

DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE
EAGLE CREEK WILD AND SCENIC RIVER
MANAGEMENT PLAN

Forest Plan Amendment No. 15

USDA Forest Service
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
Eagle Cap, Pine, and La Grande
Ranger Districts

Union and Baker Counties, Oregon

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest is available for public review at the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office in Baker City, Oregon. The EA analyzes alternatives for managing the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The selected alternative described below amends the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan).

DECISION

As Forest Supervisor for the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, it is my decision to implement Alternative B of the EA for the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan. Alternative B protects and enhances the Outstandingly Remarkable (OR) Values while emphasizing water quality and the Fisheries and Recreation OR values and prescribes the following activities:

1. Adopts a management plan for the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River to protect the Outstanding Remarkable (OR) values with an emphasis on water quality, fisheries, and water quality.
2. Modifies the Management Area boundary for MA-7 surrounding Eagle Creek to better protect and enhance the OR values. It is also my decision to recommend this boundary change to the Regional Forester as the final boundary for the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor in accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
3. Provides a detailed monitoring plan to ensure the intent of the Act and management plan are being met.
4. Changes the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum from Semi-primitive Motorized to Semi-primitive Non-motorized in the one-mile Recreational River segment from the Eagle Creek Trailhead to the Wilderness Boundary.

My decision also includes the following change to the Forest Plan to further clarify the management of the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River.

On page 4-75, add a new heading: **"#27. Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River."** Followed by: **The Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River corridor within National Forest Lands, will be managed according to the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan on file at Forest Headquarters.**

ALTERNATIVES

I considered three other alternatives before selecting Alternative B.

- Alternative A (No Action) consisted of managing the river corridor in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines of Management Areas 4, 7, 15, and 16 in the Forest Plan and with other Forest wide Standards and Guidelines and Forest Service manual and policy direction. The river corridor boundary would be a quarter mile either side of the river as specified by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Alternative A provided little direction for managing the corridor to protect and enhance the OR Values.
- Alternative C consisted of protecting and enhancing the OR values with an emphasis on maximizing developed recreation capacity. It also modifies the Management Area boundary for MA-7 surrounding Eagle Creek to better protect and enhance the OR values. This alternative was not selected due to its direct and cumulative impacts on the primitive recreation experience in the corridor.
- Alternative D consisted of an emphasis on the perpetuation and enhancement of the natural functioning ecosystems and a natural-appearing corridor. It also modifies the Management Area boundary for MA-7 surrounding Eagle Creek to better protect and enhance the OR values. This alternative was not selected due to its impacts on the Recreation OR values in the corridor.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

I selected Alternative B because it best achieves project objectives and attains the desired future condition.

Of the four alternatives, Alternative B provides for the best opportunity to emphasize water quality, recreation, and fisheries, and to protect free flow, while still protecting and enhancing the other Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

Alternative B best implements my decision to maintain existing recreation uses and experiences to the extent that the river's Outstandingly Remarkable Values are protected.

Expanding the wild and scenic river boundary to include an additional 654 acres along Eagle Creek, would provide additional protection for riparian vegetation, the Historic Sparta Ditch, sensitive visual areas, and other OR values.

SCOPING AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public has been involved throughout the process. Initially, approximately 12 public meetings were held throughout northeastern Oregon to discuss issues and concerns. Letters were also sent to acquire additional information from public and private landowners and to inform the public on the progress of the management plan.

ISSUES

Several issues were identified during the scoping process. Three significant issues were identified by the interdisciplinary team for analysis in the EA:

- Recreation: What types of recreation facilities and opportunities will be provided, and what level of use will be accommodated within the river corridor, consistent with the requirements to protect and enhance Recreational OR values?
- Scenery: How to perpetuate the predominantly natural appearing landscape over time to ensure protection and enhancement of Scenic OR Values, in light of the effects of activities occurring in the river corridor and larger seen area, and concerns with forest health?

- Fisheries: How to protect and enhance the habitat for salmonids, to ensure that Fisheries OR Values are adequately protected and enhanced?
- Watershed/Water Quality: How to protect water quality and soils in the corridor from the effects of past and continuing activities occurring throughout the watershed, including timber harvest, recreational development and use, grazing, mining, and road building, which may be potentially compounded by naturally unstable and sensitive soils?
- Vegetation Management: What vegetation management activities are most compatible with river objectives that can be used to maintain and improve vegetation diversity, old-growth and late seral stage stands, riparian communities, and long-term forest health, while still protecting and enhancing the OR Values?

Management of each of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values were also addressed as issues. The Outstandingly Remarkable Values are Recreation, Scenery, Fisheries, Geology/Paleontology, and Historic Cultural Resources.

MONITORING

Monitoring will be in accordance with the monitoring plan outlined in the Eagle Creek Wild and Scenic River Management Plan and with the existing direction specified in the Forest Plan. This includes the monitoring for the protection and enhancement of the OR values, free flow, and water quality.

SPECIFICALLY REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

There are no unavoidable, adverse effects associated with implementing Alternative B that are not already identified in the Final EIS for the Forest Plan.

There are no short-term uses proposed in the project. Promoting long-term health and productivity of the Forest's ecosystems is a project objective.

There are no irreversible or irretrievable losses from implementing Alternative B that are not already identified in the Final EIS for the Forest Plan.

There are no unusual energy requirements associated with implementing Alternative B.

Wetlands and floodplains do exist within the river corridor. There are no major projects planned within the wetlands or floodplains. There are however several projects planned within the Eagle Creek floodplain. There is a planned campground construction project to complete a campground loop at the Eagle Creek Trailhead and a reconstruction project planned at the Two Color Campground. In addition, other campgrounds, trails, and dispersed sites would have some minor construction, reconstruction, relocation, and rehabilitation to prevent soil erosion and protect resource values within the Eagle Creek floodplain. A site specific Environmental Analysis would be completed before any of these activities could take place.

The management plan will cause no adverse effects on any Threatened or Endangered species or critical habitat; prime farmland, rangeland, or forest land; cultural resources; or civil rights, women, and minorities not already identified in the Final EIS for the Forest Plan.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on the site-specific environmental analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the Wild and Scenic Eagle Creek Management Plan and Forest Plan Amendment #15 are not major Federal actions significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts discussed in the EA have been disclosed within the appropriate context and will have little intensity. My determination is based on the incorporation of mitigation measures and monitoring requirements associated with Alternative B and the following factors from Title 40 CFR 1508.27:

1. The beneficial and adverse environmental effects described in the EA for Alternative B were considered independently to determine if the project would significantly affect the human environment. No significant impacts were identified.
2. Public response to the project has indicated that the project is not likely to cause effects that are highly controversial. Refer to Chapter I of the EA for a description of the public scoping process.
3. The project causes no highly uncertain effects and no effects that involve unique or unknown risks.
4. There will be no significant adverse cumulative effects from implementing the plan in conjunction with past, present, and foreseeable future actions.
5. The plan will not adversely affect any sites or features listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or any significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
6. The effects of the plan on Threatened and Endangered species were analyzed in a Biological Evaluation (BE). There will be no risk of adversely affecting these species with the plan as described in the EA. The plan will have no adverse effects on Threatened and Endangered species habitat. Over time, the plan is expected to have positive effects on Threatened and Endangered species.
7. The plan is consistent with all known Federal, State, and local laws. Regulations related to the National Forest Management Act and the Endangered Species Act have been incorporated into the project. Environmental Protection Agency herbicide application requirements will be followed.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS

I have determined that this amendment is not significant in relation to the National Forest Management Act of 1976. Adoption of this amendment will not significantly alter Forest Plan goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, or management direction. Indeed, this amendment will enable managers to better meet the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and existing Forest Plan objectives, standards, guidelines, and management direction.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this decision shall not occur within 30 days following publication of the legal notice of the decision in the Baker City Herald.

APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 217. Any Notice of Appeal of this decision must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 (Content of a Notice of Appeal) and must be filed with John Lowe, Regional Forester, P.O. Box 3623, Portland, Oregon 97208 within 45 days of the date legal notice of this decision appears in the Baker City Herald.

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information regarding the Wild and Scenic Eagle Creek Management Plan, contact Steve Davis at the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest Supervisor's Office, P.O. Box 907, Baker City, Oregon 97814 or at (503) 523-1316.

R M Richmond

12/22/94

R. M. RICHMOND
Forest Supervisor
Wallowa-Whitman National Forest

DATE