



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service



March
2008

Record of Decision

Aspen Range Timber Sale and Vegetation Treatment:

**Soda Springs Ranger District, Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Caribou County, Idaho**



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RECORD of DECISION

Aspen Range Sale Timber and Vegetation Treatment

March 2008

Lead Agency:

USDA Forest Service, Caribou – Targhee National Forest, Soda Springs,
Ranger District

Location:

Caribou County, Idaho
Township 8 South, Range 43 East, Sections 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 and
34.
Township 9 South, Range 43 East, Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 17
and 18 of the Boise Meridian.

Responsible Official:

Lawrence A. Timchak
Forest Supervisor
Caribou-Targhee National Forests
1405 Hollipark Drive
Idaho Falls, Idaho 83401
(208) 557-5760

For further information:

Jack Isaacs, District Ranger
Doug Heyrend, Project Team Leader
Caribou – Targhee National Forest
Soda Springs Ranger District
410 East Hooper Ave.
Soda Springs, Idaho. 83276
Ph: (208) 547-4356, FAX: (208) 547-2235

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	OVERVIEW	3
1.1	Background	3
1.2	Best Available Science	3
1.3	The Purpose of the Action	3
1.4	The Need for Action	3
2.0	The Decision	5
2.1	The Rationale for the Decision	5
2.2	Key Actions and Effects of Alternative 5	6
3.0	Public Involvement, Issues and Alternatives	8
3.1	Alternatives Considered.....	9
4.0	Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations	11
4.1	Environmentally Preferred Alternative.....	13
4.2	Implementation	14
4.3	Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities	14

1.0 OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

The Soda Springs Ranger District of the Caribou-Targhee National Forest has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to document the analysis and disclose the effects of the five alternatives formulated to manage the Aspen Range project area. This analysis documents these alternatives in detail and the rationale for their formulation; it identifies issues from project scoping, assesses the existing environmental conditions, and discloses the expected effects to the environment. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is on file and available at the Soda Springs Ranger District office and at our web site www.fs.fed.us/r4/caribou-targhee/.

1.2 Best Available Science

What constitutes best available science might vary over time and across scientific disciplines. As a general matter this NEPA document will show consideration for the best available science, scientific integrity of discussions and analysis of the project. The Aspen Range Timber Sale and Vegetation Treatment identifies analysis methods used, references scientific sources and discloses incomplete or unavailable information. The project record references all scientific information considered: papers, reports, literature reviews, results of ground based observations, etc.

1.3 The Purpose of the Action

The Purpose for the proposed action is to:

- Release aspen from competing conifer and convert vegetation to early seral species.
- Reduce conifer stand densities to improve vigor.
- Emphasize the production of timber within the land capability and capacity as outlined for lands within 5.2 Forest Vegetation Management Prescription. (RFP 4-71 to 4-74)
- Reduce expected fire intensity in the project area and stands bordering residential homes/cabins along the northwest forest boundary of the Trail Canyon area.
- Reduce erosion impacts and maintenance on roads in project area.

1.4 The Need for Action

Forest Condition - Stand Composition, Density, and Structure Need

As documented in the Soda/Montpelier Front Ecological Assessment for Vegetation and Hydrology (USDA 2002), many aspen stands in the analysis area are succeeding or already have succeeded to shade tolerant conifer species. The Assessment estimates that conifers completely dominate at least 25% of the stands that would be primarily aspen cover types in historic fire disturbance regimes.

- There is a need to reduce stand density, convert plant communities to early seral, and move structural stages closer to the Desired Future Condition (DFC) to improve long-term forest condition. The mature/old class is currently over represented; the mid/young and seedling/sapling classes are under represented. The forested landscape as a whole is about 80% mature/old.

Forest Condition – Wildfire Effects Need

Within the project area, various levels of succession to conifer have occurred in a landscape that was historically dominated by aspen. The combination of dead and down fuels and dense multi-layered stands increases the risk that a fire will move from the forest floor to tree crowns. Effective suppression of a crown fire and defense of private property in the area may be beyond the capabilities of firefighter forces.

- There is a need to reduce fuels in order to provide for the safety of firefighters, the public and private property if a wildland fire would start in or near the project area.

Timber Production Need

Prescription 5.2 Forest Vegetation Management lands are included in the suitable timber base and contribute to the Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ). These forested lands are designated to be managed to emphasize the cost-effective production of timber within the lands capability and capacity while maintaining or restoring forested ecosystem processes and functions to more closely resemble historical ranges of variability with consideration for long-term forest resilience. Investments made in 5.2 lands for timber production, such as road systems, silvicultural improvements and the value of the timber for wood production receive consideration prior to the use of fire (RFP 4-71-74).

- There is a need to capture the value of the timber that is assigned to the prescription 5.2 Forest Vegetation Management in the RFP.

Transportation - Reduce Maintenance and Sedimentation Need

The nature of the roads in the project area include: poorly located pioneered, poorly located constructed and properly constructed gravel surface roads. The majority of the roads are native surface with poorly located sections that create erosion damage and excessive maintenance.

- There is a need to decrease on-going erosion damage, road maintenance costs and to provide safe access for motorized use including harvest activities while reducing impacts on other forest resources

2.0 The Decision

The information analyzed and disclosed in the FEIS adequately addresses existing laws, regulations, an array of alternatives, guidance from the Caribou National Forest Revised Forest Plan (RFP) (February 2003), and responds to the public comments (FSH 1909.15,65.12#1).

Based on a thorough review of the alternatives, public comments and environmental analysis using the best available science, I have decided to implement Alternative 5 as described in Chapter 2 of the Aspen Range Timber Sale and Vegetation Treatment Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Alternative 5 will include all design features that have been listed in the FEIS Chapter 2, Management Practices and will not be repeated here.

2.1 *The Rationale for the Decision*

The loss of aspen to forest succession is a serious concern on the Caribou National Forest and across eastern Idaho. At one time, nearly 45% of the Caribou National Forest was occupied by aspen. Current aspen distribution across the forest has declined to 27%. The decline in aspen has far-reaching consequences for wildlife, forage production, scenic quality, watersheds, and fire management. I believe projects like Aspen Range are critical if we are to maintain and restore aspen across the landscape. I have chosen Alternative 5 in an attempt to balance the need to restore the landscape to a more resilient condition while being sensitive to the concerns of public comment.

Alternative 5 will meet the purpose and need by:

- Increasing and maintaining aspen cover types within the project area by treating approximately 862 acres of aspen/conifer with prescribed fire following the mechanical harvest of approximately 374 acres.
- Moving the forested age class structure towards the desired future condition (DFC) by decreasing the percentage of mature/old and increasing the seedling/sapling stage.
- Improving existing roads designated to remain open by realigning location, obliterating excess roads, and managing trails as determined in the Revised Travel Plan.
- Minimizing undesirable wildfire effects particularly along the urban Forest boundary to provide firefighter/public safety by reducing ladder fuels, crown bulk density, and ground fuels.
- Capturing the economic value of the timber from acres assigned the prescription 5.2, Forest Vegetation Management, through timber harvest
- Meeting the Idaho Department of Fish and Games' Mule Deer Initiative by increasing aspen habitat. One of goals in southeast Idaho is to increase the mule deer population by improving habitat. IDFG recognize that "Succulent shrubs, forbs and grasses are disappearing in the shade of an aging forest canopy. Aspen stands, which provide forage, cover and vital fawning habitat, are becoming scarce."(1) As the IDFG Mule Deer Management Plan 2008-

2017 (2) states “Forage supply for ruminant grazers is inversely related to the amount of tree overstory in forested habitats (Ffolliott and Clary 1972). In general, managing habitats for early to mid-seral states will prove most beneficial to mule deer. Exceptions to this might be on certain winter ranges where shrubs can take much longer to regenerate. Disturbance is crucial to maintaining high quality deer habitat. Traditionally, different fire cycles and human disturbance, such as logging, resulted in higher deer densities than occur in many areas today. In the short-term, weather patterns, especially precipitation, drive deer populations, but landscape-scale habitat changes will impact long-term deer trends.”

(1) <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/hunt/MDI/habitat.cfm>

(2) <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/apps/surveys/muleDeerExec/index.cfm>

Within the 12,000 acre project area, we are treating only 4% or 473 acres with commercial timber harvest. The mature/old structural class would be at 72% in the project area following project implementation.

The timber sale provides an opportunity to use stewardship contracting to help accomplish other resource objectives including; road obliteration and restoration, road improvements, travel plan implementation, and watershed improvement projects. It would be difficult to accomplish this work without the benefits of the timber receipts.

I believe this alternative provides a good balance between creating a diversity of forest conditions through timber harvest and prescribed fire while protecting key resources including wildlife, water, recreation and roadless lands within the project area. We will be moving the landscape to a more resilient condition.

2.2 Key Actions and Effects of Alternative 5

The following actions and effects were important considerations in making my decision.

1. Vegetation –

- The alternative would help shift the competitive advantage from conifer to early seral aspen on approximately 861 acres. Overall at the project scale, seral species would increase and climax species would decrease.
- The aspen/conifer cover type would be closer to desired future condition (DFC) than the landscape as a whole.
- Treated stands will be stocked (RFP 3-45) within five years and likely reach sapling size within fifteen years
- Remnant aspen would quickly respond to the proposed disturbance (harvest and burn) where it exists in the stands and insure clone survival for approximately another 130 years.
- The silvicultural prescription would provide flexibility for aspen clone regeneration, snag preservation, remnant Douglas-fir retention, and remnant replacement in situations of Douglas-fir bark beetle mortality.
- Implementing this alternative would re-introduce fire into the landscape by using prescribed burning to; stimulate aspen regeneration, create snags, reduce fuels and accomplish site preparation for natural regeneration of aspen.

- Alternative 5 would meet RFP Standards and Guidelines by managing at least 20% of the mature /old age class of forested vegetation within each 5th code watershed to attain old growth characteristics.
 - Fuels would be treated and reduced on approximately 1,387 acres.
 - The activities proposed by this project are on lands designated as 5.2 (b) Forested Vegetation Management Prescription. Timber lands located within this prescription are described by the RFP as suitable and contribute to the annual Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) for the Caribou National Forest.
2. **Inventoried Roadless Area –**
- There will be no activities or evaluation of characteristics in the Inventoried Roadless Area.
3. **Wildlife –**
- The analysis showed that all Threatened and Endangered species received a ‘no effect’ determination.
 - All Sensitive species received a determination of either a: NI “no impact to any populations, species, or habitat” or MIIH “may impact individuals or habitat, but will not contribute to a trend towards Federal listings or loss of viability to the populations or species”.
 - Active goshawk nesting and post fledging areas within the project area will be managed in compliance with goshawk RFP Standards and Guidelines.
 - This alternative will have a Beneficial Impact (BI) to big game species and/or habitat for hiding cover and non-winter forage.
 - Implementation will also assist in accomplishing objectives of aspen restoration on public lands as a component of the 2004 IDFG (Idaho Department of Fish and Game) Mule Deer Initiative to reduce the long-term decline in mule deer numbers. This alternative would also contribute to attainment of the aspen restoration goals of the Letter of Agreement between the land management agencies of Eastern Idaho (April 2006).
4. **Roads and Access –**
- Approximately 4.5 miles of existing old system roads (20574, 20126 & 20297) are proposed for realignment
 - Relocating road 20574 will provide safe legal access to Johnson Creek, Dry Creek and Burchertt Canyon without having to cross private land that currently does not have access agreements
 - Old system road segments identified to be replaced with new alignment have been analyzed and would be obliterated.
 - Deferred Maintenance cost will be reduced on the improved roads.
5. **Recreation and ROS –**
- Roaded natural opportunities and motorized trail opportunities are unaffected.
 - The alternative will improve access and parking for the Trail Canyon Archery Range.
 - The Visual Quality Objectives by definition are met.

6. **Soils - Hydrology – Water Quality -**

- The net reduction of 1.5 miles of roads in Aquatic Influence Zones (AIZ) (high benefit) and 0.4 miles in upland areas (moderate benefit) planned would give this alternative the greatest reduction of open road in AIZs, and reduction of miles in upland areas.
- The percentage of detrimentally disturbed soils, within the project area, remaining after all design features have been completed is below the R-4 Soil Quality Guideline of 15%.
- The percentage of hydrologic disturbance after all design features have been completed for the Wood Canyon HUC, Sulphur HUC, Trail Creek HUC and the Johnson Creek HUC are below the RFP standard of 30 %.
- Water quality will improve long term because of road improvements such as: realignment of problem segments, obliteration of unnecessary road segments, spot graveling, cleaning culverts, repairing drainage structures, blading and shaping the road surface.

7. **Economics -**

- An estimated ASQ (allowable sale quantity) volume of approximately 3-3.5 million will be offered.
- Revenue could be generated for Stewardship projects, benefiting multiple resource areas across the District.
- Timber receipts will provide jobs through implementation of Sale Area Improvement Plan/KV Projects.
- Timber sale receipts will contribute towards the Salvage Sale Fund and assist in funding future timber sale opportunities.

3.0 Public Involvement, Issues and Alternatives

Public involvement in this project began in the winter of 2002 when the *Aspen Range Timber Sale/Vegetation treatment* was included in the Forest's NEPA Quarterly. The project has appeared quarterly in the schedule since that issue. In February of 2002, an Idaho Fish and Game Coordination meeting was held where this project along with other were discussed.

On March 11, 2003, a scoping letter detailing a proposed action was mailed to approximately 118 individuals and organizations that had previously indicated an interest in receiving notification of proposed activities on the Soda Springs Ranger District. News articles concerning this project were published in the Caribou Sun (March 9, 2003), Casper Star Tribute (March 19, 2003), Idaho State Journal (March 19, 2003), and USA Today (March 20, 2003). The scoping letter was also mailed on March 18, 2003 to approximately eight adjacent landowners. Comments were received from seven individuals, organized groups, companies, adjacent landowners, and public agencies. A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environment Impact Statement (EIS) was published in the Federal Register May 12, 2003.

The Aspen Range Timber Sale and Vegetation Treatment Draft Environment Impact Statement (DEIS), Notice of Availability (NOA) was published on 5/22/05. Five

comment letters were received from individuals, organized groups, and public agencies addressing content of the DEIS. The Legal Notice for the DEIS was published in The Idaho State Journal on 5/29/2005.

A Forest Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) identified issues from the comments received during this scoping process. Issues identified through the scoping process were divided into three groups and detailed in chapter 1 of the DEIS. The issues that resulted in the development of new alternatives included new roads, wildlife and transportation.

3.1 Alternatives Considered

The Aspen Range Timber Sale and Vegetation Treatment FEIS documents the analysis of five alternatives providing a basis to measure the effects of the action alternatives against the effects of all alternatives, including the No Action alternative, to the environment.

Alternative 1 - No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative provides a baseline against which impacts of the various action alternatives can be measured and compared. Under this alternative, none of the specific management activities proposed in this document would occur. Ongoing activities such as grazing, recreation (hunting, OHV use, etc.), public firewood gathering, fire suppression, normal road maintenance, special uses and existing road management closures would continue at current levels. Management activities proposed by other environmental documents may still occur.

The present course of management would continue. There would be no active management to address the imbalance of structural stages present in the forest community. Conifer encroachment would continue; no active management would occur to enhance or restore aspen. Poorly located old roads would continue to impact riparians with no improvements beyond scheduled maintenance.

Alternative 2 - Proposed Action

Alternative 2 proposes to tractor harvest **881** acres of Douglas-fir, aspen/Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine stands using a variety of silvicultural prescriptions. The harvest would be followed by 1,332 acres of prescribed fire to increase aspen cover types and reduce fuel loads in the 12,000 acre analysis area. The harvest volume is anticipated to be about 5.5 million board feet from two timber sales. Proposed activities may not occur on every acre within individual stands, but for analysis and reporting purposes the stand acreage will be assumed treated.

The alternative was designed to address the imbalance in forest age/structure classes, species composition and diversity on a landscape scale. Timber stands that qualified as suitable for timber production and could contribute to ASQ (allowable sale quantity) were proposed for harvest.

All design features that have been listed in Chapter II Management Practices will be included in this alternative. Proposed activities are designed to comply with the Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Guidelines for **Goshawk Habitat** and **Hydrological Disturbance** would be exceeded in this alternative. The proposed action

alternative would also need approval from the Regional Forester in order to meet the 40 acre maximum mechanical opening standard for forested vegetation (RFP 3-45). Portions within the Johnson Creek drainage of alternative 2 would not take place until a right of way across private property for the Johnson Creek road # 126 is secured. Currently the right of way is not valid.

Alternative 3 - No New Roads

Alternative 3 proposes to tractor harvest approximately **288** stand acres, followed by 846 acres of prescribed fire to increase aspen cover types and reduce fuel loads in the 12,000 acre analysis area. The harvest volume is anticipated to be about 2 million board feet from two timber sales. Proposed activities may not occur on every acre within the stand, but for analysis and reporting purposes the stand acreage will be assumed treated.

While similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative proposes no new roads and follows the Revised Forest Plan Goshawk Habitat guidelines. The alternative was developed in response to the public's concerns regarding the effects of new road construction and regeneration harvesting systems. Timber stands that qualified as suitable for timber production and that could contribute to ASQ (allowable sale quantity) were proposed for harvest.

The alternative does not meet objectives for riparian improvements by realigning roads. The current Trail Creek road location would not meet the needs for archery range parking nor would it facilitate logging equipment

All design features that have been listed in Chapter II Management Practices will be included in this alternative. Proposed activities are designed to comply with the Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Portions within the Johnson Creek drainage of alternative 3 would not take place until a right of way across private property for the Johnson Creek road # 126 is secured. Currently the right of way is not valid.

Alternative 4 - Reduced Roads

Alternative 4 proposes to tractor harvest approximately **481** stand acres followed by 1,185 acres of prescribed fire within the project area. The harvest volume is anticipated to be about 3.5 million board feet from two timber sales. Proposed activities may not occur on every acre within the stand, but for analysis and reporting purposes the stand acreage will be assumed treated.

While similar to the Proposed Action, this alternative proposes reduced road construction and follows the Revised Forest Plan Goshawk Habitat guidelines. The alternative was developed in response to the public's concerns regarding the effects of new road construction and regeneration harvesting systems. Timber stands that qualified as suitable for timber production and that could contribute to ASQ (allowable sale quantity) were proposed for harvest.

All design features that have been listed in Chapter II Management Practices will be included in this alternative. Proposed activities are designed to comply with the Revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines. Portions within the Johnson Creek drainage of

alternative 4 would not take place until a right of way across private property for the Johnson Creek road # 126 is secured. Currently the right of way is not valid.

Alternative 5 - Preferred Alternative

Alternative 5 proposes to tractor harvest approximately **473** stand acres followed by 1,199 acres of prescribed fire within the project area. The harvest volume is anticipated to be about 3.0-3.5 million board feet from two timber sales. Proposed activities may not occur on every acre within the stand, but for analysis and reporting purposes the stand acreage will be assumed treated.

While similar to alternative 4, this alternative proposes removing additional road segments from riparian areas with realignment. The alternative was developed in response to public concerns of problematic roads segments within riparian areas that were only partially addressed in Alternative 4 of the DEIS. Other internal concerns such as lack of legal right of way and the cost of road reconstruction to facilitate haul trucks on private ground were also taken into consideration for the development of alternative 5. Timber stands that qualified as suitable for timber production and that could contribute to ASQ (allowable sale quantity) were proposed for harvest.

All design features that have been listed in Chapter II Management Practices will be included in this alternative. Proposed activities are designed to comply with the Revised Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines including goshawk habitat. The alternative provides legal transportation and access into the Johnson Creek drainage.

4.0 Findings Required by Other Laws and Regulations

When implementing projects several laws, Executive Orders, regulations and policies must be followed. A list of these follows.

Consistency with the Revised Forest Plan,

The decision to implement Alternative 5 is consistent with the intent of the RFP's long term goals, objectives, direction and Desired Future Conditions as stated in the FEIS. The selected alternative is not only consistent with the management direction contained within the RFP, but it is necessary in attaining these goals and objectives.

The project was designed in conformation with forest plan standards for forested vegetation, hydrology, soils, wildlife, fisheries, roads and access, travel plan management, roadless areas, economics, air quality, heritage resources, tribal treaty rights, visuals, and recreation.

Administrative Procedures Act

This decision is neither arbitrary nor capricious; it is based on careful review of the Purpose and Need, public comments, analysis process, and effects determinations. This is documented in the FEIS and project file.

Clean Air Act

The emissions from the burning activities combined with the existing local emissions would be well within NAAQS and State of Idaho air quality standards. Based on local

experience, a one or two day degradation of air quality may be expected in the local communities of Soda Springs. Early morning smoke intrusions would be expected in these areas during the ignition periods and would be expected to occur for up to five days until weather conditions extinguish the burn.

Clean Water Act

Section 404 of the clean water act (33 U.S.C. 1251, et seq.; Pub. L. 95-217) exempts construction and maintenance of forestry and mining roads when BMPs designated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 33 CFR 323.4(a) 6 are followed. The project follows these mandatory BMPs and complies with the act. Project design with BMP implementation will meet the requirements of the Idaho Stream Channel Protection Act and Section 404 and 303(d) of the Clean Water Act.

Endangered Species Act

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) agreed with the streamlining determination that the proposed project; would *not likely to jeopardize the continued existence* of the gray wolf, *no effect* on the Canada lynx, and *no effect* on the bald eagle. It is important to note that when streamlining occurred, the bald eagle was listed as an endangered species. During the ongoing time of this EIS, the bald eagle has since been delisted as an endangered species.

Environmental Justice

This decision will not have a discernible effect on minorities, Native Americans, women or the civil rights of any United States Citizen.

Idaho Forest Practices Act

Rules pertaining to the Idaho Forest Practices Act would be implemented. In addition, logging operations and road maintenance would be supervised and monitored on the ground to ensure compliance with the timber sale contract and its associated provisions.

National Forest Management Act

I have considered the NFMA Management Requirements “to be met in accomplishing goals and objectives for the National Forest System” (36CFR 219.27). Because this project is consistent with the goals, objectives and standards of the RFP for the Caribou National Forest, I have found that it is consistent with the NFMA management requirements. Specifically:

- All silvicultural prescriptions are consistent with resource objectives and requirements in the RFP.
- Implementation of Alternative 5, would assure adequate stocking of all suited timberlands in the project area following implementation.
- The preliminary silvicultural prescriptions in Alternative 5 were selected based upon the existing conditions of the forested vegetation, the need for treatment, potential effects to residual trees/adjacent stands and other resource concerns.
- As described in the Rationale for the Decision, my decision considers resource effects and how they compare to the goals and objectives established in the RFP. Effects from alternative 5 on water quality, soil productivity, fish/fish habitat, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and other resource yields

meet RFP direction. Alternative 5 adequately addresses the transportation system needs to effectively harvest/haul sawlogs, implement prescribed burning for site preparation and fuels reduction, to provide safe public access to existing motorized routes and relocate old route alignments for protection of other forest resources within the Aspen Range Timber Sale area.

National Historic Preservation Act

A cultural resource inventory was completed for the project area. No sites of eligible or potential historic significance were found. Based on the findings of the inventory, the Forest Archeologist determined that there would be no effect on heritage resources. Contract provisions, which would halt any activities that degrade sites, would be included with Alternative 5 to prevent adverse impacts to any newly discovered site(s).

Tribal Treaty Rights

As part of government to government relations, the Shoshone – Bannock Tribes and Caribou – Targhee National Forest are developing a protocol which guides coordination, cooperation and consultation between the two entities. Tribal concerns with site specific projects revolve around impacts to their tribal treaty rights. According to the Fort Bridger Treaty and subsequent court cases clarifying these rights, the Shoshone – Bannock Tribes have reserved the right to hunt, fish, gather and practice traditional uses on all unoccupied lands in the United States. On ceded lands, the Tribes have also reserved the right to graze domestic livestock. In addition, the Northwest Band of the Shoshoni also has treaty rights on the Caribou – Targhee NF. Forest Service managers have a responsibility to protect those resources essential for the Tribes to exercise their treaty rights.

Two Tribal consultation meetings were conducted during the winters of 2004 and 2005 to discuss any concerns the Tribes have specific to this project. Questions specific to this project were answered during these consultations. General forest management concerns with this project have been analyzed and documented within the FEIS, Chapters 3 and 4.

4.1 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) require agencies to specify the alternative(s) considered to be environmentally preferable (40CFR 1505.2(b)). Forest Service policy further defines this as an alternative that best meets the goals of Section 101 of NEPA. This calls on Federal, State and local governments and the public to create and maintain conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony. In determining the environmentally preferred alternative, I referred to the goals of Section 101:

1. fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;
2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;
3. attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment, without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;

4. preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain wherever possible an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;
5. achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and
6. enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

Section 101 of NEPA clearly states that we should provide for human uses of the environment and not exclude Americans from using their environment. We should, however, avoid degradation of the environment. These goals are similar to the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines adopted by the Revised Forest Plan for the Caribou National Forest. All the action alternatives individually meet many of the goals listed above. Alternative 5 is the environmentally preferred alternative meeting the goals listed above as well as providing improvements for long term transportation needs, forest resources and other public concerns

4.2 Implementation

If no appeals are filed within the 45 day appeal period, implementation of the decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. When appeals are filed, implementation may occur on, but not before, the 15th business day following the date of the last appeal disposition.

4.3 Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is subject to administrative appeal pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215.11(a). Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. Individuals or organizations who submitted timely comments or demonstrated interest in the proposed action during the comment period specified at 215.6 may appeal this decision. Appeals must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Officer within 45 calendar days after the date of the legal notice of this decision in the *Idaho State Journal*. This publication date is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal (36 CFR 215.7). Those wishing to file an appeal should not rely upon dates provided by any other source. Incorporation of documents by reference is not allowed. Appeals may be filed by regular mail, facsimile, e-mail, express delivery, or messenger service. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to an electronic message, a verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature is one way to provide verification. The Appeal Deciding Officer is the Regional Forester, Intermountain Region (R4).

Appeals must be sent to:

Appeal Deciding Officer
C/O Planning, Appeals and Litigation
324 25th Street,
Ogden, Utah 84401

or by fax to 801-625-5277; or by email to: appeals-intermtn-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Emailed appeals must be submitted in rich text (rtf) or Word (.doc) and must include the project name in the subject line. Appeals may also be hand delivered to the above address, during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, exclusive of federal holidays.

Any notice of appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 215.14 and include at a minimum:

- A statement that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR Part 215.
- The name, address, and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identification of the decision to which the objection is being made.
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and subject, date of the decision, and name and title of the Deciding Officer.
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which objection is made.
- The reasons for appeal, including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy and, if applicable, specifically how the decision violates law, regulation, or policy.
- Identification of the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Jack Isaacs, District Ranger, Soda Springs Ranger District, 410 East Hooper Ave, Soda Springs, ID. 83276 or by phone (208) 547-4356.

LAWRENCE A. TIMCHAK
Forest Supervisor
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

DATE