

APPENDIX F

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS ASSESSMENT OF OUTSTANDINGLY REMARKABLE VALUES

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Middle Fork of the Salmon River Resource Assessment

December 15, 2000

INTRODUCTION

The Middle Fork of the Salmon River (Middle Fork River) was designated as a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers (W&SR) System through the W&SR Act in 1968.

Approximately 103 miles of the Middle Fork were designated as a wild and scenic river from its origin (at the confluence of Bear Valley and Marsh Creeks) to its confluence with the Salmon River. The entire designated river is classified as wild (free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted).

The Middle Fork of the Salmon River is located on the Salmon-Challis National Forest; Challis and Salmon, Idaho are the closest towns. The designated river is a part of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness (FC-RONR). The mainstem is a sixth-order tributary to the Salmon River entering the Salmon River approximately 39 miles west of North Fork, Idaho.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

The Middle Fork of the Salmon River was designated in 1968 absent a wild and scenic river study. The River Plan for the Middle Fork Salmon W&SR, September 1969, identified and described the values which caused the Middle Fork to be designated. These values were mentioned again, although somewhat superficially, in the 1985 version of the River Management Plan. The "resource assessment" process developed in the Pacific Northwest Region is being used here to confirm and better document whether or not specific resources are outstandingly remarkable. The criteria used in the Middle Fork of the Salmon River assessment are as modified in a technical paper developed by the Interagency W&SR Coordinating Council (12/99). In order to be assessed as outstanding, a river-related value must be judged unique, rare or exemplary at a regional or national level. The region of comparison for the Middle Fork of the Salmon River is generally the northern Rockies.

Neither the W&SR Act nor its legislative history provides a definitive statement of the values Congress intended to protect by designating the Middle Fork of the Salmon as a wild and scenic river. Section 1(b) of the W&SR Act provides a list of resources that may be determined ORV's on a particular river. Each of the resources mentioned in Section 1(b) and other resources have been evaluated in this assessment to determine the ORV's of the Middle Fork.

The resource assessment for the Middle Fork of the Salmon River is based on available literature (refer to "Literature Reviewed" section) and consultation with subject matter experts on the Salmon-Challis National Forest (refer to "Consultants" section). The following text describes the criteria against which the present situation was evaluated, an evaluation of the present situation, and concludes with a finding.

SCENERY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Middle Fork River corridor is classified as variety class A indicating it contains distinctive visual features. The riverine setting is generally natural in appearance with human activity, i.e., private land development, historic mining and recreation use, having relatively little impact to scenic character. The lower 30 miles of the mainstem are the most scenically diverse with views of the canyon's interesting rock outcrops and the river's pools, cascades and clear water. From the river, there are distant views of forested peaks and ridges, while the foreground and middleground views are of forested slopes, interesting rock outcrops and highly diverse riparian vegetation. The user's focus is usually on the river; its fast-moving water through rapids and still water pools in between.

The river's gradient is steep; elevations range from approximately 6160 feet at the origin of the mainstem to 3010 feet at the confluence with the Salmon River. This elevational range contributes to considerable vegetative diversity. Lower elevations support ponderosa pine and Douglas fir transitioning to Engelman spruce, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir at higher elevations. Particularly at upper elevations, forest stands are mature and overmature with numerous snags and down wood in the foreground. The riparian zone is 80-100 percent occupied by shrub vegetation.

The river's gradient also contributes to diversity of interaction of water and watercourse. Many portions of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River flows through pools and cascade/riffle complexes that draw the observer's focus to the river. Veil Falls and Waterfall Creek provide outstanding visual features in the lower canyon.

Finding

The change in elevation and topography over this river system results in highly diverse scenery and visual attractions. The steep gradient and narrow canyon focus the viewer's perspective on the water's interaction with its watercourse and riparian vegetation, with past human activities noticed only occasionally, if at all. The scenery of the Middle Fork River is found to be outstandingly remarkable.

RECREATION

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison, or are rare, unusual, or unique to the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting and boating/rafting.

- Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the region of comparison.
- The river may provide or have the potential to provide settings for national or regional usage.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Middle Fork River is a part of the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness. The wild river corridor offers a variety of land-based dispersed-nonmotorized activities including premier whitewater rafting, hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and horseback riding. The major trail access into the river corridor is provided by the Middle Fork trail, beginning at the Boundary Creek launch site. This trail follows the mainstem to Impassible Canyon, where trail access ends. There are a number of trails that extend from the uplands into the river corridor. Trail use is by foot and horse. Whitewater boating is by far the predominant use from April through September, with six-day trips the norm. The Middle Fork is world renowned in the boating community and origin of visitors reflects an international flavor. Fishing and hunting are the predominant uses in October and November.

The substantial size of the Wilderness and the rugged terrain of the river corridor provide high-quality primitive and semi primitive recreation opportunities. Due to its remote location and ruggedness, overall recreation use other than floating is low. The river corridor offers the recreationists solitude, particularly outside the high-use summer float season. It also offers spring hiking and backpacking before the higher elevations open. This early-season use is increasing in popularity. Most of the non-floating users come from local communities (Salmon, Challis, Boise). The floating users come from all over the United States.

Finding

The Middle Fork River is recognized for providing recreation users the opportunity for solitude in a scenically diverse river setting. It first and foremost provides possibly the premier whitewater rafting experience in the United States. It further provides for early season hiking and backpacking, and fall hunting. Most of the floating use is from a Nation-wide audience. Recreation is an outstandingly remarkable value.

GEOLOGY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or the area within the river corridor contains one or more example of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is rare, unusual, or unique to the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a "textbook" example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial or other geologic structures).

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Middle Fork River is primarily a moderate gradient river with interspersed rapids. Rock exposures are extensive due to the generally arid climate.

The drainage lies within the eastern and northern portions of the Idaho Batholith Province of Central Idaho. The Idaho Batholith Province is comprised primarily of the Idaho batholith, which was intruded into what is now central Idaho approximately 80 to 100 million years ago. The province also includes much older rocks that were intruded by the batholith, younger intrusive rocks, and much more recent erosional deposits. The older rocks consist of quartzite's of the Yellowjacket Formation and their metamorphosed equivalents. These rocks are approximately 1.5 million years old. The younger intrusive rocks consist primarily of the Casto pluton granite and associated dikes and surface volcanic flows. These rocks are approximately 50 million years old. Recent geologic features include stream terraces and rock falls from various time periods. As can be imagined from the foregoing, a trip through this canyon is truly a rare "trip through time"—1.5 million years ago to the present. In addition, due to the excellent rock exposures in the arid canyon, many geologic features and processes are exposed throughout the system. Examples include joint formation, downcutting, terrace formation, and the geologic nature of the canyon's famous rapids.

Finding

Due to the extensive rock exposures, the geologic time span represented, and the geologic features and processes exposed and preserved, geology is an outstandingly remarkable value. This has been well documented in a 32-page waterproof brochure entitled "*GEOLOGY of the MIDDLE FORK of the SALMON—a wild and scenic river*".

FISH

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations or habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.

Populations

The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and/or species under the state of Idaho's Administrative Code 13.01.06 -Classification and Protection of Wildlife. Diversity of species is also an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat

The river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and/or species under the state of Idaho's Administrative Code 13.01.06 -Classification and Protection of Wildlife. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Middle Fork River contains three federally listed ESA fish species: "threatened" spring/summer chinook salmon, "threatened" steelhead, and "threatened" bull trout.

Chinook Salmon: Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon are listed as "threatened" under the ESA. Chinook stocks within the Snake River system are at all time low numbers although little quantifiable population data on the condition or trend of these natural stocks is available. These species occupy the mainstem Middle Fork River and its tributaries. Spawning and rearing chinook salmon have been observed throughout the watershed and into the headwater tributaries like Marsh Creek. All perennial streams in the Middle Fork of the Salmon River watershed are designated as "Critical Habitat" under the ESA.

Steelhead: Snake River basin summer steelhead (anadromous forms) is listed as "threatened" under the ESA. Spawning and rearing steelhead have been documented throughout the Middle Fork of the Salmon River watershed.

Bull Trout: Columbia River bull trout is listed as "threatened" under the ESA. The Middle Fork of the Salmon River supports two stocks of bull trout: fluvial and resident populations. The life cycle of the fluvial population requires portions of tributaries within the Middle Fork River and migration into the Middle Fork River and mainstem Salmon Rivers. The life cycle of the resident population takes place entirely within the Middle Fork River or tributaries. While critical habitat has not yet been officially determined for bull trout, the eventual critical habitat may include four life cycle components: spawning areas, overwintering habitat, connectivity (migratory corridors), and summer rearing habitat.

Other Fish Species: Other documented fish found in the Middle Fork River include native redband rainbow trout, westslope cutthroat trout, mountain whitefish, northern squawfish, sculpin, redband shiner, sucker and dace.

Habitat: The Middle Fork River provides exceptionally high quality habitat for coldwater salmonid fish species indigenous to the region. Lack of major land-disturbing activities in the Middle Fork River contributes to near-natural habitat conditions for all aquatic species. Stream

temperature data has been collected annually throughout the summer period July-September from 1997 to 2000 at four locations in the Middle Fork River. The stream temperatures are collected using a continuous monitoring thermograph that takes an instantaneous reading every two hours. Measured stream temperatures meet Idaho State water quality standards for coldwater spawning salmonids (Idaho Department of Health and Welfare).

Finding

The Middle Fork River contains three federally listed ESA fish species and related designated critical habitat for Snake River spring/summer chinook. In terms of habitat, the Middle Fork River watershed is the largest and best remaining aquatic stronghold within the entire Salmon River watershed. It is a key area for the survival and recovery of federally listed “threatened” salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. The populations of nationally significant fish species and the river's federally designated critical habitat and near-natural habitat combine to a finding that "fish" is an outstandingly remarkable value for the Middle Fork of the Salmon River.

WATER QUALITY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river has exceptionally pure, clear and/or clean water. The river is known for its water quality nationally or regionally. The river provides exceptionally high water quality for a variety of beneficial uses including but not limited to fish, wildlife, recreationists, and communities.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The majority of the Middle Fork River watershed is located within the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness area. Human caused water quality impacts are very minimal within the Middle Fork Watershed. The streamflow regime and water quality of the Middle Fork represent very pristine conditions with very little impacts from point or non-point pollution sources.

The streamflow regime and water quality of the Middle Fork represent a watershed that is directly tied to nature. Changes in streamflow are in direct response to precipitation and weather conditions. High flows occur in late May or June when the winter snowpack is melting. Low flows occur in late summer through early spring during periods of low rainfall or snow accumulation. Changes in water quality are linked to natural events such as fire and/or high intensity thunderstorms that can increase soil erosion and stream sedimentation.

The water clarity of the Middle Fork is renowned due to the low level of suspended sediment. Predominate geology of the Middle Fork is the Idaho Batholith and the soils are derived from granitic bedrock. These soils are very sandy and do not produce a high level of suspended sediments or water turbidity. Cold-water temperatures in the Middle Fork support a healthy population of many fish species, including endangered resident and anadromous fish.

Recently the exceptional water quality of the Middle Fork River has been recognized by the State of Idaho when the state Environmental Quality Board voted to recommend the Middle Fork for additional protection under Idaho's water quality standards. The board recommended to the State legislature that the Middle Fork of the Salmon River be designated an Outstanding

Resource Water. To date only two streams have been recommended by the board to the legislature for designation. The classification as an Outstanding Resource Water would further protect the Middle Fork from water quality degradation. Activities that would degrade the water quality of the Middle Fork would be prohibited by State law if the legislature follows the recommendation of the Environmental Quality Board.

Finding

In comparison to other rivers in the region, the water quality of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River is exceptional. The river provides exceptionally high water quality for a variety of beneficial uses including resident and anadromous fish habitat and exceptional recreation opportunities for thousands of people who come to float the Middle Fork every year to enjoy its pure, clean water. Water quality is an outstandingly remarkable value.

WILDLIFE

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations or habitat, or a combination of these conditions.

Populations

The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could in itself lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat

The river or area within the river corridor provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for Federal or State listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered and sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Many species of wildlife, including bighorn sheep, mountain goat, elk, mule deer, wolverine, pine marten, cougar, black bear, bobcat, river otter, coyote, red fox, porcupine, badger, beaver, mink, muskrat, skunk and rattlesnake inhabit the river corridor. Over 75 species of birds, including golden eagle, Chukar partridge, Franklin's, blue and ruffed grouse, Harlequin ducks and other waterfowl, and a variety of neotropical migratory songbirds, also can be observed in the corridor, at least seasonally.

The Middle Fork corridor also supplies important habitat for several Federally listed threatened and endangered species including gray wolf, bald eagle and Canada lynx. In addition, the river corridor contains potential habitat for grizzly bears, should they be reintroduced in Idaho.

Wildlife habitat within the Middle Fork of the Salmon River corridor is extremely varied due to the extremes in topography and elevation. Vegetative associations range from high elevation subalpine fir and Douglas-fir communities to ponderosa pine communities at the lower elevations. Within all associations, and especially within the ponderosa pine type, rock outcrops, open meadows and south slopes occupied by bunchgrasses and shrubs such as mountain mahogany and sagebrush provide important habitat diversity. The river corridor is located within the heart of the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness and thus is both large enough and remote enough to provide key big game winter range, summer range, migration routes, security areas and birthing/rearing areas for all native ungulates. This area is home to one of the largest herds of bighorn sheep in the contiguous United States and was one of the few areas that were not severely impacted by over exploitation (i.e. market hunting) during the 1800's. The low level of human presence and the abundant wintering herds of three species of native ungulates now provide the key to recovery of gray wolves in central Idaho.

Finding

Wildlife populations are diverse and abundant within the river corridor. The species mix and population numbers are nationally significant, and includes listed threatened and endangered species. The diversity of habitat and quality of habitat is of national significance. Wildlife is an outstandingly remarkable value in the river corridor based on both populations and habitat.

VEGETATION/BOTANY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique or populations of federally listed or candidate threatened or endangered species. When analyzing vegetation, additional factors such as diversity of species, numbers of plant communities, and cultural importance of plants may be considered.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Middle Fork of the Salmon originates at an elevation of approximately 6160 feet, dropping to 3010 feet at its confluence with the Salmon River. The area has strongly contrasting vegetation types, primarily keyed to aspect and elevation. The lower elevations support mixed conifer species, including ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. Seral stands of large, mature ponderosa pine occupy the timbered slopes within the river corridor. The forested ecosystems within the corridor at the lower elevations are characteristically dominated by an overstory of large diameter old Ponderosa pine and/or Douglas fir trees. In many areas along the corridor, management activities (including fire exclusion) have allowed for many smaller trees to grow in under the older and larger Ponderosa pine or Douglas fir. This is converting these ecosystems from a natural open old forest to a densely stocked multi-layered forest.

Englemann spruce, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir, interspersed with small forb and grass meadows, are found at higher elevations. Southern aspects that lack forested stands are principally native bunch grass types within the river corridor.

Several low brush and grass species such as pinegrass, wheatgrass, fescue, ceanothus, snowberry, ninebark, serviceberry, and willow grow on the steep, dry, western and southern exposures. Elk sedge, huckleberry, meadow rue, mountain maple, pinegrass, violet, alder, and beargrass occur in the more cool and moist areas. Noxious weeds are also found scattered in the corridor area.

A sensitive plant, Puzzling Halimolobos, occurs within the Wilderness and river corridor. It is typically found within the ponderosa-pine type and is, therefore, likely to occur at lower elevations of the river corridor.

Finding

While the vegetation, including individual species and plant associations, is diverse but not unique or rare within the region of comparison, the lower elevation old open forest ecosystems are regionally important. These old open forests of Ponderosa pine and/or Douglas fir are rapidly disappearing in the Western United States. Within this corridor, the ingrowth of smaller trees has predisposed these older larger diameter trees to lethal fire and attack from insects. Vegetation/botany (lower elevation older open forests) are an outstandingly remarkable value.

PRE-HISTORY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor must contain one or more sites where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must have rare or unusual characteristics or exceptional human interest value. To meet this criteria sites have one or more of the following characteristics: Be of National or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; or have been used by cultural groups for rare or sacred purposes.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

According to the *Cultural Resource Reconnaissance in the Middle Fork Salmon River Basin, 1978* 60 Native American sites were identified within the river corridor. Additional work by others has since increased this number significantly. Archaeological site types identified within the river corridor include pictographs, pithouse villages, lithic scatters, human burials, sacred sites, ponderosa pine peeled trees, talus pits, and rockshelters. Archaeological excavation at Dagger Falls, Waterfall Village, and several other sites within the river corridor documents an opportunity to understand regional patterns of chronology, settlement, subsistence, and technology in a mountain setting of both Utaztecan speaking Shoshonian and Sahaptan speaking Nez Perce cultures.

Finding

Pre-history is an outstandingly remarkable value in the Salmon River corridor.

HISTORY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains one or more sites associated with a significant event, an important person, a cultural activity of the past that was rare in the region, or that significantly illustrates the patterns of history described in the Idaho Historic Preservation Plan. Many such sites are listed on the National Register for Historic Places, which is administered by the National Park Service. A historic site and/or feature in most cases is 50 years old or older.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

According to the *Cultural Resource Reconnaissance in the Middle Fork Salmon River Basin, 1978* 40 historic sites were identified within the river corridor. Additional work by others has since increased this number significantly, many of which are eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. During the Sheepeater War of 1879, Captain Bernard and his troop pursued the Sheepeater Indians of Central Idaho through the Middle Fork country, camping along its banks. Mining and homesteading began in the area in 1885 and the traces of these long abandoned mines and cabins can still be seen. Outstanding examples include the Joe Bump, Parrott cabin, Sader cabin, and Power House sites. In the 1930s, The Civilian Conservation Corps established camps in the Middle Fork and reconstructed or constructed many of the trails in the area, including outstanding examples of long sections of dry laid stone walls along many of the trails.

Finding

Historic sites within the river corridor are associated with at least one significant event and person of regional importance and significantly illustrate patterns of history described in the Idaho Historic Preservation Plan. History is an outstandingly remarkable value in the Salmon River corridor.

TRADITIONAL USE, CULTURAL

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains one or more regionally unique locations of importance to Indian tribes (religious activities, fishing, hunting, and gathering). Locations may have unusual characteristics or exceptional cultural value being integral to continued pursuit of such activities. Locations may have been associated with treaty rights on ceded lands or activities unprotected by treaty or ceded lands or in traditional territories outside ceded lands.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Middle Fork River corridor is within ceded lands for the Nez Perce and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of Idaho. The river has important cultural, traditional and sacred meaning to both Tribes, manifested in salmon fishing, bighorn sheep hunting, traditional plant gathering, pictographs visitation, honoring burial sites, visiting traditional camps, and other honoring other sacred sites. There continues today an especially strong connection with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes resulting in yearly visits by Tribal Business Council members to the Middle Fork of the Salmon River to fish and visit sacred and traditional sites. Unfortunately, the remoteness and high cost to visit the river corridor limits present day visitation and Traditional Cultural practices for most members of both Tribes.

Finding

The river corridor has many regionally unique locations of importance to the Shoshone-Bannock and Nez Perce Tribes making it an outstandingly remarkable value for traditional use.

LITERATURE REVIEWED

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Salmon River Resource Assessment

December 15, 2000

INTRODUCTION

The Salmon River was added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers (W&SR) System through the Central Idaho Wilderness Act (CIWA) of 1980. Approximately 125 miles of the Salmon River were designated as a wild and scenic river: the 46-mile stretch from North Fork to Corn Creek is classified as Recreation (readily accessible by road and may have some development along their shorelines), and the 79-mile stretch from Corn Creek to Long Tom Bar is classified as Wild, (free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted).

The Salmon River flows through the Sawtooth, Salmon-Challis, Payette, and Nez Perce National Forests, as well as public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and private lands. The portion of the river that is designated flows through the Salmon Challis, Payette and Nez Perce National Forests. The Wild stretch of the river flows through the Frank Church–River of No Return wilderness. Salmon and Riggins, Idaho are the closest towns. The mainstem is a sixth-order tributary to the Snake River entering the Snake approximately 30 miles south of Lewiston, Idaho.

RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

In 1968, Congress established the National Wild & Scenic Rivers system, with eight initial components. It also named additional rivers to be studied with their potential for designation to be reported to Congress for their action. The 237-mile stretch of the Salmon River downstream from North Fork was one of these study rivers. The study was accomplished in conjunction with the Wilderness potential studies of the adjacent Idaho and Salmon River Breaks Primitive Areas. These studies were completed in 1976, with the recommendation that the Salmon River be included in the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. The study documents contain definitive statements of the values intended to be protected by designating the Salmon River as a wild and scenic river.

The CIWA of 1980, in addition to establishing the River of No Return Wilderness, amended the W&SR Act to add the part of the Salmon River between North Fork and Long Tom Bar to the System, as recommended. Congress deferred action regarding the remaining segments.

This assessment is an update to incorporate new resource information (such as recently listed T&E species) in regards to the previously identified outstandingly remarkable values of the Salmon River.

The resource assessment for the Salmon River is based on available literature (refer to "Literature Reviewed" section) and consultation with subject matter experts on the Salmon

Challis National Forest (refer to "Consultants" section). The following text describes the criteria against which the present situation was evaluated, an evaluation of the present situation, and concludes with a finding.

SCENERY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The landscape elements of landform, vegetation, water, color and related factors result in notable or exemplary visual features and/or attractions. When analyzing scenic values, additional factors such as seasonal variations in vegetation, scale of cultural modifications, and the length of time negative intrusions are viewed may be considered. Scenery and visual attractions may be highly diverse over the majority of the river or river segment.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Salmon River corridor is classified as variety class A indicating it contains distinctive visual features. The riverine setting is generally natural in appearance with human activity, i.e., private land development, historic mining and recreation use, having relatively little impact to scenic character. From the braided channel and island complex at Deadwater to the vertical granite cliffs at Pine Creek and Black canyon to the mature ponderosa pine stands to the cascades at Salmon Falls to the cliffs and slackwater at Mackay Bar, the Salmon River canyon displays an outstanding diversity of visual elements. From the river, there are distant views of forested peaks and ridges, while the foreground and middleground views are of forested slopes, interesting rock outcrops, high gradient rushing streams from side drainages and highly diverse riparian vegetation. Similar views are afforded from river side trails where they exist. The user's focus is usually on the river; its fast-moving water through rapids and still water pools in between.

The Salmon River flows through a vast wilderness in the second deepest gorge on the continent. Only the Snake River canyon is deeper. The Salmon's granite-walled canyon is one-fifth of a mile deeper than Grand Canyon. For approximately 180 miles, the Salmon River canyon is more than one mile deep. In the 151 miles from North Fork to Riggins, the Salmon drops a total of 1,910 feet, over 12 feet per mile. Elevations range from approximately 3600 at North Fork to approximately 1690 at Riggins. This elevational range contributes to considerable vegetative diversity. Lower elevations support ponderosa pine and Douglas fir transitioning to Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir at higher elevations. Mountain mahogany is an important component on south-facing slopes. Particularly at upper elevations, forest stands are mature and overmature with numerous snags and down wood in the foreground. The riparian zone is 80-100 percent occupied by shrub vegetation.

The river's gradient also contributes to diversity of interaction of water and watercourse. Many portions of the Salmon River flow through pools and cascade/riffle complexes that draw the observer's focus to the river. Black Canyon provides outstanding visual features in the middle canyon with smooth granite outcrops and huge boulders shaped by the water.

Finding

The change in elevation and topography over this river system results in highly diverse scenery and visual attractions. The steep gradient and narrow canyon focus the viewer's perspective on the water's interaction with its watercourse and riparian vegetation, with past human activities noticed only in the middle section. The scenery of the Salmon River is found to be outstandingly remarkable.

RECREATION

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Recreational opportunities are, or have the potential to be, popular enough to attract visitors from throughout or beyond the region of comparison, or are rare, unusual, or unique to the region. Visitors are willing to travel long distances to use the river resources for recreational purposes. River-related opportunities could include, but are not limited to, sightseeing, wildlife observation, camping, photography, hiking, fishing, hunting and boating/rafting.

- Interpretive opportunities may be exceptional and attract or have the potential to attract visitors from outside the region of comparison.
- The river may provide or have the potential to provide settings for national or regional usage.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Salmon River flows through the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness. The river corridor offers a variety of land-based dispersed activities including premier whitewater rafting, hunting, fishing, hiking, horseback riding, jetboating and camping. Short sections of trail provide access into the river corridor in numerous locations throughout its length. Trail use is by foot and horse. Whitewater boating is by far the predominant use from April through September. The Wild section offers multi-day trips while the Recreation section offers primarily day use trips. The Salmon River is world renowned in the boating community and origin of visitors reflects an international flavor. Fishing and hunting are the predominant uses in October, November, February and March.

The substantial size of the Wilderness and the rugged terrain of the river corridor provide high-quality primitive and semi primitive recreation opportunities. Due to its remote location and ruggedness, overall recreation use other than floating, jetboating and fishing is low. The river corridor offers the recreationists solitude, particularly outside the high-use summer float season. It also offers spring hiking and backpacking before the higher elevations open. This early-season use is increasing in popularity. Most of the non-floating users come from local communities (Salmon, Challis, Boise). The floating users come from all over the United States.

Finding

The Salmon River is recognized for providing recreation users the opportunity for solitude in a scenically diverse river setting. It first and foremost provides one of the premier whitewater rafting experiences in the United States. It further provides for early season hiking and backpacking, and fall hunting. Most of the floating use is from a Nation-wide audience. Most of the jetboating use is from a regional audience. Recreation is an outstandingly remarkable value.

GEOLOGY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or the area within the river corridor contains one or more example of a geologic feature, process, or phenomenon that is rare, unusual, or unique to the region of comparison. The feature(s) may be in an unusually active stage of development, represent a "textbook" example and/or represent a unique or rare combination of geologic features (erosional, volcanic, glacial or other geologic structures).

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Salmon River is primarily a moderate gradient river with interspersed rapids. Rock exposures are extensive due to the generally arid climate.

The drainage lies within the eastern and northern portions of the Idaho Batholith Province of Central Idaho. The Idaho Batholith Province is comprised primarily of the Idaho batholith, which was intruded into what is now central Idaho approximately 80 to 100 million years ago. The province also includes much older rocks that were intruded by the batholith, younger intrusive rocks, and much more recent erosional deposits. The older rocks consist of quartzite's of the Yellowjacket Formation and their metamorphosed equivalents. These rocks are approximately 1.5 million years old. The younger intrusive rocks consist primarily of the Casto pluton granite and associated dikes and surface volcanic flows. These rocks are approximately 50 million years old. Recent geologic features include stream terraces and rock falls from various time periods. As can be imagined from the foregoing, a trip through this canyon is truly a rare "trip through time"—1.5 million years ago to the present. In addition, due to the excellent rock exposures in the arid canyon, many geologic features and processes are exposed throughout the system. Examples include joint formation, downcutting, terrace formation, and the geologic nature of each of the canyons' famous rapids.

The Salmon River flows through a vast wilderness in the second deepest gorge on the continent. Only the Snake River canyon is deeper. The Salmon's granite-walled canyon is one-fifth of a mile deeper than Grand Canyon. For approximately 180 miles, the Salmon River canyon is more than one mile deep.

Finding

Although not explicitly stated in the original Study Report as an outstanding value, due to the extensive rock exposures, the geologic time span represented, and the geologic features and processes exposed and preserved, we believe geology should be added as an outstandingly remarkable value.

FISH

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Fish values may be judged on the relative merits of either fish populations or habitat, or a combination of these river-related conditions.

Populations

The river is nationally or regionally an important producer of resident and/or anadromous fish species. Of particular significance is the presence of wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat

The river provides exceptionally high quality habitat for fish species indigenous to the region. Of particular significance is habitat for wild stocks and/or federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar contains four federally listed ESA fish species: “endangered” Snake River sockeye, “threatened Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon, “threatened” steelhead, and “threatened” bull trout.

Sockeye Salmon: Snake River sockeye salmon are listed as “endangered” under the ESA. Sockeye stocks within the Snake River system are at all time low numbers and near extinction. The sockeye salmon use the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar as a migratory corridor for returning spawning adults to the upper Stanley Basin Lakes, in the headwaters of the Salmon River, and out migrating smolts down river to the ocean. All perennial streams within the mainstem Salmon River watershed are designated as “Critical Habitat” for sockeye and chinook salmon under the ESA.

Chinook Salmon: Snake River spring/summer chinook salmon are listed as “threatened” under the ESA. Chinook stocks within the Snake River system are at all time low numbers and their status in the Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar, within the Inland West Watershed Reconnaissance, is considered imperiled, with its spawning and rearing conditions considered depressed. These species occupy the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar and its tributaries. Spawning and rearing chinook salmon have been observed throughout the

watershed and its tributaries. All perennial streams within the mainstem Salmon River watershed are designated as “Critical Habitat” for sockeye and chinook salmon under the ESA.

Steelhead: Snake River basin summer steelhead (anadromous forms) is listed as “threatened” under the ESA. Spawning and rearing steelhead have been documented throughout the mainstem Salmon River and its tributaries from North Fork to Long Tom Bar.

Bull Trout: Columbia River bull trout is listed as “threatened” under the ESA. The mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar supports two stocks of bull trout: fluvial and resident populations. The life cycle of the fluvial population requires portions of tributaries to the mainstem Salmon River and migration into the mainstem Salmon River. The life cycle of the resident population takes place entirely within the mainstem Salmon River or tributaries. While critical habitat has not yet been officially determined for bull trout, the eventual critical habitat may include four life cycle components: spawning areas, overwintering habitat, connectivity (migratory corridors), and summer rearing habitat.

Other Fish Species: Other documented fish found in the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar include native redband rainbow trout, westslope cutthroat trout, sturgeon, mountain whitefish, northern squawfish, sculpin, redshiners, suckers and dace.

Habitat: There are a significant amount of land-disturbing activities adjacent to the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Corn Creek. The two large contributing factors that prohibit this stretch of the mainstem Salmon River from acting under near-natural habitat conditions for all aquatic species are the 47.4 miles of the Salmon River Road (FS Road # 030) that closely parallels the river and the private land activities occurring along the riverbanks. Stream temperature data has been collected annually throughout the summer period of July-September from 1993-2000 at three locations in mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Corn Creek. The stream temperatures are collected using a continuous monitoring thermograph that takes an instantaneous reading every two hours. Measured stream temperatures in the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Corn Creek are not meeting Idaho State water quality standards for coldwater biota (Idaho Department of Health and Welfare). Lack of major land-disturbing activities in the mainstem Salmon River from Corn Creek to Long Tom Bar contributes to near-natural habitat conditions for all aquatic species. Stream temperature data has been collected annually throughout the summer period of July-September between 1994-1999 at three locations in the mainstem Salmon River below Corn Creek. The stream temperatures were collected using a continuous monitoring thermograph that takes an instantaneous reading every hour. Measured stream temperatures in the mainstem Salmon River below Corn Creek are not meeting Idaho State water quality standards for coldwater biota (Idaho Department of Health and Welfare).

Finding

The mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar contains four federally listed ESA fish species and related designated critical habitat for Snake River Sockeye and Snake River spring/summer chinook. In terms of habitat, the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar is an important migratory route for anadromous salmonids as well important rearing habitat for all the observed aquatic species. The mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar is a key area for the survival and recovery of federally listed “threatened”

salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. The populations of nationally significant fish species and the river's federally designated critical habitat and near-natural habitat combine to a finding that "fish" is an outstandingly remarkable value for the mainstem Salmon River from North Fork to Long Tom Bar.

WATER QUALITY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river has exceptionally pure, clear and/or clean water. The river is known for its water quality nationally or regionally. The river provides exceptionally high water quality for a variety of beneficial uses including but not limited to fish, wildlife, recreationists and communities.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

A large portion of the Salmon River watershed is located in the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness. Significant tributaries of the Salmon River, such as the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, are located almost entirely in wilderness areas. Human caused water quality impacts in the Salmon River watershed are mostly non-point sources, such as agriculture and forest practices.

The streamflow regime of the Salmon River is very natural with streamflow fluctuations in response to precipitation and weather events. There are no dams that effect the natural streamflow regime on the Salmon River. High flows occur in late May or June when the winter snowpack is melting. Low flows occur in late summer through early spring during periods of low rainfall or snow accumulation. Water diversions on the Salmon River above the Wild and Scenic River segments are primarily for irrigation. Only approximately 3 percent of the watershed above these river segments is irrigated.

Changes in water quality on the Salmon River are usually linked to natural events such as high intensity thunderstorms that can increase soil erosion and stream sedimentation. The water clarity of the Salmon River is very good, except following events such as high intensity thunderstorms or snowmelt runoff that increase water turbidity. The Salmon River supports a variety of beneficial water uses including, fish habitat and recreation opportunities, such as fishing and white water rafting.

Finding

In comparison to other rivers in the region, the water quality of the Salmon River is exceptional. The river provides exceptionally high water quality for a variety of beneficial uses including resident and anadromous fish habitat and exceptional recreation opportunities for thousands of people who come to float the Salmon River every year to enjoy its' clean, clear water. Water quality is an outstandingly remarkable value.

WILDLIFE

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

Wildlife values may be judged on the relative merits of either terrestrial or aquatic wildlife populations or habitat, or a combination of these conditions.

Populations

The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous wildlife species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique, or populations of federal or state listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered or sensitive species. Diversity of species is an important consideration and could in itself lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Habitat

The river or area within the river corridor provides exceptionally high quality habitat for wildlife of national or regional significance, or may provide unique habitat or a critical link in habitat conditions for Federal or State listed (or candidate) threatened, endangered and sensitive species. Contiguous habitat conditions are such that the biological needs of the species are met. Diversity of habitats is an important consideration and could, in itself, lead to a determination of outstandingly remarkable.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

Many species of wildlife, including bighorn sheep, mountain goat, elk, mule deer, moose, wolverine, pine marten, cougar, black bear, bobcat, river otter, coyote, red fox, porcupine, badger, beaver, mink, bats, muskrat, skunk and rattlesnake inhabit the river corridor. Over 75 species of birds, including golden eagle, Chukar partridge, Franklin's, blue and ruffed grouse, Harlequin ducks and other waterfowl, and a variety of neotropical migratory songbirds, also can be observed in the corridor, at least seasonally.

The Salmon River corridor also supplies important habitat for several Federally listed threatened and endangered species including gray wolf, bald eagle and Canada lynx. In addition, the river corridor contains potential habitat for grizzly bears, should they be reintroduced in Idaho.

Wildlife habitat within the Salmon River corridor is highly varied due to the extremes in topography and elevation. Vegetative associations range from high elevation subalpine fir and Douglas-fir communities to ponderosa pine communities at the lower elevations. Within all associations, and especially within the low elevation ponderosa pine type, rock outcrops, open meadows and south slopes occupied by bunchgrasses and shrubs such as mountain mahogany and sagebrush provide important habitat diversity. The river corridor is located within the heart of the Frank Church-River of No Return Wilderness and thus is both large enough and remote enough to provide key big game winter range, summer range, seasonal transition ranges, migration routes, security areas and birthing/rearing areas for all native ungulates. This area is home to one of the largest herds of bighorn sheep in the contiguous United States and was one of the few areas that were not severely impacted by over exploitation (i.e. market hunting) during

the 1800's. The low level of human presence and the abundant wintering herds of three species of native ungulates now provide the key to recovery of gray wolves in central Idaho. The abundance and diversity of wildlife along the river corridor is an important attraction for the thousands of whitewater enthusiasts that float the river each year.

Finding

Wildlife populations are diverse and abundant within the river corridor. The species mix and population numbers are nationally significant, and includes listed threatened, endangered and sensitive species.

The diversity of habitat and quality of habitat is of national significance and the area surrounding and including the river corridor is large enough to sustain fully functional ecosystems. Wildlife is an outstandingly remarkable value in the river corridor based on both populations and habitat.

VEGETATION/BOTANY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains nationally or regionally important populations of indigenous plant species. Of particular significance are species considered to be unique or populations of federally listed or candidate threatened or endangered species. When analyzing vegetation, additional factors such as diversity of species, numbers of plant communities, and cultural importance of plants may be considered.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Salmon River at North Fork is at an elevation of 3600 and drops to an elevation of 1690 at Riggins. The corridor has strongly contrasting vegetation types, primarily keyed to aspect and elevation. The lower elevations support mixed conifer species, including ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. Seral stands of large, mature ponderosa pine occupy the timbered slopes within the river corridor. The forested ecosystems within the corridor at the lower elevations are characteristically dominated by an overstory of large diameter old Ponderosa pine and/or Douglas-fir trees. In many areas along the corridor, management activities (including fire exclusion) have allowed for many smaller trees to grow in under the older and larger Ponderosa pine or Douglas fir. This is converting these ecosystems from a natural open old forest to a densely stocked multi-layered forest.

Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir, interspersed with small forb and grass meadows, are found at higher elevations. Southern aspects that lack forested stands are principally native bunch grass types within the river corridor.

Several low brush and grass species such as pinegrass, wheatgrass, fescue, ceanothus, snowberry, ninebark, serviceberry, and willow grow on the steep, dry, western and southern exposures. Elk sedge, huckleberry, meadow rue, mountain maple, pinegrass, violet, alder, and beargrass occur in the more cool and moist areas. Noxious weeds are also found scattered in the corridor area.

A sensitive plant, Puzzling Halimolobos, occurs within the Wilderness and river corridor. It is typically found within the ponderosa-pine type and is, therefore, likely to occur at lower elevations of the river corridor.

Finding

While the vegetation, including individual species and plant associations, is diverse but not unique or rare within the region of comparison, the lower elevation old open forest ecosystems are regionally important. These old open forests of Ponderosa pine and/or Douglas fir are rapidly disappearing in the Western United States. Within this corridor, the ingrowth of smaller trees has predisposed these older larger diameter trees to lethal fire and attack from insects. Although not explicitly stated in the original Study Report as an outstanding value, we believe vegetation/botany (especially lower elevation older open forests) should be added as an outstandingly remarkable value.

PRE-HISTORY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor must contain one or more sites where there is evidence of occupation or use by Native Americans. Sites must have rare or unusual characteristics or exceptional human interest value. To meet this criteria sites have one or more of the following characteristics: Be of National or regional importance for interpreting prehistory; represent an area where a culture or cultural period was first identified and described; have been used concurrently by two or more cultural groups; or have been used by cultural groups for rare or sacred purposes.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

According to the *Final Report of the 1971 Salmon River Archaeological Survey* 299 Native American sites were identified within the river corridor. Additional work by others has since increased this number significantly. Archaeological site types identified within the river corridor include pictographs, pithouse villages, lithic scatters, human burials, sacred sites, ponderosa pine peeled trees, talus pits, and rockshelters. Scientific excavations at Shoup Rockshelters, Corn Creek, Smith Gulch, Owl Creek, Cove Creek and other locations suggest the river corridor presents an opportunity to understand regional patterns of chronology, settlement, subsistence, and technology in a mountain setting of both Utaztecan speaking Shoshonian and Sahaptan speaking Nez Perce cultures. Archaeological excavations at the Shoup Rockshelters were among the earliest in Idaho, being completed in 1966, and helped define the earliest and rarest cultural components for the Salmon River Mountains, dating to 8000 years ago.

Finding

Pre-history is an outstandingly remarkable value in the Salmon River corridor.

HISTORY

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains one or more sites associated with a significant event, an important person, a cultural activity of the past that was rare in the region, or that significantly illustrates the patterns of history described in the Idaho Historic Preservation Plan. Many such sites are listed on the National Register for Historic Places, which is administered by the National Park Service. A historic site and/or feature in most cases is 50 years old or older.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

According to the *Intensive Cultural Resource Inventory Along the Salmon River Road, Lemhi County, Idaho* 38 historic sites were identified within the upper river corridor between North Fork and Corn Creek alone, 16 of which are eligible to the National Register of Historic Places. There has been no systematic inventory of the entire Salmon River corridor for historic sites, however, unpublished monitoring and inventory work by the Salmon-Challis National Forest suggests large numbers of significant historical sites exist all along the river. Mining and homesteading began in the area in the 1880s and the traces of these long abandoned mines and cabins can still be seen. Outstanding examples include the Blackie Foster cabin, Jim Moore Ranch, Polly Beamis cabin, Shoup townsite, Gold Hill Mine, Clipper Bullion Mine, and other sites. The Forest Service started administering the river corridor around the turn of the 20th Century and sites, such as the 1909 Indianola Ranger Station and Long Tom Picnic Area, are outstanding examples of early Forest Service architecture and administration. In the 1930s, The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) established camps along the Salmon River, like Ebenezer Bar CCC Camp, and reconstructed or constructed many of the roads and Forest Service administration and recreation sites in the area, including Indianola and Long Tom Picnic Area. Additionally, they opened up the upper portion and lower portion of the river corridor by constructing the Salmon River Road through extremely difficult terrain and conditions.

Finding

Historic sites within the river corridor are associated with numerous significant events and people of regional importance and significantly illustrate patterns of history described in the Idaho Historic Preservation Plan (IHPP). History is an outstandingly remarkable value in the Salmon River corridor.

TRADITIONAL USE, CULTURAL

Criteria for Outstandingly Remarkable Value

The river or area within the river corridor contains one or more regionally unique locations of importance to Indian tribes (religious activities, fishing, hunting, and gathering). Locations may have unusual characteristics or exceptional cultural value being integral to continued pursuit of such activities. Locations may have been associated with treaty rights on ceded lands or activities unprotected by treaty or ceded lands or in traditional territories outside ceded lands.

Evaluation of the Present Situation

The Salmon River corridor is within ceded lands for the Nez Perce and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of Idaho. The river has important cultural, traditional and sacred meaning to both Tribes, manifested in salmon fishing, bighorn sheep hunting, traditional plant gathering, visiting pictographs, honoring burial sites, visiting traditional camps, and honoring other sacred sites. There continues today an especially strong connection with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes resulting in yearly visits by Tribal members to hunt bighorn sheep, fish and visit sacred and traditional sites. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, in cooperation with the Forest Service, annually visit the river for several days of river rafting and camping to teach Shoshone-Bannock kids about their heritage. The Nez Perce Tribe maintains contact with sacred sites within the corridor and members hunt, fish and gather plants along its shores. Unfortunately, the remoteness and high cost to visit the river corridor limits present day visitation and Traditional Cultural practices for most members of both Tribes in the nonroaded portion of the river corridor.

Finding

The river corridor has many regionally unique locations of importance to the Shoshone-Bannock and Nez Perce Tribes making it an outstandingly remarkable value for traditional use.

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