Summer: 58 percent	Summer: 44 percent	Summer: 43 percent	Summer: 55 percent
	Winter: 63 percent	Winter: 48 percent	Winter: 70 percent	Winter: 62 percent	Winter: 70 percent	Winter: 60 percent
Percentage of Forest in Non-Motorized ROS Category	Summer: 39 percent	Summer: 53 percent	Summer: 42 percent	Summer: 56 percent	Summer: 57 percent	Summer: 45 percent
	Winter: 37 percent	Winter: 52 percent	Winter: 30 percent	Winter: 38 percent	Winter: 30 percent	Winter: 40 percent
Acres of Disturbance / Restoration Annually to be within Natural Range of Variability1	40,000	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500	53,000-64,500
Timber Harvest Acres annually	4,300	12,600	14,000	7,500	3,700	8,825-10,000
Timber Output Restoration potential timber sale quantity	50-60 MMBF	221-241 MMBF	241-261 MMBF (Departure)	120-140 MMBF	60-80 MMBF	190-210 MMBF
Max Regen Unit Size	40 acres	207 acres	207 acres	207 acres	207 acres	207 acres

Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Federal agencies are required by the NEPA to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the proposed action provided suggestions for alternative methods of achieving the purpose and need. Some of these may have been outside the scope of what can be included in the Nez Perce-Clearwater Land Management Plan, or duplicative of the alternatives considered in detail. 15 alternatives were considered but eliminated from detailed consideration for the reasons summarized in the Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study section in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Alternatives eliminated from detailed study include:

- Proposed Action
- Framework for Alternative Development
- Timber Target Unconstrained by Budget
- Maximum Recreation Alternative
- Ecological Processes, a.k.a. “Citizen’s Alternative”
- Additional Areas for Over-Snow Motorized Use
- All Idaho Roadless Areas as Recommended Wilderness
- Additional Areas as Recommended Wilderness
- Additional Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers/Fewer Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers
- No Wild and Scenic Rivers Suitability Study
- Manage Eligible Rivers Under Interim Guidance
- Include All 88 Eligible River Segments as Suitable
- All Idaho Roadless Areas as Non-Motorized
- Specified Motorized Road and Trail Densities
- Add Plan Components for Trail Maintenance in Recommended Wilderness Areas

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

National Environmental Policy Act regulations require agencies to specify the alternative or alternatives that are considered to be environmentally preferable (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). The environmentally preferable alternative is “the alternative that will best promote the national environmental policy as expressed in section 101 (42 U.S.C. 4321 of the National Environmental Policy Act). Ordinarily, the environmentally preferable alternative is that which causes the least harm to the biological and physical environment; it is also the alternative which best protects and preserves historic, cultural, and natural resources” (36 CFR 220.3).

I find, based upon the laws and regulations guiding national forest management, that the Preferred Alternative is the environmentally preferred alternative. When compared to the alternatives analyzed in detail, it best contributes to, and moves the Nez Perce-Clearwater toward, ecological,

social, and economic sustainability and desired conditions that will benefit future generations (see the explanation of how the plan components meet the requirements of the 2012 Planning Rule, in the section titled "Findings required by other laws and regulations" of this record of decision). While other alternatives allow fewer acres of ground-disturbing activity (Alternative Z), allow fewer acres available for motorized recreation in the summer (Alternative Z) and winter (Alternative W), and have more suitable wild and scenic rivers (Alternative Z) and more acres of recommended wilderness (Alternative W) they do not address the six goals of the National Environmental Policy Act as well as the Preferred Alternative does. Additionally, the Preferred Alternative moves towards the natural range of variability the fastest and has the highest objectives for resource restoration. I base my finding on the following comparison showing how the alternatives address the goals of section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act. This is a summary of the rationale, provided in more detail in previous sections of this ROD.

1. Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustees of the environment for succeeding generations.

   The Preferred Alternative emphasizes moving forest conditions toward desired conditions, while contributing to ecological, social, and economic sustainability. The Preferred Alternative, as well as alternatives W and Y, provides a set of plan objectives that enhance aquatic, vegetation, wildlife, cultural, recreation, and infrastructure resources while providing movement toward vegetation desired conditions and sustainable levels of timber harvest similar to or greater than current levels. While alternative W proposes the highest acreage of recommended wilderness, this alternative also proposes a lower Forest sustainable share of products and uses demanded by the public, and the lowest percentage of the national forest in which to actively move toward vegetation desired conditions. There are more acres suitable for timber production in alternative X, with an expected higher level of management intensity and more timber production. However, because of an emphasis on production of wood products, it does not move toward vegetation desired conditions as much as the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative also has the highest objectives for restoration of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The Preferred Alternative best manages resources associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights over the long-term.

   Alternative Z would provide the slowest progress toward achieving ecological desired conditions.

2. Assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.

   The Preferred Alternative achieves maintenance of a safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing national forest better than the other alternatives because it provides the best mix of resource utilization, active and passive management, and motorized and non-motorized recreation uses along with the safeguards provided by standards and guidelines for maintaining water quality, scenery, and wildlife habitat. The Preferred Alternative provides recommended wilderness areas that incorporate the suggestions of the public. The Preferred Alternative provides timber harvest levels necessary to achieve forest vegetation desired conditions in 35-40 years and are higher than the No Action alternative. The Preferred Alternative provides for more motorized and mechanized recreation access than alternatives W, Y, Z, and the no action, but less than alternative X. Although alternative X and W provides higher levels of timber harvest and access

opportunities, alternative X does not provide the levels of recommended wilderness areas that are currently enjoyed and desired on the national forest.

This alternative continues to recommend large portions of the recommended wilderness areas from the 1987 Forest Plans and adds the new Meadow Creek Recommended Wilderness Area, finds 11 rivers suitable as wild and scenic rivers, has lands available to active management, and use of a full range of fire management activities, including both prescribed and natural fire in all management areas that would allow for movement to desired conditions within 30 to 35 years. This also allows for potentially less impact on workforce capacity through utilization of opportunities for allowing fire as a restoration tool across all management areas, however active management activities will still have a sizable impact on workforce capacity. This alternative also allows for maintenance of infrastructure such as roads and administrative sites to provide safe access and egress to wildland fire responders and to communities within community protection zones, and maintenance of trails. Management flexibility is similar to alternatives X and Y, allowing for restoration of fire resilient landscapes utilizing natural and prescribed fire. It also addresses snag retention within community protection zones and egress routes, allowing snags to be removed during fuels mitigation projects within these areas. Pilot Knob communications site will be retained but phased out as suitable technology allows removal of the site.

3. Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.

   The beneficial uses that are most varied between alternatives and that I considered in this finding are: wood fiber production, access to treaty reserved resources associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights, resource enhancement, and a reasonable range of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities.

   The Preferred Alternative provides a balanced set of objectives that enhance aquatic, vegetation, wildlife, cultural, recreation, and infrastructure resources while providing movement toward vegetation desired conditions and sustainable levels of timber harvest similar to or greater than current levels. The Preferred Alternative has greater impact on existing motorized and mechanized recreation access than alternative X, but less but less than alternatives W, Y and Z.

   Alternative X and W provides higher levels of wood fiber production and motorized recreation allocations, but it does so at the expense of objectives for resource enhancement.

   Alternative W provides the highest acreage of recommended wilderness, and a high timber sale quantity, however it provides less motorized recreation opportunity and does not achieve forest vegetation desired conditions as quickly as the Preferred Alternative. It would limit access in areas to underserved communities and in some areas, create barriers to Tribal access for hunting and gathering. Alternative Y has the greatest impact on existing motorized and mechanized recreation access.

4. Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.

   Part of preserving our historic and cultural national heritage is recognizing that humans are a natural aspect of our national heritage—humans, specifically the Nez Perce, have utilized the

physical and cultural resources offered by the national forest for thousands of years. Recognizing this, I find that the best way to preserve this heritage and support it into the future, and an environment that supports diversity and variety of choice, is to manage the national forest to provide for physical resource use and the appropriate protection of cultural resources. Based on the final environmental impact statement, I find that the Preferred Alternative meets this goal better than the other alternatives. It improves on the no action alternative and provides the best assortment of multiple uses between alternative W's emphasis on wilderness values and alternative X's emphasis on achieving desired conditions through mechanical means. As discussed in the **Error! Reference source not found.** section, the Cultural Values section and consistent with the process described in Engagement and Consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, the Preferred Alternative meets treaty obligations to the Nez Perce and provides the best opportunity for exceeding legal, ethical and moral requirements associated with managing the ancestral homeland of the Nez Perce.

5. Achieve a balance between population and resource use, which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities.

   The public demands a variety of products and uses from their national forests. National Forest System lands and resources are important local resources that contribute in many ways to the quality of life in the region. The final environmental impact statement alternative analysis compares the various public values that define quality of life, varying from economic resource extraction values (timber harvest and minerals) to less tangibly defined resources such as wilderness character and semi-primitive recreation opportunities. The challenge is in defining the balance sought in this goal, and I find that the Preferred Alternative achieves that balance. The Preferred Alternative provides more resource use than alternative Y but more opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities than alternative X. The Rationale for my Decision section describes this in more detail.

6. Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

   I find that the Preferred Alternative enhances the quality of renewable resources and provides sustainable use of renewable resources. The standards and guidelines and the plan land allocations under the Preferred Alternative provide for levels of resource use that are higher to the no action alternative to achieve desired conditions at a faster rate, while providing protection measures for aquatic ecosystems, roadless areas and recommended wilderness areas. Alternatives Y emphasizes a greater amount of backcountry and recommended wilderness but do so at the expense of resource utilization. Alternative W also emphasized a greater amount of non-motorized opportunities and recommended wilderness and has a faster rate of achievement of desired conditions; however, it does not balance the needs of the public as well as the Preferred Alternative.

Short-term Uses and Long-term Productivity

Short-term uses are those expected not to exceed the planning period (approximately 15 years), including recreation use, timber harvest, and prescribed burning. Although the Forest Plan does not directly implement these uses, the potential for these uses is described in the Forest Plan goals and objectives, both at the forestwide and management area levels (see Land Management Plan).

Long-term productivity refers to the capability of the land to provide resource outputs for a period beyond the planning period. Minimum management requirements established by regulation (31

CFR 219.27) provide for the maintenance of long-term productivity of the land. Minimum management requirements are contained in forestwide and geographic area standards and guidelines and would be met under any alternative. They ensure that the long-term productivity of the land is not impaired by short-term uses.

Monitoring and evaluation, as described in the Land Management Plan, applies to all alternatives. The primary purpose of monitoring is to ensure that long-term productivity of the land is maintained or improved. If monitoring and evaluation show that forest plan standards and guidelines are inadequate to protect long-term productivity of the land, then the plan will be adjusted through amendment or revision to provide for more protection or fewer impacts.

Although all alternatives are designed to maintain long-term productivity, there are differences among the alternatives in the long-term availability or condition of resources. There may also be differences among alternatives in long-term expenditures necessary to maintain or achieve desired conditions.

Best Available Scientific Information

The 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.6(a)(3) and 219.14(a)(4)) requires the responsible official to use the best available scientific information to inform the development of the assessment, proposed plan, including plan components, the monitoring program, and plan decisions.

The initial foundation used to develop plan components was based upon the expertise of the planning team members, who have a combined level of professional experience of several hundred years working for the Forest Service. A number of team members have been specialists and managers on the national forest for more than 10 years each. This interdisciplinary team of resource professionals compiled and evaluated the relevant information for the assessment of the national forest (2014) and the best available scientific information and analyses contained therein. From this foundation, the interdisciplinary team used the best available scientific information to develop the proposed action (July 2014), the alternatives in 2017, and the analysis and comparison of alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement (December 2019) and final environmental impact statement (November 2023).

Team members used resources that included peer-reviewed and technical literature, databases and data management systems, modeling tools and approaches, professional knowledge and experience, local knowledge, and experience of the ecosystems in the plan area, scientific knowledge from local experts, information obtained from collaborations, and information received during public participation periods. Resource specialists considered what is most accurate, reliable, and relevant in their use of the best available scientific information. The best available scientific information used to inform the plan is appropriately cited throughout the final environmental impact statement and listed in the literature cited or references sections of the Nez Perce-Clearwater's assessment and the draft environmental impact statement, as well as any additional information that was used, updated, or included in the final environmental impact statement or the planning record prior to the record of decision. The final environmental impact statement documents the best available scientific information used to inform planning, the plan components, and other plan content, including the plan monitoring program (36 CFR 219.3). The final environmental impact statement also includes science that is discussed in order to address opposing science, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.

A number of Forest Service databases were utilized, including the Forest Service infrastructure database (INFRA), the management activity tracking system (FACTS), the natural resource management database (NRM), the fire severity database (MTBS), the threatened, endangered, and sensitive plants and invasive plants database (TESP-IS), the northern regional forest inventory and analysis summary database, and data from the PACFISH, INFISH biological opinion (PIBO) monitoring program, and national visitor use monitoring (NVUM) program.

Information was obtained leadership, staff, and members of the Nez Perce Tribe, incorporating "western" science along with their traditional ecological knowledge. Other agencies including the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also contributed greatly to the scientific information the interdisciplinary team relied upon. Some members of the public also provide what they consider the best available scientific information with their comments on the DEIS. How this scientific literature and other information provided during the comment period was considered during plan development and analysis, is included in the planning record. If the science was used by the Nez Perce-Clearwater in the planning process and is in the project record for forest plan revision it is indicated, and if it was not used then how it was considered is indicated in this documentation.

The interdisciplinary team utilized and updated a geographic information system database to evaluate complex spatial effects resulting from implementation of the alternatives (such as the recreation opportunity spectrum and effects to wildlife habitat by species). The interdisciplinary team used an optimization model to estimate the long-term flow of timber from the plan area. This type of model is widely used by private and State land managers and is widely accepted as an accurate way of modeling timber harvest schedules.

Much of the information with respect to social and economic conditions and trends contained in the assessment and final environmental impact statement was taken from the Economic Profile System-Human Dimensions Toolkit (Headwaters Economics), developed in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management and the Forest Service. This database uses published statistics from Federal data sources, including but not limited to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the U.S. Census Bureau. An analysis of the contribution of Forest programs and expenditures to jobs and labor income utilized Forest Service corporate data and data from IMPLAN (an economic impact model) for the year 2018. Public comments and expert input contributed to the development of plan components related to social and economic conditions. Additional quantitative analysis was conducted between draft and final EIS to improve the discussion of social impacts, especially as it relates to underserved communities, environmental justice, and traditional ecological knowledge.

For all these reasons, based on my review of the final environmental impact statement and the planning record, I have determined that the most accurate and reliable scientific information available that is relevant to the issues considered in this plan revision has been used to inform the planning process and has been applied to the issues considered in the revision, as required by 36 CFR 219.3.

Findings Required by Other Laws

The Forest Service manages the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests in conformance with many laws and regulations. I have considered the statutes specific to individual resources as

described in the final EIS, and I find that this decision meets our obligations to the current statutory duties of the Forest Service. Following are summaries of how the revised land management plan addresses the relevant laws and regulations.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act

Federal Agencies must make a good faith effort to understand how Native American religious practices may come into conflict with other Forest uses and consider any adverse impacts on these practices in their decision making. The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests is wholly within the territory of the Nez Perce Tribe.

No negative effects and some beneficial effects on American Indian social, economic, or subsistence rights are anticipated as a result of the land management plan revision. Regardless of which alternative is chosen, the Forest Service is required to consult with Tribes when management activities may impact treaty rights and/or cultural sites and cultural use. The revised plan was developed in concert with the Nez Perce Tribe to ensure our general Tribal Trust are met and treaty rights honored. In addition to integrated plan components benefiting terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, wildlife, fish, and botanical species, as well as plan land allocations ensuring access is maintained for the public and the Nez Perce Tribe, we developed a Tribal Trust chapter in the revised plan to provide additional specific desired conditions to ensure we are exceeding our obligations of the treaties. In addition, several special areas and a geographic area were developed for areas of Tribal importance for all action alternatives of the land management plan. The plan components for these areas are directly related to preserving and restoring the Nez Perce Tribe's religious and cultural freedom. Therefore, I find the land management plan is compliant with this act.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

This act provides protection to archaeological resources found on public lands and Native American lands of the United States. The legislation provides civil and criminal penalties for those who remove or damage archaeological resources in violation of the prohibitions contained in the act. The act prohibits the removal of archaeological resources on public lands or Native American lands without first obtaining a permit from the affected Federal Land Manager or Tribe and requires federal agencies to develop plans to survey lands under their management to determine the nature and extent of archaeological and cultural resources.

The land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800 regulations requires assessments to document the presence of historic properties within the area of potential effect for any site-specific activities and to meet the intent of this act. The Forest will also continue to consult with Tribes during site-specific management activities that may impact cultural sites and cultural use. The plan components in the land management plan include provisions that take into consideration American Indian rights and interests and cultural resources. Therefore, I find the land management plan is compliant with this Act.

Clean Air Act

In accordance with the Clean Air Act of 1990 and the Organic Administration Act of 1897, the Forest Service has the responsibility to protect the air, land, and water resources from the impacts

of air pollutants produced within the boundaries of National Forest System lands and to work with states to protect air resources from degradation associated with the impacts of air pollution emitted outside of National Forest System lands. The FEIS Air Quality Section, chapter 3.2.8 addresses and discloses potential impacts from program activities that are approved by the forest plan, including the use of prescribed fire.

The forest plan includes desired conditions and strategies for maintaining air quality and monitoring questions for gathering information. Continued adherence to the Montana and Idaho Airshed Group management practices and all federal, state, and local regulations is expected to minimize degradation to air quality and visibility from these activities for all alternatives. Conformity determinations and more detailed air quality impact analyses will be made at subsequent levels of planning and analysis where emissions can be more accurately quantified, reasonably forecasted, and local impacts can be assessed. Therefore, I find the land management plan to be in compliance with the Clean Air Act.

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (33 U. S. C. § 1251 et seq.) establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States and regulating quality standards for surface waters.

Implementing this land management plan is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfy all State water quality requirements. This finding is based on direction contained in the land management plan, application of "best management practices" specifically designed to protect water quality, and the discussions of water resources and aquatic ecosystems and fisheries of the final EIS. Management direction protecting water quality can be found in many locations throughout the land management plan, including water and aquatic resources, riparian management zones, infrastructure (aquatics and riparian), energy and minerals (aquatics and riparian), lands and special uses (aquatics and riparian) and recreation (aquatics and riparian). Project-level analysis required for land management plan implementation will be required to demonstrate compliance with the Clean Water Act. I find that the land management plan is compliant with this act.

Endangered Species Act

The purpose of the Endangered Species Act is to provide for the conservation of endangered species by conserving the ecosystems these species rely on. Section 7(a)(1) of the Act requires Federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of listed species. In addition, the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to ensure that any agency action does not jeopardize the continued existence of the species (Endangered Species Act, section 7(a)(2)). The Act also requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Forest Service to base their biological opinion and subsequent agency action, respectively, on the use of the best scientific and commercially available information 916 U.S.C. 1536(a)(2)).

The section 7 regulatory definition of Federal ''action'' includes Federal agency programs (50 CFR 402.02). Such programs may include a collection of activities of a similar nature, a group of different actions proposed within a specified geographic area, or an action adopting a framework for the development of future actions. Those future actions may be developed at the local, statewide, or national scale, and are authorized, funded, or carried out and subject to section 7 consultation requirements at a later time as appropriate. Examples of Federal programs that

provide such a framework include land management plans prepared by the Forest Service like this revised plan. For a framework programmatic action, an incidental take statement is not required at the programmatic level; any incidental take resulting from any action subsequently authorized, funded, or carried out under the program will be addressed in subsequent section 7 consultation, as appropriate (50 CFR 402.14(i)(6)).

In 2012 the Forest notified the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) of the land management plan revision process and requested lists of federally listed threatened and endangered species, species proposed for Federal listing, and candidate species to be considered for further evaluation throughout the land management plan revision process. In May 2023 the Forest received the finalized list of proposed, threatened, endangered, and candidate species that would be addressed in the biological assessment (BA).

In accordance with Section 7(c) of the Act, the BA was prepared to assess the effects of implementing the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests Revised Land Management Plan on 12 federally listed threatened, endangered, proposed species or designated critical habitat known or likely to occur on the Forest in Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis, Latah, Nez Perce, Shoshone, and Benewah Counties, Idaho.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests have had open communication regarding consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service. Informal consultation began with early conversations on the proposed action. During the development of the assessment, alternatives and the DEIS, conversations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service, along with the State of Idaho Department of Fish and Game and Nez Perce Tribe focused on development of plan components to address the needs of ESA listed species, including anadromous fish, grizzly bear, and lynx.

Additional consultation on wildlife and plant species with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service occurred in 2019 with informal discussion regarding how the revised forest plan was going to support recovery of listed species. Lynx consultation proceeded under the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD) framework. Consultation on botanical species was initiated in this time frame. Grizzly bear consultation began in 2020 and resulted in a comprehensive grizzly bear strategy for the plan in early 2022 utilizing plan components and potential management approaches.

Work on the biological assessment began in 2019. First drafts were transmitted in 2021 with a subsequent draft being transmitted in the Spring of 2022.By June 1, 2023, a group comprised of the USFS Northern Region Regional Office, the NMFS West Coast Regional Office and FWS Northern Idaho Office agreed that we had reached closure on the BA and the regulatory agencies would accept the BA and initiate a Biological Opinion.

Summary of ESA Findings

Terrestrial Wildlife Species

The proposed framework programmatic action may affect and is Likely to Adversely Affect Canada lynx but has no effect on Canada Lynx critical habitat. The proposed framework programmatic action may affect and is Likely to Adversely Affect grizzly bear. The proposed framework programmatic action will have No Effect on the Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel

because it does not occur within the planning area. The proposed framework programmatic action is Not Likely to Jeopardize the continued existence of wolverine.

Aquatic Species

Endangered Species Act effect determinations of the proposed framework programmatic action are Likely to Adversely Affect Bull Trout and their Critical Habitat; Snake River Steelhead and their Critical Habitat; Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon and their Critical Habitat; and Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon and their Critical Habitat.

Endangered Species Act effect determinations of the proposed framework programmatic action are Not Likely to Adversely Affect Snake River Sockeye Salmon or their Critical Habitat.

There are no Endangered Species Act effect determinations for Coho Salmon because they have been officially extirpated from the action area (i.e., Clearwater Basin; (Galbreath et al. 2014)). Hatchery-raised Coho Salmon have been reintroduced into some action area drainages but have not been listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Magnuson-Stevens Act effect determinations of the proposed framework programmatic action are May Adversely Affect essential fish habitat for Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon; Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon; and Coho Salmon.

Table 8. Summary of effect determinations for individuals and Critical Habitat listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Essential Fish Habitat listed under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA).

Species	Listing Status	Individuals (ESA)	Critical Habitat (ESA)	Essential Fish Habitat (MSA)
Bull trout	Threatened	LAA	LAA	Not Applicable
Snake River Steelhead Trout	Threatened	LAA	LAA	Not Applicable
Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook Salmon	Threatened	LAA	LAA	MAA
Snake River Fall Chinook Salmon	Threatened	LAA	LAA	MAA
Snake River Sockeye Salmon	Endangered	NLAA	NLAA	Not Applicable
Hatchery Coho Salmon	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	MAA

Plant Species

The implementation of the Forest Plan would contribute to the maintenance and restoration of habitat for Spalding's catchfly and result in a may affect, Likely to Adversely Affect determination. MacFarlane's four o'clock is not expected to inhabit the planning area but it does occur in adjacent areas. Because the species is not expected within the planning area, potential effects to the species are extremely unlikely to occur, and thus discountable. Therefore, with the implementation of the Forest Plan, our determination is no effect for MacFarlane's four o'clock. Implementation of the Forest plan would contribute to the maintenance and restoration of whitebark pine on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and result in a may affect, **Likely to Adversely Affect** determination.

The Forests anticipate receiving the Biological Opinion in November or December 2023. This Record of Decision will not be signed until a Biological Opinion is issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service.

The revised Land Management Plan includes desired conditions, standards and guidelines, objectives and provides broad management direction that meets our responsibilities under the ESA Section 7(a)(1). These plan components comply with the requirements of the ESA and the associated recovery plan for each federally listed species. For these reasons, I find this land management plan to be in compliance with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations) environmental justice populations, minority, and low-income populations, are present in the areas surrounding the Forest. The following Counties/Areas are identified as disadvantaged in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening tool:

Table 9. Disadvantage status by county and Tribe reservation for planning area

County/Area	Disadvantaged?	Low Income?	Disadvantaged Burden Identified:
Nez Perce Tribe Reservation	Yes	Yes	Reservation
Idaho County	Yes	Yes	Health, Climate Change, Energy, Legacy Pollution
Clearwater County	Portions	Yes	Climate Change
Shoshone County	Yes	Yes	Climate Change, Health, Energy, Legacy Pollution
Benewah County	Yes	Yes	Legacy Pollution
Latah County	Portions	Rural Portions	Transportation
Nez Perce County	Portions	Portions	Climate Change, Housing, Legacy Pollution,
Lewis County	Yes	Yes	Climate Change, Energy, Housing

https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/

All alternatives considered in the final EIS would contribute to social and economic sustainability by providing benefits to environmental justice communities, improving the quality of life, and providing opportunities for income and jobs. The Forest would continue to provide for traditional, cultural, and spiritual values that are of particular interest to Native American Tribes. The Tribal Trust section in the Plan recognizes the importance of providing access for traditional practices and sustaining treaty reserved rights. As shown in the rationale for the decision, land allocations considered impacts on underserved communities and allows for access to wild spaces, regardless of social or economic status. No populations in the plan area would experience significant adverse human health impacts or environmental effects due to management actions proposed

under any of the alternatives considered. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is in compliance with this executive order.

Federal Land Policy and Management Act

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act allows for the granting of easements across National Forest System lands. The land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature. It provides guidance and direction to future site-specific projects and activities. The land management plan does not create, authorize, or execute any site-specific activity, although it does provide for the consideration of granting easements and rights-of-way. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is consistent with this Act.

Invasive Species

Executive Order 13751, which amends Executive Order 13112, directs Federal agencies to prevent the introduction of invasive species; to detect and respond rapidly to and control populations of such species in a cost-effective and environmentally sound manner, to monitor invasive species populations accurately and reliably; to provide for restoration of native species and habitat conditions in ecosystems that have been invaded; to conduct research on invasive species and develop technologies to prevent introduction; to provide for environmentally sound control of invasive species; and to promote public education on invasive species and the means to address them. All these actions are subject to the availability of appropriations to support this work. Forest Service Manual 2900, Invasive Species Management, sets forth Forest Service policy, responsibilities, and direction for the prevention, detection, control, and restoration of effects from aquatic and terrestrial invasive species (including vertebrates, invertebrates, plants, and pathogens).

The land management plan is strategic and programmatic in nature, providing program-level guidance and direction for future site-specific projects and activities. The land management plan does not create, authorize, or execute any ground-disturbing activity, although it does provide for the consideration of certain types of activities that may have the potential to affect the dispersal of invasive species. The land management plan includes Forestwide desired conditions, objectives, and management approaches that stress the use of best management practices to limit the introduction of new species and limit the spread of existing populations due to management activities. Additionally, other direction provides protection of watershed, soil, riparian, and aquatic conditions in ways that will reduce management-related disturbances that might introduce new populations or increase existing ones. Land management plan monitoring also includes indicators associated with invasive species, and the effectiveness of treatments. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with this Executive Order.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Executive Order 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, was issued in furtherance of the purposes of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Acts, the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the NEPA. This order requires including the effects of Federal actions on migratory birds as a part of the environmental analysis process. On December 8, 2008, the Forest Service signed a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to complement the Executive order (USDI-USFWS, 2008), and the Forest Service agreed to incorporate migratory bird habitat and population objectives and recommendations into the agency planning process, in

cooperation with other governments, State and Federal agencies, and non-Federal partners, and strive to protect, restore, enhance, and manage the habitat of migratory birds, and prevent the further loss or degradation of remaining habitats on National Forest System lands. The Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds was established in 2009 by the Secretary of the Interior to oversee Executive Order 13186. More than 20 Federal agencies, including the Forest Service, currently participate in and have representation on the Council for the Conservation of Migratory Birds.

The land management plan includes forestwide direction related to key stressors for migratory birds and their habitats, including direction to maintain or improve forest resilience, composition, and structure. Future site-specific activities or projects with the potential to impact migratory bird habitat will be analyzed with site-specific analysis under the NEPA process and will comply with land management plan direction. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186.

Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act

The Forest Service manages National Forest System lands to sustain the multiple use of its renewable resources in perpetuity while maintaining the long-term health and productivity of the land. Resources are managed through a combination of approaches and concepts for the benefit of human communities and natural resources. As demonstrated in the final EIS and as required by the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528-531), the land management plan guides sustainable and integrated management of Forest resources in the context of the broader landscape, giving due consideration to the relative values of the various resources in particular areas. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act.

National Environmental Policy Act

The NEPA requires that Federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that may significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The Act's requirement is designed to serve two major functions:

- to provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of proposed actions prior to adoption.
- to inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

The Forest Service has developed, gathered, and reviewed an extensive amount of information regarding the potential programmatic effects of each of the alternatives considered in the final EIS. This information expands and refines the data, analyses, and public input described in the NEPA documents associated with the draft plan and draft EIS. My decision also considers the large amount of public input, including public meetings, comments on the Internet website, and comments received during the 120-day comment period for the draft EIS.

All substantive comments, written and oral, made regarding the draft EIS have been summarized and responded to in appendix M of the final EIS. During the course of this effort, the public involvement has led to changes in the analysis and the alternatives. I find that the environmental analysis and public involvement process the final EIS is based on complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for

implementing the NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). My conclusion is supported by the following findings.

- The final EIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The six alternatives considered in detail in the final EIS cover a broad range of possible management allocations based on revision topics identified through public involvement and scoping. The Preferred Alternative was a compilation of the five alternatives analyzed in the DEIS and is within the range of what was analyzed. An additional 15 alternatives were considered but not analyzed in detail (see EIS chapter 2).
- The final EIS reflects consideration of cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future land management in the plan area, including Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands. The environmental effects analysis estimates the potential effects of timber activities and timber-associated activities. The analysis of effects to wildlife was based on the assumption that these activities would take place with management constraints to ensure habitat availability at certain thresholds. Moreover, although non-Federal lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their land management guidance and practices have been thoroughly considered and coordinated, to the extent practicable, in the final EIS.
- The final EIS uses scientific integrity to support the conclusions made. The decision here does not authorize timber sales or any other specific activity on the Forest. Site-specific decisions will be made on projects in compliance with the NEPA, the Endangered Species Act, and other environmental laws following applicable public involvement and appeal procedures.

National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act requires the development, maintenance, amendment, and revision of land management plans for each unit of the National Forest System. These land management plans help create a dynamic management system, so an interdisciplinary approach to achieve integrated consideration of physical, biological, economic, and other sciences will be applied to all future actions on the unit. Under the Act, the Forest Service is to ensure coordination of the multiple uses and sustained yield of products and services of the National Forest System.

The National Forest Management Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations for developing and maintaining land management plans. On April 9, 2012, the Department of Agriculture issued a Final Planning Rule for National Forest System land management planning (36 CFR Part 219).

As discussed in detail in the requirements of the planning rule section of this document, my review of the planning process, the final EIS, and the information provided in the record of decision indicate the final plan and its preparation meet requirements for revising plans under the provisions of the 2012 Planning Rule and is compliant with the National Forest Management Act.

National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires each Federal agency to take into account the effects of its actions on historic properties, prior to approving expenditure of Federal funds on an undertaking or prior to issuing any license; while Section 110 of the Act outlines the

Federal agency responsibility to establish and maintain a preservation program for the identification, evaluation, and nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, and protection of historic properties.

The Land Management Plan is a programmatic level planning effort that will not directly authorize any ground disturbing activities or projects. The land management plan includes desired conditions, goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, management strategies, and monitoring requirements for managing and protecting cultural resources listed or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Site-specific projects that are undertaken as a result of the direction in the land management plan will comply with laws and regulations that ensure protection of heritage resources. Significant cultural resources will be identified, protected, and monitored in compliance with the Act. Any consultation that will occur for proposed activities will be coordinated with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Nez Perce Tribe's Historic Preservation Officer. The Forest will continue to work with the Nez Perce Tribe and SHPO to develop a Programmatic Agreement under NHPA to govern future consultation, with the Tribe as a signatory. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is in compliance with this act.

Idaho Roadless Rule

Management direction for inventoried roadless areas is compliant with the 2008 Idaho Rule (36 CFR 294 subpart C). The 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule includes restrictions and prohibitions on road construction, timber harvest and discretionary minerals activities within the Idaho Roadless Rule Areas. The land management plan is a programmatic-level planning effort and does not directly authorize any road construction, timber harvest or discretionary minerals projects. Additionally plan standard MA2-STD-IRA-01 states that if any inconsistency is found between the revised plan and the Idaho Roadless Rule, the Idaho Roadless Rule will take precedence. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.

Travel Management Regulations

The travel management regulations at 36 CFR establishes requirements for administration of the forest transportation system and designations of public motor vehicle use. Subpart A requires identification of the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands and use of a science-based roads analysis at the appropriate scale in determining the minimum road system. This portion of the regulations is intended to help ensure that additions to the National Forest System network of roads are those deemed essential for resource management and use; that construction, reconstruction, and maintenance of roads minimize adverse environmental impacts; and, finally, that unneeded roads are decommissioned, and restoration of ecological processes are initiated (66 Federal Register 3206, Jan. 12, 2001).

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests completed forest-scale road analyses in 2015 as required by subpart A. The analysis provided an assessment of the transportation infrastructure on National Forest System lands and a set of findings and opportunities for change to the transportation system. Those findings are being used under the current plan and will continue to be used under this revised plan to prioritize ongoing management of the transportation system and inform project development as the Forest works to effectively manage an efficient transportation system.

Together with the assessment, the travel analysis report was used to inform the plan components such as the objectives for miles of roads and trails to be maintained (see Infrastructure and Sustainable Recreation sections of the land management plan). Objectives such as these provide measurable actions the Forest may take over the life of the plan per the findings in the travel analysis report, consistent with subpart A of the Travel Management Rule.

Subparts B and C of the 212 regulations describe the requirements for designating roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use; and for identifying designated roads, trails, and areas on a motor vehicle use map and an over snow vehicle use map. It's important to note that subparts B and C of the Travel Management Rule and the associated Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on the Public Lands, as amended by Executive Order 11989, apply to site-specific designations of motor vehicle use. As stated earlier in this record of decision, the plan does not authorize projects or activities or commit the Forest Service to act, nor does it regulate public use either through designation or prohibition of public motor vehicle use.

The revised plan's identification of certain lands as suitable for motor vehicle use is not a commitment to allow such use but only an indication that the use might be appropriate to guide site-specific designations of motor vehicle use. The requirements at 36 CFR 212.55 to consider effects with the objective of minimizing damage to resources, harassment of wildlife, and recreation conflict applies when making site-specific motor vehicle use designations.

The suite of desired conditions, standards, and guidelines that provide for wildlife diversity, ecological integrity, and sustainable recreation will provide guidance for considering the effects of future motor vehicle use designations on forest resources and recreation conflicts, as described at 36 CFR 212.55(b). These include the plan components associated with the recreation opportunity spectrum settings, infrastructure, and those that address management risks and stressors to wildlife habitat, connectivity, soil productivity, and aquatic resources.

Therefore, I find that this land management plan is in compliance with the Travel Management Rule.

Wetlands and Floodplains

These executive orders require Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short- and long-term effects resulting from the modification or destruction of wetlands and the occupancy and modification of floodplains. Forestwide standards and guidelines are provided for soil, water, wetlands, and riparian areas to minimize effects to wetlands and floodplains. They incorporate the best management practices of the Forest Service Soil and Water Conservation Handbook. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with these executive orders.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act

This act establishes a National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with three classifications of rivers: wild, scenic, and recreational. The purpose of the act is to protect the designated rivers "for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations" and to preserve the rivers' free-flowing condition, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values.

Analysis of the plan components to protect designated wild and scenic rivers was included in the final EIS. Management area direction in the land management plan provides protection for the water quality, free-flowing conditions, and outstandingly remarkable values identified for those rivers. In addition, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires an evaluation of eligible wild, scenic,

or recreational rivers in land management planning. This was completed, and the 88 rivers identified through the eligible wild and scenic river study process were analyzed in the final EIS. Management direction in the land management plan provides protection of free-flowing conditions and the outstandingly remarkable values identified for the eligible segments of rivers on the Forest. Additionally, interim protection measures in the Eligible and Suitable Wild and Scenic Rivers section of the land management plan apply to the 11 rivers I have found suitable and the one river that did not undergo suitability study and will remain eligible. Therefore, I find that the land management plan is compliant with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Wilderness Act

The Wilderness Act of 1964 established a National Wilderness Preservation System to be administered in such a manner as to leave these areas unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. It provides the statutory definition of wilderness, how areas are assessed for addition to the wilderness preservation system, and management requirements for congressionally designated areas.

Evaluation of existing wilderness and areas recommended for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System was included in the environmental analysis for the land management plan. The land management plan provides direction for designated wilderness through goals, desired conditions, standards, guidelines, and suitability that preserves the wilderness character of designated wilderness. Therefore, I find that this land management plan is compliant with this act.

Implementation Date

The plan becomes effective 30 calendar days after publication of the notice of its approval in the Federal Register (36 CFR 219.17(a), 2012 Planning Rule).

Administrative Review

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests' LMP, final EIS, draft ROD, and other supporting documentation are available for review on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests' plan revision webpage at https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/nezperceclearwater/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5447338.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests' list of species of conservation concern and other supporting information will be available for review at: http://bit.ly/NorthernRegion-SCC.

A copy of the legal notice will also be published on the website.

The publication date of the legal notice is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an objection. Objectors must not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source (36 CFR 219.56(b)(3)). It is the responsibility of the objector to ensure that the reviewing officer receives the objection in a timely manner. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the objection filing period (36 CFR 219.56(d).

If you wish to file an objection, and have standing to do so, you must do so in writing. Electronic objection submissions can be submitted at https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public//CommentInput?Project=44089. Electronic objections need to be submitted in a format that is readable with optical character recognition software (e.g., Word, PDF, Rich text) and searchable. The following address should be used for objections submitted by mail, courier, or hand-delivery: USDA Forest Service Northern Region, ATTN: Objection Reviewing Officer, 26 Fort Missoula Road, Missoula, MT 59804. Objections or objection content specific to the identification of species of conservation concern will be forwarded to the SCC Reviewing Officer. The business hours for those submitting a hand-delivered objection are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays. Contact Sara Daugherty, 208-963-4206, sara.daugherty@usda.gov during business hours to obtain instructions for faxing an objection.

The decisions to approve the final revised LMP for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and the Regional Forester's SCC list will be subject to the objection process identified in 36 CFR 219 Subpart B. Only those individuals and entities who have submitted substantive formal comments related to the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests plan revision during the opportunities provided for public comment during the planning process will be eligible to file an objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment (36 CFR 219.53(a)).

An objection must include the following (36 CFR 219.54(c)):

(1) The objector's name and address along with a telephone number or email address if available. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an objection, the Forest Service will attempt to verify the identity of the objector to confirm objection eligibility;

(2) Signature or other verification of authorship upon request (a scanned signature for electronic mail may be filed with the objection);

(3) Identification of the lead objector when multiple names are listed on the objection. The Forest Service will communicate to all parties to an objection through the lead objector. Verification of the identity of the lead objector must also be provided if requested;

(4) The name of the plan revision, or list of species of conservation concern being objected to and the name and title of the responsible official;

(5) A statement of the issues and/or parts of the plan revision to which the objection applies;

(6) A concise statement explaining the objection and suggesting how the proposed plan decision may be improved. If the objector believes that the plan revision is inconsistent with law, regulation, or policy, an explanation should be included;

(7) A statement that demonstrates the link between the objector's prior substantive comments and the content of the objection, unless the objection concerns an issue that arose after the opportunities for formal comment; and

(8) All documents referenced in the objection must be provided (a bibliography is not sufficient) except: (a) All or any part of the Federal law or regulation; (b) Forest Service Directive System documents and land management plans or other published Forest Service documents; (c) Documents referenced by the Forest Service in the planning documentation related to the

proposal subject to objection; and (d) Formal comments previously provided to the Forest Service by the objector during the plan revision comment period.

The Responsible Official for the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests plan revision is Cheryl F. Probert, Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest Supervisor. The Responsible Official for the species of conservation concern is Leanne Marten, Northern Region Regional Forester. The Regional Forester is the Reviewing Officer for the revised plan. The Chief of the Forest Service, or designee, is the Reviewing Officer for the species of conservation concern. All objections are open to public inspection and will be posted to the project's online CARA reading room. For additional information concerning plan revision and this objection process, contact: Sara Daugherty, Forest Planner, sara.daugherty@usda.gov, 208-963-4206.

Plan Implementation

Existing Authorizations

Resource plans (example travel management plans) developed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater that apply to the resources or land areas within the planning area must be consistent with the plan components. Resource plans developed prior to this plan decision will be evaluated for consistency with the plan and updated as soon as practicable.

Authorizations for occupancy and use made before this plan approval may proceed unchanged until time of reauthorization. At time of reauthorization, all permits, contracts, and other authorizing instruments must be made consistent with the plan, subject to existing valid rights, as provided at 36 CFR 219.15(d).

Plan components applicable to livestock grazing (including the end of season stubble height guideline) will be incorporated through permit modification(s), reissuance of existing term permits, issuance of new term grazing permits, or as allotment management plan revisions and sufficiency reviews occur. Monitoring data will be used to prioritize both allotments and stream reaches. It is expected that all allotments will be managed under the plan direction within the first decade.

National Environmental Policy Act analysis will be necessary to consider closure of vacant allotments. NEPA analysis will also be required to regulate public use consistent with suitability decisions made in this revised plan , including allowing over-snow motorized use in a portion of the Hoodoo Roadless Area that was closed by my Clearwater Travel Plan decision in 2015, to exclude motorized use in areas that are new recommended wilderness areas including additions to the Mallard-Larkins RWA and the East Meadow Creek RWA, and to re-establish summer motorized use on the Fish Lake Trail.

Project and Activity Consistency

As required by National Forest Management Act and the 2012 Planning Rule, subject to valid existing or statutory rights, all projects and activities authorized by the Forest Service after approval of this plan must be consistent with the applicable plan components (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)) as described at 36 CFR 219.15. Previously approved and ongoing projects and activities are not required to meet the direction of the revised plan and will remain consistent with the direction in the Nez Perce 1987 and Clearwater1987 Plans, as amended.

All project or activity approval documents made after the effective date of the plan will describe how the project or activity is consistent with the applicable components of the plan. When a proposed project or activity would not be consistent with the applicable plan components, the responsible official shall take one of the following steps, subject to valid existing or statutory rights:

1. Modify the proposed project or activity to make it consistent with the applicable plan components;
2. Reject the proposal or terminate the project or activity;
3. Amend the plan so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended;
4. Amend the plan contemporaneously with the approval of the project or activity so that the project or activity will be consistent with the plan as amended. This amendment may be limited to apply only to the project or activity.

Maintaining the Plan

A land management plan is an integral part of an adaptive management cycle, including assessment, plan revision or amendment, and monitoring. This adaptive management cycle enables the national forest to identify and respond to changing conditions, changing public desires, and new information, such as that obtained through research and scientific findings. The plan monitoring program is an integral part of this adaptive management cycle, consisting of monitoring questions and indicators (see appendix 3 of the plan for additional information about the monitoring plan).

A land management plan may be amended at any time based on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan, which may be based on a new assessment, plan monitoring, or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. The amendment and administrative change process is described at 36 CFR 219.17(b)(2) of the 2012 Planning Rule.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this draft decision or the objection process, please contact Zach Peterson, Public and Government Relations Staff Officer, at the Nez Perce- Clearwater National Forests- Forest Supervisor's Office, 1008 Highway 64, Kamiah, ID 83536 by phone at (208)935-4239 or by email at Zachary.peterson@usda.gov.

Signature and Date

[Reserved for final approval]

_____ _____

Cheryl F. Probert DATE

Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests

Appendix I- Wild and Scenic River Suitability Determination and the Outstandingly Remarkable Values on the Nez Perce Clearwater

Following is a narrative of the suitability determination process and consideration of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) in that process of determining which rivers should be recommended to Congress for designation as a Wild and Scenic River. The detailed analysis and information that informed the suitability determinations are in the Land Management Plan FEIS Appendix F, as well as the complete LMP analysis as documented in that FEIS.

The information in Appendix F and the FEIS was considered along with the information, insights, perspectives, and recommendations expressed in the many meetings, conversations, and letters that came through: the thousands of comments received through public involvement; the interests and expertise of the cooperating agencies, counties and the Nez Perce Tribe; the concerns and recommendations of collaborators; the perspectives, interests and recommendations from local, regional and national interest groups; and the hundreds of interested citizens that engaged in meetings and/or submitted written comments. Collectively, this informed the analysis as documented in the FEIS and the is the basis of the decisions in the Record of Decision.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of October 2, 1968, established a policy to complement the national policy of constructing dams and other developments within river segments that were determined appropriate for such use. The Act indicates the policy is to preserve and protect the free-flow, water quality and other exemplary values that contribute to vital national conservation purposes. The Act provides for permanent protection of the designated rivers for the benefit of present and future generations. Emphasis in the administration of a designated river is to protect and enhance the values which caused the river to be included in the National System. The Middle Fork of the Clearwater, including the Lochsa and Selway Rivers, is the first named river in the Act itself.

The Act establishes the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System) that documents those river segments authorized by Congress for inclusion in the National System. The Act also establishes a suitability and reporting process that requires specific information regarding those rivers considered in the suitability determination. Chief among this specific information includes “the characteristics which do or do not make the area a worthy addition to the system,” and “the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water which would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the national wild and scenic rivers system”.

Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 80 provides the direction for the process of identifying and evaluating potential additions to the National System. The Handbook provides clear criteria to set the minimum threshold to establish an outstandingly remarkable value and therefore, eligibility for consideration in the suitability process. Identifying ORVs is part of the initial filtering of rivers to distinguish which rivers can be considered for inclusion in the National System. Once these eligible rivers are identified Chapter 83 provides the study criteria and considerations that guide the process, and serve as the basis, of the suitability determination.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and Forest Service Handbook make it clear that all eligible rivers are not necessarily suitable, and the suitability process is designed to give the decision maker

pertinent, consistent information to make a distinction between those rivers that simply meet the minimum criteria to be considered eligible, and those rivers that go beyond the minimum criteria and should be included in the National System. The handbook provides guidance for weighing the characteristics of each river and a mechanism for comparison to the other eligible rivers. It indicates the objective of the suitability study is to distinguish which eligible rivers possess those characteristics that would best contribute to preservation purposes through designation as a Wild and Scenic River, or which rivers may better contribute to the conservation of our natural resources through management of these resources consistent with Land Management Plan direction and components; to meet Land Management Plan desired conditions, objectives in a sustainable manner without the emphasis on preservation a of ORVs and permanent designation.

Throughout this analysis we use the terms “permanent protection” in reference to the interim protective measures for the rivers found suitable. To some readers, this may imply that the outstandingly remarkable values would not be protected if the river is not found suitable. That would be an incorrect assumption. The full suite of land management plan components will provide protection of resource values across the Forest and ensure ecological, social, and economic sustainability at the Plan level. The Forestwide plan components provide a baseline wherein resources are managed to persist across the Forest. Rivers found suitable for designation in the WSR system would then have additional restrictions on activities in order to protect and enhance ORVs.

The suitability factors and criteria in Chapter 83.2 were used as a guide to review all aspects of a river segment. Although these factors and the data that support them were reviewed, the nature of the suitability determination also involves consideration of the qualitative aspects of the social, economic and resource values. These qualitative values were expressed through the involvement of the public, cooperating agencies, counties, collaborators, the Nez Perce Tribe, and individuals and organizations within the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Varying suitability across NEPA alternatives allowed me to consider the tradeoffs associated with a suitability determination in the context of other Land Management Plan direction. This also allowed the public to provide input on the full suite of options, rather than focusing their comments on one permutation of suitability. Suitability was different for each alternative due to the broad themes within the alternative and how they related to the suitability factors and criteria in Chapter 83.2.

Making the suitability determination in conjunction with Land Management Plan revision proved to be beneficial for both processes. From a Land Management Plan perspective, making this final determination removes uncertainty as to the future management of river segments determined suitable as well as those determined not suitable. It provides the opportunity to see how best to meet Land Management Plan desired conditions and objectives, and how designating Wild and Scenic rivers best meets desired conditions from a Forest perspective. Benefits from a river suitability perspective include economy of scale in accomplishing the data gathering and analysis, and having a more robust record to inform the decision that otherwise might have had a narrower scope. The Land Management Plan provides comprehensive information and direction to have a clear understanding of the values, conditions, and options to address the likely environmental consequences for the river values and other resource activities whether or not a river is added to the National System. It provides the necessary information to fully understand “the reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water which would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the national wild and scenic rivers system.” (W&SR Act, Sec 4(a)). Suitability during revision of a land management plan also provides opportunity to consider administrative recommendations in the context of other recommended and designated

lands, and to look specifically at how recommendations and designations interact with one another. Additionally, other land management plan decisions are considered at this time, such as the suitability of motorized recreation, the scenic integrity objectives, or the suitability of timber harvest in an area. Therefore, when considering the full spectrum of resources, management objectives and options across the Forest, it was important to look for those areas or resources that represent the best value or opportunity to move the Forest toward the desired conditions. It was important to identify those areas and resources that best contribute to and complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan. And, in the case of river suitability, it was important to identify those river segments that best represent the qualities of a designated Wild and Scenic River, rivers that provide a significant contribution to national conservation purposes, and rivers that warrant the special emphasis and permanent protection through designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

We chose not to layer these different managements schemes on top of each other, instead, we fit them together across the landscape to build an integrated and cohesive, suite of management objectives that better provides for all uses, while focusing on the outstanding features of different areas. In fitting the pieces of areas analyzed for administrative recommendations together, I looked at the underlying reasons that our analysis and public comments indicated were the most important and special. This allowed us to use the many varied land allocations including recommend wilderness, wild and scenic river suitability, motorized vehicle suitability, and others to best manage and highlight those key features. We also considered what those designations would do to benefit or harm other resources.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

FISH

Three regions of comparison for eligibility for the fisheries ORV were identified on the Nez Perce/Clearwater National Forests, which include the Clearwater Basin in its entirety and portions of 3 subbasins within the Salmon basin. Fish, particularly salmonids, are an important component of the Clearwater River ecosystem, culture, society, and economy, locally and regionally. The presence and continuance of salmonids in the Clearwater River and Salmon River basins is an important consideration in the goals, objectives, and desired condition for the Forest. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with habitat, free-flowing clean water, and numerous species of resident and anadromous fish. Fish are ubiquitous across the Forest. The Forest works with other federal and state agencies to manage, protect and enhance the fisheries resource. These include the Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Idaho Water Resources Board. These agencies are committed to the protection of the fisheries resources across the Forest.

The aquatic and riparian plan components in the revised land management plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas everywhere. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the listed wildlife ORV species and their habitat. And, while the construction of dams would certainly impact these species, it is highly unlikely that any Forest Service authorizing action that includes large-scale impoundments or activities that affect free flowing or clean water would be consistent with the Land Management Plan aquatic desired conditions. Therefore, any such proposals likely would not be authorized during the life of the plan.

While most waters of the Nez Perce-Clearwater support some fisheries resource, all rivers do not possess the same attributes, value or contribution toward the goals, objectives or desired condition for fisheries and water-related resources. Eighty-eight rivers were found eligible, totaling approximately 919 miles on National Forest lands. This includes 317 miles in designated wilderness, MA1; 482 miles in roadless, MA2; and 120 miles in the front country, MA3. Of the eighty-eight eligible rivers, forty-one have fish identified as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value. Fish was identified as an ORV more than any other ORV category. And most of these eligible rivers possess three of the four eligibility attributes: diversity and abundance, habitat quality and natural reproduction.

This broad array of eligible rivers highlights the abundance and importance of the fisheries resource in the identified fish regions of comparison. It also provides greater opportunity and flexibility to identify those rivers that can best contribute to the goals and objectives of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act while contributing to the other goals, objectives, and desired conditions as described in the Land Management Plan. It provides greater opportunity to identify those fishery resources that best contribute to and warrant the special emphasis through designation as a Wild and Scenic River in addition to the protections already in place through the land management plan, other laws, and regulations, etc.

Factors considered included: the uniqueness of the fisheries ORV versus the redundancy of or plentifulness of that fisheries value; the relative contribution to the river system's fisheries resource; existing activities in or near the river corridor and their effects on the river fisheries value; the Management Area and management emphasis for the surrounding area; opportunity to meet other Land Management Plan objectives while preserving the fisheries resource through Land Management Plan components and direction, and how that may be affected with designation; and the social and Tribal values and uses of the river and its fisheries resource and how those may be affected with or without designation.

NEZ PERCE CULTURAL

"The water that runs through Mother Earth's veins is the blood of life to all beings."

Allen Slickpoo, Sr in Salmon and His People, page 24

The region of comparison (ROC) for eligibility of historic and cultural values was determined

to be central Idaho and NE Oregon. This area is meant to capture the deep river canyons that were drivers of past settlement systems – both historic and prehistorically. The ROC roughly corresponds to the "usual and accustomed" area of the Nez Perce Tribe as determined by the Indian Claims Commission.

Since time immemorial, the Nez Perce have occupied, utilized, managed, and been a part of the lands and resources included in the Nez Perce Clearwater. Throughout this time certain areas have had generations of continuous or repeated use and occupancy, while other areas have had less frequent or transient use, some areas for dispersed activities, some sites for sacred purposes. There are literally hundreds of archaeological sites as well as ancient trails, important traditional areas, sacred sites, and areas of value maintained through oral traditions across the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

Unfortunately, many of the traditional use areas of the Nez Perce have been altered or lost through flooding, erosion, and landsides from breaches of Glacial Lake Missoula, or occupancy

and use since settlement by Euro-Americans. Human impacts to sites occurred through farming, mining, logging, roads, dams, occupancy, and recreational activities. These activities create physical disturbance as well as extraneous sights and sounds that reduce the value of an area and impedes the ability of Nez Perce people to engage in traditional spiritual and environmental connection in an undisturbed, quiet setting. These varied conditions of sites and areas influence their relative contribution to traditional activities, their contribution to the history and record of the Nez Perce, and their value for current use by Nez Perce people and visitors to the Nez Perce Clearwater.

However, many sites and areas do remain on the Forest that have little disturbance and retain their values for Nez Perce traditional, cultural, and current experiences. Many of these areas are important to the Nez Perce people as traditional camping, fishing, and gathering places. Some of these places have been visited for generations and are culturally important today. A few sites and areas provide significant value to the Tribe as a whole with unique or rare characteristics, use for rare sacred purposes, or sites that represent the origin or conflict of cultures. And a few sites provide exemplary educational value providing evidence of prehistoric human practices, occupancy, and culture. These are the considerations in determining which of these sites possess higher integrity, more value, and greater significance than other similar sites across the Forest and, more broadly, across the "usual and accustomed" area of the Nez Perce Tribe. A primary obligation and intent of the revised land management plan is to maintain and protect these significant sites. While wild and scenic river designation may highlight the rivers cultural importance, protection of cultural ORVs is accomplished regardless of designation through other plan components implementing Treaties, sustaining resources, associated with the Tribe's rights implementing co-stewardship, other federal laws, and regulation.

CULTURAL

The Nez Perce and other Native American Tribes have traveled the landscapes now known as the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests since time immemorial. The arrival of the Corps of Discovery to the Nez Perce-Clearwater in 1805 marks the beginning of the "historic period" for central Idaho. That arrival set off a succession of events that changed Native American culture and the landscape in and around the Nez Perce-Clearwater. As trappers, explorers, miners, loggers, farmers, ranchers, homesteaders, and businessmen invaded and traversed the area they established areas of concentrated settlement and activity, and the use and exploitation of the abundant natural resources in the area. With the rising national concerns over the condition of forested watersheds on public lands the Forest Reserves were established in the area and ultimately the Forest Service established in this region. That brought with it the development of Forest Service-related administrative sites, lookouts, trails, and bridges, followed by roads, communications sites, campgrounds, and other appurtenances to support the protection of, and use and enjoyment of the public lands. This Forest Service occupation of the area is well evidenced through the presence, maintenance, and protection of numerous sites on the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

As stated in the FEIS, Chapter 3, Cultural Resources, the Nez Perce-Clearwater expresses "a rich narrative reflecting a converging cross-section of cultures, technologies, values and environments."

Consequently, there is a plethora of evidence of the Euro-American use and development over the past couple centuries. However, as with all resources, there are varying degrees of the quality, contribution, and significance of any evidence of these past activities. From a completely

undisturbed site to one that is heavily impacted by current activity, all sites that meet the historic and cultural values ORV do not necessarily bring the same level of these values. Integrity, interpretive and educational value, significance of the site or person represented, and rarity and uniqueness can all be different between ORV sites and influence its overall value. Additionally, consideration of other reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water may be a preferred management approach in the area to best meet the goals, objectives and desired condition described by the Nez Perce-Clearwater Land Management Plan. In some situations, maintaining flexibility for potential future uses while implementing Land Management Plan protections for cultural resources will provide more opportunity to meet the Land Management Plan desired conditions, rather than applying the special emphasis and designation that may foreclose or curtail other management activities that might have better met Land Management Plan goals, objectives, and desired condition.

RECREATION

In developing the region of comparison for eligibility of the recreation ORV we considered where the majority of Forest visitors come from. Forest visitors generally are local or regional, coming from as far as Spokane, Missoula and Boise and places in between, or approximately ½ day's drive from a portion of the Forest as determined from the 2011 National Visitor Use Monitoring data.

Recreation experiences and opportunities on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are greatly influenced by the physical nature of the area including the geologic, hydrologic, vegetative, climatic, and related environmental conditions. This backdrop lends itself to a plethora of outdoor recreational pursuits from quiet solitude to motorized adventure, from fly-fishing to white-water boating, from snowshoeing to snowmobiling, and much more. With the increasing population within the recreation region of comparison it is expected that there will be changes in use patterns as well as increasing demand on these recreational activities on public lands. Today's recreationists often interact with the Forests differently due to changing demographics. Day use is increasing while overnight use is decreasing for many demographics. Motorized use continues to increase in popularity and technology is constantly changing allowing more people to visit more of the Forests using new methods. Managing these resources and opportunities in a sustainable manner requires consideration of all the ecological, economic, and social aspects of these recreational pursuits. The Land Management Plan components and direction provide management constraints and permissions affecting recreation activities and are applied across the landscape through Management Area direction, Idaho Roadless Rule direction, and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes. A critical piece of the desired conditions for the Nez Perce-Clearwater is to sustainably provide for a broad array of recreational opportunities suited to this landscape, culture, and interest of the recreating public. It is also critically important to provide access to these wild rivers and streams to the diverse array of people, regardless of social or economic status or ability.

The Forest has 1,460 rivers and streams, with 88 rivers totaling 925 miles determined eligible. Consequently, river based, and river-associated, recreation opportunities are abundant across the Forest. While no two settings or experiences are the same, the Forest, and region of comparison, have many places that provide comparable experiences across the spectrum of recreational opportunities. Some areas are better suited for specific activities while other areas provide for multiple recreation pursuits. Some areas provide an enhanced or unique experience while other areas offer experiences similar to those found across the region of comparison. Some are more heavily used for social and traditional activities while others serve smaller populations. Some

areas have other management or public activities occurring that adversely impact the recreation experience. And some river segments would best serve the public through management under Land Management Plan components and direction with the protections that come through those and other laws and regulation. These are the aspects of the recreation ORV I considered while reviewing the eligible rivers in making the suitability determination.

SCENIC

The region of comparison for eligibility for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. For the Scenic ORV, the distinctive attributes are directly tied to water features and the geologic, hydrologic, and vegetative features of the steep river canyons that comprise much of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

As with recreation, the scenery on the Nez Perce-Clearwater is largely affected by the physical nature of the area including the geologic, hydrologic, vegetative, climatic, and related environmental conditions such as fire. The landscape of the Nez Perce-Clearwater begins in the high mountain peaks of the Bitterroot Mountains and flows to the deep canyons of the Salmon, Selway, Lochsa, and Clearwater Rivers. Scenery can also be greatly influenced by human activities in and around the Forest, most of which is associated with Nez Perce-Clearwater management activities and access. The place from which someone is viewing this landscape also greatly affects the scenic value of an area. The Nez Perce-Clearwater offers numerous opportunities to enjoy natural appearing landscapes, with management activities evident consistent with scenic integrity objectives identified in the Land Management Plan.

Most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where our visitors come from, and where else those publics might go, as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. In this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of “distinctive scenic features” and “distinctive river canyons” encompass many similar river segments, not only in the recreation region of comparison but in neighboring national forests and other national forests in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain ranges.

I considered the redundancy of similar features such as waterfalls and rapids, the juxtaposition of powerful whitewater and slow moving, calm sections, the diversity of shoreline landscapes or striking geologic features. I considered the notoriety or significance of the scenic ORV to the visiting public. I also considered how management activities implemented under the Land Management Plan components and direction might affect the scenic ORV of any given river segment, and how designation might affect such management activities that might be planned in the river corridor. This is perhaps the most difficult ORV to evaluate since beauty is, as they say, in the eye of the beholder. To some, an unbroken blanket of forests seems most natural and is most pleasing to the eye. For others, a mosaic of vegetative and physical features and structure is more natural and holds higher scenic value. The difference between Land Management Plan direction and the interim protection measures for rivers found suitable is likely discernible with this ORV. For the other ORVs, the difference between plan components that provide sustainability and interim protection measures would be almost indistinguishable.

WILDLIFE

We selected the Forests administrative boundary, including portions of the Salmon River watershed, as the region of comparison because of its biodiversity and large size. For the

purposes of identifying wildlife outstandingly remarkable values, regionally and nationally important populations of wildlife within the region of comparison were defined as those Federal listed T&E species, State-Listed (Tier Listed Species in the Idaho Statewide Wildlife Action Plan), species of conservation concern, those species considered to be unique, endemic, or rare as identified in the Idaho Statewide Wildlife Action Plan, or species ranked in NatureServe as G1 or G2 or S-rankings of S1 or S2. This screening process identified 133 species as regionally or nationally important. The list of species was refined by removing species that are not river dependent. This resulted in 13 river dependent species and one group of pond snails (Stagnicola spp.) identified as regionally or nationally important, and their presence supporting a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value.

The forest contains a suite of Idaho and regional endemic species that are, in many cases, unique to the region and often limited to the plan area and immediately adjacent areas. The identified species are rare, limited in distribution, and appear to be most imperiled by changes to river alteration, damming, diversion, sedimentation, changes to water quality, and temperature.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. A group of stakeholders, including the Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho, developed more than 120 plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions.

The aquatic and riparian plan components in the revised land management plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas everywhere. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the listed wildlife ORV species and their habitat. And, while the construction of dams would certainly impact these species, it is highly unlikely that any Forest Service authorizing action that includes large-scale impoundments or activities that affect free flowing or clean water would be consistent with the Land Management Plan aquatic desired conditions. Therefore, any such proposals likely would not be authorized during the life of the plan.

Dams for the purpose of energy generation could be proposed by entities other than the Forest Service. However, studies have shown that the likelihood of such development is minimal. Additionally, any such proposal would be subject to NEPA, including public involvement, and the actions would have to be consulted on with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Construction of dams where these species or their habitat is present would most likely result in direct negative impacts to the species and would not be consistent with the September 27th, 2023, Presidential Memorandum on supporting salmon and steelhead recovery. Designation as a Wild and Scenic River would permanently prevent this activity from occurring and would give emphasis to preserving the river's outstandingly remarkable values. However, given that there is little expectation of any such proposal coming forward, the rigorous environmental analysis that would be required, the high degree of public engagement and controversial nature of such development, and the Forest Plan components that would preclude such activities, there is little expectation that a major hydroelectric facility would be developed on National Forest System Lands during the life of the plan.

I considered that there is little to no threat of dam construction during the life of the Plan and such construction would be against the new Presidential Memorandum which requires all Agencies to

do everything within their Mission to support recovery of salmon and steelhead. There is low confidence in the data supporting the presence and abundance of the listed species. And, generally, there are other management goals that would better provide ecological, social, and economic benefits to the American people than permanent protection of these species. Additionally, there is a plethora of Land Management Plan components to protect aquatic and riparian values that would directly benefit these species if present and allow for other management actions that otherwise might be precluded. Designation and the interim protections would likely preclude the full suite of management options needed to mitigate fire risk in critical, high priority firesheds.

Therefore, I do not believe any river determined eligible based only on the presence of a listed wildlife species can support any determination of uniqueness, greater value, or significance in the region of comparison to support designation as a wild and scenic river. I see no need or benefit to the wildlife outstandingly remarkable values beyond those provided under the Land Management Plan. I believe management under this direction will ensure protection and direct benefits to the wildlife outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan. Therefore, the mere presence of a wildlife ORV does not warrant designation of an eligible river as wild and scenic.

GEOLOGY

The region of comparison for eligibility for geology includes two large physiographic provinces as described by the United States Geological Survey: the Columbia Plateau and the Northern Rocky Mountains. The region of comparison includes nine national forests, Glacier National Park, and other public lands administered by federal and state agencies. With such a large region of comparison and innumerable stunning geologic features, the geological outstandingly remarkable values truly must be outstanding to be considered.

Generally, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests do not have very many geologic outstandingly remarkable values directly related to water or streams. Six river segments were identified with a geologic ORV, five are associated with waterfalls and one is a series of hot springs. In determining the uniqueness, rarity or exemplary nature of the geologic feature, I considered any scientific value associated with the feature, notoriety of the feature regionally or nationally, the opportunity for the public to view or otherwise enjoy the feature, the potential for adverse impact to the feature, and the Land Management Plan desired condition, objectives, and components as applied to the river segment, whether the river segment is designated or not.

BOTANY

The botanical ORV applies to the low elevation canyon ecosystems of the rivers characterized by relatively warm temperatures and high precipitation. This combination of climatic factors, which is unusual in the Northern Rocky Mountains, is responsible for an assemblage of coastal disjunct and endemic plants and animals and the unique vegetation types found in the area. These occurrences are best developed in low elevation riparian areas, and areas with perched water tables, on a few river segments in the North Fork Clearwater River drainage. Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, and Isabella Creek were found eligible based solely on the presence of specific refugia species. The North Fork Clearwater River segment has the botanical ORV and six other ORVs identified. Portions of Beaver Creek and the North Fork Clearwater River are within the Aquarius Research Natural Area. Elmer Creek and portions of Isabella Creek are within Management Area 2, the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, wild land recreation theme. Elk

Creek and portions of Isabella Creek are in Management Area 3 and Elk Creek is adjacent to a popular national recreation trail.

The presence of these species on the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rare and warrants special consideration in any future management activities under the Land Management Plan. There are numerous protections provided throughout the Land Management Plan applicable to aquatic ecosystems and riparian management zones where these site conditions and species are found. There is also direction applicable to the research natural areas on the Forest that brings focus and management considerations to some of these areas. I considered all the Land Management Plan direction, the findings documented in the FEIS Appendix F, and other considerations regarding the botany ORV and determination of suitability.

I considered the disjunct nature of these specific ecological conditions, the fact that their presence here is driven in large part by climate and the specific habitat conditions that are required for their persistence. I considered that Elmer Creek and portions of Isabella Creek are within Management Area 2, the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, wild land recreation theme which is the most restrictive themed Idaho Roadless Area and least likely to be subject to management activities. I also considered that some of the populations are in Management Area 3, along an established and well-used forest road and trail that serve as a primary access to the Mallard-Larkins recommended wilderness. A primary concern is that the climate is changing, and the effects of climate change are uncertain but anticipated to adversely affect these ecosystems.

With the inevitability of climate change and its anticipated effects in these areas, it seems prudent to maintain flexibility in management practices to adapt as we experience, learn from, and respond to these changes. The Land Management Plan desired conditions include maintenance of healthy, functioning aquatic and riparian ecosystems. There is a plethora of Land Management Plan components addressing aquatic and riparian areas that will serve to maintain these site-specific areas but also allows management flexibility to identify and address priority resource concerns in this changing climate. Actions needed to address these concerns and protect the botanical ORV would be constrained with the interim protective measures of suitable WSR. Due to the ecological significance and scientific value of the presence of these disjunct populations, the presence of a botanical ORV, and how WSR designation would preclude options to retain this ORV in the face of climate change, was a major factor in my suitability determinations.

River Suitability Determinations

Elk Creek

The Elk Creek eligible segment is 4.9 miles long located between the Elk Creek Reservoir and Dworshak Reservoir. Its eligibility is based on scenic, recreation and botany outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is Scenic.

The scenic outstandingly remarkable value is based on a series of highly scenic waterfalls that is unique because of the presence of five waterfalls of varying types from punchbowl to cataract dropping in basalt cliffs within a one-half mile segment of Elk Creek. The waterfalls are accessed from a trail and are visible across open grassland and rock formations in the canyon. The area has long been managed for its scenic and recreational qualities.

The Elk Creek Falls National Recreation Trail is a popular, family-friendly trail two miles from the city of Elk River, population 125. Although there are many waterfalls in the region of

comparison, few waterfalls can be reached by hiking only a few miles across gentle terrain. Both the trailhead and trail itself are easily accessible to people from all walks of life and abilities. It is a featured site along the Elk River backcountry byway. Pools below the waterfalls are also used for swimming and soaking.

Elk Creek exhibits core coastal refugia plant associations that are remnants of the last Ice Age. Although there are other examples of coastal refugia on the national forest, only six streams exhibit the core coastal refugia characteristics.

Elk Creek is currently not free flowing. There is a dam and reservoir upstream from the Forest boundary on Elk Creek that is controlled by Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Water rights for recreation and for municipal water supply exist which could impact the flow of the river and scenic value of the waterfalls. Due to the lack of control over water quantity, designation would not ensure protection. The river corridor is currently managed for recreation uses with a trailhead, several family friendly trails, scenic value related to the series of waterfalls, and historical significance due to the remnants of a wagon road and historic school. The existing protection as part of a National Recreation Trail, and Land Management Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and recreation is sufficient to protect the river values within the jurisdiction and authority of the Forest Service.

This area is highly valued for recreation but is also adjacent to a small community and downstream of their municipal water supply. Fuels management treatments are critical to protect the City of Elk River and the municipal water supply from wildfire impacts. In addition, the trail system around the falls is heavily used for recreation. To protect the public fuels treatments are necessary along the trail system to insure ingress/egress in the event of a wildfire. Vegetation management to reduce hazard trees is also necessary to provide for public safety.

There are significant forest health issues within the river corridor. Vegetation management will need to occur to maintain the aesthetic values of the forested habitat within the corridor and to provide for public safety. The area is currently designated as a national recreation trail surrounded by a National Recreation Area which affords some protection.

The other entities responsible for portions of the river corridor have other management priorities – such as providing fishing opportunities for the public. During low water flow, the potential exists for water to be held in the reservoir for recreation instead of allowed to flow downstream and over the waterfalls.

Elk Creek is not suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River in the forest plan due to the lack of certainty around future water supply. Water supply to the portion of the creek that lies within the forest boundary is controlled by another entity for recreation purposes. Designation would not ensure that water quantity and therefore the outstanding recreational value will not be protected to a greater extent than it is now. Additionally, vegetative management in the river corridor is necessary for community fire protection. Such activities can be hampered or foreclosed by designation and subsequently the need to emphasize, protect and enhance the outstandingly remarkable values.

Potlatch River

The eligible segment of the Potlatch River is 6.4 miles long from the Little Boulder Creek Campground to the confluence with Cedar Creek. Its eligibility is based on its recreation outstandingly remarkable value. Its preliminary classification is recreational.

The recreation outstandingly remarkable value is due to its early season kayaking opportunity 15 miles long, as early as February, March, or April. It provides challenging whitewater with rapids up to a long Class V known as Coleman Falls. The first four to five miles of the run are on National Forest System lands with the remainder through a mix of private, state, and Bureau of Land Management lands.

The proposed segment is in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3 suitable timber base where timber harvest is one management tool used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions and where timber harvest provides products to provide for economic stability for local communities.

Although this section of the Potlatch River provides a short-term recreation opportunity to a select few individuals, it is not necessarily unique. A small number of local whitewater enthusiasts utilize the river early in the season which is the only time the water level is high enough to boat this section. Mixed land ownership within the corridor downstream of the National Forest Service land makes management of this recreation opportunity challenging.

Water supply to the river is controlled upstream by private landowners and therefore could impact the free-flowing character in the future. Water quality in the river is heavily impacted by activities on private ground upstream and elsewhere in the watershed. Much of the watershed is industrial timber lands and washouts are common in the smaller drainages after heavy rain due to harvest practices. Grazing is common on private lands in the riparian areas of the Potlatch River and its tributaries which could contribute to declining water quality. Forest Service grazing permittees are held to grazing standards designed to protect water quality on Forest Service system lands, but private landowners do not have these standards.

Designation would not enhance or increase the recreational use of the river segment that flows through National Forest lands.

Current land management practices upstream and downstream on private land impact the suitability of the NFS segment. Because these lands are currently included in the suitable timber base, timber harvest is a tool available for managing the forested habitat for resiliency into the future. Insect and disease impacts are widespread throughout the area. As example, an average of 50 hazard trees per year are taken out of the Little Boulder campground alone due to insect infestation. The benefit of actively managing the forested vegetation and restoring meadows far outweighs any benefit that may be derived through designation.

Due to the significant forest health issues within the river corridor vegetation management will need to occur to maintain the aesthetic values of the forested habitat within the corridor and to provide for public safety. The Forest Service owns such a small proportion of the overall watershed, designation would make little to no difference in protecting the river corridor.

This river is included in designated critical habitat for steelhead, therefore other entities such as the National Marine Fisheries Service, Latah Soil and Water Conservation District, and Idaho Fish and Game have an interest in protecting the river. An interagency working group (Potlatch Implementation Group) has been established to guide implementation of a multi-agency derived management plan. A great deal of restoration work has been done and more is planned on private and federal land specifically to protect or enhance fish habitat. Much of the work that has been done and is in the planning stages now would not be allowed if the Potlatch River were designated as a wild and scenic river segment.

Potlatch River is not suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River in the forest plan due to the lack of certainty around future land management activities in most of the river corridor. Water supply to the portion of the river that lies within the forest boundary is controlled by a multitude of private and corporate landowners with varying interests. Designation would not ensure that water quantity or quality is protected, nor would it ensure the persistence of the river's outstanding and remarkable value as boatable waters. Designation could limit or impact the ability of the Potlatch Implementation Group to implement activities for improving, restoring, and protecting habitat for steelhead. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find this river segment suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, Isabella Creek

Collectively these river segments are 7.35 miles long. The Beaver Creek segment begins 1.47 miles upstream from the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River in the Aquarius RNA. Isabella Creek is 5.44 miles from the confluence with Jug Creek to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River downstream of the RNA. Elmer Creek is 0.44 miles long from the confluence with Johns Creek to the confluence with Isabella Creek. These rivers were identified as eligible for inclusion in the National System due to their botany outstandingly remarkable value. The Botany ORV is the only ORV identified for these river segments. Beaver Creek and Isabella Creek have a recreational preliminary classification. Elmer Creek has a wild preliminary classification.

The botany values are associated with low elevation canyon sections of river characterized by relatively warm temperatures and high precipitation. This combination of climatic factors, which is unusual in the Northern Rocky Mountains, is responsible for an assemblage of coastal disjunct and endemic plant and animal taxa and the unique vegetation types found in these areas. The Aquarius Research Natural Area encompasses a cross section of canyon that contains many of these rare and unique elements.

The presence of these species on the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rare and warrants special consideration in any future management activities under the Land Management Plan. There are numerous protections provided throughout the Land Management Plan applicable to aquatic ecosystems and riparian management zones where these site conditions and species are found. There is also direction applicable to the research natural areas on the Forest that brings focus and management considerations to these, and other areas. I considered all the Land Management Plan components and direction, the findings documented in the FEIS Appendix F, and other considerations regarding the botany ORV and determination of suitability.

I considered the disjunct nature of these specific ecological conditions, the fact that their presence here is driven in large part by climate and the site-specific habitat conditions that are required for their persistence. I considered that Elmer Creek and portions of Isabella Creek are within Management Area 2, Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, with a wild land recreation theme, which is the most restrictive themed Idaho Roadless Area and least likely to be subject to management activities that would affect these values. I also considered that some of the populations are in Management Area 3, along an established and well-used forest road and trail that serve as a primary access to the Mallard-Larkins Pioneer Area and recommended wilderness.

I considered that analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin, including the North Fork. And there is nothing to

indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to determine suitability based on the concern of such development.

I considered that during development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

A primary concern is that the climate is changing, and the effects of climate change are uncertain but anticipated to adversely affect these ecosystems as well as the general forest area. With the inevitability of climate change and its uncertain effects, it seems prudent to maintain flexibility in management practices to adapt as we experience, learn from, and respond to these changes. The Land Management Plan desired conditions include maintenance of healthy, functioning aquatic and riparian ecosystems. Additionally, there is a plethora of Land Management Plan components addressing aquatic and riparian areas that will serve to maintain these site-specific areas but also allows management flexibility to identify and address other priority resource concerns in this changing climate.

I recognize the ecological significance and scientific value of the presence of these disjunct populations. However, permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of this outstandingly remarkable value. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities within or adjacent to the 7.3 miles of river segments found eligible. Management such as prescribed fire or protection from invasive species and insect and disease may be needed to preserve this unique botanical resource in the face of climate change. I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and botany outstandingly remarkable value and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed.

Given that these eligible segments are protected through Management Area 2 direction, Research Natural Area Plan direction, Land Management Plan components for aquatic and riparian resources, as well as the considerations stated above, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of interim protection measures and future designation of the botany outstandingly remarkable value, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals or restricting future action that could actually protect the ORV itself, especially in the face of climate change. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of Beaver Creek, Elmer Creek, or Isabella Creek, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Bostonian Creek, Boundary Creek, Caledonia Creek, Graves Creek

These eligible segments total 10.6 miles. Bostonian Creek, 5.0 miles, from its headwaters to its confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River; Boundary Creek, 3.1 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River; Caledonia Creek, 0.5 miles

from the boundary of private property to its confluence with Bostonian Creek; and, Graves Creek, 2.0 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River. All streams are eligible based on their fish outstandingly remarkable value. Preliminary classification is wild.

The lands in the proposed corridor are managed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The segments are in the primitive themed Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork Idaho Roadless Area. Road construction and reconstruction are prohibited in Idaho Roadless Areas designated Primitive unless pursuant to statute, treaty, reserved or outstanding rights, or other legal duty of the United States. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is prohibited in Idaho Roadless Areas designated as Primitive except under limited conditions. Given these streams' remote and unroaded condition there is no expectation that management actions involving road construction or timber harvest would occur here. Therefore, there is no compelling reason to make a suitability determination based on the threat of potential development or other management actions that might pose a threat.

There is private land along Caledonia Creek upstream of the segment proposed for designation. If changes in water quality and sedimentation occur from land use on these private lands, the habitat for bull trout could be affected. Any activity on this private land is outside the jurisdiction of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value in these streams includes habitat quality and natural reproduction. Eligible stream segments included in this group comprise the most significant complex of modeled climate shield reaches for bull trout persistence in 2040 within the region of comparison. The highest known numbers of fluvial and adfluvial bull trout within the region of comparison spawn in these streams, and habitat supports very high densities of juveniles. These streams are important to meet recovery goals for Columbia River bull trout. They contain designated critical habitat for bull trout and a local population has been identified. A population of westslope cutthroat trout is also present. The range and number of connected, strong populations of westslope cutthroat trout in the North Fork Clearwater and tributaries suggest that the basin supports one of the strongest populations of westslope cutthroat trout in Idaho.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. A primary objective of the aquatic and riparian plan components is to not retard recovery of ESA listed species or their critical habitat. The "do not retard recovery" framework is conceptually identical to the wild and scenic river's goal of protection and enhancement. This, in turn, serves to protect fisheries habitat and populations. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components will provide protections and direct benefits for the fish species and their habitat. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value of these streams contributes to the health and productivity of the North Fork Clearwater River. As such, they deserve consideration and protection in the management of the Forest. However, the fish species and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. Additionally, 189 streams on the Nez Perce-Clearwater have been identified as critical habitat for bull trout. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Therefore, although these streams and fisheries values are important and contribute to the ecosystem health of the region of concern, they are not unique or at risk of adverse impacts from management activity.

A wild and scenic designation would prohibit water developments. However, these streams are not at risk for this type of development. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin, including the North Fork Clearwater and its tributaries. And there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Designation as a wild and scenic river would protect the fish values. However, Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to protect the free flow, water quality, and habitat of these rivers, supporting the preservation of these species. Therefore, designation would not add any significant benefits to the protections provided through the Land Management Plan components and direction.

Given all of this, there is no urgency or compelling reason to make a suitability determination based on the threat of potential development or other management actions that might pose a threat. There are no benefits from designation that supports the application of permanent protection of these fish outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Wild and Scenic River designation may impede or create unnecessary barriers in treating fuels and addressing the wildfire crisis. Designation may also limit tools and adaptation strategies needed to increase resiliency to climate change. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Cave Creek and Chateau Creek

These two eligible stream segments total 7.2 miles. Cave Creek, 4.6 miles, is eligible from its headwaters to the confluence with Chateau Creek; Chateau Creek, 2.6 miles, is eligible from its headwaters to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River. Eligibility of both is for their scenic outstandingly remarkable value. Preliminary classification is wild.

These North Fork Clearwater River tributaries have highly scenic waterfalls, including multiple drops over pink granite. Part of this segment is within the Chateau Falls Research Natural Area which consists of steep mountainous terrain and features waterfalls on Chateau Creek. As with much of the northern Rockies, the scenery on the Nez Perce-Clearwater is largely affected by the physical nature of the area including the geologic, hydrologic, vegetative, climatic, and related environmental conditions such as fire. The Forest offers abundant opportunity to enjoy natural appearing landscapes, including numerous waterfalls. Distinctive scenic features associated with steep gradient stream flow are prevalent across the region of comparison, neighboring national forests, and other national forests in the northern Rocky Mountain range.

All the lands in the corridor proposed are managed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The segments are mostly within the Pot Mountain Idaho Roadless Area, which has a backcountry/restoration theme. No changes are anticipated to land use since the area surrounding the creeks has been managed to protect the research natural area and maintain roadless area characteristics. However, in the Idaho Roadless Rule, timber harvest is permitted for vegetation restoration and other purposes. If these segments were found suitable with a wild designation, timber harvest would be limited to that necessary to address a primitive recreation experience, to protect users, or to protect the scenic outstandingly remarkable value. Permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of the scenic value. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement needed ecological restoration activities over a much greater landscape than the river segments found eligible, including those needed to protect the coastal disjunct plant species in the North Fork drainage.

A wild and scenic designation would prohibit water developments. However, these are very small streams, do not have any dam sites identified, are nowhere near private land or Forest Service administrative sites, and are not at risk for this type of development. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin, including the North Fork Clearwater and its tributaries. There is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Designation as a wild and scenic river would protect the scenic values but would not add significantly to the protections provided through the Land Management Plan components and direction. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to make a determination of suitability based on the concern of such development.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the scenic values associated with the waterfalls on these streams. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values. I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to provide protection of the scenic outstandingly remarkable value and will preserve it during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. The benefits of designation would not exceed the benefits of the opportunity and flexibility to manage these lands compliant with the Land Management Plan.

Given these considerations, I do not believe designation is the best method to protect the river corridors, and there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason that warrants these river segments to be determined suitable for designation as Wild and Scenic rivers.

Cayuse Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, South Fork Kelly Creek

The eligible segments of these rivers include: Cayuse Creek – 35.93 miles, Kelly Creek – 26.24 miles, North Fork Kelly Creek – 5.90 miles, Middle Fork Kelly Creek – 4.89 miles, and South Fork Kelly Creek – 6.16 miles, for a total of 79.10 miles. Eligibility is based on: Cayuse – recreation and fish; Kelly – recreation, scenic, cultural, Nez Perce cultural, fish, and wildlife; NF Kelly – scenic; MF Kelly – scenic, and SF Kelly – scenic. Preliminary classifications are: Cayuse

– wild, scenic, and recreation; Kelly – wild and recreation; NF Kelly – wild; MF Kelly – wild, and SF Kelly – wild. Refer to Appendix F for specific river segment classification.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. A mere sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. The remaining areas are in Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that this area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. Consideration was also given to the fact that Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, riparian habitats, and wilderness, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, thereby supporting and preserving the fish outstandingly remarkable values. The larger question is whether fire intensity from natural ignitions will have deleterious impacts on the fisheries resource. Interim protection measures from suitability determination would not allow management flexibility if unmitigated wildfire is found to negatively impact these resource values.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Kelly and Cayuse Creeks includes diversity and abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Kelly and Cayuse creeks are two of four extremely important fluvial westslope cutthroat populations in the North Fork Clearwater River Basin, along with Weitas Creek and the Little North Fork Clearwater, in the North Fork Clearwater River Basin and two of a half dozen others in the region of comparison. Genetic integrity is high. Fluvial bull trout are present, and eligible river segments are included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout. A local population has been identified. Habitat has been minimally affected by human disturbance.

Land Management Plan direction related to aquatic ecosystems is intended to conserve and restore habitat for fish listed under the Endangered Species Act and aquatic species of conservation concern, and to prevent future listings, as well as meet Clean Water Act requirements. Aquatic and riparian desired conditions emphasize conservation of natural habitat-forming processes in places where they are largely intact; restoration of natural habitat-forming processes in places where desired conditions can be met by mitigating legacy effects; or

enhancement of aquatic habitats where infrastructure or legacy effects delay the recovery of natural processes by several decades or more. In addition to these Plan components, Conservation Watersheds have been identified across the Forest. Conservation Watersheds are intended to maintain multi-scale connectivity for at-risk fish and aquatic species, identifying important areas needed for conservation and/or restoration, ensuring ecosystem components needed to sustain long-term persistence of species. The North, Middle, and South forks of Kelly Creek are included in this Conservation Watershed Network. Conservation Watersheds can be of particular importance for recovery of ESA-listed species, helping to focus and guide ESA Section 7(a) 1 responsibilities. This provides additional assurances that these river values will be preserved through management under, and application of the Land Management Plan components.

The recreation outstandingly remarkable value for Kelly and Cayuse Creeks is their exceptional fishing opportunity. For communities in the primary and secondary analysis area, fish are integrated into the culture and economy, serving as recreation, subsistence and employment for local outfitters, fishermen and businesses reliant on the tourism industry. Although there are ample and various fishing opportunities throughout the national forest, the unique fishing opportunity is fly-fishing for cutthroat trout. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game maintains special catch-and-release fishing regulations for both streams. People travel from within and beyond the region of comparison to fish Kelly Creek since it offers a high-quality trail-based fishing opportunity in a natural setting.

The scenic outstandingly remarkable value for Kelly Creek and its tributaries is a harmonious relationship of rock, water, and a variety of vegetation. Kelly Creek is a clear, swift stream flowing through a variety of terrain, including high country meadows, forests, and rocky canyons. It includes fast moving water forming rapids and still pools. The upper reaches of its forks – the North Fork, Middle Fork, and South Fork – originate near the state line divide and include distinctive cliffs. These river-related scenic values are consistent with and contribute to the North Fork River area's scenic character. These river drainages with their landforms, river features, and vegetation are generally considered more attractive than those areas with commonly found vegetative patterns, river features, and landforms. However, the inherent scenic attractiveness of Kelly Creek and its tributaries can be considered common among the numerous rivers and streams across the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Many of the rivers in the scenery region of comparison contain fast moving water forming rapids and still pools that flow through a variety of forested and non-forested landscapes, and headwaters in the high country that offer dramatic vistas. While the scene landscape of Kelly Creek may vary from what would be seen in other river viewsheds, it is not rare, unique, or so significantly different to warrant special and permanent protections beyond those provided through the scenic integrity objectives and other Land Management Plan components.

Nez Perce Tribal staff identified the Kelly Creek segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. It was identified as a traditional use area and a traditional cultural property containing ancient habitation sites. Ethnographic accounts, archaeological evidence and early written historic records demonstrate the Nez Perce have had a dominant presence in the Clearwater River region for thousands of years. The plan components in the Tribal Trust section as well as throughout the resource sections of the plan, safeguard these traditional uses into the future.

Numerous archaeological sites and areas of traditional cultural significance line the shores and ridges of the Kelly Creek Drainage Basin. Oral traditions of the Nez Perce document that they

have occupied this riverway since time immemorial and this area represents some of the earliest human occupations known to exist on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest. (Chalfant 1974:115; Sappington 1994:21-22; Clark 1966:26-30; FiveCrows 2007:x; Landeen and Pinkham 1999:51-52; Longstaff 2013:47-56). The pre and post contact historic features will be maintained through land management plan components and existing federal law and would not be further protected if found suitable.

The Forest Service administrative history from the mouth of Kelly Creek up to Deer Creek, approximately 11 miles, provides the cultural outstandingly remarkable value for Kelly Creek. Kelly Creek has a relatively long history of Euro-American uses. The archaeological and historical record represents all periods of early American History and historical significance of the many different roles Kelly Creek played in the broader pattern of American history. Early trappers, prospectors, miners, loggers, homesteaders, and Forest Service personnel have all utilized the terraces, stream courses, foothills, slopes, and ridges in Kelly Creek drainage.

The wildlife outstandingly remarkable value in Kelly Creek is based on observations of Harlequin duck, a nationally or regionally important indigenous river-dependent wildlife species. Populations of Harlequin ducks occur along Kelly Creek, but they have not been documented on Cayuse Creek. Harlequin ducks are rare sea ducks that nest inland on larger, low gradient rivers with clean water. Kelly Creek is an important tributary that provides habitat for the Harlequin duck. Rivers that provide habitat for harlequin ducks are uncommon in the plan, and some rivers with harlequin duck observations do not consistently maintain observations. However, Kelly Creek has a history of consistent harlequin duck observations through time. Some of these ducks move from Kelly Creek down into the North Fork of the Clearwater River. Some evidence suggests that harlequin ducks are sensitive to disturbances and have been documented to abandon rivers as nesting areas after disturbances. Portions of Kelly creek are one of the few larger rivers in the plan area that do not have a road running along its length, making it one of the more protected rivers that provides harlequin duck habitat. Harlequin ducks are sought after targets for bird watchers because of their beauty and Kelly Creek offers an opportunity to view this beautiful duck on foot away from the distractions of roadways. Kelly Creek contributes to the regionally and nationally important population of harlequin ducks in Idaho, and the population of harlequin ducks on the Western coasts of the U.S. and Canada.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Kelly Creek and Cayuse Creek provide a fisheries resource that is unique and significant in the region of comparison. As stated above, they support two of four extremely important fluvial westslope cutthroat populations in the North Fork Clearwater River Basin, along with Weitas Creek and the Little North Fork Clearwater, and two of a half dozen in the region of comparison. The range and number of connected, strong populations of westslope cutthroat trout

in the North Fork Clearwater and tributaries suggest that the basin supports one of the strongest populations of westslope cutthroat trout in Idaho. And, although not unique, fluvial bull trout are present and these eligible river segments are included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout. This is important as bull trout populations are currently considered depressed in most of the tributaries within the North Fork Clearwater Basin. These fisheries resources support the fish outstandingly remarkable value of Kelly and Cayuse creeks and warrant the additional emphasis and protection, beyond those provided through Land Management Plan components, that would be afforded through designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

The opportunity to fish these strong populations of westslope cutthroat trout as a catch-and-release fisheries in Kelly Creek, attracts anglers locally and regionally. These fishing opportunities support economically and socially significant sport fisheries on the Forest and have been identified as an important component of the social and economic well-being of small communities such as Orofino, and Kooskia. The fact that Kelly and Cayuse creeks are two of four extremely important fluvial westslope cutthroat populations contributes to the enhanced popularity of these streams as high-quality fishing opportunities. This fishing opportunity is exceptional and somewhat unique in the recreation region of comparison, along with the Upper Lochsa River and its tributary Colt Killed Creek. These opportunities and their contributions both socially and economically warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater and the permanent protection that comes with designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

The significance of the Kelly Creek drainage to the Nez Perce Tribe cannot be overstated. The ethnographic record, historical and archeological record, length of the period of significance, and relatively undisturbed character of the Kelly Creek basin demonstrates the significance, uniqueness, anthropological value that it is among the best representatives of Nez Perce Tribe Cultural outstandingly remarkable values in the region of comparison.

The ethnographic record, historical and archeological record that documents this broad use of Kelly Creek make this stream more unique, exemplary, and provides greater contribution in its anthropological value than other river segments in the region of comparison. These values should be protected while managing for other uses and activities. Currently, protection of these values comes through numerous laws and regulations in addition to Land Management Plan components and direction.

Based on the above-stated information regarding the cumulative and complimentary river values, it is evident that Cayuse Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, and South Fork Kelly Creek provide a significant contribution to the North Fork Clearwater river basin integrity, is unique and among the best representatives of the outstandingly remarkable values, will complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan, will not significantly affect the ability to implement other management actions to meet those goals, and rises to a level of significance that will contribute to vital national conservation purposes.

Given all of this, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan. Tribal Trust plan components will ensure these areas remain vibrant and protected for the Nez Perce Tribe's culture into the future. However, given the exceptional value and contribution of this river's fisheries, wildlife, Tribal, cultural, and recreational resources to the Nez Perce-Clearwater cumulatively, it is appropriate that protection of these river resources take precedence over the objectives of other potential management activities in the river corridor.

The permanent protections through designation as a Wild and Scenic River will ensure this to be the case. Therefore, I believe designation is the best method for protecting the outstandingly remarkable values, and I find Cayuse Creek, Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, and South Fork Kelly Creek suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Cliff Creek, Falls Creek, Lost Pete Creek

These three eligible segments total 10.0 miles. Cliff Creek, 3.9 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Collins Creek; Falls Creek, 2.1 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Isabella Creek; and Lost Pete Creek, 4.0 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River. Their eligibility is based on their geologic outstandingly remarkable value associated with waterfalls. The preliminary classification is wild.

Generally, the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests do not have very many geologic outstandingly remarkable values directly related to water or streams. Six river segments were identified with a geologic ORV, five are associated with waterfalls and one is a series of hot springs. Numerous other waterfalls are present on the Forest. Some were identified as outstandingly remarkable for their scenic, rather than geologic value, others were not identified as outstandingly remarkable.

The region of comparison also includes Glacier National Park, Flathead National Forest, Kootenai National Forest, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Payette National Forest, Custer Gallatin National Forest, Salmon Challis National Forest, Sawtooth National Forest, and Helena and Lewis and Clark National Forest. With their vertical drop and falling characteristics, the waterfalls in Cliff Creek, Falls Creek, and Lost Pete Creek are on par with other spectacular waterfalls in the region of comparison and, therefore, were determined to be outstandingly remarkable.

Cliff Creek and Falls Creek are in the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area, which has a wildland recreation theme. Lost Pete Creek is also in the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area and holds wildland recreation and primitive themes. Changes to land use are not anticipated since the surrounding area has been managed to protect the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area. Additionally, this Land Management Plan decision designates the Mallard-Larkins Idaho Roadless Area as recommended wilderness. The free-flowing character, water quality and geologic outstandingly remarkable value contribute to the wilderness character of the area and deserve protection. These streams will be afforded all protections associated with the recommended wilderness designation.

A wild and scenic designation would prohibit water developments. However, these are very small streams, do not have any dam sites identified, are nowhere near private land or Forest Service administrative sites, and are not at risk for this type of development. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin, including the North Fork Clearwater and its tributaries. And there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Designation as a wild and scenic river would protect the geologic values but would not add any significant benefits to the protections provided through the Land Management Plan components and direction for aquatics, riparian, and recommended wilderness. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to determine suitability based on the concern of such development.

These waterfalls do not provide any distinguishing scientific value. They are not well known and generally difficult to access as there are no system trails to them. There are numerous waterfalls comparable to these within the region of comparison. There is little potential for adverse impact to them, and they are afforded protection within the Mallard-Larkins recommended wilderness. Given these considerations, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting these river corridors and there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason that warrants these river segments to be determined suitable for designation as Wild and Scenic rivers.

Lake Creek

The eligible segment of Lake Creek is 12.4 miles from its headwaters at Fish Lake to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River. Eligibility is based on a fish outstandingly remarkable value. Preliminary classifications are scenic from Fish Lake to the trailhead at the end of Forest Road 295, and recreational from that point to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value in Lake Creek is based on natural reproduction and habitat quality. Lake Creek is thought to support one of three known adfluvial bull trout populations within the region of comparison. Bull trout may migrate to and from Fish Lake for spawning and rearing. Lake Creek contains designated critical habitat, provides high quality habitat for spawning and rearing, and is free of non-native aquatic species. In addition to the lake-based spawning population, Lake Creek supports moderate to high numbers of fluvial bull trout migrating from the North Fork Clearwater River.

Bull trout and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, and 189 rivers have been identified as critical habitat for bull trout. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin. Any such proposal would conflict with the Presidential Memorandum on supporting salmon and steelhead recovery and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to make a determination of suitability based on the concern of such development.

All the lands in the proposed corridor are managed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. Lake Creek exits Fish Lake in the Wild Land Recreation-themed Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area. It continues 5.2 miles through the roadless area then enters Management Area 3 for 7.2 miles to its confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River near the Cedars Campground. This Land Management Plan designates a portion of the Hoodoo IRA as recommended wilderness. Lake Creek is not within that recommended area. This Plan identifies Trail 419 that is adjacent to Lake Creek for much of its distance as suitable for motorized travel and until 2022, it was open to summer motorized travel. A separate travel management decision would now be necessary to authorize that use.

Road construction and reconstruction are prohibited in Idaho Roadless Areas designated Wild Land Recreation unless pursuant to statute, treaty, reserved or outstanding rights, or other legal duty of the United States. The cutting, sale, or removal of timber is prohibited in Idaho Roadless Areas designated as Wild Land Recreation except under limited conditions. Given that there are no roads in the Hoodoo IRA there is no expectation that timber harvest would occur in the area that might impact the upper portion of Lake Creek.

Areas in Management Area 3 are available for timber harvest. The segments on National Forest System lands suitable for timber production in Management Area 3 have been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan, and timber harvest has occurred along Lake Creek. In the Land Management Plan Management Area 3, suitable timber base, timber harvests are one management tool used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions. There is an expectation that these drainages will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions in Management Area 3 through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns. These management activities also provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. The persistence of bull trout while past management activities have occurred in these river segments demonstrates the Forest's commitment to protect them, and effectiveness of management controls to preserve habitat that support these species.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value in Lake Creek contributes to the health and productivity of the North Fork Clearwater River. As such, it deserves consideration and protection in the management of the Forest. The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components provides protections and direct benefits for the fish and wildlife ORV species and their habitat.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

Past management activities have occurred in these drainages and bull trout populations remained protected and persisted. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, supporting the preservation of these species.

Designation as a wild and scenic river would permanently protect Bull Trout in Lake Creek but would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of the fish outstandingly remarkable value. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities over a much greater landscape than the river segment found eligible. This is particularly true in the lower reach of Lake Creek that flows through Management Area 3. This area includes numerous roads, trails, and structures designed to actively manage the area to address ecological conditions, provide jobs and products to local communities and facilitate outdoor recreation.

While designation would permanently protect the river values, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly

remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Little North Fork Clearwater River

The eligible river segment is 4.3 miles long flowing along the boundary between the Nez Perce Clearwater and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest to the boundary between the Nez Perce-Clearwater and Idaho state lands. Eligibility is based on scenic, botany, recreation, fish, and Nez Perce Tribe cultural outstandingly remarkable values. Preliminary Classification is wild.

The scenic outstandingly remarkable value is based on a diversity of water, vegetation, and rock features.

Recreation is an outstandingly remarkable value on both the Idaho Panhandle National Forest and the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests due to the river providing a multi-day whitewater boating opportunity that is accessible by roads at both ends and does not require a competitive permit.

The botany outstandingly remarkable value for this segment exhibits core coastal refugia plant associations that are remnants of the last Ice Age.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values are based on abundance and diversity, natural reproduction, and habitat quality. The Little North Fork Clearwater River supports a population of fluvial and potentially adfluvial westslope cutthroat trout population. Fluvial bull trout are also present and eligible river segments are included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout.

Nez Perce Tribal staff identified the Little North Fork Clearwater segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe as a traditional use area.

The Idaho Panhandle National Forest identified 26.6 miles of the Little North Fork Clearwater River corridor as eligible for inclusion in the National System. Maintaining an eligible status of the river segment on the Nez Perce-Clearwater will ensure consistency, coordinated management, and protection of the entire river corridor until such time a suitability study and determination can be completed for the entire eligible length. Given this consideration, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting this 4.3-mile segment of the 26.6 miles of the Little North Fork Clearwater River corridor, and there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason that warrants this river segment to be determined suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River at this time.

North Fork Clearwater River

The eligible segment of the North Fork Clearwater River is 78.9 miles long from its headwaters to the generally recognized full pool mark of the Dworshak reservoir at an unnamed tributary between Marquette Creek and Salmon Creek. The identified ORVs include recreation, scenic, cultural, Nez Perce cultural, fish, wildlife, and botany. The presence of each ORV is supported by on-the-ground conditions as discussed in Appendix F. Preliminary classifications include wild in the headwaters downstream to Meadow Creek, then recreational for the remainder of the segment.

The North Fork Clearwater River runs along the boundary of a number of Idaho Roadless Areas with a backcountry restoration theme, and for about one-half mile is within the Meadow Creek-

Upper North Fork primitive Idaho Roadless Area. The river also runs through the Aquarius Research Natural Area and is adjacent to the Chateau Falls Research Natural Area. In addition, sections of the river flow adjacent to or through areas of Land Management Plan Management Area 3 suitable for timber harvest.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

Recreation

The outstandingly remarkable value for recreation includes boating and fishing. The North Fork Clearwater River provides 79 miles of boatable water, ranging from flat water to Class IV rapids. Much of the river is readily accessible by road, so various river segments can be floated by a variety watercraft. The river also provides high quality Blue Ribbon equivalent fishing opportunities and exemplary fly-fishing for cutthroat trout that attract out-of-state visitors from within and beyond the region of comparison. The adjacent Roads 247 and 250 provide numerous access points to the river, dispersed sites, and trailheads for boater, anglers, and other recreationists. There are seven campgrounds and numerous trails and roads along the river. There are many trails that start in the river corridor and access other areas of the national forest. Roads running alongside the river include Forest Road 247, Forest Road 250, and a short segment of Forest Road 720, known as Fly Hill Road. Over 30 other roads within the corridor provide administrative and/or public access to the campgrounds, trails, and backcountry recreation opportunities.

Scenery

The river corridor has cliffs, interesting rock formations, large boulders forming rapids, juxtaposition of white water and smooth, reflective water, and a variety of vegetation, trees, shrubs, and grasslands along its length. The Black Canyon section is particularly dramatic. Cumulatively, these features support the scenic outstandingly remarkable value.

Cultural

The outstandingly remarkable value for cultural resources can be found from the Cedars Campground down to the point ending free flow above Dworshak reservoir. They include one of the oldest archaeological sites on the southern Columbia Plateau as well as Forest Service administrative history.

Nez Perce Cultural

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified the North Fork Clearwater as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. It is recognized as a traditional use area which includes sites of early habitation.

Fish

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for the North Fork Clearwater River is based on diversity and abundance, and habitat quality. Though impounded downstream by Dworshak Dam, the remaining free-flowing portions provide important habitat for a large population of fluvial westslope cutthroat trout (Onchorhynchus clarkia lewisi) and fluvial and adfluvial bull trout (Salvelinus confluentus); the quality and extent of available habitat is unsurpassed within the region of comparison. The river is included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout.

Wildlife

The wildlife outstandingly remarkable value in the North Fork Clearwater River corridor is based on observations of nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous, river dependent wildlife. The North Fork Clearwater River supports populations of Harlequin duck along the majority of its length, with some of the best river characteristics and habitat in the upper reaches.

Botany

The botany outstandingly remarkable value applies to coastal disjunct plant communities in low elevation canyon sections of the river characterized by moderate air temperatures and abundant, well-balanced soil moisture and precipitation. This combination of climatic factors and soils is responsible for an assemblage of coastal disjunct and endemic plant and animal taxa and unique vegetation types found in the area. In these low, warm, moist local habitats plant species that once extended from the coast far inland have found a climatic refuge to persist since ancient times. The best developed coastal disjunct communities are generally within a one-quarter mile corridor on either side of the river, though they extend beyond this core area in many places. These coastal disjunct species and communities are rare in the region of comparison. The Nez Perce-Clearwater is at the southern end of this region and these disjunct communities are only known to occur in the North Fork Clearwater, Lochsa, and Selway rivers. These disjunct communities are limited in distribution but defining the actual distribution is difficult due to the variable species biology and subsequent placement across the landscape, especially above the lower core communities.

Current Condition and Restoration Needs

The 800,000-acre North Fork Clearwater River drainage is highly modified as compared to its natural range of variability and the desired conditions as described in the Land Management Plan. The completion of the Dworshak dam in 1973 had numerous direct and indirect impacts to the ecological, social, and economic conditions associated with the North Fork Clearwater River. An immediate and direct impact was the eradication of anadromous fish migration, particularly steelhead trout, in the North Fork and its tributaries; thus, eliminating hundreds of miles of spawning and rearing habitat. To mitigate for this impact, a national fish hatchery was constructed and operates on the mainstem Clearwater River. However, due to the absence of a fish ladder at the dam none of these fish make it into the North Fork drainage.

The dam flooded over 17,000 acres resulting in the loss of wildlife habitat, particularly winter and year-round elk habitat. But the impact to elk is greater than just the area under the reservoir. The area under and downstream of the reservoir served as an important migratory route and elk winter range. In addition to eliminating habitat, the reservoir now serves as an impediment to elk movement to an extended wintering area downstream. Elk now have to winter on harsher ground and are susceptible to more severe weather conditions with less area to escape to. Upland habitats burned in the epic fires of 1910 have either reburned multiple times and converted to brush fields or are now severely limited in high quality forage for elk.

The Dworshak reservoir covers approximately 53 miles of the once free-flowing North Fork Clearwater River that provided similar boating and fishing opportunities as the 79-mile eligible segment. It can be surmised that this loss of opportunity has concentrated and modified these recreational activities above the slack water pool. Conversely, the reservoir provides different, lake-based, recreational boating and fishing opportunities that the free-flowing segments do not provide. Together, these two distinctly different aquatic systems within the North Fork Clearwater River provide a broad array of water-based recreation opportunities that are key contributors to

the social and economic wellbeing of neighboring communities, residents, and forest visitors. During this evaluation, we strongly considered whether the North Fork Clearwater River is free-flowing due to the dam and its upstream impacts. Given the length of the river upstream from the slack water and the presence of other ORVs in the upstream segment, per the planning rule directives we proceeded with the eligibility analysis.

Riparian areas within the mainstem North Fork Clearwater River and several of its tributaries were affected by natural wildfires occurring in the early 1900s (IDEQ 2003). Road construction and timber harvest activities have decreased the riparian cover along the mainstem and many tributaries throughout the watershed. Mining, agricultural, and forestry-related activities have also changed the stream channel locations and morphology in some areas. These changes have decreased streamside shade and increased the solar radiation to the streams; they have removed once-available flood plains and flat riparian benches. Coastal disjunct species and communities that persist in these riparian areas have also been, and can be impacted by large-scale stand replacing fires, dam impoundment, logging, roads, campgrounds, administrative sites, and dispersed sites.

Several major drainages within the North Fork Clearwater Basin have undergone substantial changes in riparian and aquatic resources as a result of mining activity over the last 135 years. Orogrande Creek, Moose Creek, and the upper North Fork drainages (including Bostonian, Vanderbilt, Lake, and Long creeks) were subjected to placer-mining by hand, dredge, and large machinery in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Riparian areas and stream channels appear to have been altered numerous times. Due to this mining activity, which was followed up by road development and timber harvest, changes in stream channel morphology, water temperatures, and riparian conditions have occurred, which reduced the overall spawning and rearing potential of the drainage.

Wildfire is, was, and will remain the dominant driver of vegetation change on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, for nearly a century, fire suppression efforts have been successful in reducing the size and severity of fires in the North Fork drainage. With this absence of fire playing its role on the landscape, increasing fuel accumulation has occurred with the potential being more acres burning at higher fire severities than under historic regimes. Additionally, the North Fork Clearwater drainage is approximately 60 percent fire regime III, mixed severity, and 40 percent fire regime IV, high severity. Given that climate trends are expected to continue to be warmer and drier in the summer it is anticipated that large fire activity will continue to increase and fire seasons will be longer; fire can be expected to increase in frequency and severity. This has played out recently with fires in 2015 and 2021showing explosive growth in the wet forests of the North Fork. Fire behavior was more extreme than experienced in modern past, impacting mature and old forests that had not seen disturbance in over a century.

Given the importance of fire as a key ecosystem process, maintaining vegetation and forest diversity, sustaining fire adapted species and structures, and creating vegetation conditions that support and sustain native wildlife species in the short and long term are critical components of the Land Management Plan. Management Area 3 is still demonstrating the lack of fire that has occurred throughout the era of fire exclusion and remains well below the NRV for acres burned; Management Areas 1 and 2 are reflecting the trend of increasing fire activity with warming climates. Wildfire is projected to increase in extent in response to increased drought and decreased precipitation combined with warmer temperatures (Littell et al. 2009; Littell et al. 2010). It is also likely that insect and disease occurrence may increase with continued warmer and

drier weather during the life of the plan. A 2016 report found the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests as having the highest root disease hazard rating of all Forests in the Northern Region and a separate report in 2019 found our insect and disease hazard rating to also be the highest in the Region, albeit by a lesser margin than the root disease hazard rating.

Vegetation

With over 800,000 acres, the North Fork Clearwater River drainage encompasses more than half of the Clearwater and twenty percent of the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. Western white pine once dominated this landscape until the introduction of white pine blister rust around 1910. This introduced fungal disease has accounted for the loss of over 90 percent of native western white pine populations. The resulting landscape scale departure is the product of many different factors interacting over time. Previous timber harvesting and stand culturing practices including western white pine salvage, along with 100 years of fire suppression and land use allocation decisions have had compounding effects on the landscape vegetation and represent a major departure from the natural disturbance regime. Both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions in term of species composition, size class distribution, canopy cover density and structure. Additionally, the potential effects of climate change may accelerate the rate of mortality within over dense forest cover types, and this increase in mortality will promote high severity fire behavior. This will have increased deleterious impacts to both riparian and upland systems.

Landscape scale restoration is needed across the North Fork Clearwater drainage to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions in the Land Management Plan. Both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions in term of species composition, size class distribution, canopy cover density, and structure.

Management activities designed to trend toward desired conditions need to address a plethora of resources beyond the outstandingly remarkable values identified in the eligibility analysis. Much of the landscape in the North Fork Clearwater drainage is steep terrain, many of the tributaries provide important habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout, many areas do or could provide important habitat for elk and other wildlife, and several locations support coastal disjunct species and communities.

Sections of the river flow through Management Area 3 which is suitable for timber production which is a more precise tool for restoring forest vegetation. Timber harvest and elk habitat improvement activities have occurred in these areas for several decades establishing a concentration of road systems and harvest units. Restorative work through timber harvest, mechanical treatments, and wildland fire is expected to continue in these areas to move the landscape toward the desired conditions as described in the Land Management Plan.

Much of the river flows through or adjacent to Idaho Roadless Rule areas designated as Management Area 2 in the Land Management Plan. There are restrictions on road construction and timber harvest imposed by the Idaho Roadless Rule that limit management options to address the restoration needs. Use of wildland fire will be the primary activity to address declining vegetative conditions in these areas. The use of wildland fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns which in turn will promote desired vegetative conditions that are resilient over time. A Land Management Plan objective is to use wildland fire and other treatments to improve or maintain desired forest vegetation conditions on 530,000 to 645,000

acres per decade. An average of approximately 10,000 acres per year of this objective can be expected to occur in the North Fork Clearwater drainage.

The North Fork Clearwater River drainage is approximately 60 percent fire regime III and 40 percent fire regime IV. Landscapes with long return fire frequencies generally over 100 years (FR IV) are dominated by high severity, stand-replacement fire. Effective fire exclusion reduced the frequency, extent, and severity of many of these types of fires. Only a small fraction of the pre-1900 annual average fire acreage is being burned today. With fire exclusion, dense understories and thickets of conifers have produced stands that are highly susceptible to a variety of insect and disease epidemics and severe wildfires. When wildfires do occur on fire-excluded landscapes, they are likely to be more extreme in behavior, more severe, and with greater aerial extent compared to those occurring prior to the exclusion era (Keane et al. 2002, Finney 2003). Because of fire exclusion, landscapes tend to become more homogeneous with succession creating conditions that support more shade tolerant species.

Wildland fire is expected to be the primary agent of change North Fork Clearwater River drainage. However, vegetative conditions, fuels accumulation, and climatic factors on many north and east facing slopes may preclude the effective use of fire as a management tool in ecological restoration. Many of these sites are within the eligible river corridor and other tributary drainages. In these areas, mechanical treatments, including timber harvest and silvicultural practices may be the most effective method to address departed ecological conditions or to protect high value resources. Mechanical treatments also ensure reforestation with more resilient species, something that is not guaranteed with wildfire.

The Land Management Plan includes components to move toward ecological desired conditions that support a diversity of plant and animal communities, support the persistence of native species, and maintain ecosystem integrity across the Forest. This includes components specific to the management of elk habitat. Elk are recognized for their ecological, social, Tribal, and economic importance in the Plan area and regional communities. There has been a significant loss of high-quality elk habitat, including summer and winter range across the Forest including the North Fork Clearwater drainage. While management for elk is emphasized in the Plan for improving their habitat conditions to support increased populations, many other wildlife species will benefit from this emphasis on habitat management for elk. Much of the North Fork Clearwater drainage is within Management Area 2, Idaho Roadless Areas. Many of these roadless areas lack nutritional resources for elk due to past fire suppression and the resulting dense forest cover. Wildland fire will be the primary management tool to improve these conditions in these areas. Timber harvest and other mechanical treatments will be the primary management tool for improving elk and other wildlife habitat in those portions of the river drainage in Management Area 3.

As mentioned above, western white pine populations are far below the natural range of variation on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Restoring western white pine is desirable across the Plan area, particularly the North Fork Clearwater drainage. Western white pine occurs primarily on warm moist broad habitat types which is the dominant habitat type of the North Fork Clearwater River and its tributaries. Western white pine is a moderate to high shade intolerant species and therefore management activities to restore it on the landscape will require large openings or lightly shaded areas and planting of blister rust-resistant seedlings. Establishment of these openings will be through wildland fire and timber harvest depending on the Management Area.

Climate change is expected to bring warmer and drier conditions in the Plan area. This is expected to result in increased mortality of drought intolerant species and increased fuels accumulation. Adapting landscapes to climate change and future wildfires will require more active management to open canopies of dry pine and moist mixed conifer species where fire resilient and larger size trees are favored. It will also require removing ladder fuels of smaller size class and fire intolerant tree species that compete for limited resources such as moisture, light and growing space. Ultimately, promoting adaptation to climate change and future wildfire will require restoring landscapes to function within their historic fire regime (Hessburg et al 2022). This work will certainly include the North Fork Clearwater River and its tributaries to help move the Nez Perce-Clearwater toward its desired conditions.

Recreation

It is hard to dispute that the North Fork Clearwater is a boatable river and is popular for a variety of boating and floating experiences based on time of year and river flow levels. The lower section of the North Fork Clearwater below the Bungalow Ranger Station offers three segments of Class III, IV, and V rapids interspersed by segments of slower or less technical water depending on river flow. Upstream, the Black Canyon section and several tributaries also offer quality boating opportunities. However, when considering all the boatable rivers on the Forest and within the recreation region of comparison it is difficult to determine that this river is rare or exemplary in the boating experience it provides as compared to the other rivers on the Forest or around the recreation region of comparison. The Forest includes the notable Lochsa, Selway, Middle Fork Clearwater, and Main Salmon designated rivers as well as numerous lesser-known or advertised streams that are recognized and enjoyed by the river boating community.

Additionally, there are many regionally known boatable rivers available within and from the recreation region of comparison. These include the Bitterroot River, Blackfoot River, Clark Fork River, and North Fork Flathead River in Montana; and, the Little North Fork Clearwater River, South Fork Clearwater River; North Fork, South Fork, and Main Payette Rivers; Rapid River; and the St. Joe River in Idaho among many others. In fact, American Whitewater lists on their website over 100 boatable rivers in the state of Idaho. It is easy to imagine that each river is different in its setting, river characteristics, and experience. But that does not necessarily mean that they are rare or exemplary in providing a boating experience that is significantly different or notably superior to most of the other boatable rivers or equal to the experience of most of the rivers currently designated wild and scenic. There is nothing to suggest that designation would provide anything to improve the boating experience in these rivers beyond what is provided through the Land Management Plan, or that the rivers demand the permanent protection of designation to ensure the continued presence of these opportunities.

The more notable recreational use of the North Fork Clearwater River has traditionally been and is fishing, particularly fly fishing for westslope cutthroat trout. It provides high quality Blue Ribbon equivalent fishing opportunities that attract out-of-state visitors from within and beyond the region of comparison. However, the Northern Rockies provide innumerable rivers and streams for fly-fishing within and available from the recreation region of comparison. Some of these are already protected through wild and scenic river designation or wilderness designation, and many more are protected through other state and federal regulation, policy, and management practices. The North Fork is well known for fly fishing for Cutthroat, Rainbow, and Bull trout, and offers opportunity for angling for small mouth bass and other species. Fishing pressure has traditionally been high and is expected to continue to increase as surrounding community populations grow. Fishing pressure is increasing more dramatically in the upper reaches including

Black Canyon and above on the North Fork, and Cayuse and Kelly creeks. Providing for this river related recreation while preserving the habitat to support sustainable fishery populations requires close attention, application of Land Management Plan components, and collaboration with the Nez Perce Tribe, state and federal agencies, and partners.

It's incumbent that the Forest finds balance in providing for the increasing number of recreationists while restoring and protecting the upland, riparian, and river conditions that support these fishable fish populations. The Land Management Plan provides numerous plan components and direction to guide restorative and protective measures to provide that balance between competing resources. There is nothing to suggest that additional constraints through designation are warranted, nor that they would appreciably improve success in meeting the goals and desired conditions as described in the Plan. The interim protection measures could reduce the ability to restore both aquatic and upland habitats.

The majority of recreational use is by residents of local communities in and near the Forest as described by the recreation region of comparison. However, the popularity and notoriety of fly fishing for westslope cutthroat trout in the North Fork and its tributaries has increased and now draws anglers from throughout the recreation region of comparison and beyond. Due to the remoteness of the river and relatively slow travel on the forest roads most visitors come to camp rather than day use. This is particularly true the farther up the river visitors go. Seasonal access is dictated by snow levels and duration. Upriver use increases as access from the East through Hoodoo Pass becomes available. Until then use is concentrated in the lower reaches accessible by primary access Road 247 from Headquarters. Early season use is primarily by whitewater enthusiasts while later in the season users primarily enjoy floating, fishing, lounging, gathering forest products, off-highway vehicle use, and hunting.

Increasing populations, changing demographics, and technological advances in motorized recreational vehicles is bringing change in the numbers of recreationists and the activities they enjoy in the North Fork Clearwater. What was once a popular area primarily for tent camping while hunting and fishing has now become popular for RV camping while using ATVs, UTVs, motorcycles, mountain bikes, and e-bikes for riding for pleasure, adventure riding, and accessing backcountry. Often, these visitors join in larger groups that want to camp together and ride together on the roads and trails open to that use. The North Fork is gaining notoriety as a destination or key component of dual sport motorcycle touring, ATV and UTV riding, and mountain bike adventures. Additionally, changing policies that limit public use on adjacent and nearby state and private lands have pushed more recreationists onto the Forest resulting in an increasing the number and duration of hunting camps as well as increased use of motorized vehicles. Recognizing, understanding, and providing for these changing and increasing uses is necessary to provide quality recreational experiences while protecting the river values and upland resources.

Most recreation use on the Nez Perce-Clearwater occurs in primitive dispersed sites rather than developed facilities. This is certainly true along and around the North Fork Clearwater River. With the changes in use available sites are often filled to their capacity leading to a proliferation of new, unauthorized sites, with negative social and ecological consequences. Through stewardship contracting and partnerships, site mitigation practices have been put into place to direct users away from the river's edge and, as needed, out of riparian areas, while still providing for the dispersed experience visitors seek in the North Fork Clearwater. These practices have been successful in some locations and less successful in other locations. But additional action will still

be needed in the future to continue to address this issue. Due to the steep terrain of the river corridor options are limited and costly to mitigate the impact of recreational uses on the water quality in the river.

Implementation of any actions to address the need for additional dispersed or developed recreational areas could potentially be restricted because permanent protection and enhancement of all ORVs may not be feasible during or as a result of these activities. For instance, mitigation or obliteration of dispersed sites may adversely affect the recreation ORV, water quality, cultural values, or fisheries habitat. Additionally, restorative work in the corridor or uplands to other ecological needs may be limited due to the interim protective measures in the adjacent river corridor. This, in turn, would limit the resources available to mitigate water quality concerns within the river corridor. Land Management Plan components are in place to protect these resources while maintaining flexibility to adjust to changing uses and conditions.

A contributing factor in the popularity of the corridor for recreation is the availability of the river by the roads in the river corridor. Like the other major rivers on the Forest, the North Fork Clearwater is paralleled by roads. However, unlike the Middle Fork and South Fork River roads, the North Fork roads are not paved. Forest Roads #247 and #250 parallel a majority of the river from Aquarius Campground to Cedars Campground. These are graveled Maintenance Level 3 roads maintained for passenger vehicles. These roads are predominantly two-laned but do have bridges and other narrow sections that are single lane. The roads in the river corridor provide a seasonal connector route from Pierce, Idaho to Superior, Montana. These roads receive increased traffic because of this east-west connection. These roads receive routine maintenance but there is a growing backlog of deferred maintenance as well, primarily the need to replace up to 200 culverts on Forest Road #250. Routine dust abatement and regular surfacing helps to mitigate the high level of use, but do not eliminate impacts. These mitigation actions are largely possible due to stewardship timber harvest projects across the Forest. The value of the timber product is used to cover the expense of a myriad of other beneficial projects across the Forest. Finding the balance between sustaining the social and ecological values is most complex along the North Fork of the Clearwater. Actions that would enhance the ecological values would adversely affect the recreational ORV. Applying interim protection measures that could potentially become permanent would limit the restoration work adjacent and within the corridor. This in turn could reduce the ability of the Forest to fund projects that both protect and enhance the fisheries ORV and protect the recreation ORV. Invariably, fully protecting and enhancing one outstandingly remarkable value could diminish or degrade another outstandingly remarkable value. Maintaining flexibility without the increased constraints that come with designation would have a higher likelihood of success of meeting Land Management Plan desired conditions to provide recreational opportunities that are ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable. This, ultimately, would be provide the best future for the outstandingly remarkable values.

Scenic

As described in the Land Management Plan Appendix 7, the scenic character of the North Fork Clearwater is somewhat different from the other three scenic character zones described for the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

The North Fork Clearwater River is similar in its geology, hydrology, and vegetation as the Middle and South Fork Clearwater rivers. Each river presents scenic character that is riverine in appearance featuring, rivers, tributaries, a diversity of forest and vegetative cover, canyons, and low-lying areas. Each river has cliffs, interesting rock formations, large boulders forming rapids,

juxtaposition of white water and smooth, reflective water, and a variety of vegetation, trees, and shrubs, along its length. Each river is diverse in its appearance, varying from shallow, rocky-river bottom stretches to narrow deep pool and rocky rapid sections. Each river corridor has evidence of past and current human use, including places and features important to the Nez Perce. Each river is readily accessible by vehicle for much of its length along an adjacent road, and each river offers viewsheds that are natural appearing as well as views of managed landscapes. Collectively these features are typical to most river corridors on public lands in the region. However, as with all rivers, the composition, juxtaposition, and magnitude of these, and other features varies to present a unique scenic character.

The scenic features of the North Fork Clearwater are similar in terms of the juxtaposition of whitewater and smooth water, a variety of vegetation, and glimpses of cliffs and interesting rock formations. Evidence of past mining, logging, and Forest Service history is present along the river corridor similar to but less prevalent than the South Fork.

Notable differences include the absence of a paved highway adjacent to the North Fork and less evidence of current and past human habitation and use in the corridor as compared to the Middle and South Fork Clearwater rivers. Generally, the North Fork is narrower and more incised than the Middle and South Fork Clearwater rivers with fewer broad riparian areas and wetlands. For much of its length, the North Fork is paralleled by a high standard gravel Forest Service road. The Middle and South forks are paralleled by paved state highways. There are no residences along the North Fork as opposed to the Middle and South Forks yet there are two large Forest Service compounds with a multitude of facilities and other infrastructure. The absence of a paved road in the North Fork, the absence of private residences, and the cumulative effect of the specific features of the North Fork Clearwater presents a natural-appearing, but different viewing experience than the other rivers on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. While the scenic character is somewhat different along the North Fork, the distinction from other rivers is subtle as there are no scenic features that are so dramatic, rare, significantly different, or the best example of any such feature in the region of comparison. When considering rivers in a larger region such as the geologic or recreation region of comparisons, the scenic resource of the North Fork is even less exemplary and certainly not unique or rare.

The Scenic Integrity Objective for the North Fork Clearwater River is moderate, where the landscape character appears slightly altered. As such, deviation of the scenery landscape through management activities should remain visually subordinate to the landscape character being viewed. Restorative activities within the river corridor and across the landscape visible from the river corridor may be required that are more evident than otherwise desired in this scenic integrity objective. Maintaining the scenic integrity objective is one of the objectives to be considered during project planning. Given the dynamic nature of the landscapes, a mosaic of vegetation type and structure along the corridor is the most natural if the interim protection measures were applied as the way to protect the scenic value, restoration activities in and around the river corridor, even those designed to protect or enhance other outstandingly remarkable values, may have to be modified or eliminated. As with the recreation ORV, the rigidity of the interim protection measures and/or permanent designation would create conflicts between actions needed for the different ORVs. Land management plan components for scenic integrity would provide the best method for retaining and enhancing the scenic values along the North Fork.

Fish and Aquatics

Generally, the North Fork Clearwater corridor above the reservoir is in a more natural condition than the Middle Fork and South Fork Clearwater rivers. This is because there have been fewer direct impacts to the river from activities such as grazing, mining, housing, agricultural practices, and road development including widening and paving.

Much of the North Fork Clearwater corridor is comprised of steep slopes with few stream-side meadows, wetlands, or broad riparian areas. Given these conditions, there is limited opportunity to implement traditional river related restoration such as wetland restoration or placement of beaver dam analogs to create or improve wetlands and meadows. Therefore, the focus for aquatic restoration in the North Fork has been and is expected to continue to be eliminating sediment sources through road or trail decommissioning, dust abatement along roads, limitation of recreational access within the riparian zones, culvert replacement to replace undersized culverts and to improve aquatic organism passage, placement of large woody debris in the river, and addressing large debris dams from rain events that are creating resource damage.

Cutthroat trout and bull trout populations in the Pacific northwest have been impacted from years of threats such as habitat alteration, hybridization, and overfishing leading to petitioning for both species to be ESA listed. These petitions resulted in the range wide listing of bull trout as threatened in 1999, and a finding that listing of westslope cutthroat was unwarranted in 2003.). Despite the impacts to these species in other waters in the region of comparison, through pro-active and careful management actions, including IRR and harvest closures (Erhardt and Scarnecchia 2014, Johnson and Bjorn 1978) bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations have increased substantially over recent decades and appear to be stable or increasing in the north fork (Meyer et al. 2013). Restorative work as described above as well as careful consideration of the fisheries resource and application of Land Management Plan components during upland management activities have been successful and are necessary to preserve these, and many other species. There are over 120 plan components designed to ensure no net degradation of fisheries habitat and direct enhancement, particularly in Conservation Watersheds. When the aquatic restoration activities are integrated with upland restoration, more tools are available to leverage funding for additional work.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with habitat, free-flowing clean water, and numerous species of resident and anadromous fish. Fish are ubiquitous across the Forest. The Forest works with other federal and state agencies to manage, protect and enhance the fisheries resource. These include the Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Idaho Water Resources Board. These agencies are committed to the protection of the fisheries resources across the Forest. While most waters of the Nez Perce-Clearwater support some fisheries resource, all rivers do not possess the same attributes, value or contribution toward the goals, objectives or desired condition for fisheries and water-related resources.

The North Fork is unique in the fisheries region of comparison in that it does not provide habitat for anadromous fisheries. However, it does provide important habitat for bull trout and Westslope cutthroat trout. Bull trout are found throughout the Northwest in Montana, Idaho, Northern California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Canada. Bull trout are present across much of Idaho from the Canadian border to the Boise River and beyond. The Clearwater River basin includes four core areas: South Fork Clearwater River, North Fork Clearwater River, Lochsa River, and Selway River. Bull trout are widely distributed throughout most of the large rivers and associated

tributaries within the Clearwater River basin. The Clearwater River is one of four basins that contain the healthiest and most stable bull trout populations in the bull trout recovery unit.

Bull trout are widely distributed within the North Fork Clearwater River core area and populations are stable or increasing. Populations are also increasing in the South Fork Clearwater River core area, and stable or increasing in the Lochsa and Selway core areas, as well as the Salmon River core areas on the Forest. The quality and extent of available habitat in the North Fork is superior within the region of comparison and exemplary in its region of occurrence. As such the river basin includes 355 miles as designated critical habitat for Columbia River Bull trout. There are 19,729 total miles of designated Bull trout critical habitat, with 1,680 miles of that on the Nez Perce-Clearwater including 1,282 miles in the Clearwater River basin.

The ESA listing of bull trout imparts a uniqueness to the species because it is one of four listed fish species present on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. The Forest supports the species through the quality, diversity, and abundance of aquatic and riparian habitat, including free-flowing, high quality water. These conditions are not rare or unique within the region of comparison. But the fact that these core areas support bull trout demonstrates that these conditions are exemplary in that they provide cold, clean, complex, and connected habitats essential for bull trout recovery. In that sense, the North Fork Clearwater provides less than 2 percent of the total critical habitat, and approximately 4 percent of the critical habitat in Idaho. So, while the North Fork is important to the recovery of bull trout, its relative contribution through designation of critical habitat is relatively small.

Management activities have and continue to occur across the North Fork Clearwater basin, and with these activities bull trout are thriving. The North Fork includes 42 miles in Management Area 2 where the Idaho Roadless Rule prohibits road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest unless exempted under the criteria specified in the rule. These restrictions on roads and harvest limit opportunity for timber harvest or mechanical treatments for restorative work. Therefore, the use of wildland fire will be the primary tool to move the Forest toward desired habitat conditions such as conditions that support healthy, huntable game species including elk, deer, bear, cougar, and others. The use of prescribed fire and management of wildland fire in the river corridor and adjacent uplands is appropriate, necessary, and expected to continue to provide these desired conditions.

Thirty-six miles of the North Fork are in Management Area 3. Most of this area consists of areas with roads, trails, structures, and evidence of past and ongoing management activities. Activities in Management Area 3 are expected to continue to meet Forest objectives while contributing to the economic and social wellbeing of nearby communities and forest visitors through the production of forest products and sustainable recreation. Activities such as road construction and reconstruction, timber harvest, and other mechanical silvicultural treatments are expected to continue. Under the plan components which include more than 120 measures to contribute to habitats that support recovery of the species, the fisheries ORV would be protected. By virtue of the listing of bull trout as threatened, as well as requirements under other federal law and regulation, the Nez Perce-Clearwater is obligated to provide ecological conditions that contribute to the persistence of the species. Land Management Plan components regarding water and aquatic resources, conservation watershed network, riparian management areas, and timber constrain management activities in order to protect river values. Designation as a Wild and Scenic Rivers would provide added legislative protections, but potentially could limit options to utilize management techniques and tools otherwise available in other management areas. Additionally,

the fact that the North Fork provides so many high value resources present a management conundrum as how best to meet incongruent or competing resource objectives while equally protecting these same resources. Land Management Plan components are in place and cooperation between other state and federal agencies, the Nez Perce Tribe, and non-government organizations are ongoing that work to protect river values, particularly the fisheries resource. Maintaining flexibility that comes without the requirement to permanently protect and enhance the seven outstandingly remarkable values brings more options to consider to meet Plan objectives while preserving these and other values. This may become more important as the effects of climate change and needed responses to those effects become apparent.

Westslope cutthroat trout occur primarily in Montana, Idaho, and Canada. It occurs in central and north Idaho in the Salmon, Clearwater, Coeur d'Alene, St. Joe, and Pend Oreille rivers. It is widely distributed across the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Westslope cutthroat trout provide a regionally renowned sport fishery in several areas, including the Lochsa River, Selway River, North Fork Clearwater, and the Kelly Creek tributary to the North Fork Clearwater River. Throughout its range, over 50 percent of current occupied WCT habitat is in roadless and wilderness areas (McIntyre & Rieman). In 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that the WCT is not likely to become a threatened or endangered species within the foreseeable future. Westslope cutthroat trout populations are generally stable or increasing in abundance across much of Idaho. In the Clearwater River subbasin, the population growth is positive or stable. Westslope cutthroat trout are neither a Nez Perce-Clearwater sensitive species nor a focal species. Generally, the conditions in the North Fork Clearwater River that support bull trout support Westslope cutthroat trout. And the management implications of their presence are linked. See the previous narrative regarding Bull trout of their importance, resource concerns, management implications, and protections in place through Land Management Plan components and cooperative management.

Wildlife

After the large fires of the early 1900's and aggressive logging practices associated with white pine blister rust the North Fork Clearwater area provided habitat that supported a large population of elk and other game species. However, with the passage of time, successful fire suppression, and reduced timber harvest, vegetative conditions have changed and no longer provide high quality habitat for large ungulates. Consequently, elk populations have greatly decreased in this area. Restorative activities have occurred in the recent past but have been focused on elk winter range. More restoration using wildland fire, timber harvest, and other silvicultural practices is needed to increase and improve summer and winter habitat that will support large, huntable populations of elk and other game species. Such restorative work is necessary in the uplands and within the river corridor to ensure quality habitat is available to support healthy wildlife populations year long. The locations and magnitude of these restorative practices may not be consistent with the requirement of permanently protecting and enhancing all or any of the outstandingly remarkable values.

Considering the wildlife outstandingly remarkable value, the Harlequin duck has been considered rare in Idaho for over 100 years. In Idaho it is estimated that statewide approximately 50 pairs breed along a limited number of high-quality streams within the Priest River, Kootenai River, Clark Fork, Lake Pend Oreille, St. Joe River, Clearwater River, and the South Fork Snake River watersheds. The statewide population is estimated to be between only 100-250 individuals.

Rivers in the plan area are regionally important for the conservation of the Harlequin duck from a statewide perspective. Collectively, 38 percent of all observations of Harlequin ducks in the state of Idaho have been observed on rivers in the plan area. Harlequin ducks nest along fast-moving rivers and mountain streams on rocky islands or banks. They require relatively undisturbed, low gradient, meandering mountain streams with dense shrubby riparian areas (greater than 50 percent streamside shrub cover), and woody debris for nesting and brood rearing. The most important rivers for Harlequin ducks appear to be the Lochsa river, portions of the Selway within the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, Kelly Creek, Fish Creek (Lochsa drainage), Crooked Fork Creek, Colt Killed Creek, and the North Fork Clearwater River, especially the upper reaches. Much of the designated Lochsa and Selway Wild and Scenic rivers contain substantial portions of Harlequin duck observations. Other rivers that have observations include Waw'aalamnime Creek, Weitas Creek, South Fork Clearwater River, Red River, Orogrande Creek, Crooked River, Imnamatnoon Creek, and Brushy Fork.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. A group of stakeholders developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. This suite of plan components was developed to improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. The aquatic and riparian plan components in the plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the listed wildlife ORV species and habitat. And, while the construction of dams would certainly impact these species, it is highly unlikely that any Forest Service authorizing action that includes large-scale impoundments or activities that affect free flowing or clean water would be consistent with the land management Plan aquatic desired conditions. Such activities would also not be in alignment with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum on recovery of salmon and steelhead. Therefore, any such proposals likely would not be authorized during the life of the plan.

Several wildlife species will benefit from outcomes in the plan for the eligible and suitable wild and scenic rivers. Harlequin ducks will benefit from the inclusion of Kelly Creek, Weitas Creek, Colt Killed Creek and Fish Creek, and will continue to benefit from the Middle Fork Clearwater, Selway, and Lochsa designated wild and scenic rivers. Together the suitable and designated wild and scenic rivers combine to capture 87 percent of all Harlequin duck observations in the Idaho Species Diversity Database.

The North Fork Clearwater also supports populations of the Coeur d'Alene salamander. However, the Coeur d'Alene salamander was reviewed for its potential as a wildlife species outstandingly remarkable value but was determined not to be an appropriate indicator for wildlife as an outstandingly remarkable value. This species did not meet the screening criteria as a wildlife ORV for the following reasons: the species is water dependent but not river dependent; it is not a species of conservation concern and therefore was not identified as having regional or national significance; while it has narrow habitat characteristics it has an area of distribution from the Selway River north into southern British Columbia, including parts of western Montana. A study by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game determined that populations were present at 95 percent of previously surveyed locations and the populations are stable. Five percent are of unknown status. (Cassirer & Groves, 1994)

Harlequin ducks and other aquatic species are present in several rivers on the Forest and many of those have or will receive added protection through designation, or a determination of suitability for designation through this Plan decision. The habitat and presence of Harlequin ducks in the North Fork is primarily in the upper reaches within an Idaho Roadless Area that has a primitive classification. It is highly unlikely that any management involving roads or timber harvest would occur in this area during the life of the plan.

In any case, preservation of aquatic and terrestrial species in the North Fork Clearwater is important in achieving the desired conditions of the area. Management under the land management plan components will provide protection and direct benefits to the Harlequin duck, the Coeur d'Alene salamander, and the other aquatic and terrestrial species present in the North Fork Clearwater and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan and beyond. There is nothing to indicate that designation as a wild and scenic river is warranted or would assist in the management and preservation of the wildlife outstandingly remarkable value or the other numerous wildlife species supported by the North Fork Clearwater River drainage.

Botany

The present climate and soil features are important elements in the maintenance of the refugia that supports coastal disjunct species. Coastal disjunct systems are sensitive to extreme temperatures, wildfire, drought, and reduced soil moisture, which pose their greatest climate-driven threat. The sensitivity of the coastal disjunct ecosystem to climate and climate-driven changes was determined to be moderate-high. These systems are also sensitive to non-climate stressors including timber harvest, fire suppression practices, grazing, mining, roads, and recreation (EcoAdapt, 2014). Without the low elevations and warm, moist local climate of the river bottoms, the ecological conditions would be inadequate to support the coastal disjunct communities. As climate induced changes take place, management actions may be required across the landscape to address impacts to numerous species and ecosystems. Depending on the magnitude of these impacts and the values of the resources, they may take priority over actions to protect these coastal disjunct systems. Conversely, if the coastal disjunct systems are priority, their protection may demand management actions within the corridor, potentially at the expense of some other outstandingly remarkable value or other resource values. This could set up an untenable situation to protect and enhance competing outstandingly remarkable values without the flexibility to allow for some diminishment of any of them.

With the inevitability of climate change and its anticipated but uncertain effects in these areas, it seems prudent to maintain flexibility in management practices to adapt as we experience, learn from, and respond to these changes. Land Management Plan components addressing aquatic and riparian areas will serve to maintain these site-specific areas but also allows management flexibility to identify and address priority resource concerns in this changing climate that might conflict with protecting and enhancing the botanical outstandingly remarkable values.

Cultural

The outstandingly remarkable value for cultural resources can be found from the point of free flow above the reservoir upstream to the Cedars Campground, approximately 70 miles. Sites of historical relevance and archaeological significance in this section of the river include Forest Service administrative structures, early European settlement sites, an abundance of mining and mining exploration features, some of the earliest recorded Native American habitation sites on the southern Columbia Plateau, and the viewsheds of Traditional Cultural Properties.

Construction of the Dworshak reservoir destroyed many significant historic locations and impacted many more with its subsequent flooding of the North Fork landscape. The establishment of the Dworshak Reservoir facilitated the inundation of a staggering number of historical and cultural sites that can never be fully mitigated or understood scientifically. Comparatively, the sites within the free-flowing section of the North Fork, having good to pristine preservation conditions, stand to emphasize the importance of the remaining sites due to the rare quality of their preservation and the breadth of history they represent. Archaeologically these sites are all that remain to represent forgotten facets of the story of human use of the North Fork Clearwater River.

Nez Perce Cultural

The Nez Perce Tribe has identified the North Fork Clearwater as having cultural and historic importance to the Nimiipuu (The People). The North Fork contains multiple traditional use areas and a multitude of locations that are referred to in Coyote Stories associated with the origins of the Nimiipuu culture. Early habitation and village sites were abundant in this landscape prior to the construction of the Dworshak Reservoir. Now only a fraction of these areas remain unaffected above the high-water mark. Areas of Traditional Cultural Significance have been identified in areas not impacted by the reservoir on Forest Service administered lands. The relative rarity of the unaffected cultural places that occur in the free-flowing sections of the North Fork support their consideration as outstanding river values.

Many traditional use sites have been and are currently popular with recreationists. Consequently, these traditional sites have suffered varying degrees of impacts and loss of artifacts over the years. The Forest has taken actions to protect these resources, but more can be done. This may include actions such as site closure or removal that could adversely affect the recreation outstandingly remarkable value. This is a difficult situation that could be further complicated by the requirement to permanently protect and enhance all the outstandingly remarkable values in the river corridor if designated a wild and scenic river. Maintaining flexibility in approaching this difficult situation while complying with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act and Tribal Trust plan components, and other applicable regulation, without the increased constraints that come with designation, seems to be the most prudent approach with a higher likelihood of success of meeting Land Management Plan desired conditions for these cultural resources and other resources, rather than prioritizing permanent protection of the seven outstandingly remarkable values identified through the eligibility analysis.

Conclusion

Given the highly altered landscape conditions of the North Fork Clearwater drainage, the anticipated effects of climate change, and the objectives of the Land Management Plan, large-scale management practices will be necessary to restore vegetative conditions, support the persistence of numerous wildlife and fish species, and respond to anticipated potential impacts due to climate changes. It will also be necessary to maintain flexibility in these management practices to address these conditions, meet Forest-wide resource objectives and move the Forest toward desired conditions.

Designation as a wild and scenic river does not prohibit management activities within a river corridor or adjacent lands. However, paramount in any management activity in, or that might adversely affect, a designated river corridor, is the requirement to fully protect and enhance, in perpetuity, the outstandingly remarkable values. The eligible North Fork Clearwater River comprises 25,248 acres, or three percent of the approximately 800,000-acre river drainage. Each

outstandingly remarkable value within the corridor has a different zone of influence and different activities that could impact each value. As discussed in the sections above, activities to protect and enhance one ORV could adversely affect other outstandingly remarkable values. Therefore, prioritizing the protection and enhancement of these seven values, through designation, in this relatively small area could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other needed ecological restorative activities within the river corridor and adjacent areas. Prohibitions on actions outside of the river corridor would adversely affect important resources such as the coastal disjunct plant communities, elk habitat, and more.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the intention of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

State agencies have demonstrated their commitment to protect the river values through their regulatory actions. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality administers the Clean Water Act through water quality standards, designation of beneficial uses, and the anti-degradation program. Also, the Idaho Water Resource Board is authorized to protect highly valued waterways as “State Protected Rivers” with the goal of maintaining free-flowing waterways and conserving unique river features where it is in the public interest to protect recreational, scenic, and natural values. The Idaho Water Resource Board prepared components of the Comprehensive State Water Plan for the North Fork Clearwater River Basin and South Fork Clearwater River Basin. The plans provide guidance for the development, management, and protection of water and related resources in the North Fork and South Fork Clearwater River Basins in compliance with provisions of the Idaho State Constitution and Idaho State Code.

Additionally, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council was created by Congress and the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington to provide planning and policy leadership on regional electric power and fish and wildlife issues. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council determined that, for specific stream reaches, hydroelectric development would have unacceptable risks of irreversible loss to fish and wildlife and identified these stream reaches as “Protected Areas,” thereby demonstrating their commitment to protect river values.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of the eligible segment of the North Fork Clearwater River are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. The Land Management Plan describes the desired conditions and objectives across the planning area. Plan components including standards and guidelines provide management direction to meet those objectives and desired conditions. These components include the protection of, and benefits to, river-related values. Compliance with these components serves to preserve the many river-related values for the life of the Plan without imposing potential restrictions that may come with designation as a wild and scenic river. Therefore, I do not believe the benefits of designation exceed the benefits of non-designation.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and the seven outstandingly remarkable values described above. However, there is little to no potential for construction of hydropower projects or other water development activities that would impede the

free flow of these segments. Additionally, much of the drainage is in or adjacent to suitable timber management ground and important winter habitat for big game, particularly elk. Management activities to improve forest health, enhance wildlife and fish habitat, and achieve desired future conditions could be affected or foreclosed with designation. Timber management and other mechanical treatments are a more precise tool for restoring the majestic white pine stands that once blanketed the corridor. Management of the North Fork Clearwater drainage, including the habitat that supports the outstandingly remarkable values, may better contribute to the conservation of the outstandingly remarkable values and other resources through management consistent with Land Management Plan components and direction.

The outstandingly remarkable values of the North Fork Clearwater River have persisted, and some have thrived, under management of the 1987 Land Management Plan. This revised Land Management Plan includes numerous Plan components constraining management actions that will provide direct and indirect benefits to these river values. And doing so while maintaining flexibility to address resource conditions in consideration of the anticipated, but uncertain, effects of climate change.

There is no apparent benefit, threat, or other compelling reason to support the application of the standards of WSR designation to protection the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. The application of interim protection measures through designation could benefit the seven outstandingly remarkable values, as intended, or complicate or eliminate the ability to implement actions to protect them. Maintaining flexibility to be able to prepare for and respond to anticipated but uncertain changing conditions will be critical to success in preserving these river values and other resources across Forest.

The analysis and direction documented in the FEIS supports the conclusion that Land Management Plan components and direction, federal and state protections, and management principles and practices are in place to provide a reasonable balance of the multiple uses of the Forest, including protections for the river values of the North Fork Clearwater River. I considered the information in the analysis documented in the FEIS and Appendix F, and the considerations for suitability outlined at the beginning of this appendix to the ROD. Based on this information, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features regionally or nationally such that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a wild and scenic river. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find the North Fork Clearwater River suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Weitas Creek

Weitas Creek is a 28.5-mile-long tributary of the North Fork Clearwater River. The identified outstandingly remarkable values include fish, recreation, and Nez Perce cultural. Its preliminary classification is Scenic.

While many rivers and streams have traditionally been, and are, used by the Nez Perce people, Weitas Creek, along with Kelly Creek, is of particular significance in the North Fork Clearwater River. Weitas Creek is a high elevation area the Nez Perce have used since time immemorial. It is an area that individuals and families can still go to connect with their environment and their ancestors, where there has been an ancient, spiritual connection for countless generations.

An important aspect of Weitas Creek is that this high elevation area was not impacted by Glacial Lake Missoula back waters, nor has it suffered impacts from Euro-American settlement and use. Traditional use sites were not washed away, eroded, or otherwise damaged. As such, sites within the Weitas Creek area have maintained their integrity as compared to many past significant sites that have suffered from various impacts. This undisturbed area is unique in that it provides a significant record of this traditional and ancient use, making Weitas extremely important to the Nez Perce and valuable for scientific, cultural, and educational purposes.

Consideration was given to the abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. The remaining areas are in Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that this area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. Consideration was also given to the fact that Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, riparian habitats, and wilderness, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, thereby supporting and preserving the fish outstandingly remarkable values. Weitas Creek supports thriving populations of westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout due to its high-water quality and habitat that has had little human caused disturbance. It has been identified as a major spawning area for these species and supports self-sustaining populations through high levels of natural reproduction. Additionally, eligible river segments are included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout that is supported by presence of the species. Among the other tributaries to the North Fork Clearwater River, Weitas Creek contributes higher value than most to the presence and persistence of these species and, consequently, is significant to the Forest and regionally. Given the exceptionally high value of Weitas Creek to the fisheries resource on the Forest, actions to permanently protect and enhance the fisheries in this river segment warrants consideration for inclusion in the National System.

Weitas Creek is very popular for those wishing a fly-fishing experience in a semi-primitive setting. While there is no road adjacent to the creek, it is easily accessed by Trail 20, either from Road 500 at the headwaters, from Road 555 at Weitas Bridge in the middle reach, and at the mouth from Road 250. This trail is open to non-motorized and motorcycle use. The presence and abundance of a self-sustaining trout population, along with the near-pristine, semi-primitive environment provides a recreational opportunity unmatched by most rivers on the Forest. Consequently, Weitas Creek is regionally known for its high-quality fly-fishing and draws visitors from around the recreation region of comparison. This unique fishing experience contributes to the economic and social sustainability of the communities in and around the Nez Perce Clearwater. Additionally, Weitas Creek has been identified as a culturally important stream for fishing for the Nez Perce people. This unique, high-quality, fishing experience warrants special consideration and protection when considering management activities in the river corridor.

Weitas Creek is within a Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum allocation and allows use of Trail 20 for motorized use. The trail is currently managed for motorcycle use, and this is not expected to change if the river is designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

Weitas Creek lies wholly within Management Area 2, in the Big Horn-Weitas Idaho Roadless Area. This IRA has a Backcountry Restoration theme classification that allows only limited and specific reasons for road construction or the cutting, sale, or removal of timber. Given the creek's

location well outside of a community protection zone and in a generally unaltered landscape there is little reason to expect that any road construction or timber harvest would occur within the river corridor. However, any timber harvest that might occur would certainly be modified or foreclosed as an option for forest vegetation restoration by the interim protection measures. Other management activities may be considered for restorative purposes, predominantly the use of fire to improve wildlife habitat or other ecological conditions.

Given the exceptional value and contribution of this river's fisheries and cultural resources to the Forest, it is evident that Weitas Creek provides a significant contribution to the North Fork Clearwater river basin integrity, is unique and among the best representatives of the outstandingly remarkable values, will complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan, will not adversely affect the ability to implement other management actions to meet those goals, and rises to a level of significance that will contribute to vital national conservation purposes. Given all of this, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan. However, the cumulative and exceptional value and contribution of this river's fisheries, recreational, and Nez Perce cultural resources to the Nez Perce-Clearwater, it is appropriate that protection of these river resources take precedence over the objectives of other potential management activities in the river corridor. I find that the protection measures through designation as a Wild and Scenic River are an appropriate way protect and enhance the ORVs along this stream. Therefore, I find Weitas Creek suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Upper Lochsa River, Big Sand Creek, Storm Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, and South Fork Storm Creek

These five tributaries to the Lochsa River total 39.5 miles. The outstandingly remarkable values include recreation, scenic, fish, wildlife, and Nez Perce Tribe cultural. The preliminary classification for the South Fork Storm Creek, 3.74 miles, North Fork Storm Creek,3.20 miles, Storm Creek, 10.79 miles, and Big Sand Creek, 19.5 miles, is wild and the preliminary classification for the Upper Lochsa River is recreational.

The recreational outstandingly remarkable value for the Upper Lochsa River is its exceptional trout fishing. Although there are various fishing opportunities throughout the Forest, the rare fishing opportunities are steelhead trout and fly-fishing opportunities for cutthroat trout. The Upper Lochsa River, 1.95 miles, from the Wilderness Gateway Bridge upstream to the confluence of Crooked Fork Creek and Colt Killed Creek, provides a catch-and-release fishing opportunity. These recreational opportunities are important to the desired conditions for their contribution to the social and economic sustainability of local communities I and around the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

Streams and lakes on the Forests support many species of fish that are valued by the public for a wide variety of consumptive and non-consumptive uses. The Forest also contains a substantial portion of the spawning and rearing habitat available to anadromous steelhead trout and chinook salmon in the Snake River basin. The opportunity to fish for and harvest salmon and steelhead, as well as the catch-and-release fisheries associated with the Selway River, Lochsa River, and Kelly Creek, attract anglers locally and from across the country. Salmon and steelhead fishing contribute substantially to the local economies of communities such as Riggins, Orofino, Kamiah, and Kooskia. While the Upper Lochsa River, as well as these other river segments, do offer outstanding fishing opportunities they are not unique to these streams and are similar to

opportunities downstream in the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River, the Selway Wild and Scenic River, Kelly Creek, and many other streams across the recreation region of comparison.

There are scenic outstandingly remarkable values for Big Sand Creek, Storm Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, and South Fork Storm Creek. These streams are within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness beginning in high cirque basins near the Bitterroot Divide.

The region of comparison for eligibility for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. For the Scenic ORV, the distinctive attributes are directly tied to water features and the geologic, hydrologic, and vegetative features of the steep river canyons that comprise much of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where our visitors come from, and where else those publics might go and enjoy dramatic scenery as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

A small set of recreating visitors engage in back-country adventure recreation that would lead them to venture high into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, thereby enjoying the distinctive geologic features, high cirque basins and vistas of the river canyons falling below. These wilderness adventurers have several wilderness and remote areas in the recreation region of comparison that offer similar wilderness experiences of challenge, solitude, high-country adventure, and dramatic scenery. The eligible river segments offer spectacular scenery that is certainly equal to other notable areas of scenic splendor in the region of comparison. But, in this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of “distinctive scenic features” and “distinctive river canyons” encompass many similar river segments, not only in the recreation region of comparison but in neighboring national forests and other national forests in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain ranges. Therefore, it can not be said that the scenic values of these eligible segments is unique or rare in alpine or sub-alpine areas in the region of comparison.

The Upper Lochsa River and Big Sand Creek have fish outstandingly remarkable values of diversity and abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. The Upper Lochsa River and portions of Big Sand Creek are identified as major spawning areas for native steelhead trout in the Snake River Recovery Plan. Storm Creek supports high densities of fluvial and resident bull trout when compared to others in the region of comparison. These fish species and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. Past management activities have occurred in these drainages and these populations remained protected and persisted. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will provide protection of the free flow and high-water quality of these rivers, supporting the preservation of these species.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

Given the fisheries contribution to the integrity of the Lochsa River system these streams deserve strong consideration and protection in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. In recognition of this, during development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified the Upper Lochsa River segment as having a fish outstandingly remarkable value of cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. For countless generations, the Lochsa River area has been a traditional use area for hunting, fishing, and gathering by the Nez Perce people.

A wildlife outstandingly remarkable value for the Upper Lochsa River is due to populations of Harlequin ducks. In Idaho, approximately 50 pairs are known to breed along a limited number of high-quality streams within the Priest River, Kootenai River, Clark Fork, Lake Pend Oreille, St. Joe River, Clearwater River, and the South Fork Snake River watersheds. Approximately 38 percent of all Harlequin duck observations in Idaho Species Diversity Database (accessed April 2017) have been observed within the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Prominent among the rivers in the region of comparison for populations of Harlequin ducks is the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River, including the upper section not currently designated as wild and scenic, and the lower four miles of Colt Killed Creek.

The Upper Lochsa River is in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. Developments and roads in the corridor include White Sand Campground, Powell Campground, Powell Ranger District Office and facilities, Historic Lochsa Lodge, Forest Road 102 (Forest Road 102 A-F), Forest Road 111, Forest Road 368, and maintenance level 1 roads Forest Road 362 and Forest Road 5646. The segment is in the checkerboard area of ownership and about one-half mile of the river is on private land. The persistence of the fish and wildlife species while past management activities have occurred in these river segments demonstrates the Forest's commitment to protect them, and effectiveness of management controls to preserve habitat that support these species. The continued presence of these species supports the recreation and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values and are expected to remain through implementation of the Land Management Plan.

Colt Killed Creek runs through approximately 2 miles of private ownership, the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho Roadless Area (backcountry/restoration, primitive, and wild land recreation themes), and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. maintenance level 4 roads Forest Road 111 and Forest Road 368, maintenance level 3 road Forest Road 102, maintenance level 2 roads Forest Road 359 and Forest Road 362, and a number of maintenance level 1 roads are all within the corridor. The corridor also contains the White Sands Campground, Colt Creek Trailhead, and a couple of non-motorized trails. The private lands have been subdivided and residences are being constructed. In order to address the wildfire crisis, fuels reduction activities should be planned in this area to protect private and federal infrastructure. In addition, the private lands have been heavily impacted by past timber harvest practices. Moving into the future there is ample opportunity for cross-boundary restoration to benefit fisheries. This would be precluded or made more complex were these streams managed under the WSR protections.

Storm Creek runs through the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho Roadless Area (backcountry/restoration and wild land recreation themes) and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Only non-motorized trails occur in this area. Over-the-snow motorized travel is authorized within the lower Colt Killed Creek drainage, lower Storm Creek, and the upper Lochsa River.

Big Sand Creek, North Fork Storm Creek, and South Fork Storm Creek are in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Only non-motorized trails occur in this area. There are no roads, motorized trails, mining claims, mapped rock sources, or allotments in this area. No changes are anticipated to the land use within the wilderness area. Wilderness area designation withdraws the area from mineral entry, and water developments in wilderness areas must be authorized by the President. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin. And there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Construction of a dam would not be in alignment with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum to support salmon and steelhead recovery. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to decide suitability based on the concern of such development. Given their location in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness these streams have a high scenic integrity objective. Management in accordance with the General Management Direction –Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, as amended in 1992 ensures maintenance of the scenic splendor consistent with this objective. Designation as a wild and scenic river would do nothing to further protect or enhance this scenic resource.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components provides protections and direct benefits for the fish and wildlife ORV species and their habitat. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, a majority of these river miles are located in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness or in Idaho Roadless Rule areas where any management activities to address ecological concerns are limited and most likely would only involve wildland fire which would pose little to no threat to the river values. While designation would permanently protect the river values, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values, and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed.

Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals such as addressing the wildfire crisis or allowing watershed restoration activities to occur. Additionally, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

‘Imnamatnoon Creek and Waw’aalamnime Creek

‘Imnamatnoon Creek, 1.26 miles, and Waw’aalamnime Creek, 2.06 miles, are tributaries to the Lochsa River. Their eligibility is based on fish and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is recreational.

The fisheries outstandingly remarkable values for Waw’aalamnime Creek are based on diversity, abundance, and natural reproduction. The eligible segments support spawning and early rearing habitat for native steelhead trout, bull trout, spring Chinook salmon, and westslope cutthroat trout. The eligible segments are included as designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. A bull trout local population has been identified in the watershed, and Forest Service data (redd surveys) indicate eligible segments are used extensively for spawning. Waw’aalamnime Creek is identified as a minor spawning area for steelhead trout. There are no known non-native aquatic species present in the watershed. A fish outstandingly remarkable value has not been identified in ‘Imnamatnoon Creek.

The wildlife outstandingly remarkable value for Waw’aalamnime Creek and ‘Imnamatnoon Creek is based on populations of the Harlequin duck. Harlequin ducks occur from the mouth of ‘Imnamatnoon Creek upstream to the confluence of the east fork and west fork of this creek. Populations of Harlequin ducks occur on Waw’aalamnime Creek from the mouth to approximately two miles upstream. There have not been any observations upstream from these sections.

Waw’aalamnime Creek runs through the Land Management Plan Management Area 3 and Management Area 1. Forest Road 108 (maintenance level 3) runs along the creek and roads in the corridor include U. S. Highway 12, Forest Road 566 (maintenance level 3), Forest Road 1680 (maintenance level 2), and Forest Road 5613.

‘Imnamatnoon Creek runs through the Land Management Plan Management Area 3 and Management Area 1. Forest Road 568 (maintenance level 3) runs along the creek and roads in the corridor include U. S. Highway 12, Forest Road 563 (maintenance level 1), and maintenance level 1 roads Forest Road 5621 A, B, and E. There are a more than a dozen mining claims upstream of the ‘Imnamatnoon Creek segment on ‘Imnamatnoon Creek and West Fork 'Imnamatnoon Creek.

The segments on National Forest System lands suitable for timber production in Management Area 3 have been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan, and timber harvest has occurred along both segments. In the Land Management Plan Management Area 3, suitable timber base, timber harvests are one management tool used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions.

These streams are tributaries to the Lochsa River and the Middle Fork Clearwater River. Within this drainage there are ecotones that connect both riparian and upland vegetation communities. The natural range of variation analysis indicates that both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions in term of species composition, size class distribution, density, and structure. This landscape scale departure is the result of many different factors interacting over time including timber harvest and stand culturing practices, fire suppression, infrastructure development, and land use allocation decisions. Landscape scale restoration is needed to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions derived from the NRV analysis. The use of prescribed fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns which in turn will promote species composition, size class distribution

(including old growth), density and structure that is resilient over time. However, timber harvest and other mechanical treatments are more precise and provide assurance of replanting with resilient tree species; these treatments may also be used to meet objectives while contributing to the economic sustainability of local and regional communities. The potential effects of climate change may accelerate the rate of mortality within over dense forest cover types. This increase in mortality will promote high severity fire behavior that in turn will have deleterious impacts on both riparian systems and communities tied to the Middle Fork corridor.

There is an expectation that these drainages will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions in Management Area 3 through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns. These management activities also provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. The persistence of these species while past management activities have occurred in these river segments demonstrates the Forest's commitment to protect them, and effectiveness of management controls to preserve habitat that support these species.

The fish and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Lochsa and Clearwater rivers. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan. Beyond this, no other agencies or entities have demonstrated a commitment to protect the river values. The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components provides protections and direct benefits for the fish and wildlife ORV species and their habitat.

These fish species and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. These rivers are not at risk of impacts from dam construction, and the lower reaches of these rivers are already protected under the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River. Past management activities have occurred in these drainages and these populations remained protected and persisted. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, supporting the preservation of the fish and wildlife ORV species.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant protection in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. However, there is little to no potential for water resource development, and I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Additionally, I

do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Canyon Creek, Glade Greek, Lowell Creek, Rye Patch Creek

These four creeks are tributaries to the Lochsa River. The eligible segments total 7.6 miles and were identified as eligible for a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value due to the presence of Selway forestsnail and salmon Oregonian snail. This is the only outstandingly remarkable value identified for these river segments. The preliminary classifications are scenic for Glade Creek and recreational for Canyon, Lowell, and Rye Patch creeks.

The confluence of these creeks with the Lochsa River are within the designated recreation corridor of the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River. U.S. Highway 12 runs along the Lochsa River in this area. Some habitats for the Selway forest snail and salmon Oregonian fall within the existing designated Lochsa Wild and Scenic River corridor.

The location and configuration of these drainages in proximity to the Lochsa and Selway Wild and Scenic Rivers to the south, and the Lolo Motorway to the north, along with the roads, motorized trails, and recreation developments in the area support a variety of recreational opportunities that contribute to the recreation outstandingly remarkable value of the Lochsa and Selway Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Developments and roads in the corridor that supports this robust recreation activity include Glade Creek Campground, Deadman Ridge Motorized Trail (T142), maintenance level 3 Forest Road 5542, and maintenance level 1 Forest Roads 5542M, 75269, and 75268. The Higgins Hump Motorized Trail (T 46), Rye Patch J Motorized Trail (T 460J), and maintenance level 1 roads associated with these trails are within the corridor. The Chitwood #9 mining claim is within the Rye Patch Creek corridor. The Canyon Creek Motorized Trail (T 107), Forest Road 458 (maintenance level 2), and maintenance level 1 roads associated with this trail are within the corridor. Forest Road 5162 (maintenance level 1) and Big Hill Motorized Trail (T 65) are within the corridor.

The Lowell and Rye Patch creek segments are in the suitable timber base of the Land Management Plan Management Area 3 where timber harvest is used as a tool to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions and provides products that contribute to economic stability for local communities. Portions of Glade Creek and Canyon Creek are in both Management Area 3 and the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area. The portion of that roadless area that includes these drainages is managed under a backcountry restoration theme. Management through timber harvest has occurred in and around these river corridors.

These streams are tributary to the Lochsa River and the Middle Fork Clearwater River. Within these drainages there are ecotones that connect both riparian and upland vegetation communities. The natural range of variation analysis indicates that both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions in term of species composition, size class distribution, density, and structure. This landscape scale departure is the result of many different factors interacting over time including timber harvest and stand culturing practices, fire suppression, infrastructure development, and land use allocation decisions. Landscape scale restoration is

needed to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions derived from the NRV analysis. The use of prescribed fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns which in turn will promote species composition, size class distribution (including old growth), density and structure that is resilient over time. Timber harvest and other mechanical treatments are more precise and provide avenue for reforestation less likely with fire. These tools may also be used to meet these objectives while contributing to the economic sustainability of local and regional communities. The potential effects of climate change may accelerate the rate of mortality within over dense forest cover types. This increase in mortality will promote high severity fire behavior that in turn will have deleterious impacts on both riparian systems and communities tied to the Middle Fork corridor.

The forest contains a suite of Idaho and regional endemic species that are, in many cases, unique to the region and often limited to the plan area and immediately adjacent areas. The identified species are most imperiled by changes to river alteration, damming, diversion, sedimentation, changes to water quality, and temperature. Canyon Creek, Glade Creek, Lowell Creek, and Rye Patch Creek are listed on the 303(d) list and designated as impaired (Class 5) for water temperature and are not supporting cold water aquatic life beneficial use. Usually, an Environmental Protection Agency approved total maximum daily load is needed to address the pollutant of concern. According to the Lochsa River Subbasin Temperature Total Maximum Daily Loads: Addendum to the Lochsa River Subbasin Assessment (State Technical Services Office, 2012) document, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality will rely on the Lochsa wild and scenic river protections and Forest Service management practices to protect canopy and restore the vegetation in areas of past harvest.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan. Beyond this, no other agencies or entities have demonstrated a commitment to protect the river values.

The aquatic and riparian plan components in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the listed wildlife ORV species and their habitat. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values.

In addition to the aquatic and riparian plan components, protections are provided through other Land Management Plan components associated with the North Lochsa Slope roadless area primitive classification, the Lochsa Research Natural Area, Lochsa Wild and Scenic River, and the Lolo National Historic Landmark. While much of the area around these river segments is managed for ecosystem restoration and recreation, with these protections there is little threat of changes to river alteration, damming, diversion, sedimentation, changes to water quality, and temperature.

The river segments found to be eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System do not warrant designation as a wild and scenic river. The segments only support habitat for two moderately unique endemic species within the area of comparison, where there are other known populations and suitable habitat. There are no other outstandingly remarkable values in these river segments. However, the motorized recreation opportunities in these drainages are an integral part of the recreation experiences in the Lochsa and Selway river corridors.

These stream segments are not at risk of impacts from dam construction, and the lower reaches of these streams are already protected under the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River. Past management activities have occurred in these drainages and these populations remained protected and persisted. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations serve to protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers. Existing designations as Roadless, Research Natural Area, Historic Landmark and Wild and Scenic River will also substantially protect the wildlife ORV and other river-related values.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. However, there is little to no potential for water resource development, and I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Additionally, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Colt Killed Creek

The Colt Killed Creek segment is 23.25 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with the Lochsa River. Eligibility is based on the recreation outstandingly remarkable value due to exceptional trout fishing; fish outstandingly remarkable values of diversity and abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction; wildlife outstandingly remarkable values due to the presence of Harlequin duck; and scenic outstandingly remarkable values associated with the aesthetic attributes of fast-moving rapids. The preliminary classifications are wild for the upper portion to the confluence with Dan Creek, and scenic for the lower portion from Dan Creek to the confluence with the Lochsa River.

Colt Killed Creek runs through the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho Roadless Area (backcountry/restoration, primitive, and wild land recreation themes), and private ownership. Management Level 4 roads Forest Road 111 and Forest Road 368, Management Level 3 road Forest Road 102, Management Level 2 roads Forest Road 359 and Forest Road 362, and a number of Management Level 1 roads are all within the corridor. Trail 50 parallels the creek, provides fishing access that is an integral part of stream use. Private lands along the lower reaches are being subdivided for home construction.

The Harlequin duck has been considered rare in Idaho for over 100 years. In Idaho, approximately 50 pairs breed along a limited number of high-quality streams within the Priest River, Kootenai River, Clark Fork, Lake Pend Oreille, St. Joe River, Clearwater River, and the South Fork Snake River watersheds. Harlequin ducks are known along the area of the Upper Lochsa River and in the lower section of Colt Killed Creek between the confluence with Beaver Creek downstream to the confluence with the Lochsa River. Even when they occur, Harlequin ducks are uncommon within the Forest and tend to only be observed on larger rivers with low gradients and clean water. Colt Killed creek is one of the few larger, low gradient rivers that does not have roads running along its length, which provides a level of protection for Harlequin ducks. While most Harlequin duck observations on Colt Killed Creek occur from the confluence and lower 4 miles of the river, other sections of this river could contain Harlequin duck habitat. Colt killed Creek provides opportunities for bird watchers to view this beautiful sea duck during the breeding season and Harlequin ducks are sought out to check the bird off of birder's life list. Colt Killed Creek provides important habitat that contributes to regionally and nationally significant populations of the harlequin duck in Idaho, and the population that winters along the coast of the Western U. S. and Canada.

A wide variety of wildlife species, both those that are river dependent and those that are not, have habitat within the segment corridor and would benefit from protections provided through the Wild and Scenic River Act. Of note is the presence of high-quality habitat for fisher, which is distributed along Colt Killed Creek, the lower half of Storm Creek, and portions of the Upper Lochsa River. The watershed contains large amounts of fisher habitat outside the corridors and only the habitat within the corridors would be protected if included in the national system. Lynx habitat occurs along Storm Creek, as well as North Fork and South Fork Storm Creeks and the upper half of Colt Killed Creek. Conservation of these habitats within the corridors would be enhanced through inclusion in the National System.

Colt Killed Creek is one of the larger tributaries in the basin and an important contributor to river system and basin integrity. It is one of 245 HUC12 sub-watersheds identified as part of a Conservation Watershed Network on the Forest. A conservation watershed network is a designated collection of watersheds where management emphasizes habitat conservation and restoration to support federally listed fish and Species of Conservation Concern. The goal of the network is to sustain the integrity of key aquatic habitats to maintain long-term persistence of native aquatic species. HUC12 watersheds with strong local populations are expected to function as refugia and a source of colonizing fish for adjacent HUC12 watersheds with habitat not meeting desired conditions. As one of the larger tributaries in the basin Colt Killed Creek plays an important ecological role in providing clean, free-flowing water and habitat for fish and wildlife species. Multiple outstandingly remarkable values have been identified, including a fish outstandingly remarkable value corresponding to the potential to support recovery goals of Endangered Species Act listed aquatic species as well as for its recreational values. With its fish, wildlife, and recreational values, it has also been, and is, an important contributor to the cultural and economic sustainability of local communities and the Nez Perce Tribe.

The Upper Lochsa River, Colt Killed Creek, and portions of Big Sand Creek are identified as major spawning areas for native steelhead trout in the Snake River Recovery Plan. A local bull trout population has been identified in Colt Killed Creek, including Storm Creek. In addition, Colt Killed and Big Sand Creeks support high densities of fluvial and resident westslope cutthroat trout within the region of comparison. Native spring chinook salmon spawn and rear in the upper

portions of the Lochsa River and the mid-to-lower reaches of Colt Killed and Big Sand Creeks. Non-native aquatic species are not known to exist within the eligible segments.

Colt killed Creek is a major spawning area and supports thriving populations of wild steelhead trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and bull trout due to its high-quality water and habitat that has had little human caused disturbance. It has been identified as a major spawning area for these species and supports self-sustaining populations through high levels of natural reproduction. Additionally, eligible river segments are included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout that is supported by presence of the species. Among the other tributaries to the Clearwater River, Colt Killed Creek contributes higher value than most due to the presence and persistence of these species and, consequently, is significant to the Forest and regionally. Given the exceptionally high value of Colt Killed Creek to the fisheries resource on the Forest, actions to permanently protect and enhance the fisheries in this river segment warrants consideration for inclusion in the National System.

The fish and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Lochsa and Clearwater rivers. As such, they deserve consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions.

The corridor also contains the White Sands Campground, Colt Creek Trailhead, and a couple of non-motorized trails that connect with Trail 50. The nearby Powell Campground offers camping accommodations for tents and recreational vehicles up to 50-feet-long. The varied recreational settings, enhanced access, and improvements contribute to the fishing-related recreation outstandingly remarkable value. Although there are various fishing opportunities throughout the Nez Perce-Clearwater, the unique fishing opportunities in Colt Killed Creek are exceptional steelhead trout and fly-fishing opportunities for cutthroat trout. Colt Killed Creek is very popular for those wishing a fly-fishing experience in a variety of recreational settings including semi-primitive motorized, semi-primitive non-motorized, and primitive. The presence and abundance of a self-sustaining trout population, along with the near-pristine, semi-primitive environment provides a recreational opportunity unmatched by most rivers in the fisheries region of comparison. Consequently, Colt Killed Creek is regionally known for its high-quality fly-fishing and draws visitors from around the recreation region of comparison. This unique fishing experience contributes to the economic and social sustainability of the communities in and around the Nez Perce Clearwater. This fishing opportunity, and its contribution both socially and economically, warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater and supports the permanent protection that comes with designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

In making the suitability determination, I considered the relative value, quality, and uniqueness of the outstandingly remarkable values as compared to other eligible rivers, and whether these river segments best represent the qualities of a Wild and Scenic River. I considered the risks to these river values and the protections in place to ensure their preservation. I considered management goals and opportunities in the area to move the Forest toward the desired conditions, whether designation would complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the

Land Management Plan, and how designation might affect the ability to implement other management actions to meet those goals.

Considering the uniqueness of the fisheries values of Colt Killed Creek it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species.

This abundance of habitat and fish populations across the Forest presents an opportunity to compare the relative contributions between the eligible rivers. As discussed above, Colt Killed Creek provides fish outstandingly remarkable values of diversity and abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction similar to the other eligible rivers. These qualities support major spawning areas for native steelhead trout, a local bull trout population, high densities of fluvial and resident westslope cutthroat trout, and native spring chinook salmon spawning and rearing. Non-native aquatic species are not known to exist within the eligible segments. While not unique within the region of comparison Colt Killed Creek supports this diverse and thriving fisheries and is recognized as an important contributor to river system and basin integrity in the Lochsa and Clearwater rivers. Colt Killed Creek is recognized as a stronghold for bull trout. During several Idaho Fish and Game studies, large proportions of fish that were tagged in the Lochsa went to Colt Killed Creek to spawn.

This rich fisheries resource supports a popular recreational fishing opportunity in a semi-primitive setting that draws anglers both locally and from across the recreation region of comparison. Again, while not wholly unique within the region of comparison, it is recognized as providing higher quality fishing experiences, is readily accessible from a paved highway, and available to a broad spectrum of recreational visitors. This, in turn, is a key contributor to the social and economic health of local and regional communities near that portion of the Forest.

Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin, and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. The September 27th Presidential Memorandum on salmon and steelhead recovery directs Agencies to work within their mission to support recovery. Thus, the Forest would not approve a dam proposal. Given the location of the stream in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and the North Fork Spruce-White Sand Idaho Roadless Area (backcountry/restoration, primitive, and wild land recreation themes) there is little potential conflict between protection of these river values and potential with other management activities that might adversely affect them.

Based on the above-stated information, it is evident that Colt Killed Creek provides a significant contribution to Lochsa and Clearwater river basin integrity, is unique and among the best representatives of the outstandingly remarkable values, will complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan, will not adversely affect the ability to implement other management actions to meet those goals, and rises to a level of significance that will contribute to vital national conservation purposes. While I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan, given the cumulative and exceptional value and contribution of this river's fisheries, wildlife, and recreational resources to the Nez Perce-Clearwater, it is appropriate that protection of these river resources take precedence over other potential management activities in the river corridor.

Therefore, I believe designation is the best method for protecting the outstandingly remarkable values, and I find Colt Killed Creek suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Crooked Fork Creek, Brushy Fork Creek, and Hopeful Creek

Crooked Fork, 23.2 miles, and its tributaries, Brushy Fork Creek, 4.9 miles, and Hopeful Creek, 4.7 miles, total 32.8 miles, including 9.1 miles of private land in the checkerboard area of ownership at the boundary with Montana. The eligible outstandingly remarkable values include fish, wildlife (Harlequin duck), and Nez Perce Tribe cultural. The preliminary classifications are wild for Hopeful Creek and Crooked Fork Creek above the confluence with Hopeful Creek, and recreational for the lower portion of Crooked Fork Creek and Brushy Fork Creek.

The Nez Perce Tribe cultural outstandingly remarkable value is based on the presence of wildlife species, such as Harlequin Duck and Bald Eagle, with cultural significance for regalia and oral history.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values for Crooked Fork and Hopeful Creeks are based on diversity and abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Multiple high elevation streams in the Crooked Fork and Hopeful Creek watersheds are identified as part of the climate shield for cold stream temperatures modeled for bull trout in 2040. Eligible river segments support bull trout spawning and early rearing. They contain designated critical habitat for bull trout and Snake River steelhead trout and are included as a major spawning area for steelhead. These streams support spawning and early rearing habitat for native spring Chinook salmon. They support both fluvial and resident westslope cutthroat trout populations, with high densities within the region of comparison. No non-native aquatic species are known to exist within eligible segments.

The outstandingly remarkable value for wildlife on Crooked Fork and Brushy Fork creeks is the population of Harlequin ducks. Harlequin ducks occur from the mouth of Crooked Fork Creek upstream to the confluence of Brushy Fork Creek. They are also found along Brushy Fork Creek from the mouth up to the confluence of Twin Creek.

All river segments on the Nez Perce-Clearwater contribute to system and basin integrity. Crooked Fork Creek and its tributaries were identified as being an important contributor to the Lochsa river system and to basin integrity due to their high-quality river conditions, and their fish and wildlife ORVs.

Brushy Fork Creek runs entirely through the checkerboard area east of Highway 12, where every other section is National Forest System lands interspersed by private ownership. The lower stream reaches of the private lands are being developed, creating new wildland urban interface with fuels reduction needs. All National Forest System lands are in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. Within the corridor are maintenance level 3 roads Forest Road 369 and Forest Road 5670 and maintenance level 1 road Forest Road 112. The corridor contains the Brushy Fork Motorized Trail (Trail 34) and the Lewis and Clark non-motorized trail, with the lower end in the National Historic Landmark. Routes 5670 and 369 are groomed snowmobile and winter sports access routes.

From its headwaters to the confluence with Hopeful Creek, Crooked Fork Creek flows through the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area, which has a wild land recreation theme. From there, the creek runs through checkerboard ownership area west of Highway 12 to the confluence with Brushy Fork, then it flows east of Highway 12 to the confluence with the Lochsa River. National Forest

System lands in this area are in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. Developments and roads in the corridor include White Sand Campground, Devoto Cedar Grove Picnic Area, US Highway 12, Forest Road 111, and Forest Road 368. Routes 111, 368, and 595 are groomed snowmobile and winter sports access routes.

The checkerboard area is heavily roaded with more than 30 roads. Much of checkerboard ownership shows evidence of past timber harvest. The corridors on National Forest System lands suitable for timber production in Management Area 3 were managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan. Management focus has been for big game winter range. Timber production and timber harvest have occurred along many parts of these river corridors. Under the Land Management Plan for Management Area 3, vegetative management is expected to continue over the life of the Plan to meet ecological, social, and economic goals and desired conditions.

The fisheries resources, Harlequin duck, and Nez Perce values are important contributors to the health and function of the Lochsa river system. As such, these values deserve special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. In making a suitability determination, in addition to the information found in Appendix F, and the information that came through engagement with partners, collaborators, and public involvement, I considered the landscape in which these rivers lay, including the management areas and management emphasis of the areas, land ownership and use patterns, the uniqueness of the river values in its region of comparison, and potential threats and protections through management of the Land Management Plan.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species.

Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values. One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. The remaining areas are in Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that this area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities.

Land Management Plan direction related to aquatic ecosystems is intended to conserve and restore habitat for fish listed under the Endangered Species Act and aquatic species of

conservation concern, and to prevent future listings, as well as meet Clean Water Act requirements. Aquatic and riparian desired conditions emphasize conservation of natural habitat-forming processes in places where they are largely intact; restoration of natural habitat-forming processes in places where desired conditions can be met by mitigating legacy effects; or enhancement of aquatic habitats where infrastructure or legacy effects delay the recovery of natural processes by several decades or more. In addition to these Plan components, Conservation Watersheds have been identified across the Forest. There are 245 HUC 12 subwatersheds on the Forest, of which 81 have been identified as part of the Conservation Watershed Network. Conservation Watersheds are intended to maintain multi-scale connectivity for at-risk fish and aquatic species, identifying important areas needed for conservation and/or restoration, ensuring ecosystem components needed to sustain long-term persistence of species. These three river drainages are included in this Conservation Watershed Network. Conservation Watersheds can be of particular importance for recovery of ESA-listed species, helping to focus and guide ESA Section 7(a) 1 responsibilities. This provides additional assurances that these river values will be preserved through management under, and application of the Land Management Plan components.

Considering Harlequin duck, In Idaho, approximately 50 pairs breed along a limited number of high-quality streams within the Priest River, Kootenai River, Clark Fork, Lake Pend Oreille, St. Joe River, Clearwater River, and the South Fork Snake River watersheds. Better than a third of all Harlequin duck observations in the Idaho Species Diversity Database (accessed April 2017) have been observed within the Land Management Plan area. Low gradient, larger streams is the preferred habitat. The most important rivers for harlequin ducks appear to be the Lochsa river, portions of the Selway within the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness, Kelly Creek, Fish Creek (Lochsa drainage), Crooked Fork Creek, Colt Killed Creek, and the North Fork Clearwater River especially the upper reaches. Much of the Lochsa and Selway River are already designated Wild and Scenic rivers and contain substantial portions of Harlequin duck observations. Other rivers that have observations include Waw'aalamnime Creek, Weitas Creek, South Fork Clearwater River, Red River, Orogrande Creek, Crooked River, Imnamatnoon Creek, and Brushy Fork. Populations are small, and habitat to support additional breeding pairs is not widely available across the Forest.

Evaluation of river eligibility identified presence of Harlequin duck to support a wildlife outstanding remarkable value on 12 of the 88 eligible rivers have. With this decision, four rivers with Harlequin duck are determined suitable for designation as wild and scenic. These four rivers will be managed as if they were designated and given permanent protection and management focus on Harlequin duck and the other outstandingly remarkable values. Those rivers not determined suitable will be managed under other direction in the Land Management Plan. Some of these rivers are in Management Area 1 along the Lochsa and Selway Wild and Scenic rivers. Most of these rivers are in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, with little likelihood of management activity that would adversely impact the river values. A few rivers are in Management Area 3 where active resource management is expected to continue to meet other Land Management Plan goals and desired conditions. While conducting such activities, Plan components that address aquatic and riparian resources are particularly valuable to maintaining and improving habitat conditions that support preservation of the Harlequin duck. This distribution of Harlequin duck across management areas strikes a balance in the protection of the species while maintaining management flexibility to meet an array of Land Management Plan goals and desired conditions.

Hopeful Creek and the upper section of Crooked Fork Creek run through the Hoodoo Idaho Roadless Area. With this Plan decision, this area is included in the Hoodoo recommended wilderness. Land Management Plan components and direction for Idaho Roadless Areas and recommended wilderness provide the appropriate protections for the river values as well as the broader resource values for wildlife, wilderness, and quiet recreation across the larger landscape. Management of this area as recommended wilderness will preserve the conditions of these upper reaches that meet climate shield criteria for cold stream temperatures modeled for bull trout, that support bull trout spawning and early rearing, and provide a small portion of Snake River Steelhead trout critical habitat.

The checkerboard ownership in the lower reaches of Crooked Fork and Brushy Fork have traditionally been managed for timber production, wildlife management, and recreation. With roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure in place this area is well suited for active management approach to ecosystem restoration to meet Land Management Plan goals and desired conditions. The intermingled ownership may provide opportunity to work collaboratively with the private landowners, and other interested partners and federal and state agencies, to address resource concerns, address the wildfire crisis, improve watershed conditions, and move this area toward Land Management Plan desired conditions.

The fish and wildlife species identified as outstandingly remarkable values are thriving and much of their habitat is of high quality and quantity to support them. These river values have been recognized across the Forest and a plethora of Plan components and direction are in place to protect these aquatic and riparian resources while providing for other resource restorative practices. The checkerboard portion of the area has suffered impacts from past management practices on both private and federal lands. Even with these impacts portions of these river segments are providing habitat that supports the ORVs. Management Area 3 direction for this area calls for active management that can address a variety of resource concerns and opportunities to meet Land Management Plan desired conditions, including supporting these river values. Much of the infrastructure is in place to support these practices. The roads and trails in these drainages support year-round recreational activities as well as providing access in support of traditional Nez Perce uses of the area.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Furthermore, a dam proposal would not be in alignment with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum on

restoring salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River basin. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to decide suitability based on the concern of such development.

I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Additionally, as explained above, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Fish Creek and Hungery Creek

Fish Creek is 21.07 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with the Lochsa River. Hungery Creek is 13.80 miles from its headwaters to the confluence with Fish Creek. Their outstandingly remarkable values are fish and wildlife. Preliminary classifications are wild for the lower portion of Hungery Creek, scenic for the upper portions of Hungery and Fish creeks, and recreational for the lower portion of Fish Creek.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values. However, regarding B-run steelhead trout, two major tributaries to the Lochsa River are significant contributors for spawning and early rearing – Colt Killed Creek and Fish/Hungery creeks. This is significant because the Middle Fork Clearwater does not have hatchery stock of B-run steelhead unlike the South Fork Clearwater which does have hatchery fish.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values are based on diversity and abundance, natural reproduction, and habitat quality. Fish and Hungery Creek have been included as a minor spawning area for the native, Snake River steelhead trout and support some of the highest densities of juvenile steelhead trout in the region of comparison. In particular, the eligible segments are known to support significant spawning and early rearing of wild Clearwater River B-run steelhead trout. Consequently, Idaho Fish and Game has had a weir at the bottom of Fish Creek since the mid-90s that is used for monitoring population abundance. Because Hungery Creek is above that weir, it is grouped together with Fish Creek. Those streams combined are THE index reach that IDFG uses to monitor wild B-run steelhead abundance. Eligible segments are included as designated critical habitat for both Snake River steelhead trout and Columbia River bull trout. Eligible segments in Fish and Hungery Creek exhibit extensive areas of high-quality habitat that has been minimally affected by human disturbance. Native westslope

cutthroat trout are also known to occur at high densities, particularly in higher elevation reaches. Native spring Chinook salmon are known to spawn and rear in eligible segments.

The outstandingly remarkable value for wildlife is based on the presence of populations of Harlequin duck on Fish Creek. Harlequin ducks occur from the mouth of Fish Creek upstream to the confluence with Hungery Creek. There have not been any observations above this section. The Harlequin duck has been considered rare in Idaho for over 100 years. Approximately 38 percent of all Harlequin duck observations in the Idaho Species Diversity have been observed within the Land Management Plan area. Harlequin ducks breed in habitats that are particularly susceptible to Forest Service management activities, water development projects, and human recreational use. Designation as a Wild and Scenic River would provide permanent protection of the factors that influence Harlequin duck occupancy, reproduction, and survival.

Fish Creek has consistent harlequin duck observations through time. Many of the more recent observations on the Lochsa river have been observed near the confluence of Fish Creek and the Lochsa River and biologists suspect that the ducks are nesting up Fish Creek and bringing their broods down to the Lochsa River after hatching. Harlequin duck observations on Fish Creek occur mostly on the lower sections of the river between a half mile and 3/4 miles from the mouth of Fish Creek. Fish Creek contributes to regionally and nationally important populations of the harlequin duck in Idaho, and that winter along the coast of the Western United States and Canada.

Fish Creek is within the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area, with the majority of the creek falling within the primitive themed area and its headwaters lying in a special area of historic and Tribal significance themed area. The northern edge of the one-quarter mile buffer is within the Eldorado Creek Idaho Roadless Area, within a special area of historic and Tribal significance theme. Developments and roads in the corridor include the Fish Creek Trailhead, three motorized trails (Fish Butte Saddle, Fish Butte, and Ant Hill), the Lolo Trail (Forest Road 500), and Forest Road 462 (maintenance level 2).

Hungery Creek is within the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area, with the majority falling within a special area of historic and Tribal significance theme, and the mouth and headwaters are in the primitive themed area. Developments and roads in the corridor include the Fish Creek motorized trails, the Lolo Trail (Forest Road 500), and Forest Road 485 (maintenance level 2). A small portion of Hungery Creek, classified as scenic, runs through the Land Management Plan Management Area 3 suitable timber base, where timber harvests are one management tool used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions and timber harvest provides products that contribute to economic stability for local communities. Timber harvest may be curtailed or restricted on approximately 1,000 acres of these segments classified scenic that overlaps with the proposed Management Area 3. A wild designation would curtail motorized use in this area.

Hungery Creek is meeting water quality standards and fully supporting the following beneficial uses: aesthetic, cold water aquatic life, secondary contact recreation, wildlife habitat, and agricultural/industrial water supply. Fish Creek is listed on the 303(d) list and designated as impaired (Class 5) for water temperature and is not supporting the cold-water aquatic life beneficial use. Usually an Environmental Protection Agency approved Total Maximum Daily Load is needed to address the pollutant of concern but, according to the Lochsa River Subbasin Temperature Total Maximum Daily Loads: Addendum to the Lochsa River Subbasin Assessment (State Technical Services Office, 2012) document, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality will rely on the Lochsa wild and scenic river protections and Forest Service management

practices to protect canopy and restore vegetation in areas of past harvest. Fish Creek is fully supporting the primary contact recreation and salmonid spawning beneficial uses.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions and serve to protect fish and other aquatic organisms. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and fish and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other needed ecological restoration activities within the river segments found eligible. However, given the uniqueness and significance of the wild B-run steelhead trout, and apparent abundance and persistence of Harlequin duck in the lower reaches of Fish Creek, additional protection through designation may be prioritized over other restorative actions in these river segments. I believe these river values are unique and among the best representatives of these features within the region of comparison that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Huckleberry Creek

Huckleberry Creek is a 0.8-mile-long tributary to Boulder Creek in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Its eligibility was determined based on the recreational value associated with undeveloped natural hot springs, Stanley Hot Springs, that occur in the river segment. The preliminary classification is wild.

Nine hot springs are present on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Stanley Hot Springs, Jerry Johnson Hot Springs, Weir Creek Hot Springs, and Colgate Licks Hot Springs occur in the Lochsa River corridor, in relatively proximity to each. Stanley Hot Springs is accessible by a non-motorized, non-mechanized trail, generally by foot or horse, by following Trail 211 from the Wilderness Gateway Recreation Site up Boulder Creek approximately five miles from the trailhead and crossing Boulder Creek. The other three hot springs in the Lochsa River corridor are also accessed by non-motorized, non-mechanized trails, but are much shorter. Other, more remote hot springs occur in the general area, providing opportunity for challenge, solitude, and a wilderness soak for the most adventuresome.

There are approximately 300 hot springs in Idaho and there are numerous hot springs in the region of comparison. Most have various levels of development, especially those on private land, such as Quinn’s Hot Springs and Lolo Hot Springs, as well as Red River Hot Springs which operates under a special use permit on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Other natural hot springs are known on or proximate to the nearby Bitterroot and Payette National Forests. So, hot springs are a notable, though not unique geologic feature. These various hot springs offer a spectrum of

recreational experiences depending on an individual's desire for comfort and ease or for a more challenging and natural adventure. Stanley Hot Springs offers a more adventuresome and arduous experience than most. The five-mile hike is of moderate difficulty and no improvements are present at the hot springs except pools created by users stacking rocks as needed to obstruct flow. The experience is consistent with what one would expect in a wilderness.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. However, being in the Clearwater River basin and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, there is little to no threat of any hydro-electric development in the river corridor, or other adverse impacts from management activities. And although hot springs attract interest for geothermal development, the location of this hot springs deep in the wilderness area makes development highly unlikely. Land Management Plan components are in place for aquatics, riparian, hot springs, and wilderness to ensure the wilderness character of the area and the river values are well protected through wilderness management. The hydrological, biological, and aesthetic resources of the Forest's hot springs will be maintained. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values.

After considering these things, the presence of Stanley Hot Springs in an existing wilderness area that already offers protection of the features of the hot springs, in a river basin that offers similar experiences, in a region of comparison that offers many diverse hot springs experiences from primitive to full accommodations is not so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Lake Creek

Lake Creek is a 5.6-mile tributary to the Lochsa River. Its eligibility was based on the presence of a fish outstandingly remarkable value. Its preliminary classification is wild.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value is based on diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. The eligible segment is included as a major spawning area for Snake River steelhead trout and is designated critical habitat for both steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. A bull trout local population has been identified in Lake Creek. Fish Lake contains an adfluvial population of bull trout, which is one of only two within the region of comparison. Spawning and early rearing occurs both up and downstream of the lake. The lake also supports a native and self-sustaining population of westslope cutthroat trout. Lake Creek supports spawning and early

rearing of spring Chinook salmon in its mid to lower reaches. Non-native species are not known to be present in the Lake Creek watershed.

The upper segment of the stream is within the designated Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The lower reach is within the Lochsa Wild and scenic River corridor. Most of the eligible segment is within the Lochsa Face Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry restoration theme. Fisheries values and primitive recreation are the dominant primary uses of the area.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Lochsa and Clearwater rivers. As such, they deserve strong consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of this Land Management Plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan. Beyond this, no other agency or entity has demonstrated a commitment to protect river values.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. Consideration was also given to the fact that Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, riparian habitats, wilderness, and high scenic integrity objectives, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will protect the free flow, water quality, and habitat attributes supporting the preservation of the fish outstandingly remarkable values.

The area is well situated to contribute to the recreational opportunities in the Lochsa River drainage, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and the Lochsa Face roadless area. Lake Creek contributes to the landscape for those driving for pleasure and viewing scenery from the Lochsa Scenic Byway and Lochsa River. It adds to the fishing experience of the Lochsa River and its tributaries, and it offers wilderness character and opportunity for wilderness adventure in the headwaters.

Lake Creek is not at risk of impacts from dam construction, and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan nor would it be in compliance with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum to support salmon and steelhead recovery. The lower reach of the river is protected under the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River, the upper reach is protected by the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. The central portion of Lake Creek lies within Management Area 2, Lochsa Face Idaho Roadless Area. This roadless area has a backcountry restoration theme that allows only limited and road construction or the cutting, sale, or removal of timber. Given the creek's location well outside of a community protection zone and in a generally unaltered landscape there is little reason to expect that any road construction or timber harvest would occur within the river corridor. However, any timber harvest that might occur would certainly be modified or foreclosed as an option for forest vegetation restoration to ensure protection of the river values. Other management activities may be considered for restorative purposes, predominantly the use of management fire to improve wildlife habitat or other ecological conditions. All the above-mentioned designations and associated Plan components serve to protect Lake Creek's fisheries values. Therefore, there is no compelling reason to decide suitability based on the threat of potential development or other management actions that might pose a threat.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. However, there is little reason to believe that any activity that could threaten the fisheries of Lake Creek is imminent or reasonably expected, or otherwise warrants the permanent protection beyond that which is already provided as described above. And I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed.

While these fisheries resources are valuable to the health of the Lochsa river and beyond, their presence and habitat are ubiquitous across the region of comparison. Additionally, I do not believe the fish values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. There is no apparent benefit or compelling reason that supports the application of permanent protection of these fish outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Lolo Creek

The Lolo Creek eligible segment is the upper 19.8-mile-long portion of this tributary to the Middle Fork Clearwater River. Its eligibility is based on recreation, Nez Perce cultural, fish, and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values. Its preliminary classification is recreational.

Whitewater boating occurs on a 12-mile run that begins at the Lolo Creek Campground. The rapids in this segment are classes one and two. The first 1.6 miles of the run is through National Forest System lands and the remainder is a mix of Bureau of Land Management, state, and private lands.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe as a traditional use area and due to its proximity to the Nez Perce Trail. Anadromous fish are an integral part of the culture, history, and tradition of the Nez Perce Tribe and many other Tribes. Anadromous fish in or originating in the waters of the Forests, including Lolo Creek, are used for subsistence and religious purposes by the Nez Perce Tribe and other Tribes throughout the Columbia River basin.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value is based on fish diversity and abundance. Lolo Creek provides spawning and rearing habitat for spring chinook salmon and steelhead trout and supports westslope cutthroat trout in higher elevation reaches. It is designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead trout.

Lolo Creek also supports native and imperiled Pacific lamprey, and strong populations of native western pearlshell mussels. Pacific lamprey are proposed as a Species of Conservation Concern under this Plan revision and are a State of Idaho endangered species. Areas where juvenile lampreys are known to exist include Red River, Newsome Creek, the mainstem South Fork Clearwater River, the mainstem Selway River, the mainstem Salmon River, the mainstem Clearwater River, and Lolo Creek. They may be present in other places as well.

Although western pearlshell continues to persist in most forested streams across the state, it has been lost from large stretches of the Snake, Big Wood, Big Lost, Little Lost, Malad, Raft, Payette, Portneuf, Boise, Clearwater, and Bruneau rivers. The species is known to be present in the Lochsa, Selway, Salmon River, South Fork Clearwater, El Dorado Creek, Musselshell Creek, Lolo Creek, the Middle Fork Clearwater, Red River, Red Horse Creek, Swamp Creek, the North Nork Clearwater, Quartz Creek, Swamp Creek, and Meadow Creek. It probably resides in more rivers within the plan area than recorded in the Idaho Species Diversity database. Not all these rivers were identified as having ORV's because of the widespread nature of the populations of this species in the plan area.

Under the 1987 Forest Plan the area surrounding the eligible segment was managed for timber production and wildlife winter range. As a result, timber harvest has occurred in the drainage along the length of this segment. Under this Land Management Plan, the area is allocated to Management Area 3 and is to be managed for multiple uses. Timber harvest and other vegetative treatments are expected to continue to move forested vegetation conditions towards Plan goals and desired conditions for ecological, social, and economic sustainability of the Forest and surrounding communities. These more precise tools are needed to address the wildfire crisis in the new wildland urban interface arising from the proliferation of homes along the forest boundary.

Considering the fisheries values in the Lolo Creek eligible segment it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Steelhead trout can be assumed to be present in all smaller, accessible tributaries of the Clearwater and Middle Fork Clearwater rivers that have flows and gradient that can support fish. Westslope cutthroat trout may be present as well. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

Being so prevalent, identifying those of superior quality or most valuable is important in considering river suitability. There is nothing to demonstrate that Lolo Creek is of higher value than these other rivers in terms of high-quality habitat. Riparian areas in the Lower Clearwater subbasin are among the most altered of any on the Nez Perce–Clearwater National Forests, most notably in the Lolo Creek watershed. In fact, Lolo Creek is characterized by high levels of deposited sediment and cobble embeddedness. There are 245 HUC 12 subwatersheds on the Forest, of which 81 have been identified as part of the Conservation Watershed Network. All of these, including Lolo creek, have special attention and management emphasis on habitat conservation and restoration to maintain long-term persistence of native aquatic species. This not only benefits the ORVs but other fish and wildlife species that utilize the river corridor.

All the lands in the proposed corridor are managed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. The segment is in Management Area 3 and Management Areas E1 and C4 under the 1987 Forest Plan. Management Area E1 emphasizes timber production and Management Area C4 emphasizes big game winter range and timber production. As a result of these designations, timber harvest has occurred along the length of this segment. There is an expectation that areas in Management Area 3 will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities.

The Lolo Creek drainage is well-roaded to support management activities and access for recreationists, forest visitors, and traditional Nez Perce practices. It is within Summer Roaded Natural and Winter Semi-primitive Motorized recreation opportunity classes. The Nez Perce Trail parallels, is within, and crosses the eligible segment. Trails #852 and #854 allow for all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle use within the lower end of the segment. Forest Roads 100 and 103 are within most of the eligible river segment and are primary access routes to this part of the Forest. Lolo Trail Road (Forest Road 500 maintenance level 4 road); maintenance level 3 roads Forest Road 100-C; maintenance level 2 roads Forest Road 5114, Forest Road 5112, Forest Road 5051; and maintenance level 1 roads Forest Road 5512-A and Forest Road 5112-B are within the

segment. Lolo Creek Campground is in the segment and consists of nine sites, at the confluence with Eldorado Creek. There are a multitude of restoration needs in the area from mine reclamation, insect and disease impacts and fuels reduction.

Lolo Creek is a tributary to the Middle Fork Clearwater River which extends from the confluence of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers to the confluence with the Southfork Clearwater River. The Middle Fork drainage covers approximately 218 square miles. Within the drainage there are ecotones that connect both riparian and upland vegetation communities. The natural range of variation analysis indicates that both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions in term of species composition, size class distribution, density, and structure. This landscape scale departure is the result of many different factors interacting over time including timber harvest and stand culturing practices, fire suppression, infrastructure development, and land use allocation decisions. Landscape scale restoration is needed to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions derived from the NRV analysis. The use of prescribed fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns which in turn will promote species composition, size class distribution (including old growth), density and structure that is resilient over time; however, it is imprecise and more challenging in areas with high levels of infrastructure such as this. Timber harvest and other mechanical treatments are more precise tools and are used to meet objectives while contributing to the economic sustainability of local and regional communities. The potential effects of climate change may accelerate the rate of mortality within over dense forest cover types. This increase in mortality will promote high severity fire behavior that in turn will have deleterious impacts on both riparian systems and communities tied to the Middle Fork corridor.

The outstandingly remarkable values are an integral part of the many resources and opportunities the Lolo Creek drainage offers. As such, they need to be given due consideration, integration, and protection in the management of the area. This is supported by inclusion of the upper reach in the Conservation Watershed Network, and identification as critical habitat for steelhead trout. These designations bring focus to these fisheries values and management emphasis on habitat conservation and restoration to support federally listed fish and Species of Conservation Concern. Land Management Plan components are in place to provide the needed protections to maintain and preserve these river related values while implementing needed ecological restoration activities over a greater landscape than the river segment found eligible. Permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement ecological restoration activities within and near the river segment found eligible.

The access provided by Forest Roads 100 and 103, and other roads in the area, facilitates well established recreation use and enjoyment in and around the river corridor. This includes easy access and put-in for boating the lower section of the river, and easy access for fishing and other river-related activities. This same access allows for these same uses and traditional practices important to the Nez Perce Tribe. Designation as a Wild and Scenic River could potentially change this access if impacts from the roads were determined to adversely affect the fish or wildlife outstandingly remarkable values.

There is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Nor would such a proposal be allowed given the September 27th Presidential Memorandum on supporting salmon and steelhead recovery in the Columbia River

Basin. Given all of this, there is no compelling reason or urgency make a suitability determination based on the threat of potential hydro-electric development or other management actions that might pose a threat.

There is no benefit that supports the application of permanent protection of the identified outstandingly remarkable values, which would be at the expense of other management goals and actions needed to enhance resources, associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights improve fish habitat, address the wildfire crisis, and restore forests ravaged by insects and disease.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values however, there is little to no potential for water resource development, and I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Additionally, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Musselshell Creek

Musselshell Creek is a tributary to Lolo Creek. The eligible segment is a 2.1-mile section from the national forest boundary upstream through Musselshell Meadows to its exit from the National Historic Landmark in Section 20. Eligibility is based on cultural and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values. Preliminary classification is recreational.

The cultural outstandingly remarkable value for Musselshell Meadows includes an important traditional camp and gathering place for the Nez Perce. The Nez Perce (Nee Me Poo) National Historic Trail traverses the site, and the Nez Perce Tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. For generations, Musselshell Meadows has been an important site for gathering camas and other traditional practices for the Nez Perce and many neighboring Tribes. While they were at this mountain camp, they would pick huckleberries, gather traditional plants, hunt, fish, and engage in interTribal social interaction and economic enterprise. These forays to Musselshell Meadows were important for food collection, preparation, and storage for the winter months. While its use is not as extensive as in the past, Musselshell Meadows is still an important place for subsistence and traditional practices for many local and regional Tribal members.

The existence and condition of Musselshell Meadows is associated with the presence and condition of Musselshell Creek that runs through it. Musselshell Meadows and the eligible river segment have been impacted by management practices and general use for decades. This includes placer mining, operation of an ore processing mill, roads encroaching on the meadows and stream, a Forest Service work center, a developed trail head with toilet and parking for the Nez Perce (Nee Me Poo) National Historic Trail, and dispersed camp sites nearby. A diversion is also still in place near the head of the meadow that feeds a constructed impoundment. The Nez Perce would traditionally burn the meadows after camas harvest however, more recent fire exclusion is resulting in confer encroachment on the meadows and establishment of noxious weeds. The primary impact that is present today is existence of Road 535. As these many activities have occurred, the creek has suffered in its flow and water quality, and the meadows have suffered in their size, camas abundance and composition.

Musselshell Creek's free flow, water quality, and ORVs will be protected, and can be improved through implementation of the Land Management Plan components and direction. This includes the Nez Perce National Historic Trail Management Plan and protections afforded by the National Historic Landmark designation of the Nez Perce (Nee Me Poo) National Historic Trail. Actions needed to restore resources associated with the Tribe's reserved Treaty rights would not be allowed if the stream were managed under the "protections" of the WSR Act. Maintaining and supporting the opportunity for traditional practices and customs in use of the Musselshell Meadows is incorporated in Land Management Plan components addressing Tribal Trust and Cultural Resources, as well as aquatic and riparian components that would improve the health of the meadows. The Nez Perce-Clearwater and the Nez Perce Tribe are committed to working together in addressing the many issues associated with Musselshell Meadows.

The eligible segment is in the suitable timber base of the Land Management Plan Management Area 3, where timber harvests and other vegetative practices are to be used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions and provide products that contribute to economic stability for local communities. Timber harvest has occurred along portions of the stream. However, about half of the corridor is part of the Non-Forested Land type, including Musselshell Meadow, and is not managed for timber production. Musselshell Creek is in a degraded condition and is included in the Environmental Protection Agency approved Lolo Creek Tributaries Temperature Total Maximum Daily Loads Plan. Designation would not necessarily protect Musselshell Creek because it will take integrated management activities to restore the stream to the high-quality conditions of the Land Management Plan, including other resource values beyond the ORVs. Such activities would be limited under designation because there is no allowance for short term impacts even if conditions would improve over the long term.

Within the corridor, Forest Road 535 leads to the Musselshell Work Center (Forest Road 535-B) and the Nez Perce (Nee Me Poo) National Historic Trail Trailhead. Also, Forest Road 100 (maintenance level 4 road); maintenance level 2 roads Forest Road 5102, Forest Road 5102-A, Forest Road 5141, Forest Road 5150, and Forest Road 73028; and maintenance level 1 roads Forest Road 505 and Forest Road 5050 are within the corridor. The Shell Desert Trail, which allows for all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle use, is also within the corridor. Roads 535 and Road 100 are primary access routes to this portion of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

Musselshell Creek is a tributary to the Middle Fork Clearwater River which extends from the confluence of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers to the confluence with the Southfork Clearwater River. The Middle Fork drainage covers approximately 218 square miles. Within the drainage

there are ecotones that connect both riparian and upland vegetation communities. The natural range of variation analysis indicates that both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions in term of species composition, size class distribution, density, and structure. This landscape scale departure is the result of many different factors interacting over time including timber harvest and stand culturing practices, fire suppression, infrastructure development, and land use allocation decisions. Landscape scale restoration is needed to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions derived from the NRV analysis. The use of prescribed fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns which in turn will promote species composition, size class distribution (including old growth), density and structure that is resilient over time. The potential effects of climate change may accelerate the rate of mortality within over dense forest cover types. This increase in mortality will promote high severity fire behavior that in turn will have deleterious impacts on both riparian systems and communities tied to the Middle Fork corridor.

Following are the principal considerations I drew from the eligibility analysis, FEIS, and public involvement in determining the suitability of Musselshell Creek. Musselshell Meadows is, and has been, a very important place to the Nez Perce and other Tribes for subsistence and cultural practices. However, much of the meadows and the river segment has suffered significant impacts that has altered the stream channel, function and water quality, and size and health of the meadows. Two system roads are within the river segment; one runs parallel to Meadow Creek for several miles upstream. These roads serve as primary access for multiple uses in a large portion of the Forest. These roads are essential to the road system and are expected to stay in place. Continued operation of the Musselshell work center is an important component of fire management on the Forest. Restoration activities have been implemented within the stream and have altered flows in attempts to restore hydrologic function of the meadow and raise the water table to benefit meadow vegetation. Other management actions have taken place, and more are expected to address ecological conditions of the eligible river segment, adjacent meadows, upstream river segments, and, generally, the Musselshell Creek watershed. Being in Management Area 3, visitors can expect high-standard road access, they can expect to see the effects of past management activities and active operations that address ecological conditions and support local economies.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of Musselshell Creek are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater; however permanent protections through designation would potentially adversely affect the ability to implement needed ecological restoration activities over a greater landscape than the river segments found eligible.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values; however, there is little to no potential for water resource

development, and I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and the cultural and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Additionally, I do not believe these river values rise to the level of significance, value, or uniqueness, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor.

Therefore, given the degraded condition of the stream in need of integrated restorative actions in and around the eligible river segment; given there is primary road access within the river corridor that supports visitor access and management activities in the front country and beyond; given there are administrative and recreational facilities in and around the meadows that are planned to remain in place; and, given that historic properties and traditional practices are protected under the Land Management Plan, the eligible segment of Musselshell Creek is not recommended as suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Old Man Creek

The eligible segment of Old Man Creek is the upper 8.3 miles from the headwaters at Florence Lake to the confluence with Chimney Creek. Eligibility is based on the scenic beauty of the high basins in this area, generally known as The Crags. The preliminary classification is wild.

Old Man Creek's free-flowing character, water quality, and scenery outstandingly remarkable value with alpine meadows and mountain views are currently being protected by the wilderness designation in which the eligible segment is wholly contained. The segment is also within the proposed Fenn Mountain Research Natural Area, bringing additional focus to the resource values of the area. There are no anticipated threats of development in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and the area has been withdrawn from mineral entry. Wilderness and quiet recreation are the best uses of the area and nothing in the management of those values would pose risk to the scenery outstandingly remarkable value. No additional protections would be anticipated with designation, as the wilderness characteristics and scenic values will continue to be protected under existing wilderness designation and proposed designation as a Research Natural Area. The best method for protecting this corridor is to manage the segment to protect wilderness characteristics, which promote naturalness, scenic integrity, and compatible recreational uses.

The region of comparison for eligibility for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. For the Scenic ORV, the distinctive attributes are directly tied to water features and the geologic, hydrologic, and vegetative features of the steep river canyons that comprise much of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where our visitors come from, and where else those publics might go and enjoy dramatic scenery, as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

It is a small set of recreating visitors that enjoy the type of recreation experience that would lead them to venture into The Crags, thereby enjoying the distinctive geologic features and vistas of the river canyons falling below. These wilderness adventurers have several wilderness areas in the recreation region of comparison that offer similar wilderness experiences of challenge, solitude, high-country adventure, and dramatic scenery. The eligible river segment offers spectacular scenery that is certainly equal to other notable areas of scenic splendor in the region of comparison. But, in this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of "distinctive scenic features" and "distinctive river canyons" encompass many similar river segments, not only in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and the recreation region of comparison, but also in neighboring national forests and other national forests in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain ranges.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and scenic outstandingly remarkable value. However, there is little to no potential for water resource development, and I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction for wilderness management will provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the scenic outstandingly remarkable value. Additionally, I do not believe the scenic splendor is so unique or rare, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Warm Springs Creek

The eligible segment of Warm Springs Creek is the lower 6.4 miles from the confluence with Wind Lakes Creek to the confluence with the Lochsa River. The outstandingly remarkable values of Warm Springs Creek include recreation and geology associated with two hot springs in Warm Springs Creek known as Jerry Johnson Hot Springs, and a scenic outstandingly remarkable value associated with a 60-foot waterfall that drops into a punchbowl formation. The preliminary classification is wild.

The Warm Springs Creek eligible segment is within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and in the Lochsa Face Idaho Roadless Area that has a backcountry/restoration theme. The confluence with the Lochsa River it is within the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River corridor. It is entirely on the Nez Perce- Clearwater and no other entities have demonstrated commitment or responsibility for implementing protective management.

The wild and scenic evaluation of 2015 rated the recreation value as very high, recognizing the regional popularity of these hot springs. The scenery related to the waterfall is rated as medium because it is typical in the region of comparison. The geological value is related to the two hot springs in Warm Springs Creek and is recognized as one of the best examples of hot springs found in the region of comparison.

Jerry Johnson Hot Springs, Stanley Hot Springs. Weir Creek Hot Springs, and Colgate Licks Hot Springs occur in the Lochsa River corridor, in proximity to each other. At Jerry Johnson, developments across the Lochsa River include U.S. Highway 12 and the Warm Springs Trailhead with parking and vault toilet. A stock bridge allows access to non-motorized trails within the Warm Springs Creek corridor and the Wilderness beyond. The hot springs surface along a

relatively short section of Warm Springs Creek, and they are easily accessible via a trail open to non-motorized use and a hike of less than a mile to the first springs.

I realize that hot springs are a geologic feature that, depending on location, attract recreational use. Jerry Johnson and Weir Creek hot springs, near Highway 12, certainly have a high level of visitation. They have wide-spread notoriety and are very popular regionally. Hot springs books and websites recommend these springs, and they are visited throughout the year. The other known undeveloped hot springs on the Forest receive very little use. Management activities at all these sites are commensurate with the level of human use and are implemented to protect the natural resources in and around the hot springs, as well as providing for human health and safety, rather than facilitating or enhancing visitor use. Administrative restrictions have been put in place at Jerry Johnson and Weir Creek hot springs to manage use.

However, I believe the promotion of recreational use of hot springs is not appropriate in the Land Management Plan. Hot springs are important to Nez Perce culture and traditions and promoting them could impact Tribal Treaty rights. At least seven undeveloped hot springs are known to exist on the Forest, and, except for parking areas and toilet facilities at Jerry Johnson and Weir Creek trailheads, no facilities or improvements are provided by the Forest at these sites. The level, or absence of development is consistent with other dispersed recreation sites on the Forest and much less than is provided at developed sites. As a matter of routine management, the Forest does not promote, direct forest visitors to, or manage dispersed sites to facilitate or enhance visitor use. An exception to this is that a symbol is on Forest visitor maps indicating the location of hot springs.

There are approximately 300 hot springs in Idaho, there are several hot springs in the region of comparison, and nine on the Nez Perce Clearwater. So, this is a notable, though not unique geologic feature. Most hot springs in the region have various levels of development, especially those on private land such as Quinn's Hot Springs and Lolo Hot Springs, as well as Red River Hot Springs which operates under a special use permit on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Other, less developed natural hot springs are present on the nearby Payette National Forest. The various hot springs offer a spectrum of recreational experiences depending on an individual's desire for comfort and ease or for a more challenging and natural adventure. Jerry Johnson Hot Springs offers a natural, undeveloped experience that is moderately adventuresome as compared to the other hot springs in the recreation region of comparison. The one-mile hike is of low difficulty and the springs have no improvements except pools created by users stacking rocks as needed to obstruct flow. The experience is consistent with what one would expect in an undeveloped environment without an arduous or long hike. Additionally, trail 49 that parallels the stream is a primary access route into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness for hikers and stock users. Consequently, Jerry Johnson Hot Springs does not offer much opportunity for solitude most of the time.

Being in the Clearwater River basin, adjacent to the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River corridor, in a Conservation Watershed, in an area with a high Scenic Integrity Objective, and mostly in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, there is little to no threat of any hydro-electric or geothermal development in the river corridor, or other adverse impacts from management activities. The Land Management Plan components are in place to ensure the wilderness character of the area and the river values are well protected through wilderness management. And the special values of this stream would certainly be a key consideration with any proposed management in the Lochsa Face Roadless Area. The hydrological, biological, and aesthetic resources of the hot springs will

be maintained through implementation of the Land Management Plan and additional restrictions as deemed necessary through regulation and policy.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

Designation would permanently protect the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values. However, there is little to no potential for water resource development, and I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the river values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed.

I've considered that there is little to no threat of hydro-electric or geothermal development. And, from a management perspective, Jerry Johnson Hot Springs is in a location that offers a high level of protection of the hydrological, biological, and aesthetic resources. In turn, this protection provides for and preserves the recreational value of the hot springs as well as the entire stream. The hot springs are in the Lochsa river basin that offers similar hot springs experiences, and in a region of comparison that offers many diverse hot springs experiences from primitive to full accommodations. Although hot springs are somewhat of an anomaly, they are not highly unusual in the geologic region of comparison. While designation would protect the outstandingly remarkable values associated with the hot springs and waterfall, no additional meaningful protections are expected with designation because Plan components are in place to protect these resources commensurate with implementation of any forest management projects proposed in the future. Therefore, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values. Additionally, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridors, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Bear Creek, Cub Creek, Brushy Fork Creek

Combined, these three stream segments total 47.4 miles. This includes Brushy Fork Creek, 8.0 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Cub Creek; Cub Creek, 16.59 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Bear Creek; and Bear Creek, 22.84 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with the Selway River. Eligibility is based on scenic outstandingly remarkable values for Cub Creek and Brushy Fork Creek and scenic, Nez Perce Tribe cultural, fish, and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values for Bear Creek. The preliminary classification for all streams is wild.

All these streams are within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness except a short section of the headwaters of Bear Creek that is in the 600-acre Selway Bitterroot, primitive themed, Idaho Roadless Area. They are tributaries to the Selway Wild and Scenic River. The only motorized

access is to the headwaters through the Bitterroot National Forest via the Bear Lake Motorized Trail 613 which is within the corridor for about three-quarters of a mile near Bear Creek Pass. There are no roads, other motorized trails, mining claims, mapped rock sources, or allotments in this area.

High visual variety contributes to the scenic outstandingly remarkable value for segments of Bear Creek, along with the headwaters of Cub and Brushy Fork Creeks. Since the national forest includes 1.2 million acres of spectacular wilderness areas, it is not surprising that many of the segments with high scenic quality occur in a wilderness area. The designated Wild and Scenic Selway River flows through the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and many of its tributaries have high scenic quality, particularly those with high cirque lakes and craggy peaks in their headwaters. Therefore, while there is a scenic outstandingly remarkable value for these streams, they may be different but are not necessarily more spectacular than most rivers and high cirque basins in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. And, in terms of where visitors come from that may enjoy these views, there are numerous other wilderness areas and accessible high country that also offer alpine and sub-alpine visual diversity. Additionally, there are no system trails in the upper reaches of Cub Creek or Brushy Creek so the numbers of wilderness visitors that would get to those high cirque basins is greatly reduced as compared to other high elevation areas in the wilderness and recreation region of comparison.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Bear Creek is based on diversity, abundance, habitat quality, natural reproduction, and cultural/historical significance. Bear Creek supports spawning and early rearing by native spring Chinook salmon in high numbers and contains large areas of excellent habitat. Bear Creek also supports spawning and rearing for native steelhead trout and is designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead and Columbia River bull trout.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. This is further evident in the Selway River drainage in which twelve of the nineteen eligible rivers provide fisheries diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction for these species.

The Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable value for Bear Creek is that it is one of three places Nimi'ipuu oral history indicates the Nez Perce Tribe originated from. It is also a traditional and significant place for the trail through the area linking the Clearwater valley with the Bitterroot valley as well as seasonal use of its fisheries and wildlife resources.

The outstandingly remarkable value for wildlife on Bear Creek includes populations of Harlequin ducks. Harlequin ducks occur from the mouth of Bear Creek upstream to the confluence of Bear Creek and Cub Creek.

Each of these outstandingly remarkable values add to the wilderness character of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and they deserve special consideration and protection in the management of the wilderness. However, all these values are like other outstandingly remarkable values in various places across the Forest. One thing that is somewhat unique to these values is their location in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Their presence in the Wilderness affords them recognition and protection through the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness General Management Direction that is not present across the entire Nez Perce-Clearwater. In addition, there are many

Land Management Plan components that address these resources and further provide for their protection.

No changes are anticipated to land use within the wilderness area. And the Idaho Roadless Area Rule limits road construction, reconstruction, and surface occupancy in primitive theme areas. However, the rule does not protect from water developments or locatable mineral activities pursuant to the General Mining Law of 1872. Wilderness area designation withdraws the area from mineral entry, and water developments in wilderness areas must be authorized by the President. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin, particularly in wilderness and wild and scenic rivers. And there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan.

I believe the location of these streams predominantly in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and management under Land Management Plan and Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness General Management Direction will provide ample protection and direct benefits to the scenic, fish, wildlife, and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values, and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan and beyond. There is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of these outstandingly remarkable values in these creeks, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Buck Lake Creek, East Fork Meadow Creek

Buck Lake Creek is 12.0 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with Meadow Creek. East Fork Meadow Creek is 7.0 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with Meadow Creek. Their eligibility is based on a fish outstandingly remarkable value. Preliminary classifications are wild for Buck Lake Creek and scenic for East Fork Meadow Creek.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for these eligible segments includes diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Eligible segments have been identified as a major spawning area for Snake River steelhead trout, and in East Fork Meadow Creek a local bull trout population has been identified. Eligible segments within East Fork Meadow Creek and Buck Lake Creek are included as designated critical habitat for steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. These streams also support substantial spawning and early rearing for native spring Chinook salmon. Buck Lake Creek supports very high densities of juvenile steelhead trout when compared to other streams in the region of comparison. Steelhead trout in these tributaries are wild B-run fish that are critical to the overall population within the region of comparison, as there is no record that hatchery supplementation has ever occurred. It is likely the population has high genetic integrity. East Fork Meadow Creek supports very high densities of westslope cutthroat trout and juvenile bull trout when compared to other streams in the region of comparison.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

These streams contribute to river system integrity by providing important fish diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction primarily in a wilderness setting. Given this contribution to the integrity of the Selway River system these streams deserve strong consideration and protection in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. This is further evident in the Selway River drainage in which twelve of the nineteen eligible rivers provide fisheries diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction for these species.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

The Buck Lake Creek headwaters are within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area then it enters the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, a primitive themed area. There are no roads, motorized trails, mining claims, mapped rock sources, or allotments in this area.

East Fork Meadow Creek is entirely within the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, a primitive themed area. The corridor includes maintenance level 2 roads Forest Road 285 and Forest Road 357.

With this Land Management Plan decision, the East Meadow Creek roadless area is part of a larger recommended wilderness area and Meadow Creek is determined suitable for designation as a wild and scenic river. The entirety of the eligible segments of Buck Lake Creek and East Fork Meadow Creek are within the new East Meadow Recommended Wilderness Area or within the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Without a threat of new hydroelectric facilities, the recommended wilderness status and plan components associated with that status, offer more protection than the suitable wild and scenic river interim protections. These additional classifications are afforded all the protections that come with that designation.

Given that Buck Lake Creek and East Fork Meadow Creek are in a primitive-themed roadless area, recommended wilderness and tributary to a suitable wild and scenic river, no changes are anticipated to the land use for the area since most of the area surrounding the creeks has been managed to protect the Idaho Roadless Area. Additionally, analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin. And there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan.

While designation would permanently protect the river values, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the

outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Clear Creek and South Fork Clear Creek

Collectively Clear Creek and the South Fork Clear Creek eligible segments total 8.0 miles. This includes the South Fork, 7.19 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Clear Creek, 0.90 miles, then downstream to the National Forest boundary. Their eligibility is based on fish and Nez Perce Tribe cultural outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is scenic.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value includes diversity and abundance and natural reproduction. South Fork Clear Creek supports spawning and rearing of wild A-run steelhead trout in high densities relative to other streams in the region of comparison. Spring Chinook salmon are present in its lower reaches, and westslope cutthroat trout are present as well. The Clear Creek watershed, including South Fork Clear Creek, has been identified as a major spawning area. South Fork Clear Creek contains designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead trout.

These fish species and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Additionally, 189 rivers on the Nez Perce-Clearwater have been identified as critical habitat for steelhead trout. Sixty-seven percent of these rivers are in Management Areas 1 and 2 where there is little threat from management activities that would impact river habitat.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Middle Fork Clearwater River. As such, these fisheries values deserve thoughtful consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve aquatic and riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicates that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This, in turn, will serve to maintain river conditions that support healthy fish populations. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

Nez Perce Tribal staff identified these river segments as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. They indicated that Clear Creek contains sites of previous habitation. Preserving Nez Perce cultural values is an important part of the desired conditions for the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Maintaining such sites as those present in Clear Creek ensures physical

evidence remains in place to support the oral history the Tribe passes from generation to generation, as well as providing opportunity for education and interpretation of Nez Perce presence in this landscape to non-Tribal forest visitors. In many instances preserving such sites is also important to support continuation of cultural and traditional practices.

Protecting these fisheries and cultural resources is important, and designation could provide the highest overall level of protection of the fish and Nez Perce cultural values. However, other uses and management actions in this river corridor such as grazing, timber production and addressing forest health conditions may be foregone if the river corridor was designated and the focus of management was on permanent protection of these two values. Such management actions that could be foregone address ecological, economic, and social sustainability which are key to meeting Land Management Plan desired conditions.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, fisheries habitat, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the fish ORV species and their habitat. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values.

These fish species and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. These rivers are not at risk of impacts from dam construction. Past management activities have occurred in these drainages and these populations remained protected and persisted. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, supporting the preservation of these species.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

Land Management Plan components addressing our general Tribal Trust and cultural resources ensures coordination with the Nez Perce Tribe on any management activities and protection of Native American religious and cultural sites, practices, and treaty rights.

Permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these outstandingly remarkable values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities across the landscape within the 7.9 miles of river segments found eligible. Designation would curtail upland management activities needed to protect the cathedral cedar stands in the roadless are from stand-replacing wildfire. Aquatic restoration activities would be reduced due to potential for an adverse effect, even for a short time, on the downstream ORVs. I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the fish and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions

that might otherwise be foreclosed. There is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of protection as identified in the WSR Act, at the expense of opportunities to improve ridgetop to ridgetop conditions throughout the drainage. Additionally, I do not believe these river values are so unique, rare, or among the best representatives of these features that they rise to a level of significance, or otherwise contribute to vital national conservation purposes to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not find designation as the best method for protecting the river corridors nor these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Gedney Creek and West Fork Gedney Creek

These two streams originate in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and pass through the Rackliff-Gedney Idaho Roadless Area, backcountry restoration themed area. These two eligible river segments total 19.1 miles in length, from the headwaters of West Fork Gedney Creek, 10.14 miles, to its confluence with the Gedney Creek, 9.07 miles, and from the headwaters of Gedney Creek to its confluence with the Selway River. Eligibility of Gedney Creek is based on a fish outstandingly remarkable value and the West Fork Gedney is based on a scenic outstandingly remarkable value.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Gedney Creek includes diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Gedney Creek supports high densities of native steelhead trout and provides important spawning and rearing habitat available below Selway Falls. Steelhead trout in the Selway River and tributaries are B-run and make a significant contribution to the steelhead population within the region of comparison. Eligible segments in Gedney Creek are included as designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. They have been identified as a minor spawning area for steelhead and a potential local population of bull trout has been identified.

In making the suitability determination, I considered the relative value, quality, and uniqueness of the fish outstandingly remarkable value as compared to other eligible rivers, and whether these river segments best represent the qualities of a Wild and Scenic River. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species.

The fisheries value of Gedney Creek provides the same characteristics as the majority of the forty-one eligible river segments with a fish ORV across the Forest and all the eligible segments with a fish ORV is the Selway River drainage – diversity, abundance, habitat quality and natural reproduction. While these are important attributes there is nothing that distinguishes Gedney Creek from the other Steelhead trout-bearing tributaries in the Selway River drainage.

I considered the risks to the fish and scenic outstandingly remarkable values and the protections in place to ensure their preservation. A small campground, trailhead, and short section of Forest

Road 319 are at the confluence with the Selway River and motorized trail 708 parallels Gedney Creek for approximately the lower three miles. No other improvements are present, and the streams are minimally affected by human disturbance. Analysis indicates that there is little to no threat of development for hydro-electric, or other water developments. The scenic ORV is related to the headwaters of the West Fork Gedney Creek which is in the Selway- Bitterroot Wilderness. Management under the Wilderness Act, the Selway-bitterroot Wilderness management Plan, and the Land Management Plan components related to wilderness ensures the preservation of the scenic character of the area. The Idaho Roadless Rule limits road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest. Therefore, other than the use of management fire, there are no management activities that would pose a threat to the near-pristine conditions of these streams.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Selway and Clearwater rivers. As such, they warrant appropriate consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components provides protections and direct benefits for the fish ORV species and their habitat.

The scenic outstandingly remarkable value for West Fork Gedney Creek is based on its spectacular visual quality as noted in the National Park Service Nationwide River Inventory. The headwaters of these streams are near The Crags in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness that provide a hydrologic divide between the Lochsa and Selway rivers. The Crags are noted for the broad vistas and lake basin and steep river canyon views for those that hike or ride horseback into this rugged country. Less dramatic views are afforded from Gedney Mountain that is accessed by motorized Trail 708 to the boundary of the Wilderness.

The region of comparison for eligibility for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. For the Scenic ORV, the distinctive attributes are directly tied to water features and the geologic, hydrologic, and vegetative features of the steep river canyons that comprise much of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where our visitors come from, and where else those publics might go and enjoy dramatic scenery as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

It is a small set of recreating visitors to the Nez Perce-clearwater that enjoy the type of recreation experience that would lead them to venture high into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, thereby enjoying the distinctive geologic features, high cirque basins and vistas of the river canyons falling below. These wilderness adventurers have several wilderness areas in the recreation region of comparison that offer similar wilderness experiences of challenge, solitude, high-country

adventure, and dramatic scenery. The West Fork Gedney Creek eligible river segments offer spectacular scenery that is certainly equal to other areas of scenic splendor in the region of comparison. But, in this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of "distinctive scenic features" and "distinctive river canyons" encompass many similar river segments, not only in the recreation region of comparison but in neighboring national forests and other national forests in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain ranges.

I considered management goals and opportunities in the area to move the Forest toward the desired conditions, whether designation would complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan, and how designation might affect the ability to implement other management actions to meet those goals. Permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these outstandingly remarkable values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities, such as prescribed fire, over a greater landscape than the river segments found eligible.

I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the fish and scenic outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. There is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of these fish and scenic outstandingly remarkable values in these streams, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and Gedney Creek and West Fork Gedney Creek do not rise to the level of significance, value, or uniqueness to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Meadow Creek

Meadow Creek is 44.4 miles long from its headwaters in Mountain Meadows near the Southern Nez Perce Trail to its mouth above the Selway Falls on the Selway River. A portion of meadow creek is either bounded by or within a new recommended wilderness area, East Meadow Creek RWA, that I am recommending as part of this decision. The identified ORVs include cultural, Nez Perce cultural, recreation, fish, and wildlife. Each ORV is supported by on-the-ground conditions as discussed in Appendix F. Preliminary classifications include Meadow Creek Lower Portion, recreational; Middle Portion, wild; and, Upper Portion, scenic.

Meadow Creek has been a popular use area as trappers, prospectors, miners, loggers, homesteaders, and the Forest Service moved through and into the area around Elk City. For countless generations before that, the Meadow Creek area was a significant use area for the Nez Perce people and other indigenous peoples. The area and its fishery resources are and have always been of high cultural importance. Because of this enduring use of the area, Meadow Creek has numerous archaeological sites along its entirety that offer an outstanding example of historic and prehistoric land use. Maintaining the integrity of these archeological sites ensures the opportunity to connect people with these places that provide an important perspective of occupancy and uses on the Forest. This historic and cultural use of the area adds intrinsic value that continues today through Tribal use and practices. Consequently, Meadow Creek is important culturally, historically, and socially for the Nez Perce people. Meadow Creek is also important for scientific purposes in its contribution of archeological sites documenting prehistoric land uses.

The resources, opportunities, and practices, past and present support the identified ORVs of Cultural and Nez Perce-Cultural.

With the significance of the use of Meadow Creek for generations of Nez Perce, and the archeological record that documents this use as well as Euro-American occupation makes Meadow Creek more unique, exemplary, and provides greater contribution in its anthropological value than other river segments in the region of comparison. These values deserve special consideration and should be protected while managing for other uses and activities within the Meadow Creek corridor. Currently, protection of these values comes through numerous laws and regulations in addition to Land Management Plan components and direction.

Ecologically, Meadow Creek offers high water quality and habitat conditions that support cold water aquatic life and wildlife habitat. Segments within Meadow Creek have been identified as a major spawning area for Snake River steelhead trout, and a local bull trout population has been identified. Eligible segments within Meadow Creek are designated critical habitat for steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. Meadow Creek also supports substantial spawning and early rearing for native spring Chinook salmon. The higher elevation eligible segments in Meadow Creek support a unique assemblage of native salmonids, including interior redband trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and a resident bull trout population. The westslope cutthroat trout population in these higher elevation reaches exhibits high genetic integrity.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. The remaining areas are in Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that this area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. Consideration was also given to the fact that Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, riparian habitats, and wilderness, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, thereby supporting and preserving the fish outstandingly remarkable values.

I considered the relative value, quality, and uniqueness of the ORVs as compared to other eligible rivers, and whether the Meadow Creek segment best represents the qualities of a Wild and Scenic River. Meadow Creek, with its assemblage of native salmonids and high genetic integrity of westslope cutthroat trout, contributes higher value and more diverse attributes than most other river segments across the region of comparison, including other eligible rivers. Protection of the fisheries resource across the Forest comes through many federal and state laws, regulations, direction, and practices that are incorporated into Forest Plan components and direction or

incorporated by reference. However, given the exceptionally high value of Meadow Creek to the fisheries resource on the Forest, actions that emphasize, and permanently protect and enhance the fisheries in this river segment are warranted.

The lower portions of Meadow Creek support populations of the Selway forestsnail. The Selway forestsnail is an Idaho endemic species with a global range that is only known to occur in isolated colonies at lower elevations along the lower Lochsa River, the Selway River, the South Fork Clearwater River, the lower Salmon River, and their tributaries. This endemic population receives protection through the numerous Land Management Plan components applicable to aquatic and riparian habitats, as well as designated Wild and Scenic River direction where applicable. No significant additional protection would be provided through designation.

There are approximately 13 known sites where Selway forestsnail exist. More populations are likely as the species is probably under surveyed. Some of the species' known sites occur within the Designated Wild and Scenic River areas along the Lochsa, Selway and Middle Fork of the Clearwater rivers. Identified threats are grazing, rock quarrying, road work, logging, and fire. Apart from fire, none of these activities are likely to occur in Meadow Creek where these populations exist. Given there are several known, and protected, populations of Selway forestsnail on the Forest, Plan components provide protections to the habitat these species require, and there is little likelihood of threats to the population from management activities, the mere presence of the Selway forestsnail does not provide a compelling reason to determine Meadow Creek suitable for inclusion in the National System.

Meadow Creek is traversed by trail #726 for 22 miles from the trailhead at Slims Camp campground, past the Meadow Creek Cabin, to Schwar Creek and the junction with trail #513. The section from Slims Camp campground to the Meadow Creek Cabin was designated as the Meadow Creek National Recreation Trail in 1980. Much of the trail is proximate to the creek and offers ample opportunity for river related recreation. As part of the National Trails System, Meadow Creek NRT is provided national recognition designed to elevate and promote State, local, and community trails for their local and regional significance. This fifteen-mile section of the trail is a well-established primary trail for hiking and equestrian use that connects with numerous other trails near to Elk City, including the Anderson Butte National Recreation Trail. This system of trails around the area provides non-motorized, mechanized, and motorized trail-based recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

The recreation ORV is based on the presence of the Meadow Creek National Recreation Trail and the river-based recreation it provides. Trail access to rivers and streams is prevalent on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, being one of eight National Recreation Trails on the Forest, Meadow Creek does have additional regional notoriety and significance than the multitude of other streamside trails. National Recreation Trails, and other trails on the Forest are maintained and protected through Forest Plan components, direction, and practices consistent with the trail management objectives specific to each trail. This trail and the recreation opportunities it provides would receive little additional protection with designation as a W&S River that isn't provided through current management practices or that could be addressed through travel planning. However, use on the Meadow Creek NRT could change through designation of Meadow Creek as a wild and scenic river by limiting opportunity for trail designations that allow motorized use in those sections classified as wild. Three miles of the trail from Slims Camp campground to Little Creek are currently open to motorized use with the remaining twelve miles closed. This three-mile section is within a Recreation classification and the motorized use could

continue with designation. Trail 809 and Trail 611 are motorized trails with short sections within the river corridor near the Meadow Creek Ranger Station where they connect with Trail 726. Portions of these trails are within the Meadow Creek River corridor that is classified as wild. Trail 726 continues upstream beyond the Meadow Creek Cabin, and the end of the National Recreation Trail, for another seven miles. It is also in a wild classification. These three trails join at, or just beyond the NRT terminus. While motorized use is not prohibited under this classification, generally, motorized access is not consistent with the wild classification and there is little reason to expect that this use would continue to occur if determined suitable. This determination would be made through travel planning. Beyond this, designation as a Wild and Scenic River would add little to the protection of the National Recreation Trail outstandingly remarkable resource.

Portions of Meadow Creek are within Semi-Primitive Motorized and Roaded Natural Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Classes. Motorized recreation is a significant contributor to the economy and lifestyle of residents Idaho County, particularly Elk City and other local communities, and is an important component of the desired condition for the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Idaho County ranked in the top ten counties in the state in terms of OHV recreation trips and trip expenditures in 2012. The area is easily accessed by Forest system roads and two motorized trails are within the corridor that support motorized recreation visitors that regularly come from across the recreation region of comparison, including Missoula MT, Boise ID, and Spokane WA, and points in between. Developments in the corridor include 7 sites in the Selway Falls Campground and 2 sites within the Slims Camp Campground; the Meadow Creek National Recreation Trail, which is open the first three miles to motorized vehicles; the Meadow Creek Rental Cabin; and the Meadow Creek Workstation. The presence of these facilities is consistent with direction for designated rivers and are to be maintained under the Revised Forest Plan.

I considered the risks to these ORVs and the protections in place to ensure their preservation. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin. There is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to make a determination of suitability based on the concern of such development which would also not comply with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum on supporting salmon and steelhead recovery. Most of Meadow Creek flows through Management Area 2 in the West Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, which has a backcountry restoration theme. The east side of the corridor also includes part of the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area, a primitive themed area that is now recommended for wilderness as part of this decision. Within areas with a backcountry restoration theme, where timber harvest allowed, some segments would be designated wild if found suitable. Timber harvest is not used extensively in this area. However, if these segments are designated, timber harvest would certainly be modified or foreclosed as an option for forest vegetation restoration.

The headwaters are within the forest plan revision proposed Management Area 3, suitable timber base. Timber harvest is a management activity that is expected to continue in this area to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions. Additionally, timber harvest is recognized for the jobs and products that contribute to economic stability for local communities. These activities contribute to the objective for the Nez Perce-Clearwater to contribute to the local economic, social, and cultural strength and sustainability. Timber management activities within a designated river corridor would likely be modified or foreclosed to ensure protection and enhancement of its ORVs potentially at the expense of meeting other Forest Plan objectives.

The high quality, free-flowing condition of Meadow Creek and its associated outstandingly remarkable values are an important part of the Nez Perce-Clearwater and are worth protecting as the Forest manages the natural, cultural, and recreational resources in and around the river. This river possesses higher values and contributions to the Forest's fisheries resource than most other rivers and streams on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and the fisheries region of comparison. This, along with the cultural significance to the Nez Perce people cumulatively raises the value of the river as compared to other rivers across the Forest.

Meadow Creek is predominantly in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, that restrict management activities that may occur. Timber harvest is not used extensively in this area. However, if it is determined suitable as a Wild and Scenic River, any timber harvest that might occur would certainly be modified or foreclosed as an option for forest vegetation restoration. Little change in other management activities is anticipated except potential restrictions on motorized use in the river segment classified as Wild.

Given the higher value and contribution of this river's fisheries and cultural resources, it is appropriate that these river resources take precedence over the objectives of vegetative treatments and other management activities in the eligible corridor. While many laws, regulations and practices are in place that have facilitated protection of these resources, designation as a Wild and Scenic River brings an emphasis and permanence to this protection that is warranted given the importance of these outstandingly remarkable values. Meadow Creek provides those higher values and contributions as compared to other rivers in the regions of comparison to support inclusion in the National System. Consequently, I believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and Meadow Creek does rise to the level of significance, value, and uniqueness to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I find the Meadow Creek River segment suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Moose Creek, North Fork Moose Creek, West Moose Creek, East Fork Moose Creek, Rhoda Creek, Wounded Doe Creek

Combined, these eligible river segments total 93.8 miles. They include Moose Creek, 3.77 miles, from the confluence with East Fork Moose Creek to the confluence with the Selway River; North Fork Moose Creek, 20.82 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Moose Creek; West Moose Creek, 9.08 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with North Fork Moose Creek; East Fork Moose Creek, 34.63 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Moose Creek; Rhoda Creek, 16.33 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with North Fork Moose Creek; and, Wounded Doe Creek, 9.17 miles, from its headwaters to the confluence with Rhoda Creek.

Eligibility for Moose Creek, North Fork Moose Creek and East Fork Moose Creek are based on scenic, cultural and fish outstandingly remarkable values. Eligibility for Rhoda Creek and West Moose Creek are based on scenic and fish outstandingly remarkable values, and Wounded Doe Creek is eligible for its fish outstandingly remarkable value. Preliminary classification for all eligible segments is wild.

High visual variety contributes to the scenic outstandingly remarkable value for the segments of Moose Creek, North Fork Moose Creek, East Fork Moose, and Rhoda Creek. Rhoda Creek has stunning lakes and cliffs in its headwaters in the Selway Crags. The Moose Creek tributaries also have a high visual variety of rocks, fast-and slow-moving water, and a variety of vegetation in their headwaters.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value includes diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Rhoda Creek, below its confluence with Wounded Doe Creek, and Wounded Doe Creek support very high densities of fluvial bull trout. Wounded Doe Creek supports the highest known numbers of spawning fluvial bull trout in the Selway Basin and is among the highest in the region of comparison. Wounded Doe Creek also supports very high numbers of genetically unique westslope cutthroat trout with high genetic integrity. Rhoda and Wounded Doe Creeks are designated critical habitat for bull trout, and a local population has been identified. Eligible segments in Rhoda and Wounded Doe Creeks are designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead trout, and both are included as a major spawning area. Native spring Chinook salmon spawn and rear in the lower reaches of Rhoda Creek. West Fork Moose Creek is upstream from the range of anadromous fish and supports a large westslope cutthroat trout population with high genetic integrity.

Moose Creek is one of the largest tributaries to the Wild and Scenic Selway River. Moose Creek and its tributaries, East Fork Moose Creek, and North Fork Moose Creek, as well as North Fork Moose Creek's tributaries, West Moose Creek, Rhoda Creek, and Wounded Doe Creek, are very important fish habitat as part of the larger system of the Selway River. These streams contribute to river system integrity by providing important fish diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction primarily in a wilderness setting. Given this contribution to the integrity of the Selway River system these streams certainly deserve strong consideration and protection in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. Additionally, all these segments are within the Selway-bitterroot Wilderness and receive all the protections under the wilderness management plan and Plan components for wilderness. The protections afforded through designation as a wild and scenic river would be redundant to these Plan components and do little to further protect or enhance this fisheries resource.

The cultural outstandingly remarkable value for Moose Creek is Forest Service administrative history. The Moose Creek Ranger Station, and associated airstrip, is nationally known as a working historic ranger station deep within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. East and North Fork Moose Creeks also have early Forest Service history associated with the Three Forks Ranger Station and the embodiment of early outdoor recreation at the Moose Creek Ranch's locale. Operation and maintenance of the Moose Creek Ranger Station consistent with wilderness principles was authorized and has been ongoing since the establishment of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness in January 1964. Designation as a wild and scenic river would do nothing to further protect or enhance this cultural resource.

I considered the risks to the outstandingly remarkable values and the protections in place to ensure their preservation. Moose Creek and all its tributaries in this segment are within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. There are no roads, motorized trails, mining claims, mapped rock sources, or allotments in this area. No changes are anticipated to the land use within the wilderness area. Wilderness designation withdraws the area from mineral entry, and water developments in wilderness areas must be authorized by the President. Analysis indicates there is

little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin. And there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to determine suitability based on the concern of such development.

Given their location in the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness these streams have a high scenic integrity objective. Management in accordance with the General Management Direction, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, as amended in 1992 ensures maintenance of the wilderness character and scenic splendor consistent with this objective. Designation as a wild and scenic river would do nothing to further protect or enhance this scenic resource.

While designation would permanently protect the river values, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction, and the General Management Direction, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness as amended in 1992, will provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting these river segments, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

O'Hara Creek

The eligible segment of O'Hara Creek is 2.3 miles from the confluence with Stillman Creek to the confluence with the Selway River. Eligibility is based on its wildlife outstandingly remarkable value due to the presence of the Selway forest snail. Preliminary classification is recreational.

The Selway forest snail is an Idaho endemic that is only known to occur in isolated colonies at lower elevations. It is known only from about a dozen sites across its entire range, including near O'Hara Creek on the Selway River.

This reach of O'Hara Creek occurs at its confluence with the Wild and Scenic Selway River along a high use motorized front country recreation corridor approximately 15 miles downstream of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness boundary. The area has a high occupancy/use campground adjacent to the Selway River on FS 651. The area is frequented by campers in spring and summer and hunters in the fall and hosts the closest large group campground facility to the area's Visitor Center. Public use also includes a self-guided tour highlighting historic logging and subsequent restoration along the first mile of O'Hara Creek using the Stillman Ridge Motorized Trail 225, maintenance level 3 road 651, and maintenance level 1 roads 9701 and 9701F.

In addition to serving recreational and municipal purposes, the area west of the O'Hara-Falls Creek Idaho Roadless Area (backcountry/restoration theme area) is in Management Area 3 with focus on ecological restoration and timber production, supporting both timber and fuels management projects. Existing high value public, municipal, and commercial uses would likely be restricted after designation. Such management actions address ecological, economic, and social sustainability that may be foregone if the river corridor was designated.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of

plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, the type of management dictated by designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these values. This would not be possible to do without short term adverse impacts. This could also adversely affect the ability to implement needed ecological restoration activities over a greater landscape than the river segments found eligible.

Land Management Plan components are in place to preserve aquatic and riparian habitat that supports the Selway forest snail as well as other river values concurrent with the extensive multiple-use activities in an area that has also recently experienced substantial wildland fire.

The presence of the Selway forest snail as the only outstandingly remarkable value is not sufficient to warrant designation as a wild and scenic river, particularly since the lower reach of O'Hara Creek is already protected within the Selway Wild and Scenic River. I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the Selway forest snail and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. There is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the wildlife outstandingly remarkable value in this creek, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and O'Hara Creek does not rise to the level of significance, value, or uniqueness to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Three Links Creek and West Fork Three Links Creek

Combined, these two eligible river segments total 20.67 miles, from the headwaters of Three Links Creek to its confluence, 14.69 miles, the Selway River and from the headwaters of the West Fork Three Links Creek to its confluence with Three Links Creek, 5.98 miles. Their eligibility is based on a scenic outstandingly remarkable value and their preliminary classification is wild.

These creeks are within the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Three Links Creek includes both specific features, such as waterfalls and lakes, in addition to a unique combination of fast- and slow-moving water, rocks, cliffs, and vegetation. The high visual variety contributes to the scenic outstandingly remarkable value for the segments of Three Links Creek and West Fork Three Links Creek. Three Links Creek also has a 400-foot waterfall comprised of a series of drops and slides. Since the national forest includes 1.2 million acres of some of the most spectacular wilderness areas in the country, it is not surprising that many of the rivers with high scenic quality occur in a wilderness area. The designated Selway Wild and Scenic River flows through the heart of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and many of its tributaries have high scenic quality, particularly those with high cirque lakes and craggy peaks in their headwaters.

The free-flowing character, water quality, and scenery outstandingly remarkable value with mountain views, fast- and slow-moving water, waterfalls, rocks, cliffs, and vegetation, should be

and are currently protected by the wilderness designation in which the eligible segments are wholly contained under management of the General Management Direction, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, as amended in 1992. The segments also terminate within the Selway Wild and Scenic River, bringing additional focus and protection to the resource values of the area.

Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin. There is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. There are no other anticipated threats of development in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, and the area has been withdrawn from mineral entry. Wilderness and quiet recreation are the best uses of the area and nothing in the management of those values would pose risk to the scenery outstandingly remarkable value. No additional protections would be anticipated with designation, as the wilderness characteristics and scenic values will continue to be protected under existing wilderness designation. The best method for protecting this corridor is to manage the segment to protect wilderness characteristics, which promote naturalness, scenic integrity, and compatible recreational uses. No other agencies or entities have demonstrated a commitment to protect the river values.

The region of comparison for eligibility for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. For the Scenic ORV, the distinctive attributes are directly tied to water features and the geologic, hydrologic, and vegetative features of the steep river canyons that comprise much of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where our visitors come from, and where else those publics might go and enjoy dramatic scenery, as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

It is a small elite set of recreating visitors that enjoy the type of recreation experience that would lead them to venture into The Crags, the headwaters of these tributaries, thereby enjoying the distinctive geologic features and vistas of the river canyons falling below. These wilderness adventurers have several wilderness areas in the recreation region of comparison that offer similar wilderness experiences of challenge, solitude, high-country adventure, and dramatic scenery. The eligible river segments offer spectacular scenery that is certainly equal to other notable areas of scenic splendor in the region of comparison. But, in this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of “distinctive scenic features” and “distinctive river canyons” encompass many similar river segments, not only in the recreation region of comparison but in neighboring national forests and other national forests in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain ranges.

While designation would permanently protect the river values, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction, and the General Management Direction, Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, as amended in 1992 will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and scenic outstandingly remarkable value and will serve to preserve them during the life of the Plan. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals.

Given these considerations, there is no compelling reason to make a suitability determination based on the threat of potential development or other management actions that might pose a threat to the scenic ORV. And there is no apparent benefit from designation that warrants permanent protection of the scenery outstandingly remarkable value beyond that which is provided by

Wilderness. Therefore, I do not find the Three Links Creek and West Fork Three Links Creek eligible river segments as suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

American River

This segment of the American River is 3 miles long, downstream of a patented mining claim and upstream from the Elk City township that is comprised of private and BLM lands. This section of the American River provides habitat suitable to support the presence of Western Pearlshell mussels. As such, a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value was identified. This is the only ORV present in this river. The preliminary classification is Recreational.

The river has been heavily suction dredged in the past and the Forest continues to get new applications for mining plans of operation (POO's) on an annual basis. The past activities heavily impacted and altered the river channel. Upstream activities on private land pose additional potential adverse effects through mining activities, road construction, and other activities associated with human habitation. These activities are beyond the control of the Forest Service.

The American River corridor is within the forest plan revision proposed Management Area 3. These lands are suitable for timber production and commercial harvest activities have occurred within and near the corridor under the 1987 Forest Plan. Timber harvest is an effective method to move existing forest vegetation conditions towards desired conditions. Of particular interest are areas along the American river that provide winter habitat for big game, particularly for elk. These areas could benefit from vegetation management through timber harvest and other silvicultural treatments. These timber harvest activities would also provide job opportunities and forest products that contribute to the economic stability of local and regional communities. In addition, the proximity of this area to infrastructure and urban interface necessitates prioritizing options to reduce fire risk to communities.

Developments and roads in the corridor include Flint Creek Trailhead, Forest Road 443 (maintenance level 3), Forest Road 2541, and four maintenance level 1 roads. Three Forest Service rock pit sites are within the corridor: American River, Flint Creek, and Rumpus Creek. About one mile of the segment is in the American River grazing allotment. To date, management of this infrastructure has occurred while protecting the habitat that supports the Western Pearlshell mussel. However, such management activities could be hampered or precluded if these four river segments were designated. Developments on private lands are also present above and below the eligible river segment.

American River is listed as impaired (Class 4A) for water temperature, physical substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation and is not supporting cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning beneficial uses. It is fully supporting primary contact recreation. It is included in the Environmental Protection Agency approved South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan. A Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plan is a water quality improvement strategy that includes the development of the Total Maximum Daily Load allocated to a stream. Recognition of the impaired condition and inclusion in the TMDL Plan gives additional focus on improvement of the river conditions that are affecting river values.

The American River was identified in the Comprehensive State Water Plan for the South Fork Clearwater River Basin. It is designated as a recreational river and may include some man-made development in the waterway or riparian area. The outstanding values recognized include recreational use, fish species of concern, salmonid spawning, and streamside montane meadows.

The following activities are prohibited: alterations of the stream channel, except as allowed with specific provisions; construction of hydropower projects; construction of water diversion works; construction or expansion of dams or impoundments; dredge or placer mining; and mineral, sand, and gravel extraction within the stream channel. The State's recognition and designation demonstrates a level of commitment to protect these river values.

The Western Pearlshell mussel has declined across much its historical range. However, populations with good viability are known to occur in the Clearwater, Selway, Lochsa, and South Fork Clearwater rivers, among numerous others across the Nez Perce-Clearwater. The American River was found eligible for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System based solely on the presence of the Western Pearlshell mussel. The river is not at risk of impacts from dam construction. Past management activities have occurred in these drainages and these populations remained protected and persisted. These rivers will be managed in compliance with the Land Management Plan components and direction, with particular benefit to the wildlife ORV from the aquatic and riparian components, as well as all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

While designation would permanently protect the single ORV, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of WSR protection of the outstandingly remarkable value, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals and community protection. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to provide appropriate protection and direct benefits to the Western Pearlshell mussel. This direction, along with protections under the Comprehensive State Water Plan for the South Fork Clearwater River Basin and TMDL Plan will serve to preserve the ORV during the life of the Plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions. No additional meaningful protections are expected with designation, as Plan components are in place to protect these resources commensurate with implementing of any forest management projects proposed in the future. Therefore, I have no compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of this single wildlife outstandingly remarkable value, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals and community safety as outlined in the Land Management Plan. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Big Mallard Creek and Noble Creek

The eligible segments of these two creeks total 12.5 miles long. Big Mallard Creek is 3.6 miles long from its confluence with Summit Creek to its confluence with the Salmon River. Noble Creek, a tributary to Big Mallard Creek, is 8.9 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with Big Mallard Creek. Big Mallard is eligible due to its scenic and geology outstandingly remarkable values. Noble Creek is eligible due to its scenic and fish outstandingly remarkable values. Their preliminary classifications are wild except for a small section of Noble Creek which is recreational due to the presence of Forest Road 421 that crosses it.

The scenic outstandingly remarkable value for Big Mallard Creek and Noble Creek is based on waterfalls present on each creek. The Big Mallard Creek Falls is one of the longest waterfalls in

the region of comparison with a near-vertical drop of approximately 300 feet. Noble Creek has a cascading drop of approximately 250 feet. Both waterfalls are within the boundary of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area, which appears to have been drawn specifically to include these two waterfalls.

The presence of the Big Mallard Creek waterfalls is also the basis of the geology outstandingly remarkable value for that segment. However, waterfalls are not uncommon in the geology region of comparison or on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. There are a variety of sizes, flows, and configurations with elevational drops under 100 feet to over one thousand feet, and from cascading drops to vertical drops into plunge pools. Some are readily accessible and visible from Forest roads and trails and others more remote. However, as was stated above, the Big Mallard Creek falls is one of the longest in the region of comparison. The numerous Land Management Plan components addressing aquatic, riparian, and wilderness values ensures these falls' protection during any management activities. There is little to no threat of hydro-electric dams or development that would affect these falls; therefore, no additional protections are necessary to protect these scenic and geology outstandingly remarkable values based on potential hydro-development.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value in Noble Creek is based on habitat quality and natural reproduction. Noble Creek supports the only allopatric resident westslope cutthroat trout population in the region of comparison. It is isolated from Big Mallard Creek and the Salmon River by a large waterfall, which is an upstream migration barrier. Therefore, it is likely this population is genetically unique and has very high genetic integrity. Population abundance is very high. Habitat quality in these low gradient eligible segments is very high. There are no non-native species present in Noble Creek.

The waterfalls along these two creeks are spectacular visually and offer geological diversity in the landscape, although there is limited opportunity to view them. Additionally, the waterfalls serve as a migration barrier that protects the resident westslope cutthroat trout population. Access to the Mallard Creek waterfalls is via trail 585 with a trailhead located on Forest Road 421, the road to Whitewater Ranch on the Salmon River. A viewpoint on this road offers a dramatic view of the Big Mallard Creek waterfalls across the canyon, approximately one mile away. The river reaches that include the waterfalls are within the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness and are fully protected as part of the wilderness resource. There are no system trails or roads that offer a vantage point to view the Noble Creek falls. The upper section of Noble Creek extends into small portions of the Mallard Idaho Roadless Area which has a backcountry restoration theme. Those segments in the Idaho Roadless Area would be available for vegetative treatments and other restorative actions.

From a management perspective, little would change with designation of the Big Mallard Creek and lower Noble Creek segments because their location in the FCRNR Wilderness affords significant protections through management of the wilderness resource. Likewise, given the restrictions on road construction and timber harvest in Idaho Roadless Areas, management actions in the upper reaches of Noble Creek, would have little to no effect on the eligible segments. Westslope cutthroat trout have been identified as a species of public concern and is a sensitive species in Forest Service Region 1. The importance of this resource is recognized and accounted for through Forest Plan components found in the FEIS 2.2.1 – Water and Aquatic Resources and 2.2.3 – Riparian management Zones. These Plan components provide protections for water

resources and fisheries. All FOREST PLAN components are designed to move the Forest toward the desired condition and guide management actions that restore ecological conditions.

Management of the Noble Creek and Big Mallard Creek drainages may better contribute to the conservation of our natural resources through management of these resources consistent with Land Management Plan direction and components. Management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the fish, scenic, and geology outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan, while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. There are no apparent or impending threats to these river values, and there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection through designation of these outstandingly remarkable values in these river segments, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals.

For these reasons, Noble Creek and Big Mallard Creek do not rise to a level that would best contribute to our national conservation purposes through permanent protection as a wild and scenic river, and therefore not suitable for designation as a wild and scenic river.

Red River

Red River is a tributary of the South Fork Clearwater River. The eligible segment is a 6.5-mile-long section in the upper half of the drainage. The identified outstandingly remarkable values include recreation, fish, and wildlife. Its preliminary classification is Recreational.

The recreation ORV is based on the readily available opportunity to observe salmon spawning in the Red River as compared to other rivers in the recreation region of comparison. While observing salmon spawning does occur, this is only one of many recreational activities in the Red River drainage, some directly associated with the river, others not. Camping, hunting, hiking, fishing, swimming, river lounging, driving for pleasure, viewing scenery and wildlife, gathering forest products, and enjoying the natural landscape are activities that bring recreationists into the Red River drainage. Developments in the corridor in support of recreation include the Red River Administrative Site, a recreational vehicle dump station; four sites on the Ditch Creek Campground; 40 sites on the Red River Campground; and the Chinook Viewing Interpretive site. This level of development is commensurate with the extensive recreational opportunities in and around the Red River corridor, beyond just that associated with observing spawning salmon. This level of use and infrastructure certainly supports the fact that Red River is an area that provides an abundance of recreation opportunities, some of which are river dependent.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Red River includes diversity, abundance, natural reproduction, and cultural and historical importance. The Red River supports substantial natural spawning and early rearing of native spring Chinook salmon. It also supports spawning and early rearing of native B-run steelhead trout and is designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. Fluvial and resident populations of westslope cutthroat trout are also present. The Nez Perce Tribe indicted that Red River is culturally important due to the presence and harvest of spring Chinook salmon and Lamprey. Forty-seven percent of the eligible rivers in the fish region of comparison were identified as having a fish outstandingly remarkable value. Most of these rivers include diversity, abundance, and natural reproduction as attributes supporting their eligibility. These fisheries resources have been and will continue to be protected through Land Management Plan direction, the EPA TMDL Plan, and other federal and state regulation. Other than the recreational aspect, there is little to suggest that the Red River fisheries

resource is unique or has a higher level of contribution to the fisheries resource of the South Fork Clearwater River than the other fish-eligible rivers in the region of comparison. Therefore, the fisheries resource does not support its suitability for inclusion in the National System.

Western Pearlshell mussels are present in the lower reaches of Red River. The Western Pearlshell mussel has declined across much its historical range. However, populations with good viability are known to occur in the Clearwater, Selway, Lochsa, and South Fork Clearwater rivers, as well as other rivers across the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Past management activities have occurred in these drainages that impacted river conditions, and these populations remained protected and persisted.

Another outstandingly remarkable value for the Red River is the population of Harlequin ducks. Harlequin ducks are known to inhabit the area of Red River from the confluence with Little Moose Creek downstream to the confluence with Loon Creek, in the Wildlife Management Area. This is below the eligible segment and includes private property. This river met criteria for inclusion as having a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value because it had two observations of Harlequin ducks. Given that there are several known populations of Harlequin duck in the wildlife region of comparison, and there is a known population downstream of the eligible segment there is no reason to believe that the eligible segment is critical to the persistence of the species in the drainage. Additionally, the fact that they are present along with the multitude of activities in the drainage suggests they are tolerant of such activities and associated disturbance. Therefore, there is no compelling reason to apply the permanent management dictated by designation of a Wild and Scenic river for the sake of Harlequin ducks.

Red River was heavily placer mined for gold in the 1930's and 1940's. The primary method of mining used a drag line and dozers to move material from the riverbed, and trommels and gravity separation for gold extraction. Tailings were piled and left as the processing sites were moved. Mining stopped during World War 2 and a resurgence in the 80's was stymied by the environmental movement as subsequent regulation slowed things down. The presence of Threatened and Endangered species and critical habitat are complicating factors in approving any mining application. Applications are received but are not being processed due to a lack of resources to complete the necessary environmental analyses. Wild and Scenic designation could impair our ability to reclaim and restore these historic mining areas.

Additionally, there are numerous recreation facilities, private property, multi-party roads, and timber harvest activity within the corridor that serve a variety of interests and resource values. Many of these activities and improvements are outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service and are expected to continue. These developments may have incremental impacts on water quality and, potentially, the fish and wildlife ORVs.

Red River is listed as impaired (Class 4A) for water temperature, physical substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation and is not supporting cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning beneficial uses. It is fully supporting primary contact recreation. It is included in the Environmental Protection Agency approved South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan. A Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plan is a water quality improvement strategy that includes the development of the Total Maximum Daily Load allocated to a stream. Recognition of the impaired condition and inclusion in the TMDL Plan gives additional focus on improvement of the river conditions that are affecting river values.

The segment is in the Land Management Plan, Management Area 3 suitable timber base. In this management area timber harvest is used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions. Commercial timber harvest also provides jobs and products that contribute to the economic stability for local communities. The segment has been managed for timber production and other objectives under the 1987 Forest Plan, and timber harvest has occurred along the segment. Over two dozen Forest Service, county, and private roads are within the corridor, including Dixie Road (Forest Road 222), Red River Road (Forest Road 234), and Forest Road 468, Lightfoot Road (Forest Road 9519). The Forest Service mapped rock sources in the corridor include Red River Quarry, Red River II, and Shissler Creek.

The Red River drainage is very much a multiple use area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Private property, with permanent and seasonal residents, lies above and below the eligible segment. Access in and around the eligible segment is multi-jurisdictional. Vegetation management has been and continues to be an important method to address ecological concerns such as addressing the wildfire crisis and meet Land Management Plan desired conditions. Campgrounds and other recreational facilities support an ever-increasing and diversifying recreating public. And placer mining activities continue in the drainage under permit from the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

These activities and improvements are historical and cultural and contribute to the social and economic stability of Elk City, other surrounding communities, and the Nez Perce. The social values associated with these facilities, roads, recreation opportunities, and management activities are being met while the river's ecological values have persisted in concert with these developments. Furthermore, Red River will be managed in compliance with the Land Management Plan components and direction, with particular benefit to the fish and wildlife ORVs from the aquatic and riparian components, as well as all applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Red River was identified in the Comprehensive State Water Plan for the South Fork Clearwater River Basin. It is designated a recreational river and may include some man-made development in the waterway or riparian area. The outstanding values recognized are recreational use, fish species of concern, salmonid spawning, and streamside montane meadows. The following activities are prohibited: alterations of the stream channel, except as allowed with specific provisions; construction of hydropower projects; construction of water diversion works; construction or expansion of dams or impoundments; dredge or placer mining; and mineral or sand and gravel extraction within the stream channel.

Management of the Red River under Land Management Plan direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the recreation, fish, and wildlife resources, as well as the Nez Perce Tribe values associated with these resources. This direction will serve to preserve these values during the life of the Plan while allowing for fuels reduction, mining reclamation and the other multiple uses that occur, and are expected to continue, in the corridor and resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions.

Given these considerations, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values through designation as a wild and scenic river. In fact, I believe designation would restrict future projects to address the wildfire crisis in a critical fireshed, mining reclamation to benefit salmon and steelhead and other management goals. Consequently, designation as a wild and scenic river would not be the best method for protecting the river corridor. Therefore, there is little compelling reason to apply

permanent protection through designation of the Red River as a Wild and Scenic River, and I do not find it suitable for designation as such.

Running Creek

The Running Creek eligible segment is 16.9 miles long from its headwaters to the forest boundary. Its eligibility is based on a Nez Perce Cultural outstandingly remarkable value. Its preliminary classifications are wild in the upper and lower sections and scenic in the middle section due to the presence of Forest Road 357 in a small section of the river corridor.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. The Tribal value of Running Creek is associated with traditional use of the hot springs that are present at the confluence of Warm Springs Creek and Running Creek. These hot springs are seasonally accessible from nearby Forest Road 357 and Trail 531. Forest Road 357 also provides access to Trail 533 which is a primary access trail into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. This access facilitates recreation and traditional use of the warm springs portion of Running Creek.

Running Creek's headwaters are within the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area which is recommended for wilderness designation in this decision. The headwaters lie mostly within the primitive themed area then pass through a forest plan special area before reentering the primitive themed area again. It then flows into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area and into the Bitterroot National Forest. The East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area includes the Warm Springs Creek Research Natural Area. The roadless area, including the research natural area, has been managed to protect the primitive theme of an Idaho Roadless Area and will be managed as recommended wilderness as a result of this decision. With the recommended wilderness status, the area will be managed to maintain wilderness characteristics. The Idaho Roadless Rule limits road construction or reconstruction and surface occupancy in primitive and special area themes that all but ensures that no management activity will occur that would adversely affect the warm springs and associated Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values.

No changes are anticipated to the land use within the wilderness area. Wilderness area designation withdraws the area from mineral entry and water developments in wilderness areas must be authorized by the President. Analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. Furthermore, dams would not be in alignment with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum on salmon and steelhead recovery.

The Warm Springs Creek Research Natural Area was established for the presence of two thermal springs and a diverse array of forest communities. Research natural areas are permanently established to maintain areas of natural ecosystems and areas of special ecological significance. The established research natural areas on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are permanently designated for the purpose of conserving biodiversity, conducting non-intrusive research, and monitoring, and fostering education. The designation of the Warm Springs Research Natural Area recognizes the importance and adds focus and protection to the area around the warm springs, which, in turn, brings added protection to the Nez Perce values of the area.

In addition, during development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife

Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicates that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable value of the river segment are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Designation would permanently protect the river values. However, management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and the outstandingly remarkable value and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed.

Given these considerations, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable value through designation as a wild and scenic river, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, designation as a wild and scenic river would not be the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find Running Creek suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

West Fork Crooked River

This segment of the Crooked River is 5.4 miles long, from the confluence with East Fork Crooked River to the headwaters. This section of the Crooked River supports a fish outstandingly remarkable value based on diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. The preliminary classification is Recreational.

Spawning and early rearing habitat for fluvial bull trout provides a large percentage of the spawning habitat available in the South Fork Clearwater subbasin for this species, as well as within the region of comparison. Eligible segments are designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout and Snake River steelhead trout. It is part of a major spawning area for steelhead trout, and a local bull trout population has been identified. A large westslope cutthroat trout population is present as well. This population has known high genetic integrity. This is the only ORV present in this river.

Most of the West Fork Crooked River corridor is within the West Fork Crooked River Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration theme and a short section of the northeast side, the first 0.75 miles from the confluence with East Fork Crooked River, is in the forest plan revision proposed Management Area 3. Developments in the corridor include the Orogrande Summit Campground at the headwaters, three sites and one group site at the Orogrande 1 and 2 Campground, a self-guided tour on the first mile of the West Fork Crooked River, the Columbia Ridge Motorized Trail (T 225), the maintenance level 3 Crooked River Road (Forest Road 233), and maintenance level 2 roads 311, 9848, and 9849. There are 25 mineral claims within the first mile from the confluence with the East Fork Crooked River.

The corridor on National Forest System lands suitable for timber production in the proposed Management Area 3 has been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan, though there is no record of timber harvest occurring within the corridor. Areas along the West Fork

Crooked River provide high quality summer habitat for big game, particularly for elk. The river corridor contains high quality habitat for Canada lynx near the headwaters and for fisher near the confluence with the East Fork Crooked River.

Crooked River and its floodplain have been significantly degraded by past land management activities, most importantly mining and road construction. These activities have substantially affected the sediment regimes (various physical processes that affect sediment) in many parts of the watershed, as well as instream, riparian and floodplain functions in the main stem of Crooked River. The area surrounding Crooked River was mined for mineral resources from the early 1900s through the 1950s. Mining waste (also referred to as mine tailings) is concentrated in the valley bottom, altering the physical condition of the stream system, restricting the natural migration pattern of the stream and other changes in channel morphology (channel size, form, and function), and impairing the recolonization of riparian vegetation and its function as a natural buffer.

As a result of these past impacts and resulting current condition, the West Fork Crooked River is listed by the state of Idaho as impaired (Class 4A) for water temperature, physical substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation and is not supporting cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning beneficial uses. It is included in the Environmental Protection Agency approved South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan. The State's recognition of the values, impaired condition, and inclusion in the TMDL Plan demonstrates a level of commitment and responsibility to preserve and improve these river values. Recognition of the impaired condition and inclusion in the TMDL Plan gives additional focus on improvement of the river conditions that are affecting river values.

The Crooked River Valley Restoration project completed reconstruction of 2.0 valley-bottom miles of Crooked River. Restoration of this portion of the valley bottom and stream channel will provide habitat for ESA-listed fish, however, the river upstream of this project remains degraded by past land management activities.

Although the West Fork Crooked River provides a large percentage of the spawning habitat available in the South Fork Clearwater subbasin for bull trout and steelhead trout, it is one of many tributaries that provide similar contributions of diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Fire suppression, mining, road construction, and timber harvest have caused a shift in many of the natural hydrologic and geomorphic processes in the watershed. Therefore, it is included in the South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan. The river segment continues to be an area with active mining operations. Additionally, the area provides habitat for elk, Canada lynx and fisher that could benefit from management practices that may be precluded if designated as a Wild and Scenic River.

The abundance of similar fisheries in the South Fork Clearwater River, the degraded conditions of this river segment from past practices, the continuation of mining activities, and the reasonably foreseeable potential restoration activities to improve wildlife habitat, suggests the West Fork Crooked River would not provide a significant contribution to national conservation purposes, or represent a river that warrants the special emphasis and permanent protection through designation as a Wild and Scenic River. Additionally, the protections afforded through Land Management Plan components and the added protections through the TMDL Plan, the West Fork Crooked River is expected to continue to contribute to the fisheries resource of the South Fork Clearwater while contributing to other Land Management Plan desired conditions through active management in and near the river corridor.

In addition, during development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of the river segment is important and warrants special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement needed ecological restoration activities over a greater landscape than the river segment found eligible.

Designation would permanently protect a singular ORV. However, management under Land Management Plan components and direction will also serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and the fisheries outstandingly remarkable value and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for fuels reduction in communities at risk, improved ingress/egress for forest users, additional aquatic restoration in the drainage, and resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed.

Given these considerations, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable value, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, designation as a wild and scenic river would not be the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find the West Fork Crooked River suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Allison Creek

Allison Creek is an 8.4-mile tributary to the Salmon River. Its eligibility is based on Nez Perce cultural and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values. Preliminary classifications are scenic for the upper portion from the headwaters to Forest Road 221, and recreational for the lower portion from Forest Road 221 to the Salmon River.

The Nez Perce Tribe identified Allison Creek as having historic and cultural significance. The wildlife ORV is based on the presence of the Selway forestsnail and the Boulder Pile Mountainsnail. Both species are Idaho endemic species with a global range that is only known to occur in isolated colonies on various rivers, including the lower Salmon River, and its tributaries.

Allison Creek's free flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values should be protected. However, not necessarily through permanent designation as a wild and scenic river. In addition to the outstandingly remarkable values, other uses, current conditions, and previous development within the river corridor should be considered as well.

The majority of Allison Creek is within the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. However, the headwaters run for about 1.5 miles through the John Day Idaho Roadless Area, with a backcountry/restoration theme. Forest Road 221 runs alongside the creek for the first 5.5 miles and other roads within the corridor include Forest Road 263 (maintenance level 3), Forest Road

441 (maintenance level 3), Forest Road 221G (maintenance level 2), and Forest Road 2081 (maintenance level 1). Developments in the corridor include the Allison Creek Picnic Area. Allison creek is also within the Allison-Berg allotment area. There is mixed ownership with both National Forest System lands and private lands in the lower section.

The segment on National Forest System lands, is within Land Management Plan Management Area 3. This is an allocation that is suitable for timber production and has been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan. In Management Area 3, timber harvests are one management tool used to reduce fuels in critical firesheds and move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions.

There is an expectation that the area around Allison Creek will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions in Management Area 3 through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns. There is an expectation that grazing will continue in the Allison-Berg allotment. These management activities provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. The road system and recreation facilities are widely used and are expected to stay in place.

Allison Creek offers opportunity for cultural and traditional practices for the Nez Perce and other regional Tribes similar to other traditional use sites along the Salmon River. There is nothing to suggest that Allison Creek is of greater significance than these other traditional sites, or other use sites across the Forest. Nothing indicates that it has unique or rare characteristics, use for rare sacred purposes, or represents the origin or conflict of cultures. Additionally, the impacts from the roads, the day use site, river put-in, and campgrounds have reduced the integrity of the area. At the same time these developments allow for, and in some cases aid, traditional practices as well as general access and recreation.

The wildlife outstandingly remarkable values are not unique to Allison Creek. They are known to occur on other streams on both the Salmon and Clearwater rivers. The Selway forestsnail is known at numerous sites on the Forest, some already protected by wild and scenic designations. The Boulder Pile Mountainsnail has about 20 known populations with most observations outside of the plan area in the lower Salmon River Canyon. These species have persisted in and around Allison Creek while management activities, facilities, and recreation and traditional use have occurred in the Allison Creek and Salmon River drainages. Like many rivers and streams on the Nez Perce-Clearwater, Allison Creek provides habitat for steelhead trout, bull trout, Chinook salmon, and pacific lamprey. While these were not identified as outstandingly remarkable values in Allison Creek, their presence and contribution to the natural resources, recreation, and traditional uses of the Nez Perce-Clearwater is an important piece of the Land Management Plan desired conditions, and their preservation is a goal of the Plan. Land Management Plan components are in place to support their continued presence on the Forest.

Protections determined through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of the two endemic species of snail and the traditional practices of the Nez Perce people. Traditional practices of the Nez Perce Tribe are already protected through the Treaties of 1855 and 1863 as well as the plan components in the Tribal Trust section. Prioritizing management for the two snails could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities in the corridor and, potentially, over a much greater landscape than the river segment found eligible. Allison Creek drainage is suitable timber management ground and important winter habitat for big game, particularly elk and within the wildfire crisis strategy landscape. Management activities to improve forest health, enhance

wildlife and fish habitat, and achieve desired future conditions could be precluded with designation.

Management of the Allison Creek drainage, including the habitat that supports the outstandingly remarkable values, may better contribute to the conservation of our natural resources through management of these resources consistent with Land Management Plan direction and components. Management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the Nez Perce cultural, fish, and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan, while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. There are no apparent or impending threats to these river values, and there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection through designation of these outstandingly remarkable values in Allison Creek. For these reasons, Allison Creek does not rise to a level that would best contribute to our national conservation purposes through permanent protection as a wild and scenic river, and therefore is not suitable for designation as a wild and scenic river.

Bargamin Creek and Sabe Creek

The Bargamin Creek and Sabe Creek eligible segments combine for a total of 40.9 miles. The eligible segments begin in their headwaters and end at their confluence with the Salmon River. Their eligibility is based on fish and, in Bargamin Creek, scenic outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is wild for Sabe Creek, wild for the upper and lower sections of Bargamin Creek, and scenic for a short section of Bargamin Creek from Hot Springs Creek to the wilderness boundary due to the presence of Forest Road 468.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Bargamin and Sabe Creeks includes diversity and abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Eligible segments in both creeks support high species diversity, including spring/summer Chinook salmon, steelhead trout, bull trout, and westslope cutthroat trout. Population numbers are among the highest within the region of comparison. Eligible segments are included as designated critical habitat for Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead trout, and Columbia River bull trout.

Bargamin Creek was originally not identified as having a scenic outstandingly remarkable value but was later added based on public input. A history of fires in the river corridor have maintained a diversity of vegetation throughout the U-shaped valley of the corridor. The stream drops approximately 3,500 feet from its headwaters to the Salmon River, creating rocky drops. The steepness of the creek and the open vegetation allow for distant views. While the views are expansive, they are not significantly different or outstanding from many other vistas from the high mountains of the Nez Perce-Clearwater or the region of comparison.

The headwaters of the Bargamin Creek segment are within the East Meadow Creek Idaho Roadless Area (primitive theme area). Bargamin Creek from the mouth to Poet Creek is in the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area. The Nez Perce Trail Road (Forest Road 468) crosses Bargamin Creek in this area and other developments found in the corridor near Poet Creek include the access road at Poet Creek Campground and the Bargamin Creek Motorized Trail (T 502).

Sabe Creek’s western side is on the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests and the eastern side is on the Bitterroot National Forest within the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness Area.

Near the headwaters of Sabe Creek, the Nez Perce Trail Road (Forest Road 468) runs through a small section of the corridor.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring/summer Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species.

Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species. Specific to these eligible segments, all Sabe Creek, and approximately 62 percent of Bargamin Creek are already protected in the Frank Church- River of No Return Wilderness.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. Consideration was also given to the fact that Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, riparian habitats, and wilderness, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, thereby supporting and preserving the fish outstandingly remarkable values.

Designation would provide permanent protection of the fish and scenic outstandingly remarkable values. However, these values are already afforded ample protection due to their locations in wilderness and Management Area 2, where there is little to no threat of impacts that would adversely affect these river values. No additional meaningful protections are expected with designation. Additionally, these values are not significantly higher or unique as compared to other river segments in the region of comparison.

Given these considerations, there is no apparent benefit or compelling reason that warrants these river segments to be determined suitable for designation, and Bargamin Creek and Sabe Creek do not rise to a level that would best contribute to our national conservation purposes through permanent protection as a wild and scenic river. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a wild and scenic river.

Johns Creek, Gospel Creek, and West Fork Gospel Creek

Johns Creek, 18.26 miles, is a tributary of the South Fork Clearwater River and, along with its tributaries Gospel Creek, 6.96 miles, and West Fork Gospel Creek, 5.61 miles, totals 30.83 miles determined eligible. Their eligibility is based on scenic and fish outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is wild.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Johns Creek includes diversity, abundance, habitat quality, and natural reproduction. Johns Creek supports significant spawning and early rearing of wild B-run steelhead trout within the lower South Fork Clearwater subbasin and the region of comparison. Eligible segments are included as designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead and Columbia River bull trout. Segments are included as a minor spawning area for steelhead, and a local population of bull trout has been identified. Headwater tributaries in the higher elevation portions of Johns Creek are included in the modeled 2040 climate shield for bull and westslope cutthroat trout with moderate probability. Habitat in eligible segments supports spawning and early rearing for spring Chinook salmon. Fluvial and resident populations of westslope cutthroat trout are present in eligible segments. There are no known non-native aquatic species present in Johns Creek.

While these designations demonstrate high fisheries values, they are among many rivers across the Forest with these same designations. There is nothing to indicate that the fisheries resources of these river segments are unique or outstanding as compared to the other eligible river segments with these same designations. And, given the abundance of such rivers on the Forest it does not seem necessary or appropriate to designate a river based on just these designations. Additionally, these rivers are included in the Conservation Watershed Network where management emphasis is on habitat conservation and restoration to support native fish and other aquatic species. Also, given the headwaters location in the Gospel Hump Wilderness, these river values are well protected.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions. Twenty-five percent is in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these species; however, the AQUATIC AND RIPARIAN plan components will ensure that conditions are not degraded in project areas.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan, except by severe wildfire. The remaining areas are in Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that this area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. Consideration was also given to the fact that Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, riparian habitats, and wilderness, as well as

standard design criteria and mitigations will protect the free flow and water quality of these rivers, thereby supporting and preserving the fish outstandingly remarkable values.

The headwaters of the Johns Creek, Gospel Creek and West Fork Gospel Creek segments are within the Gospel-Hump Wilderness. The scenic outstandingly remarkable value for Johns Creek is a deeply incised, rugged canyon that provides distant views. The headwaters of Gospel Creek and West Fork Gospel Creek have high cirque lakes and dramatic cliffs within the Gospel Hump Wilderness Area. Their location within the Gospel Hump Wilderness contributes to the opportunity for solitude, apparent naturalness, and a primitive, unconfined recreation setting. There are no potential uses of these rivers that would impact this ORV. The scenic values would not gain additional protection beyond those provided through management of the Gospel Hump Wilderness.

The scenic cirque basins support the scenic ORV. However, scenic values are common to the headwaters of other rivers located in the Gospel Hump Wilderness, as well as the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness and other high-country areas in the region of comparison. There is nothing that demonstrates this viewshed and its scenic character are exceptional as compared to the other dramatic views present in the region of comparison.

The region of comparison for eligibility for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. For the Scenic ORV, the distinctive attributes are directly tied to water features and the geologic, hydrologic, and vegetative features of the steep river canyons that comprise much of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However, most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where our visitors come from, and where else those publics might go and enjoy dramatic scenery as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

It is a small elite set of recreating visitors that enjoy the type of recreation experience that would lead them to venture high into the Gospel Hump Wilderness, thereby enjoying the distinctive geologic features, high cirque basins and vistas of the river canyons falling below. These wilderness adventurers have several wilderness areas in the recreation region of comparison that offer similar wilderness experiences of challenge, solitude, high-country adventure, and dramatic scenery. The eligible river segments offer spectacular scenery that is certainly equal to other areas of scenic splendor in the region of comparison. But, in this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of “distinctive scenic features” and “distinctive river canyons” encompass many similar river segments in this region of comparison.

The east side of Johns Creek from the mouth to Gospel Creek is in the Land Management Plan Management Area 2. The west side of Johns Creek is in the proposed Management Area 3, which would be suitable for timber production. The only existing developments are non-motorized trails and State Highway 14 at the mouth of Johns Creek. Under this Plan, land allocation through the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum would allow for a motorized trail in the lower reach of Johns Creek.

In making the suitability determination, I considered the relative value, quality, and uniqueness of the ORVs as compared to other eligible rivers, and whether these three river segments best represent the qualities of a Wild and Scenic River. I considered the risks to these ORVs and the protections in place to ensure their preservation. I considered management goals and

opportunities in the area to move the Forest toward the desired conditions, and whether designation would complement the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan, and how designation might affect the ability to implement other management actions to meet those goals. This area is within critical firesheds, and fuels management is critical to addressing the wildfire crisis.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. This collaborative relationship demonstrates the commitment of the Nez Perce-Clearwater and fisheries-management agencies to protect these river values. This collaborative approach is expected to continue through the life of the Land Management Plan.

These rivers are not at risk of impacts from hydro-electric development or any other known industrial development. Past vegetative management activities including prescribed fire and timber harvest have occurred in these drainages and is expected to continue in both Management Area 2 and 3. Under the Idaho Roadless Rule, vegetative treatment in Management Area 2 is expected to be very limited to prescribed fire in this area and would pose little to no risk to the river values. There is interest in a motorized trail crossing the lower reaches of Johns Creek that would go through MA2 and MA 3 lands. This trail segment is a part of an envisioned 240-mile motorized route from Elk City to Avery, Idaho. This would contribute to the Plan's desired condition of supporting the social and economic health of surrounding communities. There are no anticipated threats to the scenic ORV as this is based on the scenic character of the headwaters in the Gospel Hump Wilderness. Wilderness management will preserve these values.

The river's free-flowing condition, water quality, and fisheries outstandingly remarkable values are important resources and are given substantial consideration in the Land Management Plan's desired conditions and goals. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to improve and protect the free flow, water quality and fisheries values of these rivers. Likewise, the scenic outstandingly remarkable value is well protected through Plan components to ensure management activities preserve and protect wilderness character.

Designation as a Wild and Scenic River would protect the river values. However, in these eligible river segments, other critical needs and opportunities to move the Forest toward natural range of variability and other ecological conditions, address the wildfire crisis through vegetative treatments, primarily in Management Area 3, and provide motorized recreational opportunities would better contribute to conservation purposes and Land Management Plan desired conditions, rather than applying special emphasis and permanent restrictions through designation as a Wild and Scenic River. Such designation could unnecessarily limit these management activities as the river values are well protected through Plan components. Therefore, designation as a Wild and Scenic River would not be the best way to protect the river corridor and contribute to the mosaic of resources and opportunities encompassed in the Land Management Plan, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Meadow Creek (South Fork Clearwater River)

The Meadow Creek segment is 14.7 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with the South Fork Clearwater River. Eligibility is based on its Nez Perce Tribe cultural outstandingly remarkable value. Preliminary classification is recreational.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified this segment as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. The traditional use and significance are associated with the presence and harvest of spring Chinook salmon.

The segment is within Land Management Plan Management Area 3 suitable timber base. The corridor on National Forest System lands suitable for timber production in the proposed Management Area 3 has been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan, and timber harvest has occurred along the eligible segment.

Developments within the corridor include the three sites on the Meadow Creek Campground and the Swan Creek Trailhead. Also, maintenance level 3 roads Forest Road 244, Forest Road 484, Forest Road 648, Forest Road 1852, Forest Road 1851, and Forest Road 1105 and maintenance level 2 roads Forest Road 451 and Forest Road 1857 are within the corridor. Motorized trails, including the Swan Creek Trail and Yew Ridge, are also within the corridor. These trails allow for all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle use.

There are several Forest Service rock pit sites in the corridor, including Rock Creek, Storm Creek I, Meadow Creek, Meadow Rock, Storm Creek, and Orchard Creek. Meadow Creek is also within the Earthquake and Meadow-Lighting grazing allotments.

Meadow Creek is listed as impaired (Class 4A) for water temperature, physical substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation and is not supporting cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning beneficial uses. It is fully supporting secondary contact recreation. It is included in the Environmental Protection Agency approved South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan.

Natural range of variation analysis indicates that both riparian and upland forest cover types in and around the South Fork Clearwater River are departed from historical conditions. Species composition, size class distribution, density and structure are all departed from historical averages. This landscape scale departure is the result of many different factors interacting over time. Previous timber harvesting and stand culturing practices, fire suppression, infrastructure development, and land use allocation decisions have had compounding effects on the landscape and represent a major departure from the natural disturbance regime. The South Fork Clearwater River drainage has been identified as a priority fireshed due to vegetation departure and proximity to private ownerships and infrastructure. Landscape scale restoration is needed to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions derived from the NRV analysis. Given that Meadow Creek is well roaded, timber harvest and other mechanical treatments can be expected to continue to move the area towards desired vegetative conditions. However, the use of prescribed fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns and can be expected to play a larger role.

There are several developments, improvements, and management activities within and around the eligible segment. While these activities and improvements have had compounding effects on the landscape they contribute to the social and economic stability of surrounding communities, as well as the Nez Perce Tribe. The social values associated with these facilities, roads, recreation

opportunities, and management activities are being met while the river's ecological values have persisted in concert with these developments. There is an expectation that Meadow Creek will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions in Management Area 3 through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, and that these management activities will provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. Meadow Creek will be managed in compliance with the South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan, the Land Management Plan components and direction, as well as all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, with particular benefit to the aquatic and riparian components. This is turn will contribute to the recreational and cultural use of the area and will preserve traditional use and practices of the Nez Perce Tribe.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The free-flowing character, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values of these river segments are important and warrant special consideration in the management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. However permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement needed ecological restoration activities over a greater landscape than the river segments found eligible.

While designation would permanently protect the river values, I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Mill Creek

The eligible segment of Mill Creek is 0.9 miles from the confluence with Canyon Creek to the confluence with the South Fork Clearwater River. The only outstandingly remarkable value is wildlife based on the presence of the Selway forestsnail. Preliminary classification is recreational.

The Selway forestsnail is an Idaho endemic that occurs in Idaho County, mostly in isolated colonies along the lower Lochsa River, and the Selway River, but also along the South Fork Clearwater River, and the lower Salmon River, including their tributaries. Some of the species' known sites occur within the Designated Wild and Scenic River areas along the Lochsa, Selway and Middle Fork of the Clearwater rivers. About 13 sites are known. More are likely as the species is probably under surveyed. Identified threats are grazing, rock quarrying, road work,

logging, and fire. However, the impact of these threats is unknown on this species. The species was found near O'hara Creek, Meadow Creek, Lowell Creek, Rye Patch Creek, Glade Creek, Canyon Creek, South Fork Clearwater River, Slate Creek, and Allison Creek.

The Mill Creek corridor is within Land Management Plan, Management Area 3 and is suitable for timber production. It has been managed for elk habitat under the 1987 Forest Plan and timber harvest has occurred along the segment. The segment is also in the Hungry Ridge Cattle Allotment and there is a corral and loading facility within the stream corridor. Roads in the corridor include Forest Road 309 (maintenance level 3), Forest Road 279N (maintenance level 1), and Forest Road 309O (maintenance level 1). Forest Service Road 309 parallels the eligible segment within the stream corridor. The presence of the roads, operations under the cattle allotment, and vegetative treatments to meet desired conditions in this area are expected to continue under the direction of the Land Management Plan.

Mill Creek waters are considered impaired and are part of the South Fork Clearwater River TMDL. This brings added focus and emphasis on improving watershed conditions while taking other management actions, including timber harvest, to address ecological conditions and move toward desired conditions. This attention to aquatic and riparian conditions would certainly benefit the Selway forestsnail.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

I considered that the Selway forestsnail is well represented on the Forest and is already protected in much of its known habitat in designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. I considered that there is little known about species distribution, data is biased by accessibility, and the species is probably under surveyed. It's likely that other river segments located in areas with less human access and visitation would also be found to contain populations of this species. I considered that the area around Mill Creek is Management Area 3 with an emphasis on vegetative treatments to move the Forest toward desired conditions and contribute to the social and economic well-being of local communities. I also considered that designation would permanently protect the river values, however, Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to improve and protect the free flow and water quality of Mill Creek, and the riparian habitat that supports the Selway forestsnail. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and Mill Creek does not rise to the level of significance, value, or uniqueness to warrant consideration as a Wild and Scenic River. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Yeva Agai Neokwaide and Papoose Creek

These two eligible river segments total 1.28 miles and are eligible based on a wildlife outstandingly remarkable value due to the presence of the pristine pyrg in Papoose Creek and the boulder pile mountainsnail in the Yeva Agai Naokwaide. The preliminary classifications are wild for the Yeva Agai Naokwaide, and recreational for the Papoose Creek segment.

The Pristine Pyrg occurs in Washington, Oregon, California, and Idaho, but is known only from scattered locations. In Idaho, the species has been recorded in Shoshone, Clearwater, Idaho, Adams, and Valley counties, with populations occurring in portions of the lower Snake and lower Salmon River drainages. The Boulder Pile Mountainsnail is known from the Salmon River between Hells Gate Creek and Allison Creek with about 20 known populations spread along the stretch of river.

Generally, little is known about the presence, distribution, and abundance of the wildlife species that support the wildlife outstandingly remarkable value. For many species there has been little survey effort and there is a lack of expertise among the scientific community at large. Additionally, there is an important limitation in the datasets used to identify presence of these wildlife species. The datasets are biased because there tends to be more observations distributed along roadways or where many people frequent. Particularly for snail and mussel species, their distribution could be well underrepresented in the data.

The Yeva Agai Naokwaide eligible segment is within Management Area 2, the Salmon Face Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration theme, and within the active Papoose cattle allotment. Papoose Creek is within Management Area 3.

The area surrounding Papoose Creek is within the suitable timber base and timber harvests are one management tool used to move forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions, and where timber harvest provides products that contribute to economic stability for local communities. Timber harvest may be curtailed if the segment is designated as a wild and scenic river.

Papoose Creek also flows through Idaho Roadless Rule lands with themes that allow timber harvest for ecological restoration and other purposes. If Papoose Creek is found to be suitable, restoration activities could be curtailed or restricted within the recreational segments of the river.

Also, within Idaho Roadless Areas that allow timber harvest, Yeva Agai Naokwaide would be designated wild if found suitable. Timber harvest is not used extensively in this area. However, if this segment is found suitable, timber harvest could be foreclosed as an option for forest vegetation restoration.

Areas along the section of Papoose Creek provide winter habitat for big game, particularly for elk. Changes in vegetation succession have been cited as a factor contributing to declining elk populations. Restrictions on some types of vegetation management may impede the ability to manage winter habitat to benefit big game species or manage fuels by reducing the number of tools available to manage forest vegetation succession.

The aquatic and riparian plan components in the revised land management plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the listed wildlife ORV species and their habitat.

I considered that these wildlife values are important and deserve to be preserved. Designation would protect them in these specific locations; however, their distribution and abundance are uncertain and, therefore may not be warranted. I believe other management needs and opportunities in this area would best move the Forest toward desired conditions while providing appropriate protections for the outstandingly remarkable values through Land Management Plan components.

I considered that there is little to no threat of dam construction in this area. There is low confidence in the data supporting the presence, distribution, and abundance of the listed species. In this area there are other management goals that would better provide ecological, social, and economic benefits to the American people than WSR designation. There is a plethora of Land Management Plan components to protect aquatic and riparian values that would directly benefit these species if present and allow for other management actions that otherwise might be precluded.

Therefore, I do not believe any river determined eligible based solely on the presence of a listed wildlife species can support any determination of uniqueness, greater value, or significance in the region of comparison to support designation as a wild and scenic river. I believe management under this direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the wildlife outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan. I see no need or benefit to the wildlife outstandingly remarkable values beyond those provided under the Land Management Plan. The mere presence of these wildlife ORVs does not warrant designation of Papoose Creek or Yeva Agai Naokwaide as wild and scenic.

Salmon River

The eligible segment of the Salmon River is 23.2 miles long from Long Tom Creek Bar, at the terminus of the designated Salmon River Wild and Scenic River, downstream to the National Forest boundary, just past Little Berg Creek. Its eligibility is based on scenic, recreation, and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is recreational.

In 1973 the Forest Service concluded an analysis of the Salmon River from the town of North Fork, Idaho to the confluence with the Snake River. As a result of that analysis, a recommendation was sent to Congress to include this 237-mile segment in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. The study recommended that the segment from North Fork to Corn Creek be designated as Recreational; the segment from Corn Creek to Long Tom Bar as Wild; the segment from Long Tom Bar to Hammer Creek as Recreational; and the segment from Hammer Creek to the Snake River as Scenic. Under the proposal, the upstream area from North Fork, Idaho to the Nez Perce National Forest boundary, 148 miles, would be administered by the Forest Service. The downstream area, 89 miles, would be administered by the Bureau of Land Management. State-owned land would be administered by the State.

In 1980, the Central Idaho Wilderness Act designated 125 miles of the Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. In the final Conference Report for the Act, Congress directed the Secretary of the Interior to manage the 112-mile segment from Long Tom Bar to the confluence with the Snake River to protect the river's ORVs until such time as Congress acts on designation of the Segment.

Subsequent State and Bureau of Land Management decisions prohibited mineral entry and mining, and in 1988 Congress passed Public Law 100-677 which prohibited permitting, licensing, or exemption from licensing for any dam, diversion, or bypass on the Salmon River from Long Tom Bar to the confluence of the Snake River, and on the Snake River below the confluence with the Salmon.

In 2008 The Bureau of Land Management completed its Resource Management Plan for the Cottonwood area. The Plan affirmed the suitability of this river segment for inclusion in the National System and directed the BLM to manage the Lower Salmon from Long Tom Bar to the confluence of the Snake River under Wild and Scenic River guidelines as directed by Congress in 1980.

Consistent with Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, Chapter 80, 83.11, river segments previously found suitable through earlier study but not yet congressionally designated do not need to be reevaluated unless changed circumstances warrant consideration of a change in river status. Upon review as documented in the FEIS Appendix F, there are no changed conditions in this river segment that would warrant further consideration. Given that there are no changed conditions, BLM affirmation of suitability, and congressional direction to manage the lower Salmon under Wild and Scenic guidelines, this segment of the lower Salmon River will retain its status as suitable for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

South Fork and North Fork White Bird Creek

The South Fork and North Fork White Bird Creek eligible segments include 12.4 miles of the South Fork and 5.6 miles of the North Fork. The eligibility is based on Nez Perce cultural and fish outstandingly remarkable values. The preliminary classification is recreational.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified North Fork White Bird Creek and South Fork White Bird Creek as segments having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. The Tribe indicated that White Bird Creek is a traditional use site. However, their traditional use area appears to be below the confluence of the North Fork and South Fork White Bird Creek, off National Forest Service system lands.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value is based on species abundance and diversity and natural reproduction. South Fork White Bird and North Fork White Bird Creeks support very high densities of juvenile steelhead trout within the region of comparison. Eligible segments are included as designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead trout and Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon. They are also included as a minor spawning area for both species. The higher elevation eligible segments in North Fork White Bird Creek support a known indigenous population of interior redband trout.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management

Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values; however, the plan components ensure no net degradation of fish habitat.

One hundred and eighty-nine streams, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce Clearwater, were identified as critical habitat for steelhead trout. While this designation indicates a stream's special value, it does not indicate that this value is unique or significantly more important than other critical habitat in the regions of comparison to automatically warrant designation. Forty percent of these streams identified as critical habitat are already protected by their location in Management Area 1 – wilderness or designated wild and scenic rivers. Another 23 percent are in Management Area 2 where there is little likelihood of management actions that would adversely impact the habitat or species.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values in these streams contribute to the health and productivity of the Salmon River, and they deserve ample consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan and will serve to maintain and improve the fisheries values.

Developments in the North Fork corridor include the Bentz Ridge Motorized Trail (TR 340), three private roads, and Forest Road 479B (maintenance level 1). The segment is within the White Bird Creek and Peter Ready allotments. Developments in the South Fork corridor include Milner Motorized Trail (TR 641) and Pinnacle Ridge Motorized Trail (TR 325). Over 20 roads intersect the corridor and roads that cross the creek include Forest Road 221 (maintenance level 5), Forest Road 342 (maintenance level 3), and Forest Road 2009 (maintenance level 3).

These eligible river segments are in Management Area 3 where vegetative treatments and grazing have and are expected to continue to move the Forest toward desired conditions for ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Areas along the lowest section of South Fork Whitebird Creek provide winter habitat for big game, particularly for elk. Changes in vegetation succession have been cited as a factor contributing to declining elk populations. Restrictions on some types of non-fire vegetation management may impede the ability to manage winter habitat to benefit big game species or manage fuels by reducing the number of tools available to manage forest vegetation succession. Management activities to improve forest health, achieve Land Management Plan desired conditions, and enhance wildlife habitat could be precluded with designation.

I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Additionally, there is nothing to indicate that the ORVs are unique, of superior quality, or possess characteristics that would best contribute to vital national conservation purposes through designation as a wild and scenic river. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe

designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Silver Creek

The Silver Creek eligible segment is 12.2 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with the South Fork Clearwater River. Its eligibility is based on the Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable value. Its preliminary classifications are scenic along the upper segment, wild in the middle portion, and recreational on the lower segment.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified Silver Creek as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe by virtue of its location within the Pilot Knob geographic area. Pilot Knob has a significant historic meaning with respect to Nez Perce religious values and is a sacred site where spiritual practices continue today.

The lower portion of Silver Creek is within the Land Management Plan Management Area 3, suitable timber base. The segments suitable for timber production in Management Area 3 have been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan and timber harvest has occurred along a portion of the segment.

Most of Silver Creek is within Management Area 2, the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob Idaho Roadless Area, with a Special Area of Historic and Tribal Significance theme. This theme is one of the most restrictive in terms of permitted and prohibited activities regarding road construction, timber harvest, and discretionary minerals activities. In recognition of its significance to the Nez Perce, the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob roadless area is also identified as a geographic area in the Land Management Plan. Plan components are in place to ensure Tribal members can engage in traditional spiritual and environmental connection in an undisturbed, quiet setting.

The Elk City Wagon Road (Forest Road 284) and the Silver Ridge Motorized Trail (T 424) are in the headwaters area of Silver Creek for about a half mile. In Management Area 3, several maintenance level 1 roads also provide administrative access to the area, including Forest Road 648, Forest Road 1866, Forest Road 1867, and Forest Road 9421. Silver Creek flows within the active Corral Hill and Meadow-Lighting cattle allotments.

Silver Creek has suffered some impacts from past management activities and is listed as impaired (Class 4A) for water temperature, physical substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation and is not supporting cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning beneficial uses.

Areas along the river provides both summer and winter habitat for big game, particularly for elk. Changes in vegetation succession have been cited as a factor contributing to declining elk populations. This area also has high potential to produce high quality forage for big game when treated. Opportunities to enhance foraging habitat for elk may be affected along these rivers if they are included in the national system.

The corridors provide habitat for mountain quail, the Lewis’s woodpecker, and the white-headed woodpecker. Habitats for some of these species were maintained by frequent fires. Because of fire suppression, these habitats may require active management to restore or maintain into the future. Methods available to restore or maintain these habitats may be restricted through mechanical vegetation manipulation versus prescribed fire, depending on measures required to protect outstandingly remarkable values. Other species are present that benefit from the existing

conditions within the corridor. However, maintaining these conditions could also require management activities that may be limited or prohibited if designated.

I considered that the Pilot Knob geographic area is an important cultural and sacred place for the Nez Perce and does have greater significance than other sites across the region of comparison. I considered that the area, including Silver Creek, has been impacted by past management practices that affects the quality of the area for traditional spiritual purposes. But I recognize that much of this impact is in other portions of the geographic area, not in the river corridor. I also recognize that with limited roads and trails in the core of the area, the area still provides ample opportunity for quiet, undisturbed cultural and spiritual practices.

I considered that the area offers opportunity to address ecological conditions using managed fire in MA2, and timber harvest in MA3 to improve wildlife habitat and move the area towards Land Management Plan desired conditions and goals. I considered that the Silver Creek-Pilot Knob Idaho Roadless Area is highly restricted and highly unlikely to have management activities that would denigrate the area's outstandingly remarkable value. I considered that the Nez Perce values of the area are highlighted and protected through designation as a geographic area with Land Management Plan components specific to the area to ensure continuation of traditional practices. I considered the need to co-steward the area with the Nez Perce Tribe, using traditional ecological knowledge, rather than restrictive interim protection measures of suitable WSR. Designation may not protect the Nez Perce cultural values of the river since it could limit management activities to improve other important resource values that directly or indirectly benefit Nez Perce values of the area such as aquatic restoration. I am convinced that the Forest and Nez Perce Tribe are committed to co-stewardship of this and other areas that will serve to protect these river values, and that designation would bring little additional protection and potentially hamper these efforts.

I believe management under Land Management Plan components and direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the free-flowing conditions, water quality and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable value, and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Consequently, I do not believe designation is the best method for protecting the river corridor, and I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Slate Creek

The eligible segment of Slate Creek is 11.4 miles long from the Gospel Hump Wilderness boundary to the forest boundary. Its eligibility is based on fish, wildlife, and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for Slate Creek includes diversity and abundance, natural reproduction, and cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. Slate Creek supports spawning and early rearing habitat for spring/summer Chinook salmon and steelhead trout, and both species are present in eligible river segments. The segment is also included as designated critical habitat for Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead trout, and Columbia River bull trout. This creek is identified as a minor spawning area for salmon and steelhead, and a local bull trout population has been identified.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values.

Critical habitat for these species has been identified on 189 river segments totaling 1421 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Thirty-three percent of these segments are protected in designated wilderness or designated wild and scenic rivers. Forty-two percent are in Management Area 2 where there is little likelihood of impact from management activities. Twenty-five percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could potentially affect these species however the plan components ensure no net degradation of fisheries habitat.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Salmon River. As such, they deserve appropriate consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to develop plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This, in turn would serve to preserve fisheries and other aquatic organisms.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the fish ORV species and their habitat. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values.

The wildlife outstandingly remarkable value is based on the presence of the marbled disc and Selway forestsnail. The marbled disc is an Idaho endemic, in which the entire global range is found only in the lower Salmon River drainage clustered closely in western Idaho County. Slate creek was the only creek identified as an eligible river with a wildlife ORV because of this species.

The Selway forestsnail is an Idaho endemic that occurs in Idaho County, mostly in isolated colonies along the lower Lochsa River, the Selway River, the South Fork Clearwater River, and the lower Salmon River including their tributaries (IDFG 2017, Idaho Species Diversity Database accessed July 2021). Some of the species' known sites already occur within the designated wild and scenic rivers along the Lochsa, Selway and Middle Fork of the Clearwater rivers. Occurrences of this species in the lower Salmon River are disjunct from the rest of the species' range.

These wildlife values are important and deserve to be preserved. Designation would protect them in these specific locations; However, I considered that there is low confidence in the data

supporting the presence, distribution, and abundance of the listed species. In this area there are other management goals that would better provide ecological, social, and economic benefits to the American people than permanent protection of these species. There is also a plethora of Land Management Plan components to protect aquatic and riparian values that would directly benefit these species if present and allow for other management actions that otherwise might be precluded.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified Slate Creek as having cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. Slate Creek offers opportunity for cultural and traditional practices for the Nez Perce and other regional Tribes similar to other traditional use sites along the Salmon River. Slate Creek is typical of the tributaries of the Salmon River that have traditionally been used seasonally for fishing, hunting, and gathering. There is nothing to suggest that Slate Creek is of greater significance than these other traditional sites, other use sites across the Forest, or other use sites in the region of comparison. Nothing indicates that it has unique or rare characteristics, use for rare sacred purposes, or represents the origin or conflict of cultures. Additionally, the impacts from the roads and campgrounds, as well as development on private lands downstream from the Forest have reduced the cultural integrity of the area in terms of location, setting, and feeling. At the same time these developments allow for, and in some cases aid, traditional practices as well as general access and recreation.

The headwaters of Slate Creek are within the Gospel-Hump Wilderness Area until it reaches the Rocky Bluff Campground at the wilderness boundary. From there the eligible segment is in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3, where timber harvest and other silvicultural treatments are used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions. Timber harvest also provides products that contribute to economic stability for local communities. Timber harvest may be curtailed or restricted if the corridor is designated wild and scenic. The corridor also includes the North Fork Slate Creek Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration theme, and the Little Slate Creek Idaho Roadless Area with a backcountry/restoration and special themed areas. The Little Slate Creek Special Area is also a part of the No Business Creek Research Natural Area. Slate Creek crosses the Butte Gospel and Peter Ready allotments. The Forest Service rock source Rocky Bluff is within the corridor.

Forest Road 354 is a primary access to the southern end of the district and provides roaded access the length of Slate Creek to the Gospel Hump Wilderness boundary and as part of a larger loop road system through Allison Creek to Riggins and back to Slate Creek. Two developed campgrounds and road-side dispersed sites provide facilities, setting and opportunity consistent with roaded natural and semi-primitive motorized ROS. Several motorized trails branch off this road in the corridor, including the Idaho Centennial Trail (TR 88). The road system, trails, and recreation facilities are widely used and are expected to stay in place.

Areas along the lower section of Slate Creek provide winter habitat for big game, particularly for elk. Changes in vegetation succession have been cited as a factor contributing to declining elk populations. Restrictions on some types of vegetation management may impede the ability to manage winter habitat to benefit big game species or manage fuels in the river corridor and adjacent areas.

Given that a majority of the river corridor is in Management Area 3, there is an expectation that the area around Slate Creek will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns. This is also an important

area to be able to reduce fuels near wildland urban interface. There is an expectation that grazing will continue in the Butte Gospel and Peter Ready allotments. These management activities provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities.

Slate Creek's free flowing character, water quality, and outstandingly remarkable values should be protected, and would be protected through designation. However, other uses, current conditions, and previous development within the river corridor should be considered as well. Shoreline development and accessibility due to the location of Forest Road 354, two campgrounds and a rock source within the corridor don't always fit well with a wild and scenic designation. The presence and management of these facilities could conflict with the permanent protection of the outstandingly remarkable values if Slate Creek was designated. Designation could also impede restoration activities in the Slate Creek drainage that are important for forest health and critical winter range habitat for big game.

Management of the Slate Creek drainage, including the habitat that supports the outstandingly remarkable values, may better contribute to the conservation of our natural resources through management of these resources consistent with Land Management Plan direction and components. Management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the Nez Perce cultural, fish, and wildlife outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan, while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. There are no apparent or impending threats to these river values, and there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection and special focus through designation of these outstandingly remarkable values in Slate Creek, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals.

For these reasons, Slate Creek does not rise to a level that would best contribute to our national conservation purposes through permanent protection as a wild and scenic river, and therefore is not suitable for designation as a wild and scenic river.

South Fork Clearwater River

The South Fork Clearwater River eligible segment is 34.5 miles long from its boundary with the Bureau of Land Management lands to the east downstream to the boundary with Idaho State lands to the west. Its eligibility is based on its recreation, scenic, fish, wildlife, cultural, and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values. Its preliminary classification if recreational.

The recreational outstandingly remarkable value is for steelhead fishing, which provides local opportunities and draws people from throughout western Montana and parts of Washington. Within the region of comparison, the Salmon River, Clearwater River, and Middle Fork Clearwater River also provide steelhead fishing, but the smaller size of the South Fork Clearwater River allows for more bank or walk and wade fishing than the larger rivers. However, most of this fishing occurs downstream of the Forest boundary.

The Forest has 1,460 rivers and streams, with 88 rivers totaling 919 miles determined eligible. Additionally, 189 rivers on the Forest are identified as critical habitat for steelhead trout, indicating there is ample habitat to support this species. Consequently, recreational fishing opportunities are abundant across the Forest. While no two settings or experiences are the same, the Forest, and region of comparison, have many places that provide comparable experiences

across the spectrum of recreational opportunities. Some areas are better suited for specific activities while other areas provide for multiple recreation pursuits. The South Fork Clearwater is similar to the Middle Fork Clearwater Wild and Scenic River in many ways. In each case a state highway is adjacent to the entire river segment that provides easy access. Numerous recreation facilities are present within both corridors, including campgrounds, day use sites, boat ramps, trailheads, and trails to the rivers' edge. While there may be some more opportunity for bank fishing on the South Fork Clearwater than the Middle Fork Clearwater, this is not unique or distinguishable from other rivers in the region of comparison. Whether for steelhead trout or other fish species, bank fishing opportunities are abundant across the Nez Perce-Clearwater.

The lower South Fork Clearwater River upstream from the Blackerby day use site to Ten Mile Creek downstream of Golden forms a major distinctive river canyon on the national forest that provides a scenic outstandingly remarkable value. This segment has an outstandingly remarkable value for scenery even though there is a highway along the river, which affects its flow in places. This segment remains generally riverine in appearance. It has cliffs, large boulders forming rapids, the juxtaposition of white water and smooth, reflective water, and a variety of vegetation, tree, shrubs, and grasslands mixed with rock features along the segment. Distinctive features include the Huddleston Bluff, a sheer cliff noted in several comment letters.

The region of comparison for the Scenic ORV was identified as the Nez Perce-Clearwater boundary but included the south side of the Salmon River canyon, managed by the Payette National Forest. However, most visitors come to the Nez Perce-Clearwater from a broader area than the scenic region of comparison. Therefore, it seemed logical to consider the predominant area where Forest visitors come from, and where else those publics might go, as a more comprehensive area to understand the regional or national significance of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. In this broader context, the scenic ORV attributes of "distinctive scenic features" and "distinctive river canyons" encompass many similar river segments, not only in the recreation region of comparison but in neighboring national forests and other national forests in the Rocky Mountain and Cascade Mountain ranges.

I considered the redundancy of similar features such as waterfalls and rapids, the juxtaposition of whitewater and slow moving, calm sections, or striking geologic features. The Payette River, the South Fork Salmon River, the Clark Fork River, the Bitterroot River, and many others within the region of comparison offer river-based scenery comparable to the South Fork Clearwater.

I considered the notoriety or significance of the scenic ORV to the visiting public. While there are sections of the river corridor that do offer natural landscapes with scenic appeal, there are also sections that are highly developed by human activities. There is nothing to suggest that the South Fork Clearwater is more notable for its scenic beauty than many other rivers in the region of comparison. I also considered how management activities implemented under the Land Management Plan components and direction might affect the scenic ORV of any given river segment, and how designation might affect such management activities that might be planned in the river corridor. The South Fork Clearwater is in Land Management Plan, Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that the area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns and providing products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. These have been compatible with protecting and enhancing the ORVs for the past three decades. Plan components for aquatics, riparian, and scenic integrity objectives ensure maintenance of the scenic values of the river corridor.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value includes diversity, abundance, natural reproduction, and cultural and historical importance. The South Fork Clearwater River functions as a migration corridor and provides winter and summer rearing habitat, as well as spawning habitat, for multiple native fish species. It is included as designated critical habitat for Snake River steelhead trout and Columbia River bull trout. The higher elevation eligible segments upstream of Ten Mile Creek are identified as a major spawning area, with very high intrinsic potential. Spawning by fall Chinook salmon has been observed in eligible reaches in the vicinity of and downstream from Mill Creek. Native spring Chinook salmon are found throughout the eligible reaches, as are bull trout, westslope cutthroat trout, and steelhead trout. Juvenile Pacific lamprey have been documented in eligible segments, suggesting that spawning has occurred in these areas. B-run steelhead trout spawn throughout the eligible reaches.

Factors considered included: the uniqueness of the fisheries ORV versus the redundancy of or plentifulness of that fisheries value; the relative contribution to the river system's fisheries resource; existing activities in or near the river corridor and their effects on the river fisheries value; the Management Area and management emphasis for the surrounding area; opportunity to meet other Land Management Plan objectives while preserving the fisheries resource through Land Management Plan components, and direction, and how that may be affected with designation; and the social and Tribal values and uses of the river and its fisheries resource and how those may be affected with or without designation.

While most waters of the Nez Perce-Clearwater support some fisheries resource, all rivers do not possess the same attributes, value or contribution toward the goals, objectives or desired condition for fisheries and water-related resources. Eighty-eight rivers were found eligible, totaling approximately 919 miles on National Forest lands. This includes 317 miles in designated wilderness, MA1; 482 miles in roadless, MA2; and 120 miles in the front country, MA3. Of the eighty-eight eligible rivers, forty-one have fish identified as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value. Fish was identified as an ORV more than any other ORV category. And most of these eligible rivers possess three of the four eligibility attributes: diversity and abundance, habitat quality and natural reproduction.

This broad array of eligible rivers highlights the abundance and importance of the fisheries resource in the identified fish regions of comparison. It also provides greater opportunity and flexibility to identify those rivers that can best contribute to the goals and objectives of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act while contributing to the other goals, objectives, and desired conditions as described in the Land Management Plan. It provides greater opportunity to identify those fishery resources that best contribute to and warrant the special emphasis and permanent protection through designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

While the South Fork Clearwater provides important fisheries spawning and rearing habitat, and passage to important up-river tributaries, in this respect it provides the same values as the Middle Fork Clearwater, Lochsa, and Selway rivers on the Forest that are already protected through designation as wild and scenic rivers.

The wildlife outstandingly remarkable value for the South Fork Clearwater River includes the populations of Harlequin ducks. Only four observations have been made on the South Fork Clearwater River.

The Selway forestsnail is present on the South Fork Clearwater River. Only the section of this river from the national forest boundary near the Blackerby day use area upstream to the confluence with Mill Creek supports the Selway forestsnail.

During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. A group of stakeholders, including the Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho, developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This collaborative approach demonstrates the commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The South Fork Clearwater River is listed as impaired (Class 4A) for water temperature, physical substrate habitat alterations, and sedimentation/siltation and is not supporting cold water aquatic life and salmonid spawning beneficial uses. It is fully supporting primary contact recreation. It is included in the Environmental Protection Agency approved South Fork Clearwater River Total Maximum Daily Load Plan. A Total Maximum Daily Load implementation plan is a water quality improvement strategy that includes the development of the Total Maximum Daily Load allocated to a stream. Recognition of the impaired condition and inclusion in the TMDL Plan gives additional focus on improvement of the river conditions that are affecting river values.

I considered that there is little to no threat of dam construction in the Clearwater River basin, and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. A dam proposal would not be in alignment with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum to support salmon and steelhead recovery thus making it even more unlikely. Due to the impaired condition of the South Fork system, plan components that would allow restorative treatments within the corridor would provide ecological, social, and economic benefits to the American people, rather than WSR designation. Additionally, there is a plethora of Land Management Plan components to improve aquatic and riparian values that would directly benefit these species if present and allow for other management actions that otherwise might be precluded.

The South Fork Clearwater River's mining history is its outstandingly remarkable value for cultural resources. The river features an outstanding collection of mining sites and features, along with the townsite of New Golden and its surrounding history.

As stated in the FEIS, Chapter 3, Cultural Resources, the Nez Perce-Clearwater expresses "a rich narrative reflecting a converging cross-section of cultures, technologies, values and environments."

Consequently, there is a plethora of evidence of the Euro-American use and development over the past couple centuries. As with all resources, there are varying degrees of the quality, contribution, and significance of any evidence of these past activities. From a completely undisturbed site to one that is heavily impacted by current activity, all sites that meet the historic and cultural values ORV do not necessarily bring the same level of these values. Integrity, interpretive and educational value, significance of the site or person represented, and rarity and uniqueness can all be different between ORV sites and influence its overall value. Additionally, consideration of other reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and water offers a preferred management approach in the area to best meet the goals, objectives and desired condition described by the Nez

Perce-Clearwater Land Management Plan. The evidence of past mining activities is prevalent along much of the river corridor and throughout the Forest. While these are interesting examples of history, past mining activity that has not been reclaimed is also impeding restoration for a more resilient future. With the abundance of such sites there would certainly remain enough to provide informational and educational opportunities of this historical use of the area. Permanent preservation of past mining activity in this river segment is unwarranted.

The Nez Perce Tribal staff identified the South Fork Clearwater River segment as having a fish outstandingly remarkable value of cultural and historic importance to the Nez Perce Tribe. This is attributed to the presence and collection of fall Chinook salmon. The ability to restore conditions within the corridor and in the adjacent uplands will provide better long-term protection of the Nez Perce cultural and fisheries value than designation as WSR.

The South Fork Clearwater River is within the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. The segment on National Forest System lands has been managed for timber production and other objectives under the 1987 Forest Plan and timber harvest has occurred along many portions of the segment. The river is bounded by steep slopes which are further bisected by numerous small tributary streams. This landscape illustrates the connection between riparian and upland vegetation communities at a large scale. Natural range of variation analysis indicates that both riparian and upland forest cover types are departed from historical conditions. Species composition, size class distribution, density and structure are all departed from historical averages. This landscape scale departure is the result of many different factors interacting over time. Previous timber harvesting and stand culturing practices, fire suppression, infrastructure development, and land use allocation decisions have had compounding effects on the landscape and represent a major departure from the natural disturbance regime.

The South Fork Clearwater River corridor has been identified in literature as a priority fireshed due to vegetation departure and proximity to private ownerships and infrastructure. Landscape scale restoration is needed to move the existing departed vegetation towards the desired conditions derived from the NRV analysis. Given that most of the landscape along the South Fork Clearwater is steep terrain, management options are limited. The use of prescribed fire is the most cost-effective means to restore natural disturbance patterns which in turn will promote species composition, size class distribution (including old growth), density and structure that is resilient over time. Past restoration efforts over the last 40 years have largely been ineffective due to the small scale of restoration efforts. The potential effects of climate change may accelerate the rate of mortality within over-dense forest cover types. This increase in mortality will promote high severity fire behavior that is turn will have deleterious impacts on the riparian systems. Rural communities and infrastructure are at high risk for deleterious impacts from wildfire and priority should be given to vegetation treatments to reduce the insects and disease and wildland fire risk.

State Highway 14 runs along the river throughout the whole segment from Grangeville to Elk City. Developments in the corridor include nine sites in the Castle Creek Campground, nine sites in the South Fork Campground, three sites in the Meadow Creek Campground, five sites in the Leggett Creek Campground, the Nelson Creek Picnic Area, the Blackerby Picnic Area, the Cotter Bar Picnic Area, and the McAllister Picnic Area. The Johns Creek and Cougar Creek Trailheads are in the corridor along with the following motorized trails: Center Star Mine Road, Cougar Creek Trail, and Dutch Oven Trail. Dozens of Forest Service, county, and private roads branch off Highway 14 and are within the corridor, including Cover Placers Road (Forest Road 279), Cooked River Road (Forest Road 233), Forest Road 484, and Forest Road 492.

There are 30 mining claims within the corridor, and the Forest Service has 4 mapped rock sources: Crooked River Mouth, South Fork Tailing, Leggett Creek, and Reed Creek. Suction dredging is authorized under permit for up to 15 miners in upper portions of the South Fork Clearwater River. There are also four active livestock grazing allotments in this area.

These activities, facilities and developments have affected each of the outstandingly remarkable values to some degree, but these values are still present and recognized for their contribution to the overall character and value of the river corridor. However, these ORVs are abundant across the Forest with some already protected in existing designated wild and scenic rivers or wilderness. They are not unique or rare within their regions of comparison and given the impacts of past and present activities they are not exemplary or represent the best of the best for any one of them.

Additionally, analysis indicates there is little to no threat of dams or other hydro-electric development in the Clearwater River basin and there is nothing to indicate that any such proposal would come forward during the life of this Land Management Plan. A dam proposal would not be in alignment with the September 27th Presidential Memorandum on salmon and steelhead recovery, thereby making it even less likely. Therefore, there is no urgency or compelling reason to determine suitability based on the concern of such development.

There is an expectation that these drainages will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions in Management Area 3 through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns. These management activities also provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. The persistence of these river values while past management activities have occurred in these river segments demonstrates the Forest's commitment to protect them, and effectiveness of management controls to preserve them.

Protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these outstandingly remarkable values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities within and beyond the river corridor. I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to improve and provide protection and direct benefits to the outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. Therefore, there is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of the recreation, scenic, fish, wildlife, cultural, and Nez Perce cultural outstandingly remarkable values in the South Fork Clearwater River, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Therefore, I do not find these river segments suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Van Buren Creek

Van Buren Creek is 5.3 miles long from its headwaters to the confluence with Little Slate Creek. Its eligibility is based on its fish outstandingly remarkable value. Van Buren Creek's preliminary classification is wild in its upper portion and recreational in its lower portion.

The fish outstandingly remarkable value for the Van Buren Creek includes habitat quality and natural reproduction. Van Buren Creek supports the only known fluvial population of bull trout within the region of comparison. Eligible segments are included as designated critical habitat for Columbia River bull trout, and a local population has been identified. Interior redband trout are also present. Eligible segments are included in the 2040 modeled climate shield for bull trout with

moderate probability. There are no other areas in the region of comparison that have been similarly modeled, so Van Buren Creek represents the one place in the region of comparison where bull trout might be expected to persist into the future given current climate change trends. Habitat has been minimally affected by human disturbance.

The headwaters of the Van Buren Creek segment are within the Little Slate Creek Idaho Roadless Area (backcountry/restoration theme area). From its mouth to the roadless area, it is in the Land Management Plan Management Area 3. Van Buren Road (Forest Road 2002) crosses the creek, the Van Buren Motorized Trail is on the east side of the creek, and ten maintenance level 1 roads provide administrative access to this area.

The segments on National Forest System lands suitable for timber production in Management Area 3 have been managed for timber production under the 1987 Forest Plan. In the Land Management Plan Management Area 3, suitable timber base, timber harvests are one management tool used to move current forested vegetation conditions towards desired conditions. There is an expectation that these drainages will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions in Management Area 3 through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns. These management activities also provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities. The persistence of these species while past management activities have occurred in these river segments demonstrates the Forest's commitment to protect them, and effectiveness of management controls to preserve habitat that support these species.

Considering the fisheries values in these eligible segments it is important to note that the Nez Perce-Clearwater is rich with fisheries habitat and fish populations. Of the 88 eligible rivers analyzed in the EIS, 69 percent have bull trout, 60 percent have Snake River steelhead trout, and 46 percent have spring Chinook salmon. This is in addition to the other non-eligible rivers across the Forest with similar habitat that may support these and other fish species. Thirty-two percent of the eligible rivers are protected in designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers. Fifty-two percent are in Idaho Roadless Areas where there is low risk of impacts from management actions due to restrictions on road construction and timber harvest. Sixteen percent are in Management Area 3 where management activities could impact these river values; however, the aquatic and riparian plan components ensure no net degradation of fisheries habitat over the long term.

One hundred and eighty-nine rivers, totaling over 1400 miles on the Nez Perce-Clearwater are identified as steelhead and bull trout critical habitat. Thirty-three percent of these rivers are protected by designated wilderness or wild and scenic rivers, and another 42 percent of this habitat is in Idaho Roadless Areas, Management Area 2, where there is low risk of impacts from management actions and higher risk from wildfire.

The fish outstandingly remarkable values contribute to the health and productivity of the Nez Perce- Clearwater. As such, they deserve appropriate consideration in the management of the Forest. During development of the revised plan, particular attention was given to aquatic and riparian ecosystems. The Nez Perce Tribe, National Marine Fisheries Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and State of Idaho worked together to developed plan components which aim to conserve riparian habitat and maintain and improve water quality over the life of the plan. Analysis of this suite of plan components indicated that the plan would improve aquatic and riparian conditions and move riparian and aquatic habitat towards desired conditions. This, in turn would serve to preserve fisheries and other aquatic organisms. This collaborative approach demonstrates the

commitment of these entities to protect these river values during the life of the Land Management Plan.

The aquatic and riparian plan components and direction in the Land Management Plan demonstrate the Forests' commitment to maintaining high-quality, free flowing water, and healthy, functioning riparian areas. The comprehensive nature of the aquatic and riparian plan components ensures protections and direct benefits for the fish ORV species and their habitat. The collaborative work with the Tribe and other agencies demonstrates their commitment to the preservation of these river values.

These fish species and quality habitat to support them are prevalent across the Forest. Past management activities have occurred in Van Buren Creek and these populations remained protected and persisted. Land Management Plan components for fisheries, aquatic resources, and riparian habitats, as well as standard design criteria and mitigations will serve to protect the free flow and water quality of Van Buren Creek, thereby preserving bull trout and other aquatic organisms present here.

Consideration was given to this abundance of fisheries habitat and populations on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and that a significant portion of this is already protected or at low risk of being impacted during the life of the plan. The remaining areas are in Management Area 3 where there is an expectation that this area will continue to contribute to Land Management Plan desired conditions through vegetative treatments to address ecological concerns, as well as provide products and jobs that support the economic and social stability of local and regional communities.

Designation as a wild and scenic river would provide protection of the fish outstandingly remarkable value. However, permanent protections through designation would only allow management activities that prioritize the protection and enhancement of these outstandingly remarkable values. This could potentially adversely affect the ability to implement other ecological restoration activities within the corridor and over a much greater landscape than the 5.3 miles of river segments found eligible.

I believe management under Land Management Plan direction will serve to provide protection and direct benefits to the fish outstandingly remarkable values and will serve to preserve them during the life of the plan while allowing for resource management to meet other Plan desired conditions that might otherwise be foreclosed. There is no benefit or compelling reason to support the application of permanent protection of these fish outstandingly remarkable values in this creek, potentially at the expense of meeting other management goals. Therefore, I do not find Van Buren Creek suitable for designation as a Wild and Scenic River.

Appendix II- Idaho Roadless Areas Analyzed for Wilderness Recommendation

Portions of the Frank Church–River of No Return and Selway-Bitterroot wilderness areas lie within the Nez Perce-Clearwater, along with the Gospel-Hump Wilderness in its entirety. These three, nearly contiguous, areas total 3,914,283 acres, 81 percent of the wilderness in Idaho. The Nez Perce-Clearwater manages 1,139,059 of these acres which constitute approximately 31 percent of the Forest and 24 percent of the wilderness in Idaho. These areas offer unparalleled opportunity to experience all that Wilderness has to offer: areas unaltered by human manipulation; naturally functioning ecological systems that provide habitat for innumerable wildlife, fish, reptile, insect and plant species, and outstanding opportunity to experience quiet solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, adventure, and physical and mental challenge limited only by one's own abilities and acceptance of risk.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater also includes 1,481,637 acres in 34 inventoried roadless areas identified under the Idaho Roadless Rule, approximately 38 percent of the Forest. These inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) possess many of the same characteristics and values as existing Wilderness. However, the wilderness character of these IRAs is not all the same in value or distinction, or equal in their opportunity for a wilderness experience.

Part of the Forest Plan revision process was to review these roadless areas for consideration as recommended wilderness. The objective in reviewing these roadless areas was to identify those areas that offer primeval character, natural conditions and opportunities for quiet solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation comparable to the Wilderness on and around the Nez Perce-Clearwater today, rather than simply recommending areas for wilderness because they have some level of some wilderness characteristic. Additionally, consideration was for opportunities for restorative management to address forest health concerns, that provide appropriate settings for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation experiences not suitable in a wilderness, or that otherwise would best serve to meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives, and desired conditions under management other than as recommended wilderness.

The initial evaluation of the 34 roadless areas identified 21 of them that lack sufficient wilderness character to warrant further analysis. The remaining thirteen areas were found to possess wilderness characteristics to warrant further review in conjunction with other management opportunities they might present to meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives, and desired conditions.

In the evaluation, as documented in the Appendix E, each roadless area is shown to possess an array of the wilderness characteristics that defines its wilderness character. Following Forest Service Handbook direction, included in that evaluation is a general description of the area and its apparent naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation, manageability, and other features including ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. These wilderness characteristics contribute to a roadless area's overall wilderness character. Appendix E describes, in detail, the settings, features, values and wilderness characteristics for each Idaho Roadless Area.

It should be pointed out, those inventoried roadless areas not recommended for wilderness would continue to possess their individual roadless values and characteristics. The Idaho Roadless Rule

outlines permitted and prohibited actions on road construction and reconstruction, timber harvest, sale and removal, and discretionary mineral development. These restrictions reduce the potential impact to roadless area values that are present in these vast areas while allowing for management to reduce threats of severe wildfire to communities, homes, and property, reducing negative effects to forests from severe wildfire and insect and disease outbreaks, and assuring access to private property within these areas. Additionally, the Rule provides opportunity for motorized and non-motorized recreation that would not be available in wilderness areas. Although the Idaho Roadless Rule allows for these limited management actions it is anticipated that any activity would occur on less than one percent of these lands per decade. Therefore, the roadless values and wilderness characteristics of these 1,481,637 acres is expected to remain present and largely intact through the planning cycle.

Following is a brief description of the thirteen areas that were included in alternatives and analyzed as documented in the FEIS, and the rationale why they were or were not identified to be recommended for wilderness in the Preferred Alternative. As stated earlier, Appendix E describes in detail the values and characteristics of each roadless area.

Bighorn-Weitas

With 254,800 acres, Bighorn-Weitas is the largest roadless area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater. Over 60 percent of the Bighorn-Weitas roadless area is within the natural range of variability (NRV), which is about average for all the areas. Approximately 63 percent is in underrepresented ecosystems, also about average for the Forest. A 400-acre Research Natural Area is in the area. Natural integrity is high and ecological processes are functioning with little human impact.

This roadless area has the most constructed features of all the roadless areas with cabins, lookouts, a SNOTEL site, and numerous trail bridges. However, most of these structures/cabins are being excluded from the area via cherry stems. These cherry stems create inclusions into the area that increase accessibility. A portion of the area has historical or Tribal significance associated with the Lolo Trail National Historic Landmark. This is a key attraction and provides access to the high country of the roadless area. Much of the area is adjacent to USFS front country but the ratio of boundary to area is very small indicating that boundary management will not be a critical issue. A network of open, motorized trails supports well established summer motorized use to approximately 35 percent of the area. These trails are also increasingly being used by mountain bikers. Winter motorized use is also occurring.

Bighorn-Weitas IRA is the core of the northern portion of the Nez Perce-Clearwater. This undisturbed area with few roads is a large portion of Idaho Fish and Game Unit 10 that historically supported healthy wildlife populations, including a large number of elk. Subsequently, this area had been popular for big game hunting, particularly elk. However, as vegetation conditions have changed through forest succession the forest has gotten denser, forage production has dropped, big game populations have decreased and opportunity for hunter success has declined. Consequently, this is a focus area for management activities to improve elk summer habitat and forage production to meet the Forest's desired conditions for wildlife. Input through public comments indicate that the highest values of this area revolve around the stream and the fisheries values along it.

With the popularity and established use of this area for summer and winter motorized recreation, and its potential value for elk and other wildlife, the Bighorn-Weitas roadless area would best meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals and objectives by implementing management actions to

improve wildlife habitat and facilitate motorized recreation, in accordance with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme. Management of this area as recommended wilderness would unnecessarily restrict motorized recreation and limit opportunity for vegetative restoration. Given the importance of the river related values of Weitas Creek, I find that the interim measures designed to protect and enhance the wild and scenic river outstandingly remarkable values through suitability is a better way to preserve the highest values in the area.

East Meadow Creek and West Meadow Creek

The East and West Meadow Creek roadless areas are adjacent to one another, separated by Meadow Creek itself, and Road #285 at the southern end of the areas. While use and management of the two areas has differed over the years, they have much in common in terms of their ecology and wilderness character. More importantly, Meadow Creek, a principal tributary of the Selway River, is recognized as an important watershed, supporting Chinook salmon, steelhead, bull trout, red band trout and westslope cutthroat trout. The current Nez Perce Forest Plan recognizes the importance of the Meadow Creek drainage for its excellent water quality and productive anadromous fishery, as well as its outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation (1987 FEIS). Prior to that, the drainage was recognized for its high wilderness character, and, in the 1979 RARE II effort, East Meadow Creek was recommended for wilderness designation. Pending timber harvest in the West Meadow Creek at that time precluded it from consideration as wilderness. However, that timber harvest was subsequently dropped, and, except for some roadside hazard tree removal, no timber harvest has occurred in the area. In this Forest Plan revision Meadow Creek is, once again, recognized for its outstanding values and has been determined suitable as a Wild and Scenic River. For these reasons, the two roadless areas have been reviewed together for their suitability as recommended wilderness or otherwise contributing to Forest goals, objectives, and desired conditions.

East Meadow Creek is 96,800 acres adjacent to the Selway-bitterroot wilderness and has no grazing and little impact from noxious weeds, firelines or timber harvest. Two thirds of the area support underrepresented ecosystems and it has a significant amount of Whitebark Pine habitat. Virtually all the area is in an Idaho Roadless rule Primitive theme with 500 acres in a Research Natural Area. Seventy-one percent of the area is within the NRV. Water quality and watershed condition are high. The Meadow Creek Ranger Station is in this area. It is accessed by trail and adds historic as well as aesthetic character. There are four trail bridges that provide user convenience as well as resource protection. Most of the area is in primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS and there is little summer motorized use and no established snowmobile use. However, there are two roads that intrude into the area. They have been cherry-stemmed out, so they are not technically in the roadless area. Sights and sounds along these road corridors could affect opportunity for solitude in the area. Impacts on this area have been very light and the area appears natural. Natural integrity and ecological processes are intact and operating naturally.

At 115,600 acres, West Meadow Creek roadless area is the fifth largest roadless area on the Forest. It has a long, irregular shape with 57 percent of its boundary adjacent to front country in the Wildfire Crisis Strategy Landscape. Much of the area burned in 1919 and long-term ecological processes have just been slightly impacted since then. There has been historical sheep grazing of much of the area but today only two percent of the area is in an active grazing allotment and 15 percent is in a vacant allotment. Two lookout towers remain in the area and are visible from various locations in the area. They are accessed by low-standard roads. Fuel reduction projects, about 10 miles of fireline and nearly 200 acres of roadside hazard tree removal have occurred in the area to address the wildfire crisis and protect values at risk, including private

land in the Elk City Township. Fifty-seven percent of the area is within the NRV, 78 percent is in underrepresented ecosystems and 13,700 acres of Whitebark Pine habitat is present. The vastness of the area along with topography and vegetative screening provides ample opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. However, roads and trails along the boundary with the front country provide a more motorized recreation setting and sights and sounds from these areas can reduce the opportunity for solitude. Snowmobiling and summer motorized use is established in portions of this area and would present management challenges if this area was recommended wilderness.

Additional considerations of this area include: Meadow Creek is recognized as important to the Nez Perce Tribe; the Meadow Creek National Recreation Trail parallels Meadow Creek from the Selway River to the Meadow Creek Ranger Station; the Magruder Corridor Road #468 follows the Southern Nez Perce Trail at the southern end of the area and is a popular motorized route into Montana; Road #285 bisects East Meadow Creek north to south and is a popular route that accesses Green Mountain, Windy Saddle and Elk Mountain; Road #357 bisects East Meadow Creek east to west and is a popular route to access Trail #533 trailhead into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Portions of West Meadow Creek are near Elk City and Red River in critical firesheds which need vegetative management and use of wildland fire to reduce the potential for devastating fire in and around these communities.

The Meadow Creek area is a landscape that offers intact ecological conditions, historic and cultural values and uses, wilderness character and a variety of recreational opportunities. Meadow Creek provides high-quality fisheries and much of the surrounding area provides habitat for an abundance of wildlife typical of the Nez Perce-Clearwater including elk, black bear, moose, wolves, deer, Canada lynx, wolverine and, potentially, grizzly bear. The existing roads and established motorized use areas provide readily identifiable areas for semi-primitive summer and winter motorized recreation as well as access to areas for semi-primitive non-motorized activities and entrance to existing wilderness. Boundary adjustments to these combined areas would provide a large area high in wilderness character, provide for existing motorized recreation and access to and through a wild landscape and existing wilderness, and allow for traditional uses, while reducing potential conflict between these values and uses. The area not recommended for wilderness would be managed consistent with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme. Meadow Creek would be managed as a suitable Wild and Scenic River. This modified area would best meet Forest goals, objectives and desired conditions for fisheries, wildlife, recreation, wilderness values, and ecological and social sustainability.

Hoodoo

This area has no grazing, very little noxious weed infestation and minimal fireline construction or timber harvest. Ninety-nine percent of the area is in IRR Wildland Recreation theme indicating little evidence of human-caused disturbance and natural conditions and processes are predominant. Eighty-six percent of the area is in Primitive or Semi-primitive Non-Motorized ROS. A portion of the area has well established snowmobile use and some summer motorized use. Seven mining claims are known to exist in the area. Approximately 42 percent of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems and the area provides over 17,000 acres of Whitebark Pine habitat. Seventy-three percent of the area is within the NRV, suggesting ecological processes and natural integrity are intact and functioning. A portion of the area has been identified as having historical or Tribal significance associated with the Nez Perce Trail. Water quality and watershed health are both high. Fifty-eight percent of the boundary adjoins other roadless areas and forty-two percent abuts USFS front country. Due to its size and configuration the boundary to area ratio

is very low, minimizing opportunity for external activities affecting opportunity for solitude in the interior of the area. However, snowmobiling and summer motorized use occurs either within the recommended area or adjacent to it. This use would reduce opportunity for solitude for visitors in proximity to the activity. The established motorized use will present boundary management challenges to prevent trespass into the recommended area.

The Hoodoo roadless area is 252,000 acres spanning portions of the Nez Perce-Clearwater, 153,900 acres, and Lolo National Forest, 98,100 acres. The Hoodoo roadless area has been recognized for its wilderness values for decades and has been included in several past wilderness bills. Natural integrity, apparent naturalness and opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation are high throughout the area. Therefore, its primeval character is intact with very little evidence of man's activity within the area. The area provides important habitat for an abundance of wildlife species including elk, black bear, moose, Canada lynx, fisher, mountain goats and, most notably, female wolverine winter denning/rearing habitat. It's also an undisturbed landscape that provides connectivity for wide-ranging species such as grizzly bear.

While snowmobiling has been a popular activity in and around the area, that activity is mostly concentrated in areas at the north and south ends of the roadless area. Mountain biking in the summer is also popular. However, this activity mostly occurs on the state line Trail #738 and trails in the Goose Creek drainage, north of Fish Lake. Summer motorized use has also been popular on many trails in the area but is now restricted to the Fish Lake Trail #419 through the 2017 travel management decision. The concentrated nature of these recreational activities provides an opportunity to make boundary adjustments to accommodate these uses while keeping a majority of the roadless area undisturbed.

Within the Hoodoo Roadless Area, this decision also finds four river segments suitable for inclusion in the wild and scenic rivers system. I have decided that Kelly Creek, North Fork Kelly Creek, Middle Fork Kelly Creek, and South Fork Kelly Creek are suitable. This suitability determination provides additional protection measures to these rivers. While these river protections do not provide protections above and beyond the protections afforded as a recommended wilderness area, they do work in concert to protect both wilderness characteristics and outstandingly remarkable values including fisheries, scenery, and cultural outstandingly remarkable values of the rivers.

Considering these ecological and social factors, the Hoodoo roadless area, with boundary adjustments, would best meet the Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives and desired condition for ecological and social sustainability managed as recommended wilderness rather than under the Idaho Roadless Rule Primitive theme. This undisturbed area would also provide connectivity for wide-ranging species, particularly grizzly bear roaming from the Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet Yaak and Selkirk ecosystems into the Bitterroot ecosystem. Keeping the area north of Fish Lake and an area south of Blacklead Mountain and Williams Peak available for winter motorized, and a corridor along the state line trail open for mountain biking, would best meet the Forest's goals and objectives for sustainable recreation and social sustainability.

Mallard Larkins

The Mallard Larkins roadless area is one of the largest roadless areas in north Idaho. The 255,700-acre area is split between the Nez Perce-Clearwater, 126,300 acres, and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, 129,400 acres. The Mallard Larkins has long been recognized for its special features and values. In 1969 a 30,500-acre portion of the area, encompassing its highest

peaks, was designated as a Pioneer Area. This area is popular for hikers and stock users who seek a primitive experience with rugged mountain peaks, high mountain lakes and 360-degree vistas. There is no grazing, no snowmobiling and one mining claim. Motorized use is prohibited; however, summer motorized use is known to occur, primarily in the western and southern portions of the roadless area. Mountain biking is also popular in the southern portion, in the Cold springs and Pot Mountain Ridge areas.

Most of the Mallard Larkins area is primitive and semi primitive non-motorized ROS and offers outstanding opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Natural integrity and ecological processes are high and functioning with little modern human influence. About half of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems and it contains 2,159 acres of Whitebark Pine habitat. It is 75 percent within NRV, which is above average as compared to the other roadless areas.

The area supports big game species including deer, elk, moose, black bear, and mountain lions, and is a primary area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater that supports a stable population of mountain goats. Consequently, the area is very popular with hunters seeking a primitive hunting experience. This undisturbed area also provides connectivity for wide-ranging species, particularly grizzly bear roaming from the Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet Yakk and Selkirk ecosystems into the Bitterroot ecosystem. The area sits on a divide between three major river systems: the St. Joe, Little North Fork Clearwater, and North Fork Clearwater rivers. Headwater streams originating in the Mallard Larkins are an important source of clean, cold water to these rivers.

The long-standing recognition of the special values of the Mallard Larkins Pioneer Area, the intact primeval character, and opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation in and around the Pioneer Area indicates this area would best meet Nez Perce-Clearwater goals, objectives and desired conditions for ecological sustainability and primitive recreation opportunity managed as recommended wilderness. Management of the southern portion consistent with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme, and the most-western portion managed under the Primitive theme, would maintain these areas in support of the established motorized and mechanized recreation activities. Collectively, providing this array of recreation opportunity from primitive to motorized, without conflict, would support the Forest's goals, objectives and desired conditions for sustainable recreation and social sustainability.

Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork

Eighty-one percent of the Meadow Creek-Upper North Fork roadless area is primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized. Eighty-one percent of the area is within the NRV, and it has a small amount Whitebark Pine habitat. Ninety-nine percent of the area is in an IRR Primitive theme. This area adjoins front country along 43 percent of its boundary. The remainder abuts IPNF recommended wilderness or other roadless areas. Due to its configuration, topography, and high boundary to area ratio there is high opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation and reduced boundary management concerns. There is some summer motorized use but there is no known recurring snowmobiling activity. There is no grazing, no fireline or timber harvest and no mining claims. Due to the varied topography and dense vegetation, external sights and sounds only penetrate the margins of the area. Considering all of this, apparent naturalness is high in this area, ecological processes are functioning, natural integrity is high and opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation is high.

This roadless area is adjacent to portions of two other national forests to the north that are not recommended wilderness and Nez Perce-Clearwater Management Area 3 to the south. Given this, this area warrants consideration for management activities, primarily prescribed and wildland fire, to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire that may threaten the timber and other values in these adjacent areas. Additionally, use of wildland fire will contribute to meeting Nez Perce-Clearwater desired conditions as well as the continuation of the area's natural integrity and functioning ecological processes. For these reasons, the area would best meet forest plan goals and objectives managed under direction of the Idaho Roadless Rule Primitive theme rather than as recommended wilderness.

Moose Mountain

Two thirds of this area are primitive or semi-primitive non-motorized ROS classes. Twenty-eight percent is roaded natural due to its west boundary adjacent to Road #250 and southern and eastern boundaries along Road #255. The opportunity for solitude is low because of these two roads and, to the north, by extensive timber harvesting. Sights and sounds from vehicles on these roads and management activities are readily apparent throughout the entire area.

There are no structures or cabins, no grazing, no snowmobiling and minimal summer motorized incursions. There is a high number of mining claims and evidence of past mining activity, with some recent activity. Except for some evidence of past human activity and recent mining activity, apparent naturalness and natural integrity are high and ecological processes are functioning naturally.

Moose Mountain roadless area is not recommended for wilderness because of its pronounced lack of opportunity for solitude. Additionally, managing the area in compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Primitive and Backcountry Restoration will contribute towards meeting Forest desired conditions and ensuring continuation of the area's high natural integrity and functioning ecological processes.

North Fork Spruce-White Sand

Northfork Spruce-White Sand is an irregularly shaped area that is approximately 14 miles long and ¼ to 5½ miles in width. It is bounded on the south and east by the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness, to the west by Road #360, and Roads #368 and #369 to the north. Within the Idaho Roadless Area is Colt Killed Creek, a river I have found suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system through this decision. The northeast adjoins lands that are in checkerboard private ownership and MA1 lands. There are no structures, mining claims or grazing. Two roads intrude into the area that affect natural integrity and solitude in areas proximate to them. Two thirds of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems and 63 percent is within the NRV. Natural integrity is generally high, opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is high and apparent naturalness is high.

Generally, the area is, and has been, popular for recreational activities throughout the year. The primary roads in the area provide access for hunting, hiking, backpacking, fishing, scenery, and wildlife viewing, driving for pleasure, photography, and trails into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Snowmobiling has been a popular activity in this area for many years and is increasing in popularity. In more recent years the area has become popular for mountain biking when the area is free of snow. Given the popularity of these established uses and the access that is in place to support them, combined with the suitable wild and scenic river status given to Colt

Killed Creek as part of this decision, the North Fork Spruce-White Sand roadless area would best contribute to the Forest's objectives for sustainable recreation through management in compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Primitive and Backcountry Restoration and through the interim protection measures for suitable wild and scenic rivers rather than recommended wilderness. Additionally, allowing these well-established uses through this allocation would serve to reduce management and compliance issues if they were restricted through designation as recommended wilderness.

North Lochsa Slope

Approximately 40 percent of the North Lochsa Slope roadless area is adjacent to front country with the rest adjoining other roadless areas or wilderness. Seventy percent of the area is in the Idaho Roadless Area Primitive Theme and 12 percent in Special Area – Historical and Tribal Significance. There are 14,300 acres of historical or Tribal significance associated with the Lolo Trail, Lolo Motorway and Lewis and Clark route. The U.S. Highway 12 corridor provides the southern boundary, and the Lolo Motorway provides much of the northwest boundary. Several low standard roads intrude into the area. There are no mining claims or grazing in the area. The roads in and around the area are very popular and provide access for hunting, hiking, backpacking, fishing, scenery and wildlife viewing, cultural and traditional uses and driving for pleasure. Snowmobiling occurs on these roads as well and there is a groomed snowmobile trail along the north boundary. Physical evidence of man's activities is present; however, their impacts are relatively minor to the natural integrity of the area. While there are areas that provide opportunity for solitude, the presence of roads on the ridgetops and noise from U.S. Highway 12 reduces this opportunity.

Sixty-three percent of the area is within the NRV, and 73 percent is in underrepresented ecosystems. There is a 1,300-acre RNA within the area. Natural integrity is high and ecological processes are functioning naturally. This roadless area is part of a larger area that historically was important big game habitat. However, ecological changes through vegetation succession have reduced its utility due to reduced forage production. This has resulted in reduction in big game numbers and a subsequent reduction in hunter success.

The North Lochsa Slope roadless area is lacking opportunity for solitude but provides opportunity for a variety of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities throughout the year. It is also important for cultural and traditional uses. Additionally, the area presents opportunity for management actions to meet desired conditions for big game habitat by improving forge production. This decision also finds suitable for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic River system Fish Creek and Hungery Creek located partially within the North Lochsa Slope Idaho Roadless Area. The suitability determination for these two rivers provides interim protection measures for the outstandingly remarkable values, including fish and river dependent wildlife (harlequin duck). The fisheries resource in particular is one of the highest values of this roadless area and my suitability determination provides interim protection measures and a path to permanent protections for that resource. For these reasons this area would best meet Forest Plan goals and objectives managed in compliance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Primitive and Special Area of Historic or Tribal Significance and the decision to find suitable Fish and Hungery Creeks which apply interim protection measures, rather than recommended wilderness.

Pot Mountain

This area is a very compact roadless area. About half the area abuts roadless areas and half is adjacent to front country. The area is practically surrounded by adjacent roads; Road #250 to the south and east, and Road #247 to the west. Road #711 lies to the to the north, northeast, but is not immediately adjacent to the area. There are no structures, mining claims, grazing, or snowmobiling in the area. There is minor disturbance to the natural integrity of the area. Fifty-nine percent is within the NRV, and 71 percent of the area is in underrepresented ecosystems. There are 1,444 acres of noxious weeds along road corridors around the perimeter of the area that presents management concerns. There are no firelines or timber harvest. Generally, natural integrity and apparent naturalness are high.

The area provides a mix of Recreation Opportunity Spectrum classes (ROS), with 59 percent semi-primitive non-motorized, 22 percent semi-primitive motorized and 19 percent roaded natural. Noise from adjacent roads is obvious around the perimeter of the area. Several trails provide access throughout the area and to many of the highest peaks. Many of the trails are open to single-track motorized use, and mountain biking is increasingly popular for those looking for more extreme riding. These activities reduce opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation for those seeking that experience. Pot Mountain Ridge is a popular hiking and biking area that allows for an expansive view of the surrounding area.

Easy access from adjacent roads, the opportunity for single-track motorized use which is limited on the Nez Perce-Clearwater, and the available mix of ROS recreation experiences makes this area valuable in providing an array of recreational activities in support of sustainable recreation. For these reasons this area would best meet the Forest's goals and objectives for sustainable recreation managed in accordance with the Idaho Roadless Rule Backcountry Restoration theme rather than as recommended wilderness that would eliminate the opportunity for motorized and mechanized recreation.

Rapid River

This roadless area is adjacent to Hells Canyon Wilderness and surrounds the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River. The total roadless area is 78,700 acres with 21,000 acres on the Nez Perce-Clearwater and 57,700 acres on the Payette National Forest. The Payette National Forest does not recommend that portion for wilderness. Eighty-seven percent of the portion of the area on the Nez Perce-Clearwater NF is in active grazing allotments. There are no cabins or lookouts but there are two stock bridges across Rapid River. There is no mining, fireline or timber harvest in the area. Ninety-three percent of the area is in semi-primitive non-motorized or primitive ROS. Seventy-five percent is underrepresented ecosystems and 79 percent is within the NRV, although there is no Whitebark Pine habitat. Except for the evidence of grazing, the apparent naturalness and natural integrity are generally high, and the area has a high opportunity for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation.

The Nez Perce-Clearwater manages approximately 27 percent of the total Rapid River roadless area, with the remainder managed by the Payette National Forest. The Payette does not recommend its portion for wilderness. To maintain consistency across unit boundaries and to allow flexibility for fire management, range management and recreation management, and because a primary value of the area is Rapid River itself, which is a designated Wild and Scenic River, the Rapid River roadless area is best managed under the direction of the Idaho Roadless

Rule Wildland Recreation theme in conjunction with the Rapid River Wild and Scenic River direction.

Rawhide

This 6,000-acre roadless area lies between two other roadless areas, sharing 75 percent of its boundary with them. The northern boundary is defined by the Stateline national Recreation Trail and is adjacent to the Lolo National Forest. Much of the area burned in the early 1900's and ecological processes have continued with little impact from human activity. Eighty-seven percent of the area is within the NRV, and the area provides a small amount of Whitebark Pine habitat. There are no structures, mining claims, firelines, timber harvest or grazing. Apparent naturalness is high. About half of the area provides a roaded natural setting. The remainder provides a semi-primitive non-motorized ROS. The eastern boundary is adjacent to Road #250, a high speed, well-traveled road. Sights and sounds from this road impact most of the area and reduce the opportunity for solitude. The west boundary is defined by an old road, Road #5428, which is popular for mountain bikers along with the Stateline NRT and Road #250.

The small size and narrow shape of this area is heavily impacted by sights and sounds from Road #250 and offers little opportunity for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation. Apparent naturalness is high, which can be maintained through management under the Idaho Roadless Area Primitive theme. For these reasons, the Rawhide roadless area would best meet Nez Perce-Clearwater objectives managed under the Idaho Roadless Rule Primitive theme rather than as recommended for wilderness.

Sneakfoot Meadows

This area shares 49 percent of its boundary with the North Fork Spruce-White Sand roadless area, and 37 percent with the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness. Road #360 provides the east boundary and Road #362 is the northwest boundary. Road #368 intrudes into the area and provides access to Kooskooskia Meadows and a trailhead into the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness.

Fourteen percent abuts front country and a very small piece of private land. Sixty-five percent of the area is within the NRV and there are over 5,000 acres of Whitebark Pine habitat. Apparent naturalness and natural integrity are high. The area resembles the adjacent Selway-Bitterroot wilderness. There are no administrative structures, cabins, mining or grazing but there is a minimal amount of fireline construction and roadside timber harvest. There is a SNOTEL site at Savage Pass under a special use permit to the USGS. This site is small in scale and not readily apparent. The area has high water quality and watershed condition. Because of topography and vegetation external sights and sounds do not impact far into the area. The opportunity for solitude and primitive recreation is high. There is a need for restoration of aquatic resources to support salmon and steelhead recovery in the area as well as opportunities to reduce fuels in the expanding wildland urban interface east of Powell and west of Lolo Pass.

The area is currently managed under a mix of Idaho Roadless Rule themes from Wildland Recreation, Primitive, Backcountry Restoration and 2,000 acres of Special Area for the Sneakfoot Meadows Research Natural Area. The area is 72 percent semi-primitive non-motorized and 27 percent semi-primitive motorized summer ROS.

The Lolo Pass and Powell areas are popular for snowmobiling due to high elevation parking, and reliable snow. A groomed snowmobile trail system is located north of the roadless area and there has been recurrent snowmobile use in the roadless area. Fires in recent years have created more

open, ridable areas off the groomed system. Road #360 to the east of the roadless area is a popular route off the groomed system. Consequently, this area has become increasingly popular for snowmobiling. The area also has a low amount (6-20 miles) of summer motorized opportunity, and, in recent years, mountain biking has become more prevalent as well.

The increasing popularity, and suitability, of the Sneakfoot Meadows roadless area for winter motorized recreation and summer mountain biking is supported by its proximity to Powell and Lolo Pass that provide services for these recreationists. Maintaining this area for these recreational activities in an area that otherwise provides primitive and unconfined recreational opportunities best meets the Forest's desired condition for sustainable recreation. In addition, this is a critical area to be able to reduce fire risk in the expanding wildland urban interface at Powell and Lolo Pass as well as potential future aquatic restoration to support salmon and steelhead recovery. For these reasons, Sneakfoot Meadows best meets the Nez Perce-Clearwater goals and objects managed in accordance with the Idaho Roadless Rule themes of Wildland Recreation, Primitive and Backcountry Restoration rather than as recommended wilderness. Allowing and providing for these recreational pursuits reduces management and enforcement needs that would be necessary to eliminate these activities from an area that is well-suited and popular for them. Additionally, management under the Idaho Roadless Rule themes also facilitates any management or research activities associated with the Research Natural Area that potentially could be restricted un recommended wilderness.