



Southwest Idaho Ecogroup

Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests

Southwest Idaho ■ BOISE, PAYETTE, and SAWTOOTH NATIONAL FORESTS REVISED FOREST PLAN ■ July 2003

Setting a Course for the Future

People and natural process have shaped the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests for centuries. The Forests are special places with nationally significant resources. The Forest Service will continue providing places for people to work, play, enjoy, and utilize these significant resources. They will also continue to restore, maintain or improve the health of this incredible area found in southern and central Idaho. The same natural resource values that caught the attention of President Theodore Roosevelt, the American people, and Congress back in 1905 still exist today.

The Boise National Forest released its initial Land and Resource Management Plan in 1990, the Payette in 1988, and the Sawtooth

in 1987. These plans have guided the management and protection of the forests through today and were developed following a number of years of study, analysis, and public involvement. The need to review and modify management for the new century, and in particular the next 10-15 years, created the revised 2003 Forest Plans. Our goal is to continue protecting and managing the land, so everyone can use and enjoy it for centuries to come.

The Forests have reached a milestone with the release of the revised Forest Plans. This planning process began in 1996. It has taken a long time, and an enormous effort to finish. Factors effecting the development of the revised Forest Plans include new listings

of threatened and endangered plant, animal, and fish species under the Endangered Species Act; forest health issues including invasive plants, outbreaks of insects and disease, and the threat of un-characteristic wildfire; court decisions; water quality issues; new research findings and science from the Interior Columbia Basin studies; increased public interest in the management and protection of roadless areas; the National Fire Plan; and the President's Healthy Forest Initiative.

The Forest Plans do the following:

- Describe management goals and objectives;
- Describe standards and guidelines to protect natural resources;
- Identify desired resource conditions; and
- Identify lands available and suitable for management.

The revised Forest Plans set a course for the future – a course that will benefit the communities we serve, the resources we are entrusted to manage, and the future generations who will inherit the results of our stewardship. To develop them, the Forests listened to what people had to say and analyzed the current conditions found on the landscape.

The revised Forest Plans are different than the initial Plans in several ways. Particularly, the revised Plans emphasize restoration or maintenance of vegetation and watershed conditions. The plans maintain undeveloped areas and produce goods and services based on desired future conditions.

Managing and protecting the natural resources on the 6.6 million acres administered by the Southwest Idaho Ecogroup to meet the needs and desires of the public and affected Tribes for today and into the future, and at the same time meet the needs of the resources, is very complex and demanding. Therefore, the revised Forest Plans may appear complex. We encourage people with an interest in these National Forests to take the time to read and learn the details and then work with us as we implement the plans. Please be patient, changes

will not occur overnight and it will take time, years in many cases, to see the results. We will also need to amend or update the plans periodically and ask your input and involvement in helping to correct problems when they are identified.

We realize that the decisions being made for future management of the three Forests will not please everyone on every topic. However, we request that you take a close look at either an entire Forest or all three Forest Plans and consider the full mix of opportunities and uses, keeping in mind the laws that we must uphold. We truly believe that in ten or twenty years people will be able to look back and see improvements to the land, resources, recreation and commodity opportunities.

On behalf of the employees on our three National Forests, we personally thank you for the privilege and opportunity given us as stewards of your land for the protection and management of these special areas. We greatly value the time you have taken in the past to provide us with your thoughts and comments, and hope you will continue doing so in the future.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Smith
Boise Forest Supervisor

Mark J. Madrid
Payette Forest Supervisor

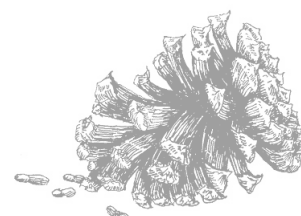
Ruth Monahan
Sawtooth Forest Supervisor



Redfish Lake

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Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests Release Revised Forest Plans

After seven years of analysis and planning, and more than 3500 public comments, a revised management strategy has been selected for the three National Forests in southwest Idaho – the Boise, Payette and Sawtooth National Forests.

The management strategy is embodied in the revised Forest Plans for the three Forests. The Plans provide direction for managing all of the resources on the three Forests. The Forests will continue to supply livestock forage, timber, a broad spectrum of recreation opportunities, and diverse and productive habitat for fish, wildlife, and plants.

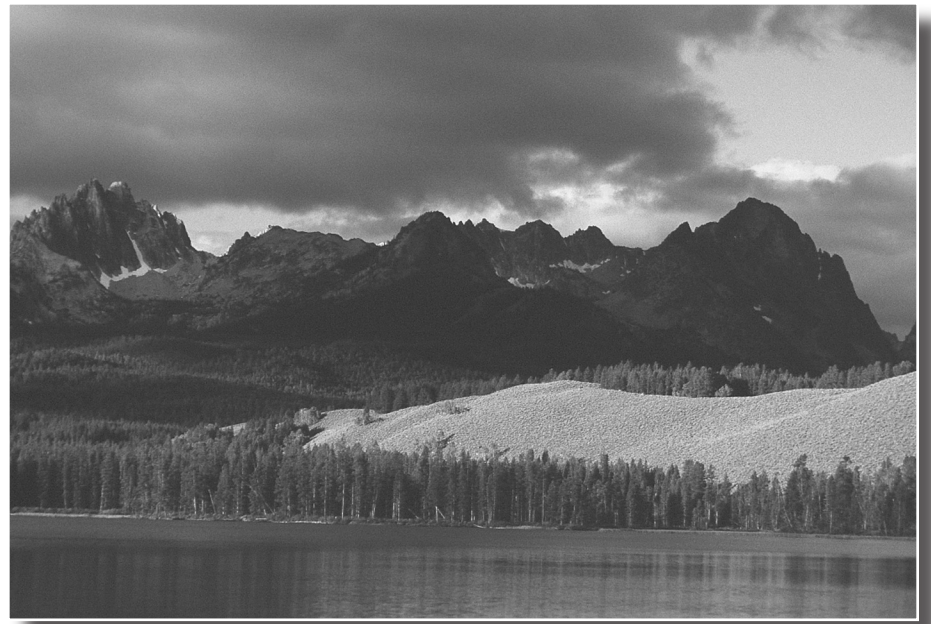
The revised Forest Plans strive to match uses with the capability of the land. They emphasize active and flexible management of vegetation to provide properly functioning wildlife habitat and watershed conditions, and to reduce hazardous fuels. The Plans also establish goals and objectives for improving Forest user education and collaboration. Overall, the Plans provide guidance to ensure that the Forests are managed in a sustainable manner.

Each revised Forest Plan:

- ✓ Provides a long term Aquatic Conservation Strategy;
- ✓ Emphasizes restoration of degraded habitats;
- ✓ Incorporates the National Fire Plan and the Healthy Forests Initiative;
- ✓ Incorporates Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species protection and recovery strategies;
- ✓ Recommends management of Inventoried Roadless Areas; and
- ✓ Emphasizes timber harvest in high productivity, developed areas outside of Inventoried Roadless Areas and riparian areas;
- ✓ Re-evaluates lands not suited for timber production; and
- ✓ Re-evaluates rangeland capability and suitability.

Management direction found in the Forest Plans was analyzed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that accompanies the revised Plans. Alternative 7 was developed following substantial public input on the Draft Revised Forest Plans and Draft EIS, released in November 2000, which contained six alternatives for managing the Forests.

Alternative 7 responds to new initiatives such as the National Fire Plan and Healthy Forest Initiative and concerns about listed species; habitat



Redfish Lake

restoration; roadless area conservation; and timber production. Alternative 7 makes individual decisions for managing roadless areas based on their inherent values. It recognizes the importance of watersheds (particularly watersheds with Threatened, Endangered, or Sensitive listed species or watersheds needing restoration), and it addresses the need to reduce hazardous fuels to prevent wildfire in areas where life and property are considered at risk.

By federal law, each National Forest must develop a management plan, and then revise that plan every 10–15 years or as changed conditions require. The Boise NF's management plan was adopted in 1990, the Payette in 1988, and the Sawtooth Forest Plan in 1987. At that time there were fewer mountain bikes, fewer National Forest visitors, fewer Endangered Species Act listed species, and less public awareness about wildfire. In addition, our understanding of healthy ecosystems has grown substantially since that time. The revised Forest Plans address these changing conditions and incorporate new scientific understanding in their new management direction.

The revised Plans are unlikely to completely satisfy every group or individual, but they do set a reasonable course that provides a diverse mix of opportunities for a variety of users.

The management strategy that has been adopted is explained in more detail in the following pages. After reading this document, if you still have questions please let us know!

“The revised Forest Plans strive to match uses with the capability of the land. They emphasize active and flexible management of vegetation to provide for wildlife habitat and watershed conditions, and to reduce hazardous fuels.”

Reducing the Threat of Un-characteristic Wildfire



Prescribed burning

KEY DECISION: The National Fire Plan and Healthy Forests Initiative direction are incorporated using a combination of mechanical and prescribed fire treatments in wildland urban interface watersheds to reduce the acres of Condition Class 3. Working with cooperators such as county and state agencies is emphasized.

Scenes engulfed in smoke. Flames racing or creeping toward homes, people struggling to make sense of blackened, scorched landscapes, environmental, social, and economic resources lost. The media has presented these scenes from the West with increasing frequency. Could this scenario happen here? Yes, it can and, in some areas such as Atlanta, Warren, the Boise foothills, and Hailey it already has.

During the last decade over 454,000 acres burned on the Boise Forest (21% of the Forest), 673,000 acres on the Payette (29% of the Forest), and 81,000 acres on the Sawtooth (4% of the Forest). Overall, our aging forests are becoming more susceptible to fire and the Forest Plan decisions set a path to better prepare landscapes and communities for uncharacteristic wildfire.



Un-characteristic wildfire

Approximately, 13% of the Ecogroup's forested areas are considered to be in bad health. That is, they are considered to be in uncharacteristic conditions where a wildfire would have lethal or stand replacing effects in areas where fires occurred historically every 10 to 15 years and were non-lethal. Wildfire hazard is based on the vegetative conditions that influence fire behavior and potential effects. Wildfire hazard ratings are identified as condition classes 0-3; low (0), moderate (1), high (2), and extreme (3). Controlling high intensity, lethal wildfires is difficult, sometimes impossible.

The Selected Alternative incorporates the Healthy Forest Initiative and National Fire Plan goals and objectives by emphasizing a combination of mechanical and fire treatments around National Fire Plan communities and within wildland urban interface watersheds.

Restoration and maintenance of historic fire intervals commonly seen in the dry forest types (ponderosa pine) is emphasized through vegetation management actions that include prescribed fire, and mechanical equipment that would include some removal of timber products. Product removal in this case would generally be a by-product of the restoration activities designed to return conditions reflective of historic fire intervals.

In addition, benefits such as products to communities, reducing longer term economic risks associated with wildland fire, as well as reducing risks to watersheds, particularly municipal water supplies are an outcome of management actions.

It is important to note that other ecosystems found within the Ecogroup area, such as the lodgepole pine and other high-elevation vegetation groups did experience periodic stand-replacing fires and the normal functioning of these stands rely on these fires. As demonstrated by the 1988 fires at Yellowstone National Park, also a lodgepole pine ecosystem, forests regenerate from high-intensity fires with surprising quickness.

Most larger animals and many smaller animals can flee fires. However, people are part of the forests, and populations adjacent to the National Forest are growing at among the fastest rates in the nation. Obviously, wildfires cannot be allowed to burn uncontrolled within this urban interface area. One of the high priority objectives in the revised Forest Plans is to reduce hazardous fuels in the wildland urban interface. The question is how.

The Forest Service sees several answers, none simple or complete. One option is to manage vegetation through **mechanical means**. For example, thinning trees reduces the rate of fire spread, and may be particularly useful in some areas. However, thinning is not possible in certain areas



Mechanical treatment

including those with steep terrain, and the Sawtooth Wilderness Area and Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

Prescribed and natural fires is a second technique for abating fire potential. A prescribed fire is a well-planned and carefully watched fire, usually occurring in the spring and fall seasons. A natural fire is ignited by lightning and allowed to burn under very specific conditions. Natural fires are most likely to occur in wilderness or other remote areas. Both types of fire techniques benefit the forests. Fire management plans will be developed using revised Forest Plan direction to better determine, when, and if, these natural fires are appropriate.

We know that unless hazardous fuels are reduced, the number of severe wildland fires and costs associated with suppressing them will continue to increase. We also know we can't do the job alone. The Forest Service will continue to work cooperatively with state and local governments, communities, and homeowners to address the threat of fire in the wildland urban interface. Everyone has to pitch in to reduce this threat because whether caused by lightning, careless recreational use, or unfortunately, arson, fire does not respect property lines.

During the last decade over 454,000 acres burned on the Boise Forest (21% of the Forest), 673,000 acres on the Payette (29% of the Forest), and 81,000 acres on the Sawtooth (4% of the Forest).

Wildland urban interface



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

Wilderness, Recommended Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas

Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs)

Of the vast array of resources managed within national forests, few resources spark as much debate as roadless areas. These generally unroaded and undeveloped areas may include features that make them suitable for future wilderness designation. For this reason, people are keenly interested in their location and extent, and the effects of any proposed management activities (or their restrictions) within these areas.

To be considered an IRA an area has to be 5,000 acres or more in size or, due to physiography or vegetation, be manageable in its natural condition. An area can also be considered an IRA if it is a self-contained ecosystem such as an island, or is contiguous to an existing wilderness, primitive area, Administration endorsed wilderness, or another Federally managed roadless area. To be an IRA the area must be free of any improved roads. The Ecogroup Forests conducted a Roadless area re-evaluation as part of the revision effort. The table provided under “Designated Wilderness Areas” shows the results of this re-evaluation.

Future management of roadless areas is a controversial and polarized issue. On many National Forests, roadless area management has been a major point of contention in land management planning. Roadless areas are valued for many resource benefits including their undeveloped fisheries and wildlife habitat, biological diversity, and dispersed recreation opportunities. Controversy continues to accompany most proposals to harvest timber, build roads, or otherwise develop inventoried roadless areas. Public opinions regarding the use of these areas vary greatly, ranging from full commodity development to maintaining undeveloped character through wilderness designation.

In the revised Forest Plans, there are a variety of management prescriptions assigned to IRAs, including those that provide for:

- A full range of development opportunities (including road construction, scheduled timber harvest or rangeland vegetation management);
- Low levels of development (including timber salvage or, in some areas, habitat restoration or treatments to reduce the hazard of insect infestation or uncharacteristic wildfire);
- Maintenance of undeveloped character (some limited management activities might occur in these areas, but no lasting signs of development would be produced);
- Recommendation for wilderness designation.

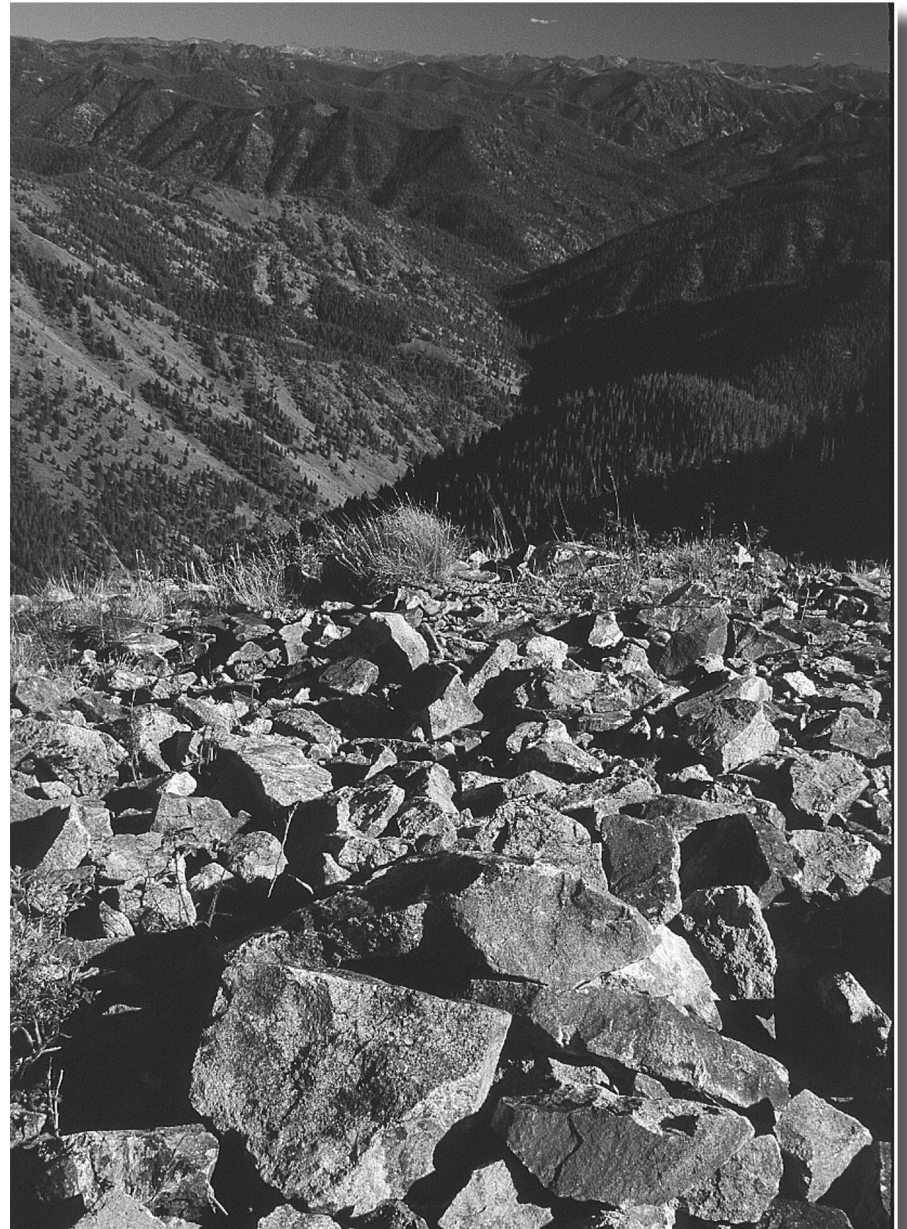
The following table indicates the mix of management options assigned to IRAs under the revised Forest Plans. Acreages are rounded to the nearest 100 acres.

Management Prescription	BOISE NF		PAYETTE NF		SAWTOOTH NF	
	Acres	Percent of Forest's IRA acres	Acres	Percent of Forest's IRA acres	Acres	Percent of Forest's IRA acres
Full range of development options	23,900	2 percent	2,700	Less than 1 percent	121,200*	10 percent
Low levels of development	868,100	78 percent	628,300	69 percent	838,200	68 percent
Maintain undeveloped character	32,600	3 percent	70,200	8 percent	1,900	Less than 1 percent
Recommended wilderness	183,900	17 percent	211,300	23 percent	263,900	22 percent

* Largely rangelands over which development would not be as concentrated or obvious as the forested lands on the Boise and Payette NFs.

As shown in the table above, most of the IRAs will be managed to maintain their unroaded character while allowing for salvage harvest or restoration treatments when necessary.

The Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR), published in 2001, was developed to respond to the national controversy over management of roadless areas. The RACR prohibited road construction and reconstruction in most IRAs and outlined procedures to evaluate the quality and importance of roadless characteristics. The RACR remains under review and litigation. About 20 percent of the Boise, 31 percent of the Payette and 22 percent of the Sawtooth IRA acres are completely consistent with the RACR.



Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness



Recommended Wilderness Areas

Recommended Wilderness Areas are areas identified as having wilderness characteristics and values but have not yet been designated by Congress. The revised Forest Plans did not change the number of Recommended Wilderness Areas within the Ecogroup Forests. While the number of recommended wilderness areas stayed the same in the revised plans, the acres recommended changed as a result of a few minor boundary adjustments for manageability, to preserve recreation opportunities, and as a result of better mapping technology.

On the Boise Forest, the Needles, Red Mountain, and Ten Mile/Black Warrior areas continue to be recommended for Wilderness designation. On the Payette Forest the Secesh and Needles areas continue as recommended Wilderness. The Sawtooth Forest continues to recommend the Hanson Lakes, Boulder/White Clouds, and Pioneer Mountains for Wilderness designation. In total, over 650,000 acres within the Ecogroup will be managed to preserve existing wilderness values and characteristics until Congress makes wilderness designation decisions on these areas.

Designated Wilderness Areas

The Ecogroup Forests administer about 985,400 acres of wilderness, or 25 percent of the designated wilderness within Idaho. Wilderness areas found within the Ecogroup area are the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness, the Hells Canyon Wilderness, and the Sawtooth Wilderness. These areas offer undisturbed landscapes, incredible scenic vistas, and solitude.

Forest	Existing Wilderness % / Acres	Recommended Wilderness % / Acres	Inventoried Roadless Areas* % / Acres
Boise	0% 0 ¹	8% 183,900	50% 1,108,500
Payette	33% 767,700 ²	9% 211,300	40% 908,500
Sawtooth	10% 217,700	12% 263,900	58% 1,225,137

¹Approximately 64,400 acres of the Boise National Forest lie within the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness but are administered by the Salmon-Challis National Forest.

²This figure does not include approximately 24,000 acres of the Payette National Forest within the Hells Canyon Wilderness that are administered by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest.

Under the revised Forest Plans, visitors seeking undisturbed solitude or just a little peace and quiet will still find numerous opportunities within the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth Forests.



Lava Butte Lake



**Boulder – White Cloud
Recommended Wilderness**

Mule deer



Livestock Grazing within the Ecogroup



**Cattle
grazing in
Stanley
Basin**

KEY DECISIONS: Riparian management standards for allotment management planning and grazing suitability were re-evaluated to better address long-term aquatic resources and recovery requirements for endangered species.

Livestock grazing has occurred within the Ecogroup for over 100 years. Livestock were initially brought into the area to provide meat and dairy products for miners and homesteaders. Livestock were also used as working animals for mining and associated timber operations. Unregulated grazing created localized areas of damaged rangeland vegetation, damaged riparian areas, and depleted forage surrounding the mining communities. Fire was used to expose ore bodies and clear land for grazing and cultivation.

As mineral deposits were discovered throughout the late 1800s, more mountain mining communities were established. Other communities began to appear along travel routes in nearby valleys, where the climate and terrain were more favorable for ranching and agriculture. The introduction of large herds of cattle (1860s) and sheep (1890s) exposed vegetation in the Ecogroup to an unprecedented level and duration of grazing. This condition was perpetuated for many years due to low production and shipping costs, a more stable forage base created by irrigated pastures and hay operations, and war-time demands for livestock products.

Livestock use on National Forest lands is calculated in Head Months (HMs). HMs are defined as the amount of dry forage required by one mature 1,000 pound cow for one month. The

Ecogroup established rangeland capability and suitability criteria to guide the broad level decisions found in the Revised Forest Plans. Rangeland capability determines the land's physical ability to support livestock grazing. Rangeland suitability determines whether or not grazing is appropriate in an area. Decisions specific to individual allotments will be based on site-specific analysis that will follow the Forest Plan Revision process.

The Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests administer about 6.6 million acres of National Forest System lands. An estimated 18% of those lands are capable for grazing. Of the 6.6 million acres, an estimated 16% are suitable for grazing. The reduction between capable and suitable rangelands is due primarily to considerations for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species listed under the Environmental Species Act, big horn sheep and domestic sheep conflicts, and livestock grazing and recreation conflicts.

The following are highlights for each Forest:

- BNF – Grazing levels will continue near current levels but six allotments that have been vacant in recent years will be closed.
- PNF – Grazing levels are maintained close to current levels.
- SNF – Grazing levels are maintained similar to current levels, but small portions of allotments within two management areas are closed to address recreation livestock conflicts, a small portion of one allotment is closed to address noxious weed concerns and one allotment currently closed will remain closed to address bighorn sheep concerns.

Many ranchers depend on allotments administered by the Boise, Payette and Sawtooth Forests to provide a portion of their year-round grazing operations. The Forests will continue to support many viable livestock operations and explore ways to improve conditions of rangelands.

Methods for improvement include prescribed fire. Periodic fire helps improve the vigor of plants in aspen, mountain brush, and sagebrush vegetation communities. Livestock grazing will be carefully coordinated both before and after these fire use projects. Areas will need to be rested from grazing to prepare for the burns and to recover from them. Over the long-term though, grazing use for both domestic livestock and wildlife will benefit from the improved forage.

Changes in plan direction may result in some overall reductions in livestock numbers over time, but that will depend partly on how well grazing is managed. Any actual changes in permitted livestock numbers will only occur following site-specific analysis to make adjustments that fit the particular allotment.

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Management Indicator Species

KEY DECISIONS: *Ecosystem-based direction is used to reflect current science from the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. A suite of species is selected to better reflect habitat relationships and the effects of management, as well as the results of population trend monitoring.*

The Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests provide habitat for many vertebrate species of wildlife including fish, reptiles (snakes and lizards), amphibians (frogs, toads, salamanders), mammals, and birds. Not all of these species are on the Forest all of the time. Many birds, for instance, migrate south for the winter, some as far as South America. Some of the species are rare on the Forest.

Laws and regulations determine wildlife management on the National Forests by providing direction to maintain habitat and viability for all native and desired non-native species that reside within the Forest boundaries. There are over 300 terrestrial species that use the three Ecogroup Forests. Because it is extremely difficult to track every species individually, species are categorized according to the habitat they use. First, we determine which habitats our management is likely to affect. Then we select species that are dependent on those habitats. We call these species "Management Indicator Species (MIS)." By assessing representative species, we can infer that other species using the same habitats are experiencing similar conditions and effects.

Considerations for selecting MIS include:

- Non-migratory species;
- Species that are sensitive to habitat or watershed condition changes;
- Changes to species habitat are influenced by forest management activities;
- Changes in species populations can be monitored; and
- Species whose habitats have changed significantly from historic conditions.

The MIS for the Forests and their associated habitats are:

FOREST	SPECIES	ASSOCIATED HABITAT
BOISE AND PAYETTE NATIONAL FORESTS	Pileated woodpecker	Mixed conifer forests capable of growing large diameter trees with multi-storied stands.
	White-headed woodpecker	Open, mature ponderosa pine and mixed ponderosa pine/Douglas-fir forests.
	Bull trout	Stream beds free of sediment, cold water temperature, and access to other streams.
SAWTOOTH NATIONAL FOREST	Pileated woodpecker	Mixed conifer forests capable of growing large diameter trees with multi-storied stands.
	Bull trout	Stream beds free of sediment, cold water temperature, and access to other streams.
	Sage grouse	Sagebrush and grasslands.



White-headed woodpecker



Sage grouse

Pileated Woodpecker:

Pileated woodpeckers are non-migratory and occur on all Ranger Districts within the three Forests, except the southern portion of the Sawtooth NF. Pileated woodpeckers nest in large standing snags. Because they are the largest woodpeckers occurring within the three Forests, they need snags large enough to accommodate their body size when excavating nest cavities.



Pileated woodpecker

Numerous other cavity-nesting birds within the Ecogroup depend on large trees. Because of their reliance on large-diameter trees and their importance to other wildlife species, and the potential for Forest management activities to affect large mixed conifer trees and snags, the pileated woodpecker is a selected MIS for all three Forests.

White-headed Woodpecker:

White-headed woodpeckers are non-migratory and occur in most of the management areas on the Boise Forest and some of the management areas on the Payette Forest. Major habitat changes have occurred from selective harvesting of large ponderosa pine, snag removal in harvest areas, large areas of ponderosa pine mortality from wildfires during the last 15 years, and a change in composition and density of remaining stands because of long-term fire exclusion. Because of these habitat reductions, and the potential for Forest management activities to affect their habitat, white-headed woodpeckers are a selected MIS for the Boise and Payette National Forests.

Bull Trout:

Bull trout were historically found in most streams in the Ecogroup area, except for the Snake River above Shoshone Falls and the Wood River. Today, bull trout are limited to streams that have streambeds free of sediment, lots of good hiding cover formed by wood, boulders, and deep pools, cold water temperatures, and good access to other nearby streams. Past management activities have reduced one or more of these conditions in many Forest streams. Bull trout is a selected MIS because its reliance on very specific habitat features, and the potential for Forest management activities to affect these features.

Sage Grouse:

Sage grouse are found on the Sawtooth Forest and the southernmost portion of the Boise Forest. The species is a selected MIS for the Sawtooth Forest because of its dependence on sagebrush and grasslands to meet their habitat needs, and the potential for Forest management activities to affect its habitat.

Management indicator species provide a way to monitor the effects forest management may have on species dependent on the Forests for survival. As information on these species is gathered over the next decade, it will help Forest managers determine if changes in management direction or practices are needed to help ensure viability of many species found on the Forests.



Summer Recreation

KEY DECISION: A mix of recreation opportunities is offered to address growing demands from Boise, Twin Falls, and other communities in the Ecogroup Forest area. Travel management plans on all three Forests will be updated following the revision effort.

Summertime brings many visitors to the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests. These visitors enjoy fishing, hiking, riding horses, mountain biking, camping, and off-highway vehicle riding, just to name a few. The revised plans lay the groundwork to provide quality recreation to an increasing number of diverse recreation users. Keeping up with the growing numbers of people enjoying the outdoors and the impacts from increasing recreation use will continue to be a challenge.

The Plans primary intent is to ensure people find opportunities for a wide spectrum of recreation experiences. Various methods are identified to help manage recreation uses and facilities to lessen impacts from recreation to other resources.

Emphasized methods include:

- Prioritize opportunities to mitigate effects at and from recreation facilities on natural resources such as water quality or plant habitat.

- Manage cross-country travel to mitigate recreation and big game conflicts on winter and spring ranges.
- Facilitate and encourage user groups to resolve use conflicts among themselves.
- Develop recreation facilities based on increased public need, operating efficiency, reduction of conflict, or reducing resource degradation.
- Issue Outfitter and Guide special use permits when the use will not degrade Forest resources, and when the use is compatible with existing public recreation activities.
- Use the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum to classify areas by recreation experience and setting to maintain an array of recreation opportunities.

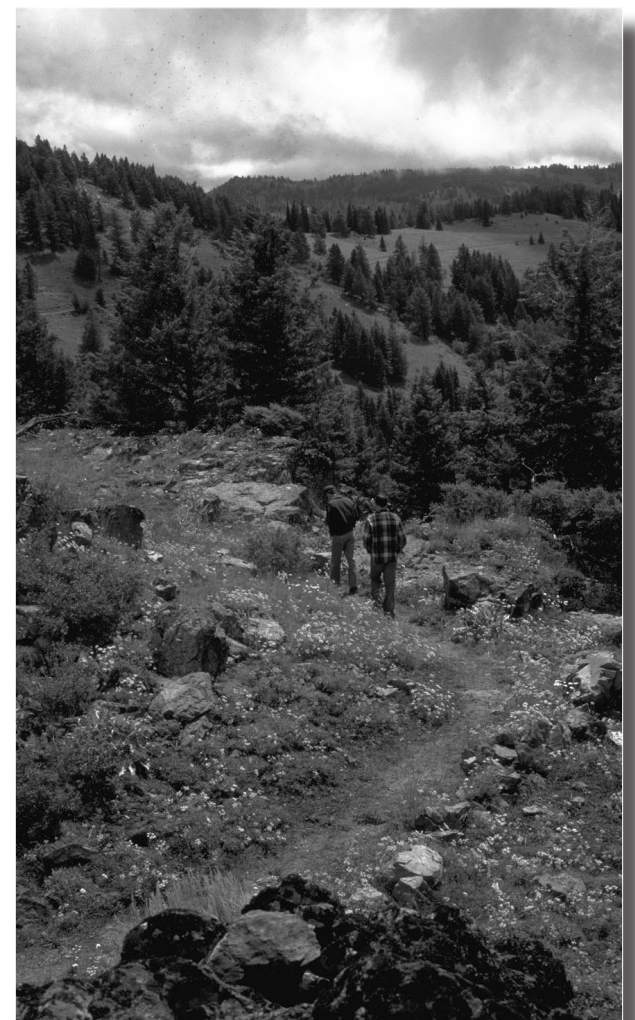
With the diversity of landscapes found on these Forests, users have a variety of settings for a wide range of activities. They include

primitive settings with solitude and challenging opportunities, to modified settings with more social interaction and comfort provisions. The Forests will continue maintaining and expanding opportunities for physically challenged recreationists.

The Ecogroup Forests are unique in their concentration of threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act. With species recovery, recreation opportunities and experiences benefit.

In recent years, conflicts between recreation users and other resources, such as listed species, have developed largely from increasing recreation use. The revised Forest Plans lay the groundwork for maintaining recreation opportunities, and reducing conflicts. They also provide environmentally responsible access parameters and set the foundation for subsequent travel management planning.

Key decisions in each Forest Plan provides for a mix of recreational opportunities. The Forests use a classification system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to help describe different recreation settings and to help guide management activities.



Hiking on the Payette National Forest

Percent of Ecogroup Forest Areas and Trails Open to Motorized Uses*

	BOISE NF ¹	PAYETTE NF ¹	SAWTOOTH NF ¹
Percent of Forest Open to Summer Cross-Country Motorized Uses	24	22	37
Percent of Summer Trail Miles Open to Motorized Uses	80	35	55

* Includes any form of motorized use during all or any part of the year.

Estimated Acres of Summer ROS Class by 2018¹

ROS CLASS ²	ACRES BY ROS CLASS		
	BOISE NF	PAYETTE NF	SAWTOOTH NF
Primitive	0	768,000	227,000
Semi-Primitive Non- Motorized	457,000	458,000	367,000
Semi-Primitive Motorized	408,000	415,000	724,000
Roaded Natural	404,000	263,000	295,000
Roaded Modified	929,000	395,000	494,000
Rural	5,000	0	4,000

¹Acres are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Totals may differ slightly due to rounding.





Winter Recreation

KEY DECISION: Programmatic management direction was reviewed and adjusted to provide a foundation for subsequent analysis and access management determinations. Site-specific winter access management will be addressed in the travel management planning process following the revision effort. A combination of methods, such as user education and collaborative user group conflict mitigation, is anticipated to resolve winter recreation conflicts.

The Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests will continue to provide outstanding opportunities for winter recreationists including downhill and cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and snowshoeing.

Downhill skiing opportunities are available at seven different downhill ski areas and resorts including Brundage Mountain, Little Ski Hill, Bogus Basin, Soldier Mountain, Pomerelle Mountain, Magic Mountain, and Sun Valley Bald Mountain.

Outstanding cross-country skiing is available at the Little Ski Hill outside of McCall and Galena Lodge near Galena Pass, not to mention the vast tracts of forests open to skiers. The Ecogroup area provides approximately 110 miles of groomed trail experiences.

Over 1200 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and 4.4 million acres of open terrain are available for snowmobile enthusiasts. The Boise National Forest manages three snowparks and the Sawtooth National Forest manages two parks. Remote forest areas provide abundant terrain for winter snow-play for snowmobile touring and hi-marking.

Most routes are groomed in partnership with organizations or agencies, including the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation and local county governments. Some of the 4.4 million acres are not accessible to motorized use because of slope steepness, wildlife conflicts, or other natural limiting factors.

Increasing winter use increases the potential for conflicts between different users and other resources, such as wintering wildlife. In most cases, these conflicts are terrain use conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users. They occur in developed ski areas as well as backcountry areas. Most of these conflicts are site specific in nature, so full resolution is, typically outside the scope of the programmatic nature of the Plans.

The intent is to continue to provide an array of winter recreation experiences and facilities, while meeting other resource goals and reducing

the levels of conflicts. Closures to any users will be determined on a site-specific or project level with ample opportunities for input from everyone.

Management direction affecting winter recreation activities was reviewed and revised in light of the growing popularity of all forms of winter recreation. New direction was developed, at both the Forest-wide and management area levels, to address conflict situations.

Key direction includes:

- Addressing current recreation use and emerging recreation use conflicts while maintaining recreation opportunities where possible.
- Emphasizing collaboration among users to reduce conflicts between recreational and environmental needs.
- Educating users of wildlife needs and promoting backcountry safety and user conflict methods.
- Recognizing that some activities in the same locations may not be compatible and separation for user safety and quality recreation experiences should be noted.

Key decisions in each Forest Plan provides for a mix of recreational opportunities. The Forests use a classification system called the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) to help describe different recreation settings and to help guide management activities.



Snowmobiling on the Payette National Forest

Percent of Ecogroup Forest Areas and Trails Open to Motorized Uses*

	BOISE NF ¹	PAYETTE NF ¹	SAWTOOTH NF ¹
Percent of Forest Open to Winter Cross-Country Motorized Uses	84	47	72
Percent of Winter Trail Miles Open to Motorized Uses	96	100	74

* Includes any form of motorized use during all or any part of the year.

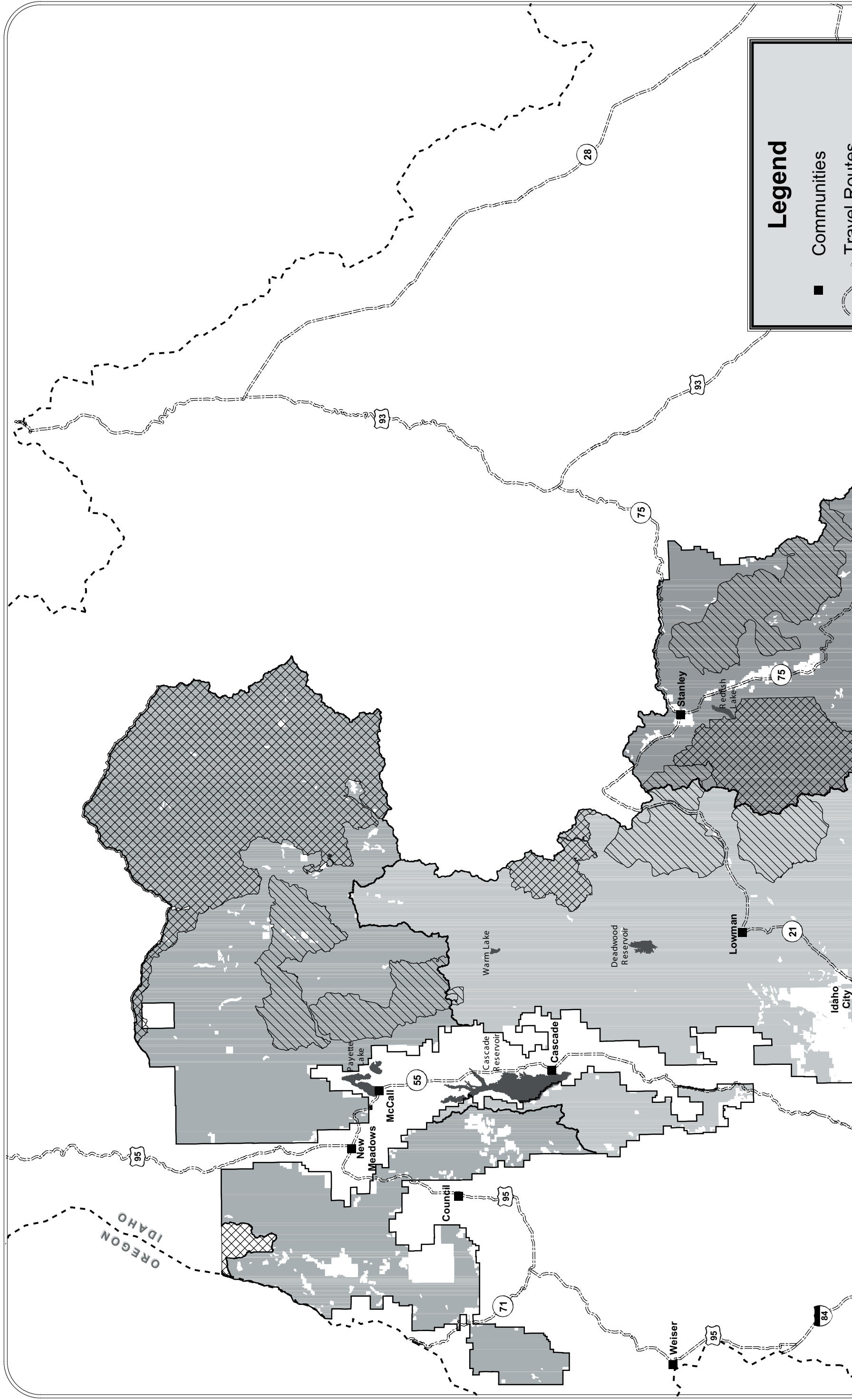
Estimated Acres of Winter ROS Class by 2018¹

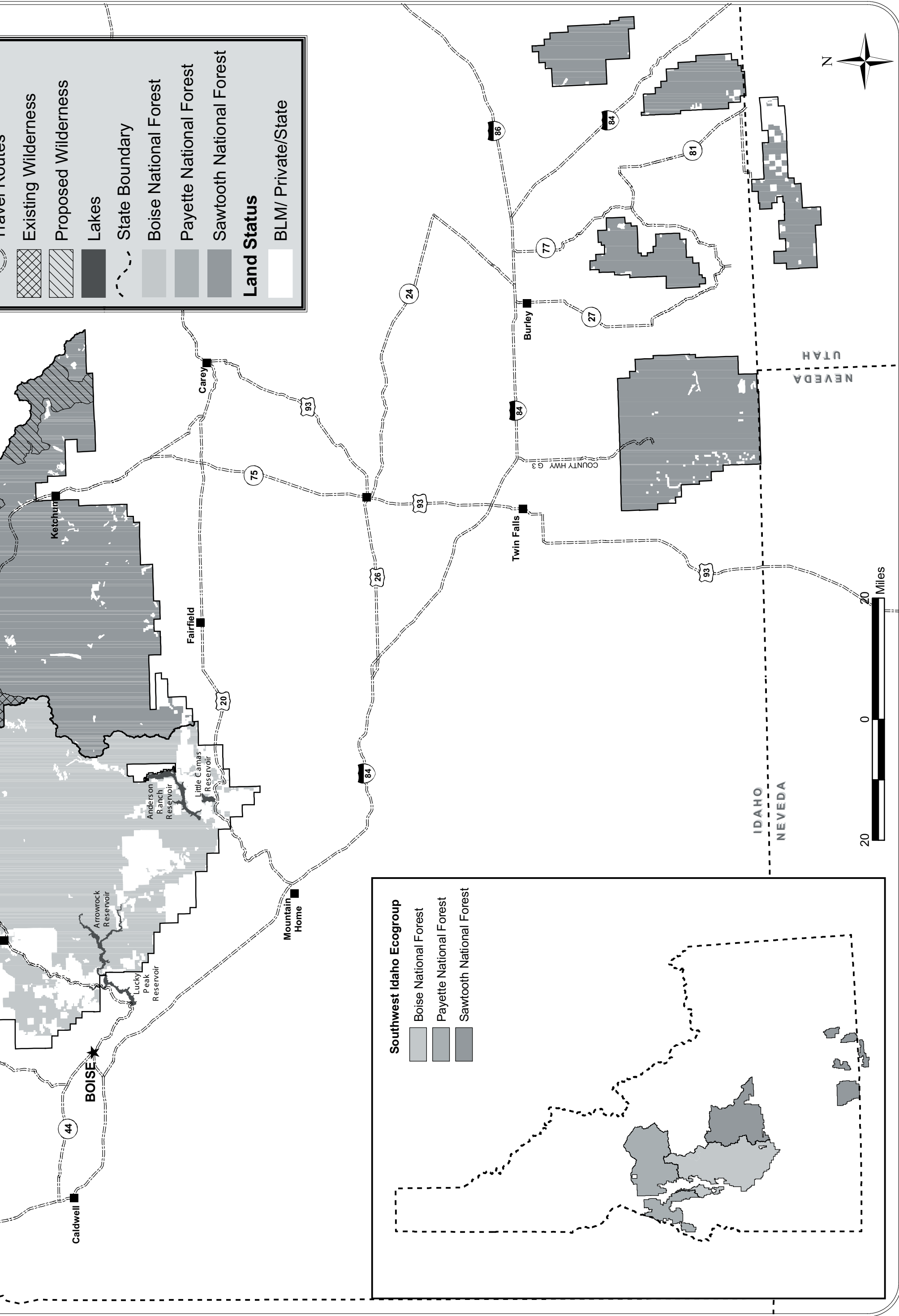
ROS CLASS ²	ACRES BY ROS CLASS		
	BOISE NF	PAYETTE NF	SAWTOOTH NF
Primitive	0	768,000	219,000
Semi-Primitive Non- Motorized	206,000	447,000	123,000
Semi-Primitive Motorized	1,725,000	745,000	1,696,000
Roaded Natural	167,000	39,000	71,000
Roaded Modified	100,000	301,000	0
Rural	5,000	0	2,000

¹Acres are rounded to the nearest 1,000 acres. Totals may differ slightly due to rounding.

Hopefully, new management direction will foster resolution of conflicts among user groups themselves utilizing approaches such as the Winter Recreation Coalition effort on the Sawtooth National Forest. The new management direction provides added protection and awareness of potential threats to wildlife from recreationists during critical periods of the year.

Southwest Idaho Ecogroup Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests

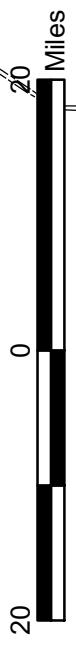




	Existing Wilderness
	Proposed Wilderness
	Lakes
	State Boundary
	Boise National Forest
	Payette National Forest
	Sawtooth National Forest
Land Status	
	BLM/ Private/State

Southwest Idaho Ecogroup

	Boise National Forest
	Payette National Forest
	Sawtooth National Forest



UTAH
NEVEDA

IDAHO
NEVEDA

COUNTY HWY. G 3

Only Time (and Monitoring) Will Tell: The New Plans Need To Be Adaptable

The Plans were built using an adaptive strategy that incorporated available information. As new information became available, it was incorporated into the planning process as appropriate. This adaptive strategy will continue through monitoring.

Now that we have made decisions to guide Forest management over the next 10 to 15 years, how will we know whether they are moving us toward our desired conditions? Moreover, what will happen if we are not moving in the right direction?

Monitoring and evaluation focus on these questions and are required in planning for the future of all National Forests. Monitoring is simply checking periodically and answering the following: Did we do what we said we were going to do? How well is it working and why? Evaluation answers the question: What, if anything, do we need to change to move toward our goals? These activities provide the information needed to keep Forest Plans up-to-date and to make sure that we learn from our successes and mistakes.

The large area and complex planning for the various uses and values of the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth Forests made it impossible to anticipate every possible situation. We fully expect to make periodic adjustments to address monitoring results, changed conditions, new information or research, new policy, etc. Through monitoring we can review the assumptions made during the development of the plans, determine if objectives are being accomplished, and decide how well those actions are working. We can assess whether management direction in the Plans is sufficient to provide for long-term sustainability and desirable public opportunities. Finally, we can determine if we should change some aspects of the revised Forest Plans through amendments based on what we have learned. It is important to note that not all items will be monitored every year – some yearly, some every 3 years and so on.

Every year, each Forest will publish a Monitoring Report outlining how we are doing with Plan implementation, what we are finding, and what management actions, if any, we are considering as a result of the findings.



Fish monitoring

Through monitoring we can review the assumptions made during the development of the plans, determine if objectives are being accomplished, and decide how well those actions are working.

LEAVE NO TRACE!

- **PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE.** Proper planning and preparation helps hikers and campers have a safe and enjoyable trip, while minimizing damage to natural and cultural resources.
- **DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY.** Bury human waste in cat holes 6-8" deep and at least 200' from water, trails, and campsites. Carry out toilet paper, food scraps and all trash.
- **RESPECT WILDLIFE.** Observe wildlife from afar to avoid disturbing them. Store food securely and keep garbage and food scraps away from animals so they will not acquire bad habits. Keep pets leashed to avoid harassment or injury to wildlife.
- **TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES.** Damage to land occurs when visitors trample vegetation or communities of organisms beyond recovery. The resulting barren areas develop into undesirable trails, campsites and soil erosion.
- **LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND.** Allow others a sense of discovery by leaving rocks, plants, archaeological artifacts and other objects as you find them.
- **RESPECT OTHERS.** Travel and camp in small groups, and help maintain the peace by camping out of sight and sound of others. Keep pets leashed and always pick up after your pet.
- **MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS.** Lightweight camp stoves make low impact camping possible by eliminating the need for firewood, and the scars that remain after a campfire.

SPECIAL AREAS

The revised Forest Plans identify some unique areas on the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth Forests. These areas fall into two different categories: Research Natural Areas (RNAs) and Special Interest Areas (SIAs).

Mt. Harrison – proposed SIA

Research Natural Areas

RNAs are part of a national effort to identify and preserve places within the National Forest System to conduct monitoring and research, to maintain biological diversity, and to foster education. The goal is to have representative examples of as many ecosystems as possible set aside for permanent protection.

There are 34 RNAs found within the Ecogroup with a combined total of more than 26,000 acres. The Boise Forest has 14 designated RNAs, the Payette Forest has 13 RNAs, and the Sawtooth Forest has 6 RNAs. Basin Gulch on the Sawtooth Forest and Patrick Butte on the Payette Forest have already been proposed as additional RNAs. With the possible exception of Railroad Ridge (described below), no new RNAs were proposed through the Forest Plan Revision process.

Special Interest Areas

SIAs are lands within the National Forest System established to protect and manage for public use and enjoyment, special areas with scenic, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, archaeological or other special characteristics or unique values.

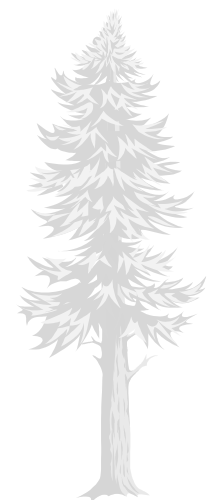
The Sawtooth Forest Plan proposes establishment of the Mount Harrison SIA on the summit of Mount Harrison, on the Sawtooth Forest's south end. Mount Harrison is home to the only known population of Christ's Indian paintbrush and has two of the largest intact tall forb communities remaining in Idaho. If established, the Mount Harrison SIA would maintain the tall forb communities, the Christ's Indian paintbrush not encompassed within the adjacent Mount Harrison RNA, and other endemic rare plant species found on Mount Harrison.

Railroad Ridge, located in the northeastern part of the White Cloud Mountains, contains White Cloud milkvetch, a White Cloud endemic species, and the only known population of northern sagewort in Idaho. Common moonwort and slender moonwort, a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act, are also found on Railroad Ridge. The Sawtooth Forest Plan includes an objective to propose establishment of a Railroad Ridge RNA or SIA.

Differences

Major differences between RNAs and SIAs include:

- RNAs are focused around areas in a natural condition, while SIAs are focused on environmental education of the attributes included within them.
- RNAs are protected from uses such as recreation, timber harvest, and livestock grazing. Fire is allowed only if it is a research component of those ecosystems included in the RNA. By contrast, SIAs can include any or all of these activities, as long as they do not interfere with the values being protected or emphasized within them.
- RNAs are primarily used by agency personnel or the scientific community, while SIAs are used as much by the general public.
- While RNAs are selected based on a need to maintain representative ecosystems in as unmodified condition as possible, SIAs are chosen because of their unique attributes.



Railroad Ridge – proposed RNA or SIA

Invaders of the Forest

KEY DECISION:

Direction is established for a strong integrated noxious weed management program across the Forests in cooperation with other federal, state and local agencies.

Noxious weeds have been described as “plants with a strong will to survive”, and they are. Unfortunately, this is at the expense of native plants that provide food and shelter for native wildlife and bird species. In addition, weeds increase the costs associated with the agricultural industry and their ability to supply us with food and the other products.

The diversity of ecosystems is severely threatened when non-natives out compete native plants. These invasive and exotic plants are degrading wildland ecosystems at a rapid and ever-increasing rate. The Ecogroup Forests have seen a tremendous expansion of noxious weeds during the past 20 years, especially rush skeletonweed and leafy spurge. Other plants that are expanding rapidly include Dalmatian toadflax, star thistle, and other various thistles.

Some of these plants were originally planted with good intention. Dyer’s woad was brought into North America from Europe, probably late in the 17th century. It was first introduced to the eastern United States by colonists as a source for blue dye (from the roots of the plant), and now has invaded extensive areas of agriculture, roadsides, and rangelands throughout the northwestern United States

Weeds spread in a variety of ways and can be found along roads and trails. Vehicles, humans, and horses can spread many of these plants. In addition, wildlife, livestock, wind, and water can play roles in weed establishment and spread. Many types of weeds can spread by birds or by the wind taking seeds to remote areas far away from human contact.

So why have we seen such an increase in weeds during the past 20 years? Increased population growth has resulted in more soil disturbing activities including construction of new highways and utility lines. Increased Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) travel through infested areas may spread weed seeds that are

caught in the undercarriage or in tire treads. Use of weed-infested hay, straw or mulch will spread noxious weeds. Weeds may spread without anyone being aware that they might be hitching a ride on a vehicle, pet, or clothing.

Educating Forest users about noxious weeds is one of the focus areas of the public outreach efforts outlined in the revised Forest Plans.

Forest-wide direction is provided to help prevent the establishment of new infestations and the transport of weed seed to other locations. This direction is primarily associated with a wide variety of management activities and uses on the Forests. Areas of high susceptibility to invasion are identified, along with precautionary measures identified for planning and implementing activities in site-specific areas. Integrated Weed Management goals and objectives address specific species and sites of concern. Noxious weeds are a problem that concerns everyone, from land managers to farmers and ranchers, and from recreationists to loggers.



Leafy spurge



Leafy spurge infestation

Working Together So Everyone Has a Place!

As population numbers in southern and central Idaho continue to increase, so do the number of people who use the National Forests as a place to play, relax, exercise, and recreate.

In 1997, recreation visits to these three Forests were estimated at more than 5.5 million visits. The Sawtooth National Recreation Area alone receives around 1,300,000 visits a year and offers “world class” recreation settings and opportunities. The Forests are predicting a 2% yearly increase of visitors resulting in an increase of 2 million people by the year 2020. Along with this increase in users comes an increase in the amount and type of recreation uses and opportunities. It comes as no surprise that as use increases so does the potential for user conflicts. As a

result, the Forests are experiencing a tug-of-war between various recreation user groups and their desires and demands of the Forests.

The most prominent recreation user conflict is between motorized and non-motorized recreationists. Recreationists using motorized equipment are rapidly growing and some non-motorized users are experiencing conflicts as a result. The Forests received many public comments about impacts on non-motorized users from motorized users and vice versa, as well as the desirability of separating different types of uses. The combination of increasing users with an ever-improving technology results in more people accessing more places than ever before. In addition to conflicts between users, larger numbers of unmanaged users increases the potential for impacts to resources such as vegetation, soil, water, fish, and wildlife.

The revised Forest Plans include management direction responsive to some of these issues. The Plans establish goals and describe “desired conditions” in which recreationists respect each other’s desires and reduce conflicts through their own behavior and through collaborative efforts. The revised Plans also place emphasis on user education to reduce conflicts and prevent impacts to the land.

The next decade will bring many challenges to those who love and use the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth Forests. We believe the revised Forest Plans set a course that recognizes the importance of recreational pursuits while striving to maintain, protect, and improve the land. Quality of life for people and every other living thing that uses or depends on the Forest will hinge on how well we can work together to make the desired future a reality.

Thanks For Letting Us Know!

Over 3500 letters, e-mails, and postcards received

Imagine receiving over 3,500 comments from people in letters, e-mail, and postcards! That’s exactly what the Forest planners did as they reviewed each comment received on the Draft Forest Plans and Draft EIS, issued in November 2000.

Many of the comments received were mass formatted e-mails or postcards, but nearly 500 were carefully written letters from individuals. The Forests thank everyone who took the time and energy necessary to provide comments on this project.

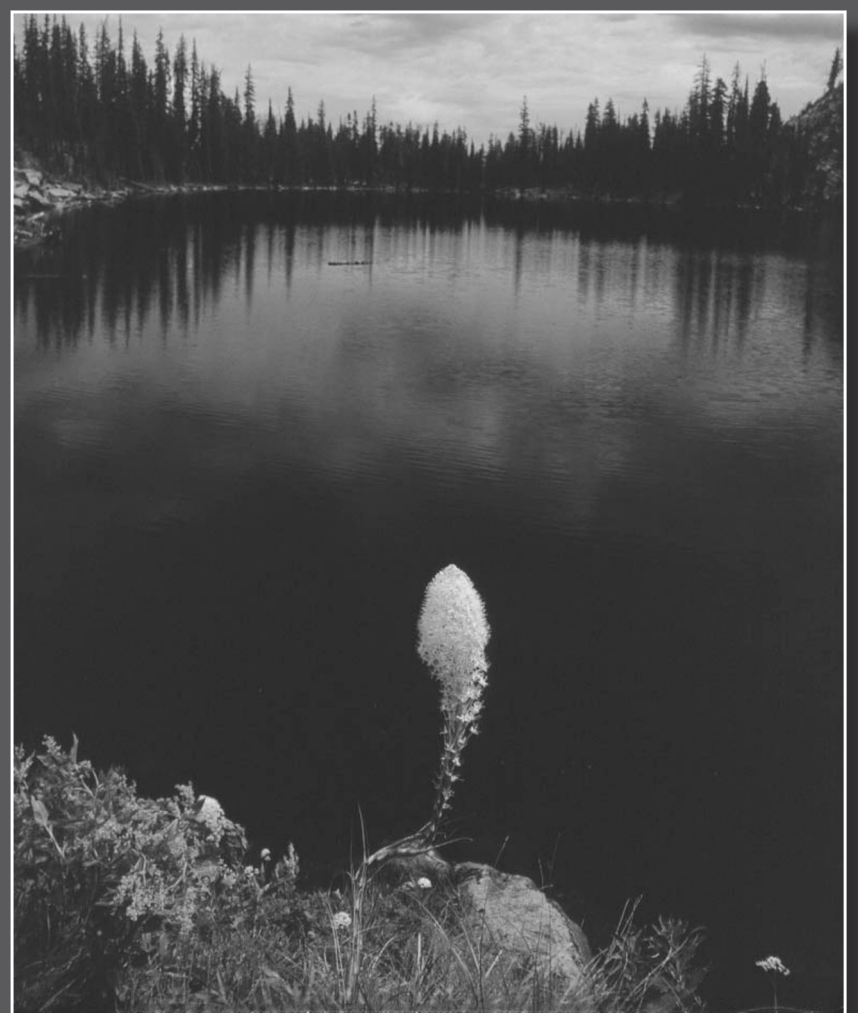
What happened to your letter after the comment deadline in June 2001? First, a team analyzed each letter, dissecting the messages. Those statements were then categorized under subject headings, such as “wildlife” or “alternative.” Each of these was considered a comment. These comments were condensed and given to a team for study. Team specialists, such as biologists and ecologists, as well as Forest planners and the Forest Supervisors, reviewed the comments. After the comments were compiled, a great deal more work and analysis was done to ensure the Forest Service was responding to public concerns. Appendix A of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS Appendix Volume 1) contains the response to comments section of the planning effort.

It’s important to understand how the comments were used. Many comments expressed a desire for one type of management or their appreciation for certain values. These types of comments, while not generating any changes in the analysis, help give decision makers a sense of how strongly some of the public feels about a specific issue.

Comments from individuals, groups and other government agencies were influential in changes between the draft and the revised Forest Plans. Some alternatives suggested new alternatives or improved analysis. Public comments were carefully considered as Forest Planners crafted Alternative 7.

Sometimes comments received did not directly relate to the decisions being made in the revised Forest Plans. Such was the case with the multitude of comments received about the Roadless Area Conservation Rule, specific roads and trails, and travel management planning. While we didn’t make any specific travel management decisions in the Forest Plans, we recognize there is a great deal of interest and diverse values related to access and travel. Travel management will be pursued in various planning efforts following release of the revised Forest Plans. Stay tuned for more information!

Environmental education



Josephine Lake

“The Forests thank everyone who took the time and energy necessary to provide comments on this project.”

Healthy Water Conditions are the Foundation for a Healthy Forest

KEY DECISION: A long-term aquatic conservation strategy focuses restoration dollars in priority watersheds to achieve goals identified by the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, and Native American Tribes. The strategy uses an ecosystem basis, and active or passive restoration. Short-term effects may be incurred to achieve long term restoration goals.

Water is critical for all life. Streams and riparian (streamside) areas are rich zones of biological diversity, supporting aquatic life such as insects, amphibians and fish, and providing important habitat for birds, mammals, and plants.

People also need water, and this demand will continue to

increase as local communities and regional metropolitan areas grow in population. National Forests provide a clean and abundant source of fresh water to meet many downstream needs and uses. Watersheds are a foundation of multiple use forests.

Healthy watersheds provide clean water and sustain aquatic ecosystem health. The role of watershed protection on National Forest System lands is an element of the 1897 Organic Administrative Act, the first law directing how lands set aside as Forest reserves were to be managed. Congress directed that these lands, now known as National Forests, be set aside to “improve and protect the Forest within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable conditions of water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States.”

A major goal of the Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth’s revised Forest Plans is to maintain and/or improve overall watershed health, so that physical, biological and chemical elements are functioning properly. The Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) provides most of the guidance to achieve this goal. It is a long-term strategy to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems. It also refines and furthers the approaches outlined

in the Interior Columbia Basin studies and opinions provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA Fisheries.

The ACS replaces previous interim direction (PACFISH/INFISH). The ACS, developed through consultation with the regulatory agencies noted above, acknowledges that long-term restoration may result in of short-term effects that were not acceptable under the interim strategies. For example, previous direction may have not allowed the removal of a culvert that was blocking upstream habitat because the disturbance could temporarily increase sediment to the stream. Now, under the ACS, that work could proceed, thus improving habitat upstream, even though the disturbance could result in temporary or short-term impacts downstream.

Another important objective is to reduce the risk of losing long-term soil productivity and soil-hydrologic function due to uncharacteristically lethal wildfire. There are 82 highly vulnerable sub-watersheds within the three Forests with a high or extreme hazard rating for uncharacteristic wildfire. Under the revised Forest Plans, the goal is to reduce this risk on about two-thirds of the sub-watersheds over the long-term through vegetation management.

Watersheds are areas that catch rain and snow that drain into rivers, streams, and lakes. For the revised Forest Plans, watersheds located wholly or partially on the Boise, Payette and Sawtooth NFs were evaluated in terms of natural and human-caused risks to their health. This is part of the Forest Service’s watershed management program, which seeks to manage activities to protect the watersheds against degradation.

When the health of a watershed is found to be at risk, steps must be taken to remedy the problem. These steps include modifying management activities, rehabilitating degraded resources, or doing both. Because watersheds do not recognize political boundaries, it is often necessary to work collaboratively with all landowners and land managers in a watershed to adequately address problems. The revised Forest Plans identify watersheds at low, moderate, or high risk and prioritize management actions to improve watershed health.

What degrades watersheds? Both natural and human-caused impacts can affect watershed health. Increased runoff and erosion from hill slopes after a fire, or changes in water chemistry from abandoned mine drainage, are two examples. Proper construction and maintenance of roads and trails are issues of critical concern for watershed health. On roads that are improperly built or maintained, runoff from rain or snowmelt can carry soil directly to a stream. Well-designed roads use effective techniques that minimize



Goose Creek Falls

erosion and direct runoff away from the stream. User-created roads and trails often cause damage because they are not planned or engineered to minimize soil erosion or other impacts to water quality and aquatic life. Each revised Forest Plan contains management direction to address these types of concerns.

All Forest management activities - including timber harvesting, recreation, mining, and grazing - must follow standards and guidelines to protect watershed health. The revised Forest Plans include standards and guidelines necessary to protect soil, water, riparian, and aquatic resources.

Public comment on the draft Forest Plans identified the importance of managing water and aquatic resources. Direction in the revised Plans recognizes the importance of healthy streams and the aquatic systems that depend on them, as well as the need for all interested parties to work together to restore and maintain properly functioning conditions.

“All Forest management activities, including timber harvesting, recreation, mining, and grazing must follow standards and guidelines to protect watershed health. The Revised Forest Plans include standards and guidelines necessary to protect soil, water, aquatic, and riparian resources.”



A forest stream



Salmon

A River Runs Through It

KEY DECISION: River segments and their corridors that are eligible, suitable, or designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers are managed to retain their free-flowing status, classification and outstanding remarkable values.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was enacted by Congress to address the need for a national system of river protection on October 2, 1968. As an outgrowth of a national conservation agenda in the late 1960s, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was in response to the dams, diversions, and water resource development projects that occurred on America's rivers between the 1930s and 1960s. The Act concluded that selected rivers should be preserved in a free-flowing condition and be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

As of September 2002, some 160 river segments comprising 11,292 miles have been protected in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (National System). These nationally recognized rivers comprise a valuable network of natural and cultural resources, scenic beauty, and recreational opportunities.

There are two parts to the Wild and Scenic Rivers study process; eligibility and suitability. Rivers are first studied for eligibility to determine if they are free flowing and have at least one outstandingly remarkable value. Once a river is found eligible it receives management direction to preserve its outstandingly remarkable values and classification until a suitability study is performed. Suitability determines whether eligible rivers should be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Congress or the Secretary of the Interior officially designate Wild and Scenic Rivers. Wild and Scenic River suitability involves determining the best use of the eligible river and the best method to preserve the outstandingly remarkable values within the river corridor.

The three Forests analyzed numerous rivers for eligibility. As a result, the Boise Forest determined 15 rivers comprising 321 miles as eligible, the Payette Forest determined 2 rivers comprising 25 miles as eligible, and the Sawtooth Forest determined 33 rivers comprising 401 miles as eligible.

Suitability studies were completed on five rivers, the majority of which are on the Payette Forest. As a result, the South Fork Salmon River (90 miles), found on the Boise and Payette Forests and the Secesh River (45 miles), found on the Payette Forest, are both considered suitable and are recommended to Congress for Wild and Scenic River designation.

In the Ecogroup area, three rivers that are partially on the Payette Forest, and one river that is partially on both the Payette and Boise Forests are currently designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. These rivers are:

- Middle Fork Salmon;
- Rapid River;
- Snake River; and
- Salmon River

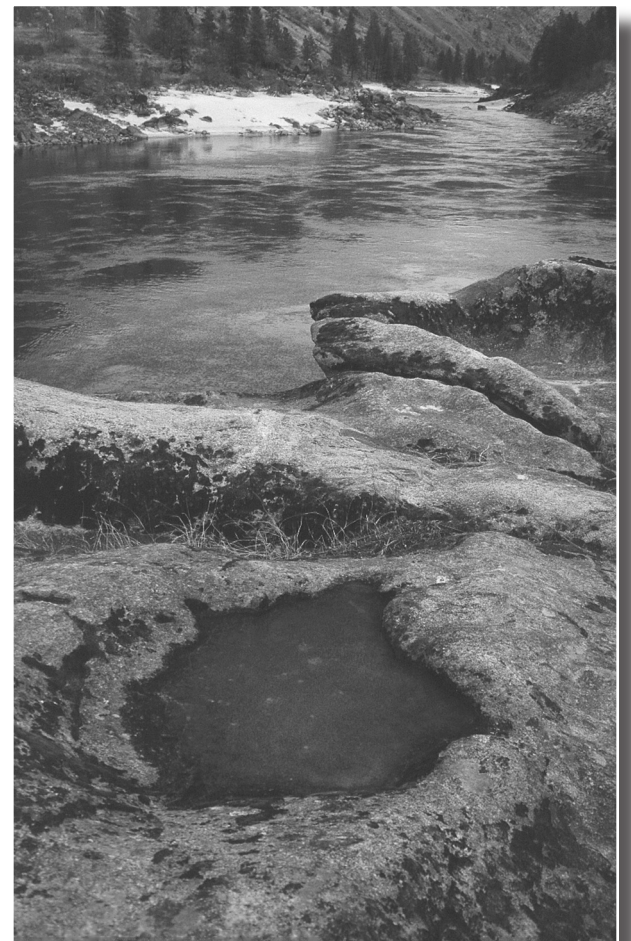
The Salmon River, Snake River, and Middle Fork Salmon River are managed by the Nez Perce Forest, Wallowa-Whitman Forest, and Salmon-Challis Forest respectively. The revised Forest Plans include direction for the management of Rapid River and the eligible and suitable Wild and Scenic rivers noted above. Most on-going uses will not be affected by a Wild and Scenic River determination.



A forest stream



Sockeye salmon



Salmon River

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE!

Moving toward vegetation diversity

KEY DECISIONS: *The revised Forest Plans propose active and adaptive management primarily through vegetation treatments, of some areas of the Forest to create healthier ecosystems, restore species composition, structure and function, and reduce hazardous fuels.*

Management direction for “old growth” has been replaced by the more encompassing “large tree size class” direction, which research indicates is more appropriate for addressing species viability.

Throughout the life of a forest, it is confronted by a wide array of natural disturbances such as fire, insects, disease, and winds. The ability of a forest to withstand such changes and continue to thrive is dependent upon its diversity – including its diversity of species, diversity of age, and diversity of tree size in forested areas across landscapes, ranging from seedlings and saplings to mature and old trees. This variety of conditions helps to provide stability in the face of disturbance agents. A pattern of larger and older trees interspersed with smaller and younger trees can help limit the extent of potentially severe disturbances, particularly fire and insect epidemics. In contrast, extensive areas of forests dominated by the same species and approximately the same size will allow insects and fire to spread rapidly and increase impacts to the forests.

The Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests have changed dramatically in the time since European settlement occurred. Past management, coupled by our effective suppression of fires during the past 100 years, helped to form the landscapes we see today. Because of these changes, most of our vegetation communities lack adequate diversity in size, density, and composition.

As a result, we have lost the diversity of wildlife and bird habitats that once existed. Many species have evolved to use different sizes and species of vegetation and will thrive as long as their habitats exist. There are wildlife and birds that prefer dense stands of saplings, and there are those such as woodpeckers that prefer open stands of large trees and snags. There are birds that prefer sagebrush communities that have dense sagebrush cover, while others prefer more scattered cover. There are those that prefer aspen rather than pine, spruce, and fir forests.

The revised Forest Plans include specific desired conditions that restore those areas not managed for growth and yield to within a range of historic vegetative conditions. The revised Plans emphasize the use of a variety of tools to manage vegetation to move towards desired conditions. Depending on the management direction for an area, we will use tools such as timber harvest,



Ponderosa pine stand

thinning, prescribed fire and wildland fire use to increase diversity and move landscapes closer to their desired conditions.

Harvesting trees is a tool that can help achieve and maintain forest diversity by creating patterns of vegetation on the landscape. This results in a



Sagebrush

variety of trees of different sizes and age and, therefore, habitat for a variety of species. Some areas will be managed to emphasize commercial timber harvest (10% of Ecogroup acres). Other areas may also yield commercial timber as the result of accomplishing other objectives.

Prescribed fires will be used to a greater extent than in the past to create a combination of openings and stands across the landscape. Prescribed fires are fires ignited by the Forest Service under approved conditions to meet certain objectives. To a lesser extent, wildland fire use will be also used to manage vegetation. Wildland fire use refers to the management of fires caused by lightning to accomplish management objectives. Since wildland fire use depends on natural ignitions, it is not as reliable a tool as prescribed fire.

The revised Forest Plans propose active and adaptive management, primarily through vegetation treatments, of some areas of the Forest to create healthier ecosystems and reduce hazardous fuels. This would allow for the continued production of timber for human use in some areas, and in other areas, would allow other techniques to proceed with less human intrusion.

Over the next 10 years, the three Forests are expected to treat extensive areas with methods including prescribed fire and mechanical treatments:

National Forest	Vegetation Treatment (Forested Acres/Decade) (estimated)	Fire or Other Treatments (Non-Forested Acres/Decade) (estimated)
Boise	200,500	19,400
Payette	136,200	0
Sawtooth	79,100	117,700

On some of the forested lands, thinning and harvesting will produce commercial timber products. Some of these forested acres are considered suited for timber management, while some are not. Commercial timber from the suited lands contributes to the Forest's Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ), measured in million board feet (mmbf). On the unsuited lands, timber is produced as a result of meeting other resource objectives, such as wildlife habitat improvement. Timber from the unsuited lands contributes to the Forest's Total Sale Program Quantity (TSPQ), which includes volume from the suited and unsuited lands.

Timber harvest will concentrate on restoring healthy conditions, and will be focused in areas where communities are within or next to the forest (the wildland-urban interface), and in areas currently developed with roads and other infrastructure.

National Forest	ASQ (annual)	TSPQ (annual)
Boise	45.00 mmbf	66.27 mmbf
Payette	32.50 mmbf	40.27 mmbf
Sawtooth	6.0 mmbf	12.9 mmbf

National Forest	Timber Harvest on Suitable Lands (decade)	Timber Harvest on Unsuitable Lands (decade)
Boise	72,300 acres	28,400 acres
Payette	45,100 acres	8,800 acres
Sawtooth	8,800 acres	10,900 acres



Aspen and cottonwood stand

Old Forests

In the previous Forest Plans, special management direction was provided for “old growth,” generally defined as areas of trees that are past maturity and in the last stage of forest succession. However, this approach treated old growth as a separate entity, rather than as one facet of forested vegetation related to habitat and species viability.

Our new approach recognizes “large tree size class,” rather than old growth, as an important component of forested ecosystems. There are two important reasons for this change:

- Recent research indicates that historically, large trees were common across the landscape, while old growth was not. Old growth and late successional stages develop in the absence of frequent disturbances, while we know that in central Idaho, disturbances occurred frequently. Thus, we may have had historical stands dominated by large, old trees and maintained by frequent, low intensity fire, but these stands likely did not have all of the components that make up “old growth.”
- Other research has shown that wildlife habitat is mainly a product of the vegetative structure of a community, rather than the age of the vegetation. Large trees are not always old, and old trees are not always large. Consequently, the revised Forest Plan direction recommends a 20 percent large tree component to maintain biological diversity and habitat needs for a host of species, including goshawk, pileated woodpecker, white-headed woodpecker, and fisher.



Aspen stand

Southwest Idaho Ecogroup Boise, Payette, and Sawtooth National Forests REVISED FOREST PLAN

Boise National Forest

Supervisor's Office
1249 S. Vinnell Way, Suite 200
Boise, ID 83709
208-373-4100

Mountain Home Ranger District
2180 American Legion Boulevard
Mountain Home, ID 83647
208-587-7961

Idaho City Ranger District
P.O. Box 129, Highway 21,
Milepost 38.3
Idaho City, ID 83631
208-392-6681

Cascade Ranger District
P.O. Box 696
540 North Main Street
Cascade, ID 83611
208-382-7400

Lowman Ranger District
7359 Highway 21
Lowman, ID 83637
208-259-3361



Payette National Forest

Supervisor's Office
800 W. Lakeside Avenue
P.O. Box 1026
McCall, ID 83638
208-634-0700

Council Ranger District
500 East Whitely Avenue
P.O. Box 567
Council, ID 83612
208-253-0100

Weiser Ranger District
851 East 9 Street
Weiser, ID 83672
208-549-4200

New Meadows Ranger District
3674 Highway 95
P.O. Box J
New Meadows, ID 83654
208-347-0300

Krassel Ranger District
500 North Mission
P.O. Box 1026
McCall, ID 83638
208-634-0600

McCall Ranger District
102 Lake Street
P.O. Box 1026
McCall, ID 83638
208-634-0400

Sawtooth National Forest

Supervisor's Office
2647 Kimberly Road East
Twin Falls, ID 83301-7976
208-737-3200

Minidoka Ranger District
3650 South Overland Avenue
Burley, ID 83318-3242
208-678-0430

Ketchum Ranger District
P.O. Box 2356
Ketchum, ID 83340
208-622-5371

Sawtooth National Recreation Area
HC 64, Box 8291
Ketchum, ID 83340
208-727-5000

Sawtooth National Recreation Area
Stanley Office
HC 64, Box 9900
Stanley, ID 83278
208-774-3000

Fairfield Ranger District
P.O. Box 189
Fairfield, ID 83327
208-764-3202



Permit No. G-40

Postage and Fees Paid
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2647 Kimberly Road East
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301-7976

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