

RESPONSE TO COMMENTS RECEIVED

Response 4.1 - We agree that the statement you refer to on page 56 of the draft document that "All significant cultural sites (as determined by the SHPO and National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation) will be retained in federal ownership" is overly restrictive. It was also inaccurate since it did not express our intentions. It has been revised and included in the final statement in this section. The preceding statement regarding abandonment of projects affecting significant cultural sites has also been revised.

Response 4.2 - Regarding your concern for Class III inventories on BLM lands along the upper end of Brownlee Reservoir, Crane Creek, and the Boise Basin, present budgets preclude conducting large scale, intensive cultural resource inventories solely for the purpose of determining site condition and/or National Register eligibility. Such inventories are not precluded by this land use plan and will be considered in the future. We will respond to reports of vandalism and would appreciate any information you may have or obtain concerning these activities.

Response 5.1 - We agree that the recommended data display of various levels of mineral favorability and a corresponding analysis of access limitations would be useful. However, since an intensive inventory of locatable or salable minerals has not been completed, we do not have the information needed to develop this type of analysis.

Response 7.1 - The environmental analysis referred to is a review of existing information done to determine what general and specific stipulations will be applied to a lease. This process is normally completed under the Categorical Exclusion provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and in accordance with 43 CFR 3109 and 43 CFR 3204. Information contained in the District Oil and Gas and Geothermal Environmental Assessments and in this land use plan will be the primary information sources used to determine the applicable stipulations. This Bureau-wide process has proven to be efficient in terms of time and money and effective in protecting public resources.

Response 7.2 - Our information indicates that there are no locations within the Cascade Resource Area which contain significant potential for energy or mineral resources. Map 3-9 has been revised (Maps 3-9 through 3-12) to better illustrate the available information on energy and mineral resources. Map 9 has been prepared to indicate areas where special stipulations will be applied to leases. Since the number of leases pending or currently being held continually changes and are relatively few and is of limited value in this land use planning process, they have not been included in this document.

Response 7.3 - See Response 7.1. We will consider all information available to us at the appropriate time during the process concerning the exploration and development of energy and mineral resources.

Response 7.4 - Map 3-9 has been revised (Maps 3-9 through 3-12) to better illustrate the available information on energy and mineral

resources. Map 9 has been prepared to indicate areas where special stipulations would apply. Since the entire area classified as prospectively valuable is considered to have low potential for energy and mineral resources and the alternatives differ only slightly concerning energy and mineral development, we feel that a matrix is not essential in this land use planning process and has not been included. Areas currently withdrawn are identified in Appendix S.

Response 10.1 - The text has been revised to identify the Idaho ground squirrel and long-billed curlew as candidate species. The Idaho ground squirrel was mentioned and the long-billed curlew was addressed throughout the document but were identified as sensitive species.

Response 10.2 - The text has been revised to reflect this information. Spelling errors have also been corrected. Carex aboriginum is not known to occur on BLM lands but was historically located on private lands.

Response 10.3 - The level of mercury verified is the result of past mining/processing activity done on patented land for which BLM has no control or authority. It is anticipated that mining activity will continue on the patented lands in the future. Although there is no current mining activity (exploration or development) on adjacent BLM land, some activity could occur in the future. The BLM cannot address the impacts of possible activities until a claim has been filed and a preliminary mining plan has been filed. At that time, the BLM would address potential impacts. The responsibility for monitoring downstream impacts or conducting studies rest with those state and federal agencies charged with those roles.

Response 11.1 - We do not feel that our Cascade (RMP) land use planning process sufficiently fulfills the study requirements for recommendations to Congress that either the North Fork or the South Fork of the Payette River be designated as a component of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Our guidance for completing land use plans that involve rivers on the nation-wide inventory is to either recommend further study for possible congressional designation or to make no recommendation for further study.

Administration and management of the Payette River and adjacent lands is a complex issue because of the various alternatives and interests (State of Idaho, Bureau of Reclamation, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, U.S. Forest Service, and BLM). For this reason we believe that the river should receive further formal study by the appropriate State and Federal agencies and the preparation of a joint legislative study/EIS.

If Congress authorizes a study of any segment of the Payette River, the study recommendations will be forwarded to Congress for their action.

We will continue to manage public lands along both the North Fork and South Fork of the Payette River as though they were components of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System pending further congressional action.

Response 12.1 - We have reevaluated the Paraphyllum Rock area as an RNA and agree that it does not meet the criteria. Since it does not meet the criteria, and protection of the sensitive species is a result of the management actions (use limitations) rather than the designation, we have

dropped the RNA designation for this area in all alternatives. We do, however, feel that special management is appropriate for this area to protect the sensitive species found here and have retained the use limitations in all alternatives, including the preferred alternative, as identified in the draft plan/EIS.

Response 12.2 - The proposed Buckwheat Flats RNA has been expanded from 60 to 200 acres to include the referenced Sage Creek area as an RNA. The expanded area now contains a better example of the Eriogonum thymoides plant community.

Response 12.3 - The proposed Summer Creek RNA has been expanded from 200 to 240 acres in response to this suggestion.

Response 12.4 - The text has been revised to more accurately and clearly identify our objectives and rationale for managing these areas and the occurrence of plant species.

Response 16.1 - See Response 11.1.

Response 17.1 - See Response 7.1.

Response 17.2 - See Response 7.2.

Response 17.3 - See Response 7.3.

Response 17.4 - See Response 7.4.

Response 20.1 - The Environmental Protection Agency and our internal review of the document did not identify any deficiency relating to the cumulative impacts of proposed actions. Our analysis includes actions anticipated in the reasonably foreseeable future for the life of the plan. We feel that our document does conform to the CEQ regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA.

Response 20.2 - The text has been revised to indicate that the correct number of miles for the water pipelines proposed for livestock management is 15. This total of 15 miles does not include the short sections of laterals which would be extended away from the mainlines. The exact location of these laterals will be addressed in site specific analysis.

Water would be taken from springs or wells and piped to areas currently void of water sources but that are used to some degree by livestock. Water developments would be designed to benefit both livestock and wildlife. The primary purpose for the water developments is to improve livestock distribution and reduce overutilization of range resources around existing water sources. The water developments are necessary to implement the rest rotation grazing systems in the affected allotments. Wildlife would also benefit by having additional water sources which would help expand the use of available habitat. The areas proposed for water developments would not necessarily be reseeded. The majority of the proposed pipelines are located in the area east of Crane Creek Reservoir. Refer to Map 7 for locations of proposed pipelines and land treatments. The cumulative impacts of the proposed livestock management program on wildlife, including water

developments and seedings, have been analyzed and the conclusions have been identified in Chapter 4 for the affected wildlife species. The text has been revised to clarify that water developments and other projects have been included in the analyses.

Response 20.3 - The impacts of land transfers are discussed in Chapter 4 under each affected resource topic including soils, riparian habitat, aquatic/fisheries habitat, wildlife, livestock, recreation, minerals, and economics.

Response 20.4 - Management actions for the control of noxious weeds would remain the same for all alternatives and are discussed in the Resource Management Guidelines section of the document. The burning, discing and spraying referred to are actions that would be taken in conjunction with land treatments to benefit livestock. Burning and discing are also identified as actions that would be taken in conjunction with land treatments to benefit wildlife. The effects of these actions have been analyzed and are incorporated in the various affected resource sections in Chapter 4.

Response 20.5 - The planning criteria used during the various stages of the RMP planning process were developed with public input. The initial request soliciting public input on issues and outlining the public participation process (Notice of Intent to prepare an RMP/EIS) was published in the Federal Register on November 25, 1983. On January 26, 1984 mailouts were sent to over 400 entities announcing the six public meetings which were to be held in communities within the Cascade Resource Area during February, 1984 and requesting public input on issues and criteria. Following these public meetings and review of public comments received on issues and criteria, the final package of issues, management concerns, guidance, and criteria was prepared and sent to over 900 entities on our Cascade mailing list on September 17, 1984. This more detailed information, including criteria, is available for review at the District Office. We believe that we have complied with our planning regulations found at 43 CFR Part 1600.

Response 20.6 - We did consider future budget levels in developing both the proposed management actions and the proposed monitoring program. National and state level BLM reviews suggest that the anticipated budget levels needed to accomplish both the proposed management actions and proposed monitoring program are realistic.

Response 20.7 - The document discusses the impact that the wildfires had on the various resources in Chapter 3. It also identifies temporary special management actions that have been taken as a result of the fire. We feel that the objectives and proposed long-term land use decisions are still appropriate and anticipate only minor adjustments in site specific management actions needed to achieve short-term objectives.

Response 20.8 - The referenced area was analyzed in February 1987 by an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, whose resources were affected by the 1986 wildfires, to determine if the area met the criteria required for ACEC designation. The conclusion of that analysis is that the area does not meet either of the two required criteria of relevance and

importance. Rehabilitation efforts have been initiated to stabilize the watershed resource and help speed the recovery of wildlife habitat. This area will receive special management attention during the life of the plan.

Response 21.1 - The annual harvest level of approximately 1 million board feet should not be used to equate any kind of an annual growth rate. This level of cut was based primarily on the administrative capacity to offer timber sales.

We agree that some of our lands, mainly those lands located in the McCall planning unit, are probably growing at a rate of 150 board feet/acre/year. However, most of our land in the Crane Creek planning unit is producing below that level.

According to our 1975 Forest Inventory, the Resource Area can support an annual allowable cut of approximately 1.7 million board feet without intensive management and approximately 2.9 million board feet with intensive management. We have revised our preferred alternative (Proposed Plan) to include an annual average harvest of 1.7 million board feet.

Response 22.1 - See Response 21.1.

Response 23.1 - In 1986, as required in the RMP/EIS process, all lands within the Cascade Resource Area were included in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) system analysis. The ROS analysis considers the following criteria:

1. Physical Setting - remoteness, size, and evidence of human use;
2. Social Setting - level and type of contact between individuals or groups which can be expected;
3. Managerial Setting - level and type of management services and facilities provided to support recreation, and the restrictions placed on peoples actions by the administering agency.

Based on the above criteria, the two areas you identified in your comment letter were placed into the category of "Roaded Natural."

In response to your comments, the ROS categories for the two areas that you identified were reevaluated. Our findings maintain that the Dodson Pass area is best classified as a "Roaded Natural" area. However, we do agree that due to overlap of the category criteria in the ROS system, a designation of "Semi-Primitive, Motorized" could be applied to the area between Crane Creek Reservoir and the Weiser River. In light of an expressed public need to maintain a natural area primarily for hiking, we propose redesignating the area in the vicinity of Crane Creek Reservoir, totaling 13,240 acres, from the ORV category of "Open" to the category of "Limited to Designated Roads and Trails" and have included it in our Proposed Plan (Preferred Alternative E).

The paucity of existing roads and trails in this area combined with steep, rocky terrain would be the primary limiting factors for increased

vehicular use. The majority of the ORV use that would likely occur in this area is that which is associated with livestock management conducted by permittees, which would be authorized as part of their grazing license, and ORV use for access by hunters during the hunting season. With the anticipated level of use from these activities, we feel that, in general, a semi-primitive experience would be available throughout most of the year in this area.

Response 24.1 - See Response 20.5.

Response 24.2 - See Response 20.7. Most of the areas that were burned by the 1986 wildfires were not identified for major projects or increases in AUMs for livestock. The major projects proposed were for wildlife habitat improvement. These projects are still proposed. The fire rehabilitation efforts include reseeding burned areas with shrub, grass, and forb mixtures that will help restore the crucial mule deer winter habitat that was burned. The fire rehabilitation efforts over the next five years to help restore that winter range for wildlife is in addition to the proposed land treatments identified in the proposed plan. All of these management actions will occur during the life of the plan. Wildlife use in the area will be related both to the success of the reseeding efforts and management of the wildlife population goals established and updated by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Response 24.3 - See Response 20.1.

Response 24.4 - See Response 20.2.

Response 24.5 - See Response 20.3.

Response 24.6 - See Response 20.6.

Response 27.1 - The proposed plan does not include a proposal for the future transportation route referenced since the location of that route was not specifically identified during discussions between our Boise District staff and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) staff. We have been aware of your long range proposal for a route between Emmett and Mesa and will continue to work with you as more specific plans are developed. The BLM planning process allows for amendments to approved land use plans as new information becomes available or as new proposals are made which do not conform to the approved land use plan. A proposal to locate a transportation route in an identified avoidance area would be processed in accordance with these land use plan amendment procedures. The amendment process would require either an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement depending on the severity of expected impacts the proposal would have on resource values or land use decisions.

Response 27.2 - Avoidance areas are areas where important and sensitive resource values have been identified. Additional areas may also be identified that contain important plant species or cultural or paleontological resource values. These areas would likely be small and would be identified through either inventories or site specific project clearances. The identified avoidance areas specifically preclude