United States
Department
of Agriculture

Forest Service

**Pacific
Northwest
Region**

1990

Record of Decision

Land and Resource Management Plan

Mt. Hood National Forest

Record of Decision

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Section I
Introduction

Basis and Need for Decision

This Record of Decision (ROD) documents approval of the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for the Mt. Hood National Forest (Forest). This ROD presents reasons for selecting the alternative to be the Forest Plan for the 1.1 million acres of National Forest land. In making this decision I considered the estimated environmental, social, and economic consequences of the alternatives described in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Throughout this ROD I have used technical terms which may not be familiar to large segments of the public. The FEIS and the Forest Plan both contain glossaries which define many of the technical terms used in this document.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan (Proposed Forest Plan) were filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on January 15, 1988. Additional details on meetings, notices, and documents preceding the FEIS and Forest Plan are presented in the FEIS Appendix A.

Authority

The FEIS and Forest Plan were developed under authority of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 219). The FEIS satisfies the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500).

The Forest Plan is part of the framework for long-range resources planning established by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA). The Forest Plan establishes general direction for 10 to 15 years and must be revised at least every 15 years (36 CFR 219.10(g)). It replaces the 1978 Timber Management Plan for the Forest. It adopts or replaces other previous management plans as listed in Chapter I of the FEIS.

Affected Area

The Forest straddles the Cascade Mountain Range and includes the moist western slopes and the drier east side. The elevation of the Forest ranges from 65 feet above sea level on the Columbia River to the summit of Mount Hood, 11,235 feet high.

The Mt. Hood National Forest is in north central Oregon. It is bounded by the Columbia River on the north, by the Willamette National Forest and the Warm Springs Indian Reservation on the south and southeast. To the west, the Forest meets the Willamette Valley and on the east it joins the wheat fields and range lands of eastern Oregon. There are 1.1 million acres within the Forest boundaries. They lie primarily in Clackamas, Multnomah, Hood River, and Wasco Counties. These are the Counties most influenced by the management of the Forest. The Forest Supervisor's Office is in Gresham, Oregon, 15 miles east of Portland. Ranger District Offices are in Dufur, Maupin, Estacada, Troutdale, Parkdale, Zigzag, and at Ripplebrook.

Public Involvement

On January 15, 1988, the DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan were formally released to the public. The public review period closed on May 31, 1988. Many public meetings, presentations, and informal discussions were held concerning the DEIS. During this period over 5,000 responses were received containing more than 80,000 comments.

Forest representatives met often with the State of Oregon Federal Plan Coordinator and various private interest representatives to clarify and correct technical concerns and identify opportunities for improvement to the DEIS. Although the State did not prepare a final coordinated response, the close personal coordination which occurred resulted in a better, more technically accurate Plan.

The Forest updated basic inventories and made other technical changes to produce the Plan based on many of the recommendations from the State, and the public responses received on the DEIS. My staff and I were briefed thoroughly on the public comments, the FEIS,

and all changes. I used this information to make my decision.

In addition, representatives of environmental groups, timber industry, and local government met often with the Forest Supervisor between the DEIS and FEIS to discuss key issues and make recommendations which were used to help clarify and focus the issues.

For further information on specific details of public involvement activities, see FEIS Appendix A and J.

Issues

Land and resource management planning began with the identification of issues and concerns through public contacts with civic and community organizations; individuals; local, State, and federal agencies; private industries; adjacent landowners; various interest groups; and Forest Service employees. After public comments and management concerns were gathered and analyzed, twelve major issues were identified. These issues are described in detail in Chapter I of the FEIS, and were considered throughout the planning process. In addition to the twelve major issues, there were numerous secondary issues. The following twelve issue areas were important in making my decision:

- Level of Timber Supply
- Community Stability Within the Forest Area of Influence
- Old Growth
- Spotted Owl and Management of Indicator Species
- Recreation Activities
- Scenic Quality
- Roadless Areas
- Resources Traditionally Used by Native Americans

- Water Quality and Fish Habitat
- Supply of Developed Recreation Site Opportunities
- Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers
- Deer and Elk Management

Resolution of these issues is addressed in Section III of this ROD.

Alternatives

Alternative approaches were formulated to respond to the major issues in different ways. The alternatives considered are discussed in Section IV of this ROD.

What the Forest Plan is, and is Not

The Forest Plan and accompanying FEIS describe a general, integrated resource program for managing the Forest. The Forest Plan provides direction to manage the Forest to produce goods, services, and use opportunities in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits. It is not a plan for the day-to-day administration activities of the Forest; it does not address such matters as vehicle and equipment management or organizational structure, although these things may be affected by direction in the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan emphasizes the application of various management practices to achieve multiple-use goals and objectives in an economically efficient and environmentally sound manner. The standards and guidelines are the rules that govern the resource management practices and are key to successful implementation of the Forest Plan. They will influence how site-specific practices are implemented. Standards and guidelines will not be violated to achieve annual targets or projected outputs.

If the results of monitoring and evaluation show that management objectives cannot be achieved without violating the standards and guidelines, the Forest will evaluate the need for amending or revising the Forest Plan. If an amendment or revision is needed, one or more of the following could be changed: projected outputs, land allocations, management prescriptions, or standards and guidelines.

As a further response to public input and new information, the Forest Plan establishes numerous multiple-use goals and desired future conditions. These are discussed in detail in the Forest Plan, Chapter IV, and the FEIS, Chapter II.

It is important for the reviewer to understand what the Forest Plan does not do. It does NOT:

- Maximize any single resource use or public service;
- Propose the use of any resource beyond the biological capability of the land to support that use; or
- Propose management of any resource based solely on values in the market place.

Implementation and Budgets

Decisions to proceed with projects are made at the implementation phase of forest management. Project development and scheduling will be achieved through an integrated resource management approach, assuring interdisciplinary teamwork and public involvement throughout the process. When projects are designed, site-specific analyses will be performed. These analyses may result in environmental assessments, environmental impact statements, or decision memos and, possibly, an amendment or revision of the Forest Plan. Any resulting documents may be tiered to the FEIS for this Forest Plan pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28.

Although all outputs in the Forest Plan can be accomplished from a physical, biological, and legal perspective, the Forest Plan does not guarantee that specific output levels will be met. An example is the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) of timber. The ASQ is the maximum chargeable volume of timber that may be sold over the planning period, not necessarily the amount of timber that will be sold. Factors such as the demand for timber products, annual Forest Service budgets, and environment effects of timber harvest will influence the actual volume offered for sale.

Management activities scheduled in this Forest Plan will be associated with multiyear program budget proposals that identify funds necessary to implement the Forest Plan. These proposals will be used to request and allocate funds. Outputs and activities in individual years may be significantly different than the averages shown in Chapter IV of the FEIS depending on available funds.

The Forest Supervisor may change proposed implementation schedules to reflect differences between proposed annual budgets and actual funds received. Such schedule changes shall not be considered a significant amendment to the Forest Plan unless they significantly alter the long-term relationship between levels of multiple-use goods and services projected in the Forest Plan.

Section II
Decisions

I have selected Alternative Q (the Preferred Alternative) from the FEIS for the management of the Forest. The Preferred Alternative was developed in response to concerns raised through the public review of the DEIS and Proposed Forest Plan.

I believe it is essential to issue this Forest Plan now to provide an updated basis for sound resource decisions and from which to make future adjustments. The current Forest direction documents approved for the Forest, do not fully consider the regulations contained in the National Forest Management Act nor the latest scientific, technical and socioeconomic information of the past several years. *The Forest Plan has been developed to* consider these factors and will make dealing with future adjustments more efficient, expedient, and environmentally sound.

Changes from the DEIS

Alternative Q changed or modified several aspects of the Preferred Alternative identified in the DEIS. These changes include the following:

Timber

- Costs related to timber management activities were reviewed and updated.
- A new timber inventory was incorporated and new yield tables were developed.
- Timber suitability was remapped based on additional field review.
- Acres allocated to timber emphasis were decreased.
- The Allowable Timber Sale Quantity (ASQ) decreased.
- Departure harvest from Long Term Sustained Yield Capacity is no longer recommended.

Recreation

- Updated recreation growth and demand projections from State of Oregon were utilized.
- Roadless area acreage was updated.
- Back Country Lakes have been identified as a separate Management Area.
- Visual Quality acres with special management have increased.

Wildlife

- Spotted owl direction contained in the Regional Guide was incorporated into FEIS.
- Big game management standards were made more specific.
- Pine Oak management area goals and standards were clarified.
- Threatened and endangered species management direction was made site specific.
- The Northern Spotted Owl was listed as "Threatened" in July 1990 by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

- Portions of eleven rivers were found eligible for Wild, Scenic or Recreation designation.
- Five rivers were designated by Congress in 1988 as Wild/Scenic/or Recreational Rivers.

Watershed

- Special Emphasis watersheds with special management were increased.

In response to public comments, many of the standards and guidelines in the Proposed Forest Plan were also modified for clarity of intent.

Program Decisions

The program decisions I make here are accompanied by the necessary supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. Additional NEPA analysis for these decisions is not expected to be done and is not required. A final decision may be revisited or re-assessed during implementation if monitoring and

evaluation indicate fundamental changes in data or information have occurred since this ROD. These decisions are not expected to be routinely revisited during site-specific analysis however. These decisions are as follows:

- Forestwide goals and objectives.
- Forestwide desired future condition.
- Forestwide standards and guidelines.
- Management area locations and goals.
- Management area standards and guidelines.
- Monitoring plan and evaluation process.
- Forestwide allowable sale quantity.
- Lands suitable and selected for timber harvesting.
- Management indicator species allocations
- Roadless Area allocations

Other Decisions

Northern Spotted Owl

A decision was made on July 23, 1990, by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to list the northern spotted owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). As management strategies are developed in response to the listing, changes to the Forest Plan are likely to be required, including plan amendment.

The Forest Plan and FEIS were prepared using the standards and guidelines in the Pacific Northwest Regional Guide, as amended by the Chief's decision of December 8, 1988. On October 3, 1990 the Secretary of Agriculture announced the vacation of the 1988 Record of Decision and all direction therein, 55 FR 40412. In addition, the SOHAs established in compliance with the 1988 Record of Decision were also vacated, as well as any previous decisions concerning management of spotted owl habitat. All Forest Plans were amended to incorporate the vacation and return the SOHAs to land classifications of adjacent lands as established in the respective Forest Plans. This vacation considered the June 22, 1990 listing of the northern spotted owl as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and the recommendations of the Interagency Scientific Committee's report "A Conservation Strategy for the Northern Spotted Owl," May 1990.

My decision is to approve Alternative Q as the management direction for the Mt. Hood National Forest with the understanding that it is modified by the October 3 Notice of the Secretary. This Plan will be amended or revised to reflect longer-term decisions dealing with the northern spotted owl as the result of legislation or the adoption of a recovery plan by the Fish and Wildlife Service or a new long-term decision by the Secretary's Task Force.

Pending enactment of new legislation, any applicable actions by the Endangered Species Committee, adoption of a recovery plan by the Fish and Wildlife Service, or the results of further consultation between the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service, all management activities will be conducted in a manner not inconsistent with the Interagency Scientific Committee recommendations.

East Fork Hood River - Wild, Scenic, Recreational River Suitability

Upon reviewing the suitability report for the East Fork of the Hood River, I have decided to not recommend this river for designation under the Wild and Scenic River Act. See Issue Resolution section for detail explanation.

Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation

The Forest Plan incorporates the Pacific Northwest Region's FEIS for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation. In implementing the Forest Plan through project activities, the Forest will comply with the Record of Decision issued by the Regional Forester dated December 8, 1988, and the Mediated Agreement of May 1989. Use of all vegetation management techniques is allowed only when other methods are ineffective or will unreasonably increase project costs. Emphasis must be on prevention and early treatment of unwanted vegetation, and on full public involvement in all aspects of project planning and implementation. Information about the vegetation management FEIS, ROD, and Mediated Agreement are available at the Forest Supervisor's Office.

Winter Sports/Ski Areas

Ski areas shall be allowed to expand depending on appropriate level of NEPA analysis based on a case-by-case evaluation and actual public need. I have decided to fully develop the existing five ski areas before allow-

ing new downhill ski areas. Eureka Peak could be considered as an eventual expansion to Multorpor/Ski Bowl.

Olallie Further Planning Area

I have decided not to recommend the RARE II Olallie Lake Further Planning Area for wilderness classification. The area will be managed under the Special Interest Area - Scenic Classification.

Bull Run

Direction contained within the 1979 Bull Run Planning Unit FEIS has been adopted into the Forest Plan.

Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area

Standards and guidelines that are compatible with the Scenic Area Act have been developed. If there are standards within the final Scenic Area Plan which are determined to be in conflict with this Plan, I expect to amend the Forest Plan in order to be consistent.

Memoranda of Understanding (Municipal Watersheds)

I have decided to continue the memoranda of understanding that currently exist for the municipal watersheds of The Dalles and Portland.

Intended Activities

I also intend that the Forest will carry out certain scheduled activities. These proposed and probable activities are displayed in activity schedules in the Forest Plan Appendix A. Unlike the programmatic decisions listed above, these proposed activities are not accompanied by necessary NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. Additional environmental analysis for these projects will be done during Forest Plan implementation.

Recommendations

Research Natural Areas

I am recommending the addition of two Research Natural Areas (RNA) and the expansion of an existing RNA. The authority to make final decisions on the recommendations lies with the Chief of the Forest Service. These recommendations are accompanied by supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure. If the Chief accepts the recommendation, the resulting final decision will not ordinarily be revisited or re-assessed by the Forest Service during implementation of this Forest Plan.

Special Interest Areas

I am also recommending the addition of 12 additional and 2 expansions of Special Interest Areas totaling approximately 26,000 acres. If the Chief accepts the recommendations, the resulting final decision will not ordinarily be revisited or re-assessed by the Forest Service during implementation of this Forest Plan.

See Chapter 3 of FEIS for discussion of these areas.

Section III
Rationale for the Decision

Issue Resolution

I approached my decisions by first reviewing the major issues, the publics' comments on those issues, and then how the various alternatives responded to these issues. I present my rationale for these decisions in the same manner below. My decision to select the Preferred Alternative (Alternative Q in the FEIS) as the Forest Plan is based on my assessment that Alternative Q best maximizes net public benefits. It provides a balanced level of diverse benefits and it is most responsive to public issues. Numerous considerations have had a bearing on my decision regarding multiple-use of the Forest. No single factor or individual consideration has predominated in my decision. I reviewed the environmental consequences of the Preferred Alternative and the other alternatives. The Forest Plan, to the best of my knowledge, complies with all legal requirements applicable to the Forest.

The early identification of issues affecting the National Forests is consistent with well-reasoned management of public lands. Regulations to implement NFMA require that one or more alternatives in the FEIS for the Forest Plan address each of the major issues. The response of each alternative to the twelve major issues was a major consideration in the selection of the Preferred Alternative (FEIS, Chapter II). The reasons for choosing the Preferred Alternative are discussed below on an issue by issue basis.

The following discussions summarize many of the important factors which I considered. They explain why I believe Alternative Q, as described in the FEIS, will maximize net public benefits when compared to the other alternatives, including those offered by non-Forest Service groups.

Issue: Level of Timber Supply

Timber management has been guided by a Timber Management Plan approved in 1978. The 1978 Timber Management Plan was amended to account for reductions in the land base due to new Wilderness Areas, Unit Plans and to take into account the effect of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) accomplishments. With amendments it estimated an annual total sale program of 387 MMBF. The average total harvested annually from 1979 through 1988 was 369 million board feet.

The total annual timber sale program for the Forest historically has represented about 7% of the timber production from Forests in Region 6 (Oregon and Washington) and about 3% of the production from the entire National Forest System. Thus, the amount of timber produced on the Forest assumes some level of national as well as local importance. In addition, since the wood products industry is one of the three major components of the economy of the State of Oregon, concern has been high for several years about the level of contribution the Forest's timber resource makes to the overall timber supply within the State as well.

Facets of this issue include the level of timber sales, effects on other resources, and effects on the economy of local communities.

Public comments on the DEIS focused on the harvest/no harvest debate. Some people believed that the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) was too high, especially considering departure, resulting in unacceptable adverse effects to other resource values. Others believed that the level of harvest should be maintained or increased to provide the raw material to help satisfy needs for wood products and to provide a stabilizing force on the economies of local communities which are highly dependent upon the various wood products industries.

In addition, many comments suggested improvements which could be made to the technical analysis of timber availability. Because of these technical concerns, the Forest reviewed the land suitability inventory, updated growth and standing inventory volumes, and created more analysis options. This was done by adjusting some inventory stand categories, adding fertilization options and adding commercial thinning options.

The alternatives developed provide an average annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) ranging from 18 million cubic feet (108 MMBF) to 53 million cubic feet (317 MMBF). Once established, ASQ becomes the ceiling for harvest of chargeable volume which may not be exceeded for the plan period (10 years). Chargeable volume is that timber which exists on lands suitable for timber production and which meets standards for utilization. The alternative I selected, Alternative Q, estab-

lishes an average annual ASQ of 32 million cubic feet (189 MMBF).

The three most important factors that determine the ASQ and the level of harvest that can be sustained in the long-term are the number of acres suited for timber production, the intensity of timber management, and the rate of harvest.

Land Suited for Timber Production: The number of acres considered tentatively suitable is based on a 1988 analysis. About 58% of the total Forest acres considered tentatively suitable for timber management have allocations which allow chargeable harvest to occur. The remaining 42% is in allocations which have no chargeable harvest because of consideration for other resource values including riparian areas, roadless recreation, special interest areas, wildlife habitat, and management requirements (MRs). The 42%, which is approximately 286,000 acres, is the minimum number of acres needed to meet the integrated management goals of the Forest Plan.

Intensity of Management: The types of silvicultural treatments available in any management area are determined by the application of management area and Forest-wide standards and guidelines. The Forest Plan provides the option to apply the full range of silvicultural treatments including uneven-aged management to all management areas. Intensity options reflect concerns for fragmentation of old growth, maintaining snag habitat and provisions for leaving large down material on site.

The decision on the most appropriate method of harvest and follow-up treatment will be made on an individual timber sale project basis, consistent with the standards and guidelines in the Plan. The achievement of the ASQ assumes harvesting approximately 2,900 acres annually. However, this figure will vary according to the mix of silvicultural practices used (clearcutting, shelterwood, commercial thinning, etc.).

Rate of Harvest: The rate of harvest in each area is determined by application of management area and Forestwide standards and guidelines. Objectives for scenic quality, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, biological diversity, and watershed cumulative effects have a strong influence on the expected rate of harvest in specific locations. The allowable sale quantity (ASQ) includes these objectives. They were modeled on a drainage basis.

The sale of chargeable volume will be monitored against the ASQ and will be monitored on the basis of cubic foot measurement. Board foot volume associated with the cubic foot volume (i.e., board foot/cubic foot conversion ratio) varies from stand to stand depending on the size and form of the trees. Both measures are displayed in the Forest Plan because board foot has been and continues to be the customary unit of measure.

The acres to be harvested will also be monitored. Any difference between the acreage assumed to be sold and that actually sold, as well as any difference between the volume planned for sale and the actual volume sold will be evaluated. If the results of the evaluation warrant, the plan will be amended. The details of the monitoring and evaluation planned are contained in Chapter 5 of the Forest Plan.

The ASQ is based on the 1986 timber inventory and associated yield tables which were developed in 1989 and 1990. Both were reviewed intensively and found appropriate for constructing and analyzing alternatives for the FEIS. Over the next 12 months, the Forest will continue reviewing the application of this new information to project ASQ. If the results of this validation so warrants, the plan will be amended.

The average annual Timber Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ), which includes ASQ and volume not meeting utilization standards or originating from lands not suited for timber production is estimated to be about 215 MMBF (36.4 million cubic feet).

I think this level of timber program will provide for an adequate mix of wood products, income to the Treasury and return to the counties, timber related jobs, and the protection of the various resource values contributing to the net public benefit. This reduction in sell level from the Draft EIS reflects the amenity values provided by the forest near an urban center.

The ASQ and TSPQ includes 13 million cubic feet of volume for the first decade scheduled from inventoried roadless areas. If the volume scheduled from these areas cannot be achieved, that volume will not be replaced by volume elsewhere.

Issue: Community Stability

The primary zone of Forest influence includes the Portland metropolitan area as well as Multnomah, Clackamas, Hood River, Wasco and portions of Marion counties. These areas contain over 1,500,000 people. The Forest is an important recreation area and source of forest products for residents of these areas.

Local communities and Forest users are affected by the availability of recreation opportunities, payments to county governments from Forest receipts, production of market goods (primarily timber), and other amenities such as enjoyment of the visual quality of the Forest.

Economic activities affecting local individuals include logging, sawmill operations, tourism, and various recreational pursuits.

Forest management activities and resulting outputs influence job opportunities, incomes, and the quality of life of residents in local communities. Public comments on the DEIS indicated deep concern about future employment opportunities and community stability. Many individuals feel the Forest should maintain or increase emphasis on commodity production. Others feel the Forest should emphasize other values such as clean water, wildlife and fish habitats, and recreation opportunities. Many individuals recognize the importance of payments to counties based on revenues from timber sales.

The range of alternatives shows considerable variation in the resource outputs and in the five social and economic factors that have a bearing on the impacts to community stability; jobs, income, payments to counties, lifestyles, and community cohesion. The social and economic environment that surrounds the Forest will be affected as a consequence of implementing any of the proposed alternatives.

The continued controversy over National Forest resource management and the related effects on people is a concern to me. I take seriously my mandate to manage all of the resources of the National Forests in an integrated manner and to ensure the long range productivity of all the resources. Decisions in this Forest Plan will affect communities. The issue, however, is not timber supply alone. Other factors, such as providing firewood, remanufacturing, log transport into and out of the area, automation, market conditions, and rate of liquidation of old growth, affect jobs, employment levels, county receipts, and community stability. Other non-timber businesses and industries also contribute significantly to the economic well-being of the community and will also influence the future balance of Forest resource outputs.

Increases in recreation and tourism on the Mt. Hood National Forest will increase jobs locally. These jobs may not command as high a salary as those related to the timber industry. The importance of timber harvest levels to jobs is recognized, but decisions by industry (e.g. automation) also affect the number of jobs. Also within the last 10 years many of the local community characteristics have changed. Many are no longer dependant solely on a timber based economy and have diversified or have become satellite communities for the Portland Metropolitan Area. Some small communities on the east side of the forest, however, have changed little in recent years and are heavily dependent on forest timber resources.

Reductions in timber volumes on the Forest will have an impact on jobs in the timber industry. I am directing the Supervisor of Mt. Hood National Forest to monitor the economic impacts of the decisions I am making. The Forest Service will work with and through various government and business development programs to stimulate and expand economic activities in resource based communities. A great deal of this is already being accomplished through marketing strategies with local recreation and tourism agencies. Decisions contained in the Forest Plan will affect communities.

In my judgment, the Selected Alternative best meets the net public benefit by producing a mix of commodity outputs and amenity resources that will contribute to the long-term economic stability of local communities; while maintaining a healthy ecosystem, diversity of plant and animal species habitat, and a diversity of recreational settings--all of which are important objectives in National Forest management. The Forest will work with communities to address these effects within the framework of the Pacific Northwest Strategy.

Issue: Maintenance and Distribution of Old Growth

As interpreted by the Mt. Hood National Forest, data from the 1988 Mature and Over Mature Survey (MOMS), completed after the DEIS, indicates that about 224,700 acres of the Forest is covered by old-growth trees as defined by the Regional Guide and about 120,600 acres meet the Pacific Northwest Research Note 447 definition. The total amount of old growth on the forest equals about 345,300 acres. See Chapter 3 of FEIS for further discussion.

The facets of this issue include the trade-offs between conserving old growth for its benefits to wildlife habitat and ecosystem diversity, its recreational and aesthetic values, and continuing historic timber harvest levels to support future demands for timber.

The intensification of public interest surrounding old growth was reflected in comments to the DEIS involving a number of key issues. Some of the public did not feel the DEIS recognized the full significance of the remaining old growth on the Forest. Significant aspects that were identified included old growth providing forest structure, old growth as a reservoir of timber supply, and old growth as an ecosystem providing a unique habitat in support of other plant and animal species.

Allocations that provide for the preservation of old-growth stands vary by alternative, but include Wilderness, Research Natural Areas, Special Interest Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, roadless areas, riparian areas, old-growth groves, and wildlife habitat areas for Management Indicator Species.

The estimated amount of present old growth remaining at the end of the fifth decade (2040) in the alternatives ranges from 185,600 acres to 290,000 acres. The amount harvested in the first decade ranges from 15,100 acres to 44,500 acres.

Old growth is one of the key features of the Forest. I have decided to implement a Forest Plan that recognizes this by striking a balance between the competing values. The Forest Plan schedules harvest on about 24,000 acres of old growth during the first decade. If updates and future Forest Plans continue the direction in this Forest Plan, the Forest would have about 275,000 acres of the currently existing old growth at the end of the fifth decade (2040). Estimates are derived from projected harvest where the average age is over 170.

The Forest Plan includes Special Old-Growth Management Areas totaling about 2,000 acres. The Forest has specifically recognized these areas as representative stands of old-growth trees, providing opportunities for interpretation and scenic enjoyment.

In addition to total acres and representative stands, my decision also includes attention to the distribution of old-growth stands across the Forest and to the structural attributes of individual stands of old growth. Standards and guidelines have been added to provide for the maintenance of structural features of old-growth stands as part of the management prescription. This is necessary to maintain the old-growth ecosystem component of diversity at the Forest level, the landscape level, and the stand level.

The Forest Plan includes management direction to categorize old-growth stands, reduce the rate of fragmentation, maintain corridors of mature stands as links across the Forest, maintain green and standing dead trees in managed stands, and provide a continuous supply of large dead wood in all stands.

By this decision I am directing the Forest Supervisor to establish a process and timeline to continue the Forest-wide effort to inventory and protect stands of old growth. This effort will be coordinated with plans and direction developed in response to the listing of the spotted owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. I recognize that recommendations for additional protection may result in Forest Plan amendments, but this inventory is essential to complete the process of providing for the many significant values associated with old-growth forests.

All of these actions help maintain options for future management of old growth while providing a sustained flow of timber products to meet commodity needs.

Issue: Viable Populations of Spotted Owls and Management Indicator Species

The Mt. Hood sustains a wide variety of fish and wildlife species because of its diversity of habitats. Some of the management activities that affect fish and wildlife habitat are timber harvest, recreation, livestock grazing, road management, and fire management. The wildlife issues on the Forest involve management indicator species such as spotted owl, big-game species, and anadromous fish habitat.

Spotted Owl

Between the Draft and Final EIS for the Mt. Hood Forest Plan, a Supplemental Impact Statement for spotted owl management was issued by the Pacific Northwest Region of the U.S. Forest Service. The analysis in this document considered the conflicting views and scientific information of others. It provided new criteria for establishing "Spotted Owl Habitat Area" (SOHA) networks on forests in Washington and Oregon, including the Mt. Hood National Forest. While the Draft EIS considered a total of 1000 acres for each SOHA on the Forest, the SEIS required that the Forest dedicate 1500 acre SOHA's.

Recently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Spotted Owl as threatened in the range of the northern subspecies which includes the Mt. Hood National Forest. Results of this listing process will be used to make appropriate adjustments to the Plan.

I decided to adopt a spotted owl habitat network that meets the direction given in the SEIS. Complying with this direction, which is included in the standards and guidelines of the selected alternative, helps maintain the continued viability of the spotted owl and other mature/old growth dependent wildlife species.

The spotted owl network consists of dedicated "Spotted Owl Habitat Areas," suitable habitat in wilderness, and other suitable habitat in management areas not allowing a scheduled timber harvest. The selected alternative will maintain about 270,000 acres or about 45 percent of the 600,000 acres of known suitable spotted owl habitat on the Forest. This network is well distributed

throughout the Forest and takes into account both suitable habitat and location of known spotted owls. Refer to the "Compatibility With Other Agency Goals and Plans" section for further discussion of Spotted Owl direction.

The Spotted Owl network will also be utilized by other indicator species such as pine marten, and pileated woodpecker.

Big Game

Big game such as deer and elk, management indicator species, make up an important component of wildlife diversity on the Forest. The preferred alternative in the DEIS contained standards and guidelines, as well as management prescriptions addressing big game, but no management area allocations. Although many public comments favored the preservation of wildlife, other groups felt that the constraints placed on timber harvest to benefit wildlife were too restrictive. See Deer and Elk Issue discussion.

It is my decision to adopt the standards and guidelines for the deer and elk summer and winter range allocations as shown on the Preferred Alternative map. These standards and guidelines provided protection during critical periods.

Fisheries

The Forest has about 1,640 miles of perennial streams and 3,500 acres of lakes, reservoirs and ponds. Many of these streams and lakes support an anadromous and/or resident fishery. Indian tribes and agencies felt that our preferred alternative standards and guidelines in the DEIS were inadequate to protect fish habitat.

I am implementing a revised set of standards and guidelines and management prescriptions in the selected alternative that will provide for the assurance of continued high quality fish habitat in the future. The Draft standards and guidelines were stated in general qualitative terms. The new quantitative standards and guidelines in the final Plan set forth measurable parameters for sediment, temperature, channel morphology and flood plain/riparian vegetation. This will allow the Forest to monitor the environmental impacts of management practices more accurately. In addition, I am implementing an accelerated stream/watershed survey program to assess current habitat conditions.

Issue: Conflicts Between Management Activities and Competing Recreational Activities

Conflicts can arise between recreational uses and other management activities, as well as between different types of recreation uses. Management activities which disturb the natural features can conflict with many recreational uses.

Responses to the DEIS indicated that much more of the Forest land base needs to be placed in allocations that provide for or do not conflict with recreational activities. Others are concerned that the effects of providing recreational opportunities in terms of reduced timber harvest, and the subsequent effects on the economic stability of nearby communities, may be unacceptable.

The Forest receives over 4 million visitor days of use per year. About 33% of the use is at developed sites, and about 63% of the use is for dispersed recreation activities and 4% is in Wilderness. Recreation use is continuing to increase as social patterns change and the population of Western Oregon communities grows.

Recreation opportunities are available throughout the Forest across a spectrum of landscape settings that range from the densely forested West Cascades to the sparsely vegetated and dryer east side of the Forest, including the high elevation meadow and lake-dotted Cascade Crest. Opportunities range from high use urbanized campgrounds to primitive wilderness experiences. Camping, water related activities, driving for pleasure, and sightseeing are the most popular recreation experiences on the Forest.

The primary facets of this issue are the demand for a wide variety of recreation experiences, management of off-road vehicle use, and management of the Forest trail system.

Dispersed Recreation: Demand for recreation opportunities on the Forest remains high. People are interested in maintaining a wide variety of options for recreation activities and there is concern about how management decisions made in the Forest Plan will increase or decrease these opportunities.

Currently, the Forest does not have the capacity to meet recreation demands in all Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes. (ROS classes in ascending order of development are Primitive, Semi-primitive Non-motorized, Semi-primitive Motorized, Roaded Natural, Roaded Modified, Rural and Urban.)

Primitive and semi-primitive opportunities have decreased over time as roading and timber harvest expanded. Even if existing inventories of these two clas-

ses of opportunities were retained, future demand is expected to exceed capacity by the early 2000s. The land allocations selected best help meet the shortage of primitive opportunities.

Trails are an important component of the Forest recreation settings and system of travel ways which is one of the key features of the Forest. The Mt. Hood National Forest will emphasize trail management by assigning appropriate visual quality, road crossing and management activity disturbance standards and guidelines to the trail system. This will protect the experience of the trail user.

Issue: Maintenance and Enhancement of Scenic Quality

The Forest landscape provides a broad range of natural and managed scenic experiences for visitors and travelers. Several State or Federal highways traverse the Forest. Two of these have been proposed as National Scenic Byways. The Forest maintains about 1300 miles of Wilderness and nonwilderness trails. It is estimated that more than 7 million travelers view the Forest in a year.

Providing and maintaining pleasant, high quality visual experiences for Forest users is accomplished in two ways: First, through the allocations of visually sensitive lands as scenic viewsheds or other recreational categories with standards and guidelines designed for high scenic quality, and secondly, through long term management of designated viewsheds and other lands to achieve the desired future conditions described in the Forest Plan.

The facets of this issue include concern about the evidence of timber harvesting from major highways, homesites, popular recreation sites, trails, and the role of visual quality objectives in planning resource management activities.

The visual quality of the Forest landscape is of concern to adjacent landowners, travelers, and Forest users. Many people prefer not to see evidence of timber harvesting from major highways and popular recreation areas such as trails, campgrounds, and scenic overlooks. The quality of the Forest's scenic resources such as the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area are important to the local tourist industry as well as the Pacific Northwest. The scenery of the Forest is an important asset to the local communities which are attempting to diversify their economic base.

People who tend to favor utilization of Forest resources, however, feel that most visual effects of resource management activities are temporary. They believe that visual quality objectives should, therefore, play a reduced role in planning such activities.

The alternatives have varying effects on scenic quality as a result of the type and distribution of the proposed management areas and their associated activities. In general, alternatives emphasizing timber harvest and supporting road construction reduce the total available naturally appearing landscape.

I will implement a scenic quality strategy that places increased emphasis on scenic quality and is sensitive to the need to maintain and enhance scenic quality for Forest recreation visitors and travelers along major travel routes, trails, and around unique and special sites. It is my intent that within identified foreground retention areas, numerous large diameter trees be a major component of stands visible up to a distance of one half mile from selected travelways, water bodies or public use areas. This strategy also allows intensive timber management activities on other portions of the Forest.

In the Forest Plan approximately 18% of the Forest will be managed to maintain the natural landscape allowing for ecological changes only. This meets the preservation visual quality objective.

Approximately 37% of the Forest is allocated to management area prescriptions that will maintain a natural appearing or slightly altered level of scenic quality (retention and partial retention). This includes management of the foreground areas of all State and federal highways, major Forest roads, and selected trails and use areas to ensure that landscape alterations will not be highly evident (retention). In addition, all other existing and proposed nonwilderness trails, or trail segments, are assigned a visual quality objective appropriate to the level of use in response to heavy public input.

Activities which alter vegetation or land forms in a way that may dominate the characteristic landscape will occur in management areas that emphasize timber harvest. These areas will meet the modification visual quality objective and amount to 45% of the Forest.

Issue: Disposition of Remaining Roadless Areas

Current roadless area acreage is approximately 118,000 acres. The Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 released these areas to be managed for uses other than Wilderness. In the DEIS Preferred Alternative parts of the Eagle, Larch Mountain, Wind Creek, and Salmon-Huckleberry unroaded areas were included in the Unroaded Recreation allocation. In addition, parts of six areas

were included in the Special Interest allocation which maintained semiprimitive recreation opportunities.

The issue is whether all, part or none of these remaining acres should be kept unroaded. If these areas remain unroaded, the existing fish and wildlife habitat, some old growth, and semiprimitive recreation opportunities could be maintained. If these areas become roaded, these resources may be adversely affected and timber production may be increased.

Many people have indicated their support for keeping the unroaded areas in a natural state. In their comments on the Draft Forest Plan, some felt that all 11 areas should be maintained, while others felt particular areas should be added to the preferred alternative. The most frequently named areas for retention as roadless were Twin Lakes, Larch Mountain and Wind Creek. They contend retention of these areas in an undisturbed state is essential to maintaining diversity of the Forest's ecosystems, enhancing habitat of sensitive plant and animal species, preservation of water quality, perpetuation of wildlife populations, and continuation of diverse recreation opportunities. Demand for semiprimitive recreation opportunities on the Mt. Hood currently exceeds supply, and this shortfall is projected to increase in the future (see FEIS Chapter II). Many people see the remaining unroaded areas as a key to meeting the demand for semi-primitive recreation opportunities.

Others however, feel that these lands should be managed for timber production, because the Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 released them for multiple use management. In their comment on the Draft Forest Plan, they expressed the view that every opportunity to increase timber harvest levels by roading and harvesting in these remaining unroaded areas should be utilized. They believe that the timber in the roadless areas (which includes old-growth timber) should be harvested while it is still commercially valuable. They see the land base for timber production shrinking as additional areas are periodically designated for uses that preclude development for commodity production. Many feel that allocation of any additional land to uses that do not allow development would be unwarranted and unacceptable.

The alternatives vary in the amount of roadless land they maintain in an undeveloped condition. The alternatives propose management of these lands for uses that range between full commodity production and retaining all in undeveloped condition. Appendix C of the FEIS provides a detailed account of the unroaded acres.

The disposition of roadless lands was a particularly difficult decision. Lands allocated to development and production uses take decades to recover their roadless qualities, once they are developed. I arrived at my decision after careful analysis and review of each roadless area. Allocation of areas, including their boundary locations, was determined only after considerable interaction among Forest managers and interested and concerned individuals and organizations.

I decided to maintain significant portions of six inventoried roadless areas in a roadless condition under this Forest Plan. There will be about 81,100 acres, or 69% of the inventoried roadless acreage, maintained in an undeveloped condition. Specifically since the DEIS, major portions of Twin Lakes and Wind Creek areas have been allocated to unroaded recreation which does not allow regulated timber harvest. In the DEIS, the Twin Lakes area was allocated to timber emphasis. Approximately one thousand acres were added to the Wind Creek unroaded allocation. These acres had been scenic viewshed in the DEIS which did allow chargeable harvest. The qualities of these sites warrant maintaining them in an unroaded condition. Eagle, Lake, Larch Mountain, and Olallie have been allocated to various other allocations which protect the unroaded condition.

The remaining 37,300 acres are allocated to various levels of development, and are not expected to retain their roadless character due to the land allocation they have been assigned. Future roads in these areas are to be planned, designed, constructed and maintained to the minimum level necessary to meet the needs of all resources.

As I discussed for the Recreation and Timber Issues, the Forest will not meet the expected future demand for either semiprimitive recreation or timber supply with this Forest Plan. These are two of the most important concerns associated with the Roadless Issue. I selected the disposition of roadless areas in the Forest Plan because it provided the best available balance between these competing uses.

The Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 identified one unroaded area, Olallie, as a Further Planning Area. This area was to be evaluated for a range of management options, including timber emphasis to Wilderness management. I have reviewed the wilderness attributes of the area as well as the other resource values and opportunities. It is my decision to allocate the Olallie Further Planning area to a Special Interest Area Scenic classification. This allocation allows for public recreational use and enjoyment of important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage. This allocation precludes chargeable harvest. Non-chargeable harvest will be allowed.

However, no activities that will change the wilderness characteristics will be allowed in this area for 90 Congressional-session days following official notice to Con-

gress. This official notice will be given soon after the legal notice is published in The Oregonian announcing approval of this plan.

Issue: Diminishing Supply of Availability of Resources Traditionally used by Native American Religious and Cultural Life

Native Americans who reside in the Mt. Hood area have traditionally used lands that are now within the Mt. Hood National Forest for hunting, fishing, gathering plant resources, and conducting religious ceremonies. These tribal groups have raised the issue of decreases in availability of the forest products that they have traditionally used in religious and cultural practices. These products range from anadromous fish and wildlife, such as salmon and elk, to a variety of plant resources, such as huckleberries, cedar and alder.

These groups have expressed a concern that years of land management to promote timber may have reduced the supply and accessibility of the resources they value. For example, huckleberries that are gathered by Native Americans may be reduced by Forest Service management activities.

In addition, wildlife and anadromous fish resources are a concern to these groups. Salmon, which require cool, clean water for habitat, are an extremely valuable resource to most local Native Americans. These groups have expressed a concern that the habitat and populations of deer, elk, and salmon may be affected by timber based resource management.

Following release of the Draft EIS and proposed Forest Plan, the Forest received formal and detailed comments and recommendations from Native American groups, primarily the Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Often mentioned were strong concerns over lack of adequate protection of Forest resources, specifically anadromous fisheries and riparian zones, big game, timber management, old growth, and unroaded areas.

During development of the final Forest Plan, the Forest has consulted with Native American people to ensure greater consideration to their needs and rights under existing treaties. Both through formal and informal consultation with Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, and other Native Americans, the Forest has established greater understanding of Native American concerns for management of the Forest.

The selected alternative affords greater consideration to the treaty-protected rights of fishing and hunting than was provided in the DEIS. Additionally, the selected alternative will support big game populations, which are important to tribes for both subsistence and ceremonial purposes. Uneven-aged timber management will occur on many acres of the Forest. Protection of sites having religious and cultural importance are also provided for by the Plan.

In response to dialogue with the Tribes, comments received at meetings, and written public responses, the planning documents have been strengthened to more adequately address the concerns of American Indians. The Selected Alternative emphasizes that treaty rights and fundamental opportunities relating to religious, ceremonial, and traditional concerns will be fully protected and preserved. It recognizes the importance of ancestral sites, uses of Forest resources, and the central reverence and value held for traditionally used forest resources.

The Forestwide standards concerning human rights have also been strengthened in recognition of our obligation to protect treaty rights and American Indian religious freedom.

Implementation of the selected alternative ensures the availability of sites and areas within the Forest for religious and ceremonial use by American Indians. The Plan requires consultation with affected tribal groups so that projects are designed to protect those sites and areas.

Issue: Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Fish Habitat and Water Quality

Water flowing from the Forest is of high quality and provides many benefits. The Forest furnishes water for municipal and domestic uses, fish hatcheries, electric power generation, irrigation, and recreation. Water provides fish and wildlife habitat, and supports a highly productive vegetative environment.

In response to the Draft Forest Plan, State and Federal agencies, tribal groups and environmental groups asked for a reduction of the impacts to watersheds that have been heavily impacted in the past. They expressed concern that timber harvest and road building can affect water quality, channel stability, water yield, mass wasting and other watershed characteristics. These effects can and do affect fish production.

An opposing viewpoint expressed the importance of timber in riparian areas and surrounding watersheds as part

of the timber supply from the Forest, and generally opposed heavily restricted timber harvest from these areas.

I have decided to place increased emphasis on watershed management and water quality. Approximately 16,000 acres are allocated as Key Site Riparian (A9, DA9, and EA 9) management areas where tree removal and other development activities will be very limited. Nearly 106,100 acres are allocated to General Riparian (B7, DB7, EB7) management areas where limited timber harvest may occur, but ground disturbance and other vegetation removal is restricted. An additional 78,600 acres are included in the Special Emphasis Watershed (B6) management area, which emphasizes the maintenance and improvement of watershed, riparian, and aquatic habitat conditions. In my judgment, the inherent values of these resources exceed the potential value that would be derived if these areas were allocated to management that includes intensive timber harvest.

Standards and guidelines protect fish habitat through controls placed on location, design, and implementation of management activities (e.g., timber harvest, road construction). Road-related capital investments will provide for proper functioning of stream crossings with respect to fish passage. Restoration of habitat degraded from past activity will occur; this work will be evaluated and implemented at the project level.

Standards and guidelines also protect streams and streambanks from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses and deposits of sediment. In addition, the Forest will implement Best Management Practices that, at a minimum, meet State water quality standards and comply with the Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended in 1977 and 1987. (See the FEIS, Appendix H Best Management Practices, and the Forest Plan, Chapter IV, Standards and Guidelines.)

Standards and guidelines specified that the existing vegetation on slopes with a high risk of landslides will be retained and timber harvest will be dispersed to minimize risk of concentrating effects of logging activities within one drainage.

Standards and Guidelines for riparian areas will ensure water quality by maintaining vegetative ground cover and standing timber. This will maintain streambank stability, provide shade and sediment filtration. Timber harvesting may be allowed and will be consistent with the goals, objectives, and desired future condition for riparian areas.

Finally, I am requesting the Forest Supervisor to contact the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) early in the scoping phase of analysis for any projects located in anadromous fish drainages on the Forest to better identify their site specific concerns. The Forest is to implement the policy agreed to by Regions 1, 4, 6, and CRITFC concerning anadromous fish habitat management.

Issue: Supply of Developed Recreational Site Opportunities

The Mt. Hood National Forest is one of eleven forests initially identified by the Forest Service as meeting the urban forest characteristics of being located within 50 miles of populations greater than 1 million people and demonstrating unique management challenges. It serves as the "backyard" for many residents of the Portland metropolitan area and the Willamette Valley. According to the Oregon State Department of Parks and Recreation, the Forest is nearly the sole provider of specific types of recreational opportunities, such as primitive and semi-primitive experiences and the major provider of many others.

Many individual responses to the Draft Forest Plan expressed concern that the Forest is not increasing the number of developed sites at a rate which would accommodate a growing tourism trade. Many groups feel that the construction of additional campground facilities and the reconstruction and expansion of existing campgrounds should be high on the Mt. Hood's list of priorities. Facilities and vegetation in some developed sites, are deteriorating due to heavy use. Some sites have been closed and many facilities are in poor condition.

The selected alternative will emphasize improving existing popular campgrounds in the first decade. A top priority is to rehabilitate existing sites that currently need heavy maintenance.

Towards the end of the first decade, some new construction of developed campgrounds is anticipated, as more capacity may be needed. This will primarily involve the expansion of existing campgrounds rather than new site development, although several new sites are proposed late in the first decade.

Additional emphasis will be the construction/reconstruction of developed recreation facilities for the day user. Picnic sites, vistas, and interpretive facilities are the types of recreation experiences predicted to be in the highest demand by the State Department of Parks and Recreation Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Recreation management will emphasize day-use facilities located along the Mt. Hood Loop (Highway 35 and 26) and in the Clackamas River Corridor.

Winter Use - Ski Areas

The five existing ski areas on Mt. Hood will continue to serve a significant portion of the Portland metropolitan market. Each ski area provides a different atmosphere, price, terrain, snow and weather conditions. In order to continue the current level of service provided, it is desirable to maintain a variety of skier opportunities.

The demand for winter sports is expected to continue into the future. Re-issuance of ski area permits under the National Forest Ski Area Permit Act of 1986 is compatible with this plan. Site specific issues related to individual area permits will be considered in the permit renewal process.

All ski areas that have expansion capacity under approved Ski Area Master Plans are expected to add development facilities. Expansion should be commensurate with expected improvements in service, and permitted on the basis of actual public need. I anticipate that some ski areas will have an interest in base-area expansion to enhance overnight and mid-week resort opportunities.

Subsequent to this process, a separate Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for the Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Area Master Plan will be issued by the Mt. Hood National Forest Supervisor. It will relate to future development of the Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Area, including overnight housing. That decision will be consistent with the Forest Plan standards and guidelines. That decision will also be consistent with the decision made in this document to manage Stringer Meadows as a Special Interest Area. For further discussion of the suitability determination process see the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Issue below and Appendix E of the FEIS.

Issue: Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers

Responses to the DEIS reflect diverse opinions on the appropriate management of the river corridors on the Mt. Hood National Forest. Many people believe that all of the rivers on the Forest should be recommended to become part of the National Wild and Scenic River System, while others feel that no such recommendations are appropriate.

The 1988 Oregon Omnibus Wild and Scenic Rivers Act designated five rivers on the Mt. Hood National Forest. These rivers are the Clackamas River, White River, Roaring River, Salmon River, and Sandy River. The 1988 Omnibus Act requires that river boundaries to be established within one year of the Act's passage. It also requires management plans to be completed within three years of the Act's passage. The Forest is using 1/4 mile on each side of a river as the interim corridor boundaries, which will be re-evaluated and adjusted as necessary in development of management plans. A more detailed description of the Wild and Scenic River process can be found in Appendix E of the FEIS.

The public comments from the Governor's Task Force, Oregon Rivers Council, Sierra Club, and others expressed concern regarding the process used to recommend rivers for designation. In response, the Forest conducted an Eligibility study on 12 additional rivers. These rivers were specifically identified in the public comment process of the DEIS.

The eligibility process and evaluation criteria that were used for river selection was endorsed by the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation and Oregon Rivers Council. Of the 12 rivers which were studied, all or parts of 11 rivers were found to be eligible. The West Fork Hood River was not found to be eligible. The rivers and river segments found to be eligible will be protected with the Forestwide Eligible Wild, Scenic, Recreational River Standards and Guidelines until suitability studies can be completed. Suitability studies for all identified eligible rivers except the East Fork of the Hood River will begin when the Forest Plan is completed.

I have conducted a suitability study (FEIS Appendix E) on the East Fork of the Hood River and have determined, based on the suitability assessment completed on July 12, 1990, that the East Fork of the Hood River is not suitable for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic River system, even though it is eligible. This decision was based on the value of other resource uses in the area. Since a portion of this river is within the existing Mt. Hood Meadows Ski Area, I have decided to protect the outstanding values of the Stringer Meadows area through a Special Interest Area - Botanical allocation. I believe the river values can be protected through these standards and guidelines, while minimizing impacts to existing and potential ski area operations. I have decided to not recommend this river for inclusion into the Wild/Scenic or Recreational River system. When suitability studies are completed for the remaining ~~11~~ 10 rivers, the Forest Plan may need to be amended.

Issue: Deer and Elk Management

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, environmental organizations, tribal groups, and private citizens, feel that the DEIS preferred alternative did not adequately provide for the management of deer and elk species

in timber emphasis areas. They believe that herd management objectives, cover forage ratios, forest wide open road densities, and dispersion of harvest units were not adequately analyzed. The Forest has developed a new land allocation for deer and elk winter and summer range. The change in allocation from timber emphasis to meet the needs of deer and elk will cause a slight reduction in the Forest's harvest level. A total of about fourteen thousand acres have been allocated to winter and summer range.

The issue is centered on the effect the current rate of timber harvest is having on big game habitat. Local individuals and environmental groups are concerned that big game habitat is being reduced by timber harvest. Hunters and hunter groups are concerned that big game numbers are being reduced because habitat is being altered. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is concerned about the level of habitat available to produce higher levels of big game numbers with stable populations over time. Timber industry is concerned that providing additional wildlife habitat for big game will result in a decline of available timber supply. Usually, the most limiting factor for big game (deer and elk) is the condition of winter range (habitat) available with the appropriate ratio and distribution of forage and cover.

Road density is a major concern in relation to big game habitat and hunting. I am directing the Forest to implement standards that strive for 1.5 miles of open roads per square mile in B-10 Deer/Elk winter range, B-11 Deer/Elk Summer Range, and B-9 Wildlife visual management areas. I am also asking the Forest, by the year 2000, to reduce open road density on inventoried deer and elk winter range to 2.0 miles per square mile and 2.5 miles per square mile on inventoried summer range.

Road density concerns will be addressed through the access management plan which will establish road management objectives for each road on the Forest. The existing road system will be reviewed to identify roads to be closed or obliterated because they no longer contribute to integrated land management objectives. The status of all roads will be determined by integrated land management analysis, incorporating objectives such as big-game habitat needs (including security needs), high quality recreation, timber harvest and firewood cutting. This will be an open process with public involvement, meeting the full intent of NEPA as well as close coordination with the State of Oregon.

My decision to implement Alternative Q and its increased emphasis for big game is based on the increased recognition of big game habitat need. The Selected Alternative addresses the need for winter and summer range habitats for deer and elk herds. Management of these lands is aimed at producing year round acceptable combination of hiding cover, optimal thermal cover and forage. Criteria for tree size, opening size and distribution is detailed in the winter and summer range standards in the Forest Plan, Chapter 4.

Section IV
Alternatives Considered

Alternatives

Ten alternatives were analyzed in detail in the DEIS. This FEIS presents eight alternative ways to manage the natural resources of the Forest. Each addresses public issues and management concerns in different ways. Taken as a group, the alternatives provide a wide range of outputs and produce a corresponding range of environmental impacts. Efforts were made to include a variety of options for the management of each resource or area in the different alternatives. These alternatives use the best available data regarding the suitability of land for harvesting timber, timber utilization standards, and analytical techniques. Timber harvest levels were determined using the FORPLAN model. These alternatives assume that the Management Requirements are incorporated into the current direction.

Changes made between draft and final EIS include dropping Alternatives B, D and G. These were dropped from consideration due to little public support or because the range of outputs of these alternatives were similar enough to other alternatives that they did not need to be analyzed in further detail.

Also, the preferred alternative from the draft EIS was modified in response to public comment. The modifications warranted that a new preferred alternative, Alternative Q, be formed by the ID team. The preferred alternative from the draft EIS is still shown as alternative E in the FEIS.

The No Change Alternative - NC

This alternative responds to the Regional direction to project the most likely condition of the Forest in the future if current management practices and policies are not changed, and analytical techniques and legal requirements remained as they were when the existing Timber Management Plan was adopted in 1978. As such, this alternative predates the National Forest Management Act regulations, 36 CFR Part 219, of 1979. It uses a commercial forest land base which is larger than the other alternatives' tentatively suitable base.

Alternative NC displays the objectives, outputs, and effects of the Timber Management (TM) Plans so that they can be compared with the other alternatives. However, since the development of the TM plans, new inventories, assumptions about resource interrelationships, and new methods for predicting timber growth and yields have been developed. Therefore, a reviewer should be aware that information provided for Alternative NC is frequently based on outdated inventories and yield tables and is not always comparable to information provided for the other alternatives.

The No Action Alternative - A

This is the "No-Action" Alternative, which is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA). With differences indicated below, it projects today's Forest management into the future. This provides a basis for comparison when evaluating the range of alternatives.

Alternative A is based upon and is essentially the same as the No Change Alternative. The major difference is that this Alternative fully incorporates all NFMA requirements, including the Management Requirements.

Alternative A is designed to present estimates of the outputs and effects of managing the Forest under current plans and practices, adjusted as required by new laws and regulations, including meeting the MRs for wildlife species and soil and water resources, and incorporating new timber suitability criteria. Alternative A would permit a variety of existing uses to continue, including present timber management practices. This alternative projects results of managing in the future without regard to public issues or management concerns that have arisen since existing plans were approved, aside from the MRs. The cost of alternative A is within existing budget allocations.

Alternative C

This Alternative was developed in response to the public issues concerning the level of timber supply and community stability. It would provide maximum timber harvest consistent with resource protection provided by Management Requirements. Alternative C most closely approximates the RPA program for the Mt. Hood National Forest. Under Alternative C all land suitable for growing trees would be managed for intensive timber

production. Timber harvesting would be on a regularly scheduled basis in the Bull Run Watershed.

A major feature of this Alternative is the large number of acres allocated to timber emphasis and a corresponding decrease in the unroaded and scenic viewshed allocations.

Alternative E

This was the Forest's Preferred Alternative in the DEIS. It was developed to reflect present land uses while meeting Management Requirements. It is based on an assumption that past determinations of management emphasis in previous plans are still generally valid and effective when also reflecting the most recent laws and scientific information. This Alternative reflects more recently identified needs to reduce timber harvest levels on some portions of the Forest in response to the public issues of water quality, fish and wildlife, and recreation. It also emphasizes the values of particular scenic corridors. Recreation of all kinds would be available. Timber would be managed intensively where such intensive management has been planned in the past, including seven of the presently unroaded areas. Timber harvest would often be used to help achieve other Forest objectives. In response to the community stability public issue, the timber harvest schedule would be a departure which emphasizes production of volume above this Alternative's long-term sustained yield quantity.

Alternative F

This Alternative was developed as a particular response to the recreation, water quality and fisheries public issues, and especially the visual quality issue. It is designed to meet the needs of visitors to the Forest for outdoor recreation in natural settings. A main objective is to provide scenic landscapes that are visible from the Forest's travel routes and recreation areas. Under this Alternative, the emphasis of management would be on providing a wide range of roaded and unroaded recreational settings and opportunities. Natural appearing landscapes would be perpetuated by periodic removal of small volumes of timber in areas that are visible. Higher levels of timber harvest would take place in areas of the Forest that are seldom seen. Benefits to wildlife and fish habitat would occur because of management of the land for scenic quality and water related concerns.

Alternative H

Alternative H was developed to supply recreational opportunities in primitive or natural settings, away from roads and other major evidence of human activity. It precludes future development in all presently unroaded areas and in places on the Forest adjacent to Wildernesses and unroaded areas that also offer primitive and semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities. Alternative H would also preserve most of the existing old growth stands. Retaining old growth would provide complementary benefits for fish and wildlife habitats, and maintain or improve scenic quality. Timber would be harvested in areas where it has been removed in the past, and where it would not conflict with the needs of dispersed recreational activities.

Alternative I

Alternative I was developed primarily to address the fish and wildlife habitat issue. In all areas considered important for fish and wildlife habitat, objectives would be achieved by precluding timber harvest, extending rotations or otherwise modifying timber management practices. The needs of animal species which require open areas would be met by continued timber harvest elsewhere on the Forest. All unroaded areas would be kept free of roads to provide the security for wildlife as well as opportunities for recreation in an unroaded setting and for future wilderness designation. The retention of natural appearing landscapes throughout the Forest would be emphasized.

Alternative Q

This is the new Forest Service Preferred Alternative. It is a new alternative and was not displayed in the draft EIS. Beginning with the draft EIS preferred alternative (E), Alternative Q was developed to respond to public comment and new information. This alternative reflects more recently identified needs to reduce timber harvest levels on some portions of the Forest in response to the public issues of water quality, fish, wildlife, and recreation. It also emphasizes the values of particular scenic corridors. A variety of recreation opportunities would be available, and a standard level of service would be maintained at developed sites. Timber harvest would often be used to help achieve other Forest objectives.

Alternatives with Higher Present Net Values

Present net value (PNV) is used to measure economic efficiency of each alternative. PNV is the sum of priced benefits minus the sum of costs for the 150-year planning period, discounted to the present. PNV does not include non-priced costs and benefits, however. Some of the more important non-priced benefits include ecosystem diversity, habitat for threatened, endangered, or sensitive species, water quality, and scenic quality. Since PNV does not reflect the values of these benefits nor the costs associated with negative effects on them, it was not the only criterion I used in selecting the Preferred Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative has a PNV of $676 million. The following three alternatives have a higher PNV:

Alternative	PNV (MM$)
A	911
C	1,107
E	971

Alternative E has a high PNV, because of its emphasis on timber production and is considered a departure alternative. It has the greatest number of acres scheduled for harvest in the first decade. Fewer acres are reserved for Special Interest Areas, Old-Growth Groves and dispersed recreation. As a result, the recreation benefits in Alternative E occur primarily in the motorized category. Actual demand for recreation, however, is spread across the entire spectrum of nonmotorized and motorized recreation. Therefore overall recreation demands are better achieved by the diversity of opportunities provided in Alternative Q.

The increased rate of harvest also results in more adverse impacts or higher risk impacts over the next 10 years. Some of these impacts include fewer acres of remaining old growth, increased risk of adverse impacts to water quality in some watersheds, reduced visual quality except in areas immediately adjacent to major cross-Forest highways and reduced habitat quality for wildlife.

Alternative C also has a high PNV. It is not a departure alternative and has a large amount of acres allocated to timber emphasis. All suitable land is managed for intensive timber production.

Alternative A has the third highest PNV. Although Alternative A does include more nonmarket values than Alternative C, I feel it does not adequately address the issues of water quality, visual quality or big game management. It also protects fewer Special Interest Areas than Alternative Q.

Alternative Q reduces the risk of adverse watershed impacts, provides a greater diversity of recreation opportunities, protects more Special Interest Areas, wildlife habitat, old growth and maintains scenic quality of the Forest at higher levels than in any of the alternatives with a higher PNV.

Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The environmentally preferable alternative is the alternative causing the least impact to the biological and physical environment. It also is the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources. (CEQ, FR18028, 3/23/81)

Alternative H is the environmentally preferable alternative. It would schedule the least amount of timber harvest and associated road development of any of the alternatives considered and consequently would have the fewest adverse effects on the biological and physical environment.

Alternative H emphasizes the management and preservation of nonmarket values such as old growth, roadless areas, dispersed recreation, water quality, and biological diversity. All of the existing roadless areas and most of the existing old growth would be preserved. The entire known inventory of spotted owl sites would also be protected. All riparian areas would be removed from the suitable timber base. The reduced rates of harvest and road building together with protection of riparian areas achieve a low risk of adverse watershed impacts in all of the Forest watersheds. Timber harvests and road building would be deferred for 10 to 50 years in some areas to allow re-growth of existing harvest acres. Much of the area available for timber production would be managed with extended rotations. The annual ASQ would be 18 MMCF (108 MMBF).

Additional information on the environmentally preferred alternative is in Chapter II of the FEIS.

Even though Alternative H is preferable from the standpoint of the physical and biological environment, it doesn't respond well to the issues of community stability and timber supply. I believe Alternative Q provides for a better balance of resource uses and maximizes the net public benefit while protecting the environment. Some components of Alternative H are incorporated in Alternative Q such as protection of riparian

areas, emphasis on watershed management, and emphasis on visual resource protection.

Alternative Q incorporates appropriate environmental safeguards to minimize potential adverse effects to the biological and physical environment. In addition, Alternative Q also maintains options for the next 10 to 15 years that will allow the Forest to respond to many of the issues addressed in Alternative H. Features such as evaluating remaining old growth for relative values and locating and scheduling harvest that minimize fragmentation of remaining significant old-growth stands will allow the Forest to adapt and incorporate new scientific findings over the next 10 years while providing a stable supply of timber for local economic stability.

Summary of Reasons for Selecting the Forest Plan

Based on the preceding discussion it is clear that Alternative Q does not have the least impact on the environment nor does it generate as many market valued commodities as other alternatives considered in the FEIS. However, I believe the Preferred Alternative achieves a balance between the economic benefits and environmental issues and concerns voiced by the public. Most importantly, I am confident that the management proposed in the Forest Plan is within the physical and biological capability of the land and can be accomplished without reducing that capability.

Many divergent opinions were considered in the development and selection of this Forest Plan. Considered individually, these opinions and their proposed goals and objectives for the Forest are highly desirable. However, when considered simultaneously and within the framework of resource capabilities it is impossible to meet all requests and desires. Considering the range and intensity of concerns expressed by the public on the various issues, I believe the Forest Plan is responsive within the basic limitations of the resources available.

Compatibility with Goals of Other Public Agencies and Indian Tribes

This Forest Plan has been developed with public participation which included involvement, coordination, and comments from federal, State, and local agencies including the State of Oregon (Governor's Office, Federal Plans Coordinator, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Forestry, Water Resources Department, Department of Environmental Quality, and Parks and Recreation Division); the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the Environmental Protection Agency; and representatives of county and city governments, industry groups, special interest groups, and individuals.

Numerous efforts were made to ensure that the Selected Alternative considered the goals of other public agencies. Comments and letters from agencies were reviewed and analyzed extensively; numerous meetings and field trips were conducted with officials from other agencies and actions were taken to address their concerns. (See Appendix A and J of the FEIS).

I believe Alternative Q is compatible with and complementary to the goals of other agencies and Native American tribes. Coordination with all of the groups, agencies and individuals involved in the development of the Forest Plan will continue as projects are implemented.

Section V
Implementation

Schedules

The Forest Plan will be implemented through identification, selection, and scheduling of projects to meet its management goals and objectives. These projects are displayed in the Forest Plan, Appendix A.

Project schedules will be available for review at Ranger District Offices and the Forest Supervisor's Office. Schedules of possible projects will routinely change as projects are implemented or removed from the lists for other reasons, and as new projects take their place. Adjustments to schedules on a year to year basis may occur based on results of monitoring, budgets, and unforeseen events and should not be considered significant amendments to the Forest Plan.

The Forest Plan provides direction in the form of goals and objectives, standards and guidelines, monitoring requirements, and possible scheduling of management practices. It does not cover projects on specific sites except in a broad manner. The management activity schedules displayed in Appendix A of the Forest Plan are not decisions for individual projects. Each proposed project will be subject to site-specific analysis in compliance with NEPA.

The Forest Plan's scheduled projects are translated into multi-year program budget proposals. The proposals are used for requesting and allocating funds needed to carry out planned management direction. Upon approval of a final budget for the Forest, the annual work program will be updated and carried out.

The Forest Supervisor has authority to change the implementation schedule to reflect differences between proposed annual budgets and actual appropriated funds. As a result, outputs and activities in individual years may differ from those projected in the Forest Plan. Significant deviations that alter the long-term relationships between goods and services projected in the Forest Plan will result in an amendment or revision of the Forest Plan.

Upon implementation of the Forest Plan, all projects, including timber sales to be offered, will be in compliance with direction contained in the Forest Plan. In addition, all new permits, contracts, and other instruments for the use and occupancy of National Forest system land and resource uses must also be in conformance with the Forest Plan. Permits, contracts and other instruments which were in existence prior to Forest Plan implementation will be revised (if needed) subject to valid existing rights. This updating will generally be done within three years.

The Forest Plan incorporates the Pacific Northwest Region's FEIS for Managing Competing and Unwanted Vegetation. In implementing Forest Plan project activities, the Forest will comply with the Record of Decision issued on December 8, 1988, and the mediated agreement of May 1989.

The Forest Plan will be implemented 30 days after the Notice of Availability of the Forest Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision appears in the Federal Register.

However, no activities that will change the wilderness characteristics will be allowed within the Olallie Further Planning Area for 90 Congressional-session days following notice to Congress. This official notice will be given soon after the legal notice is published in The Oregonian announcing approval of this plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation program is the management control system for the Forest Plan. It will provide us with information on the progress and results of implementation. This information will be evaluated and used as feedback to the Forest planning process for possible future change.

Chapter V of the Forest Plan outlines the specific process that will be used for monitoring. The overall objective of monitoring is to ensure that Standards and Guidelines and Management Area direction are being correctly applied and are producing the desired results. The information gathered during monitoring will also be used to update inventories, to improve mitigation measures, and to assess the need for amending or revising the Forest Plan.

I do not expect the Standards and Guidelines to be violated in order to achieve annual targets or projected outputs. If projected outputs cannot be achieved without violating Standards and Guidelines, the Forest will evaluate the need to amend the plan.

The results and trends of monitoring will be described in a monitoring report, and will be evaluated and sum-

marized periodically. A report of monitoring activities and results will be available for public review.

As part of the monitoring and evaluation process, I am directing the Forest Supervisor to continue to consult with citizens to ensure the Forest Plan is implemented as directed in this decision. Resource management is not static and in order to meet the expectations and desires of the public, it must be closely in tune with them. This consultation will be a way to allow communication to continue throughout the implementation of individual projects and activities under this Forest Plan.

Mitigation

Mitigation measures are an integral part of the standards and guidelines and the management area direction. The management standards were developed through an interdisciplinary effort and contain measures necessary to mitigate or eliminate any long-term adverse environmental effects. These mitigation measures include Best Management Practices as presented in "General Water Quality Best Management Practices" (USDA 1988) which are incorporated by reference under the requirements of Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. Additional mitigation measures may be developed and implemented at the project level consistent with the measures identified in Chapter IV of the Forest Plan.

To the best of my knowledge, all practical mitigation measures available to avoid or minimize environmental harm from the alternative selected have been adopted and are included in the Forest Plan.

Amendment and Revision Process

This Forest Plan may be changed either by an amendment or a revision. Such changes may be made as a result of monitoring or project analysis (see Forest Plan, Chapter V). An amendment may become necessary as a result of situations such as:

- Recommendations based on the review of monitoring results.
- Determination that an existing or proposed permit, contract, cooperative agreement, or other instrument authorizing occupancy and use is not consistent with the Forest Plan, but should be approved, based on project level analysis.
- Adjustments needed for management area boundaries or prescriptions.
- Changes necessitated by resolution of administrative appeals, litigation, or legislation.
- Changes needed to improve monitoring plans or information and assumptions used in the Forest Plan.
- Changes made necessary by altered physical, biological, social, or economic conditions.

Based on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines, and other aspects of the Forest Plan, the Forest Supervisor shall determine whether a proposed amendment would result in a significant change to the Forest Plan. If the change is determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of the Forest Plan. If the change is not determined to be significant, the Forest Supervisor may implement the amendment after appropriate public notice and compliance with NEPA. The procedure is described by 36 CFR 219.10(e) and (f), 36 CFR 219.12(k), FSM 1922.51-52 and FSH 1909.12.

As Regional Forester, I will approve significant amendments and the Forest Supervisor will approve "non-significant" amendments. The determination of significance must be documented and would be appealable under 36 CFR 217. A mailing list will be maintained to provide notification and invitation to comment on proposed amendments.

The amendment documentation will include as a minimum:

- A statement of why the Forest Plan is being amended (some possible reasons are mentioned above).
- A description of the amendment.
- Rationale for the amendment.
- A statement of NFMA significance relating to changes to the Forest Plan. (36CFR 219.18f)
- A statement of NEPA compliance (40 CFR 1500-1508, FSM 1950 1909.15) regarding effects on the environment and how effects disclosed in the Forest Plan EIS may change as a result of the amendment.
- A statement of appeal rights.

NFMA requires revision of the Forest Plan at least every 15 years. However, it may be revised sooner if physical conditions or demands on the land and resources have changed sufficiently to affect overall goals or uses for the entire Forest. If a revision becomes necessary, the Forest Supervisor shall follow the same procedure as that required for development and approval of a forest plan as described in 36 CFR 219.12.

Section VI

Appeal Rights and Approval

This decision may be appealed in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal within 90 days of the date specified in the published legal notice. The appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer:

F. Dale Robertson, Chief
USDA Forest Service
P. O. Box 96090
Washington, D.C. 20090-6090

A copy must be sent simultaneously to the Deciding Officer:

John F. Butruille
Pacific Northwest Region
USDA Forest Service
319 S.W. Pine
P. O. Box 3623
Portland, OR 97208-3623

The Notice of Appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9).

In the event an appeal exceeds ten pages in length, the appellant is required to furnish two copies of the appeal to the Reviewing Officer and two copies of the appeal to the Deciding Officer.

Requests to stay the approval of this Land and Resource Management Plan shall not be granted (36 CFR 217.10(a)).

For a period not to exceed 20 days following the filing of a first level Notice of Appeal, the Reviewing Officer shall accept requests to intervene in the appeal from any interested or potentially affected person or organization (36 CFR 217.14(a)).

Decisions on site-specific projects are not made in this document.

The schedule of proposed and probable projects for the first decade is included in the appendices to the Forest Plan. Final decisions on these proposed projects will be made after site-specific analysis and documentation in compliance with NEPA.

I encourage anyone concerned about the Forest Plan or Environmental Impact Statement to contact the Forest Supervisor in Gresham, Oregon, before submitting an appeal. It may be possible to resolve the concern or misunderstanding without using the formal appeal process.

If you would like more information about the Forest Plan or FEIS, or would like to review planning records, please contact:

Michael S. Edrington
Mt. Hood National Forest
2955 N.W. Division
Gresham, Oregon 97030
(503) 666-0700

John F Butruille

JOHN F. BUTRUILLE
Regional Forester
Pacific Northwest Region
USDA Forest Service

10/17/90

Date