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To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

#### Responsible Official

David D. Rittenhouse, Forest Supervisor, Boise National Forest is the responsible official. He will decide if the area should be managed to reduce the risk of insect attack, disease, and wildfire and, if so, which proposal for treatment will be implemented.

Dated: August 5, 1996.

David D. Rittenhouse,  
Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 96-20324 Filed 8-8-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

#### North Lochsa Face Vegetative Management; Clearwater National Forest; Idaho County, ID

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice; Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Clearwater National Forest will prepare an EIS (environmental impact statement) for vegetative management activities, within the North Lochsa Face analysis area, that will restore and maintain the health of forest ecosystems and support the economic and social needs of people and their communities. The analysis area is located on the Lochsa Ranger District on the Clearwater National Forest, headquartered in Orofino, Idaho.

The EIS will tier to the Clearwater National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Final EIS of September, 1987, which provides overall guidance of all land management activities on the Clearwater National Forest. Analyses will also be conducted in compliance with the Stipulation of Dismissal agreed to for the lawsuit between the Forest Service and the

Sierra Club, et al (signed September 13, 1993).

The agency invites written comments and suggestions on the issues and management opportunities for the area being analyzed.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received by no later than September 23, 1996, to receive timely consideration in the preparation of the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS is anticipated to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency in December 1996. The Final EIS and Record of Decision are expected to be issued in May 1997.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit written comments and suggestions on the proposed action or requests to be placed on the project mailing list to James L. Caswell, Forest Supervisor, Clearwater National Forest, 12730 U.S. Highway 12, Orofino, ID, 83544, FAX: 208-476-8329.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** (George Harbaugh, Interdisciplinary Team Leader, Lochsa Ranger District, P.O. Box 398, Kooskia, ID 83539, telephone (208) 926-4275.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The North Lochsa Face analysis area covers approximately 128,000 acres of mostly forested, steep mountains on the Lochsa Ranger District. It lies between Highway 12 and the Lolo Motorway (Forest Road 500) just north of the small communities of Lowell and Syringa. Lewiston is 95 miles west of the area on Highway 12; Missoula is 130 miles to the east. The Lochsa River, a designated Wild and Scenic River, runs alongside Highway 12. The Lochsa District boundary and the Lolo Motorway form the north border of the analysis area. The Pete King Creek drainage forms the southwest boundary. Highway 12 and the Lochsa River form the south/southeast boundary up to Fish Creek, and the remaining boundary is the eastern watershed divide of Fish Creek.

The area is relatively isolated and undeveloped. However, U.S. Highway 12, the only highway in central Idaho that connects Washington and Montana, carries a great deal of traffic year-round. It is the primary route for trucks hauling grain, logs and other products from Montana and the northern tier of states, as well as southern Canada, to the shipping port of Lewiston. This route also provides the quickest crossing for passenger traffic from the Portland, Oregon, area to points in the northern tier of states. Recreation traffic on this highway, especially in the summer, can be heavy.

Two small communities, Lowell and Syringa, lie at the southern tip of the analysis area. Both offer motels and a

service station for highway travelers and tourists. Within a 60 mile radius of the analysis area lie the towns of Kooskia, Kamiah, Grangeville, Orofino, Pierce, Weippe, and Sites. All are primarily timber-dependent communities, whose economies are directly affected by Forest Service management. The analysis area is within Idaho County, but any activity in the analysis area would also affect those communities within adjacent Clearwater and Lewis Counties.

The Clearwater Forest Plan provides guidance through its goals, objectives, standards, guidelines and management area direction. The analysis area consists of Management Areas A6, A7, C3, C4, C6, C8S, E1, M1, and US, with inclusions of Management Area M2 in all areas. Below is a brief description of the applicable management direction.

Management Area A6—Historic Lolo Trail Corridor (11,262 acres)—Manage to provide opportunity for recreational activities oriented to traveling over, understanding, and appreciating the route as a historic travel route. Minimize timber harvest activity conflicts with recreation.

Management Area A7—Middle Fork of the Clearwater Wild and Scenic River Corridor (4,105 acres)—Protect and enhance scenic values, cultural values, water quality, big game, non-game, and fishery habitats with special emphasis on the anadromous fishery, and developed and dispersed recreation that will contribute to public use and enjoyment of the free flowing rivers and their immediate environment. Harvest timber when enhancement of key resources will occur and adverse impacts to key resources would be of low magnitude and short duration, and to achieve specific vegetation management objectives.

Management Area C3—Elk Winter Range (16,797 acres)—Provide winter forage and thermal cover for big-game. Classify this land as unsuitable for timber production.

Management Area C4—Elk Winter Range/Timber (14,979 acres)—Provide sufficient winter forage and thermal cover for existing and projected big game populations while achieving timber production outputs.

Management Area C6—Elk Summer Range (28,263 acres)—Protect the soil and water from adverse effects of man's activities. Classify this land as unsuitable for timber production.

Management Area C8S—Elk Summer Range/Timber (22,900 acres)—Manage these areas to maintain high quality wildlife and fishery objectives while producing timber from the productive Forest land.

Management Area E1—Timer Management (24,640 acres)—Provide optimum, sustained production of timber products in a cost-effective manner while protecting soil and water quality.

Management Area M1—Lochsa Research Natural Area (1,022 acres)—Manage established RNAs to protect their inherent natural features and maintain them in undisturbed ecosystems.

Management Area M2—Riparian Areas (inclusions)—Manage under the principles of multiple use as areas of special consideration, distinctive values, and integrated with adjacent management areas to the extent that water and other riparian-dependent resources are protected.

Management Area US—Unsuitable Land (3,764 acres)—Manage to maintain and protect soil and watershed values and vegetative cover. Manage for resources other than timber such as dispersed recreation, and big-game summer range as appropriate.

The proposed actions are based on the North Lochsa Face Landscape and Watershed Assessment, April 1996, which was a National Forest Management Act (NFMA) analysis completed by a team of Forest and District specialists. The team was given two major objectives. The first was to prepare a scientific assessment of the ecological condition of the North Lochsa Face area, focusing on structure, function, and composition. The second major objective was to describe the social values associated with this piece of land, and integrate those social values into future management of the area. The analysis also provided an opportunity to modify interim PACFISH watershed guidelines. Copies of the assessment are available upon request from the District office.

The proposed actions reflect treatment needs identified for this landscape from a scientific basis. Numerous social constraints have not been overlaid on the proposed actions, but will be reflected in future alternative development. Also, in replicating natural disturbance patterns, it is likely that some of the timber harvest and/or prescribed burning proposals will result in Forest openings greater than 40 acres. The following actions are proposed for the North Lochsa Face area during the next 5-year planning period (1997–2001):

**Proposed Action: Timber Harvest**—Approximately 6,900 acres of highly stocked stands in the Fish and Hungry Creek drainages, 4,000 acres in the Canyon and Deadman Creek drainages, 2,500 acres in the Pete King drainage,

and 6,000 acres in the remaining small drainages along the northern face of the Lochsa River are proposed for harvest. Stand diagnoses are still needed to determine the type of harvest treatment. However, at this time, it is anticipated that the primary type of proposed treatments will consist of commercial thinnings, with some regeneration harvest and selection cuts. Where needed, proposed road activities will consist mostly of reconstruction or reconditioning. It is anticipated that there will be minimal need, if any, for the construction of new roads. Almost two-thirds of the total area proposed for harvest is unroaded and will require helicopter yarding. Those remaining areas having existing road systems would be logged using conventional systems (skyline and tractor yarding). An additional 840 acres of roadside salvage, mostly in the Canyon and Deadman Creek drainages, are proposed within a 200 foot strip on both sides of 23 miles of open roads. Where economically feasible, opportunities for salvage harvesting will be considered beyond the roadside strips. Conventional systems would be used to yard the dead, dying, and high risk trees proposed for salvage. The total estimated volume to be harvested will be available after further data analysis and field reconnaissance.

**Purpose:** To reduce stand densities, change species composition, and achieve age class/size distribution and structure patterns to desired levels; to reduce the risk of wildfire; to reduce burn intensities on the breaklands; to salvage dead, dying and high risk trees; to improve Forest health; and to provide a supply of timber for logging-dependent communities.

**Need:** Many years of fire suppression have allowed a majority of the stands proposed for harvest to have basal areas higher than the normal range of variability. Increased stand densities, combined with the drought conditions of recent years, have stressed the trees, making them more susceptible to attack by bark beetles, root rots, and other pests. As the incidence of insects and disease has increased, higher fuel loads have resulted, increasing the risk of higher intensity fires. Also, since many of these acres are on the breaklands, the stand densities need to be reduced through timber harvest, before the following proposal on prescribed burning can be implemented.

Known stands in need of commercial thinning are less than 100 years old with over 175 trees per acre. There is a need to thin these stands back to about 100 trees per acre to reduce stress,

redistribute growth, and reduce fuel loads.

Many stands along open roads are experiencing declining growth rates resulting from age, insects, disease, and overcrowding. The recent emergency salvage effort, conducted under authority of the Rescission Act, focused on similar stands through the Forest. Another 23 miles of open roads within this analysis area have dead and dying stands along them, plus, recent aerial surveys have detected insect and disease damage in much of the analysis area. These stands need to be salvaged and regenerated to improve productively reduce attack by insects and disease, and utilize volumes usually lost to mortality.

Historically, logging has been the primary means of support and a way of life for local community residents. Most communities were hit hard by the timber shortages of the 1980s, and there has been some movement towards economic diversification. However, logging still plays a significant role in the area, and the above mention harvest proposals would benefit those people who work in the mills and wood products industry.

**Proposed Action: Prescribed Burning**—Approximately 5,000 to 8,000 acres of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir habitats, mostly within the breaklands, are proposed for understory burns. Prescribed natural fire may take up additional acres, should lightning strikes occur in desirable areas. A prescribed natural fire management plan will be prepared as part of this analysis. Also, a Forest Plan amendment will be proposed to change the contain/confine status in brushfields in an effort to balance the suppression costs with resource values.

**Purpose:** To use prescribed fire to maintain healthy ecosystems; and to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

**Need:** Historically, the breaklands have had a short term fire regime of 26 to 50 years. Frequent fires maintained a very diverse structure composition, keeping stands open and allowing Douglas-fir, western larch, and to a lesser extent ponderosa pine to dominate a stand a regenerate. Over 60 years of fire suppression has caused the seral species to become less dominant in the overstory and replaced by uniform standards of trees with dense understories of western redcedar, grand fir, subalpine fir, and Douglas-fir. Under these conditions, the risk of a large catastrophic fire occurring in the breaklands is high. This risk is highest in Rye Patch Creek, lower Canyon Creek, Apgar Creek, and Glade Creek. Under-story burns will help perpetuate

the types of stand composition and structure naturally occurring when fire is reincorporated as an ecological process on the landscape.

**Proposed Action: Stocking Control**—Approximately 7,500 acres of stands having more than 1,000 trees per acre, less than 7" diameter breast height (dbh), are proposed to be thinned back to 400–500 trees per acre, using chainsaws or natural prescribed fire as methods of treatment. These stands are scattered throughout the analysis area, and further screening based on accessibility will probably eliminate those stands out of reach. Another estimated 860 acres of overstocked stands are proposed to have their tolerant species (grand fir, cedar, subalpine fir, and mountain hemlock) thinned back to increase the percentage of seral species (Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, white pine, larch, and lodgepole pine) left in the stand. These stands will also be screened for accessibility.

**Purpose:** To reduce the number of trees per acre in overstocked stands; and where desired, to reduce the density of tolerant species in favor of the seral species.

**Need:** High stocking levels, especially on the drier LTAs, lead to limited availability of water and nutrients for individual trees, predisposing them to insect and disease problems and increased fire risk. Shade-tolerant species on a site are more sensitive to water deficits, with the same results as overstocking. Also, stands having high percentages of seral species are better adapted to fire regimes.

**Proposed Action: Planting Riparian Areas**—Approximately 450 acres, consisting of a strip 300 feet wide, 6 miles long on both sides of Fish Creek, are proposed to be interplanted with conifers such as cedar and spruce, and cottonwoods. Approximately 150 acres, consisting of a similar strip along 2 miles of Pete King Creek, are proposed to be full-planted with cedar and white pine tree species.

**Purpose:** To reduce stream temperatures by re-establishing stands of trees (shade) in riparian areas.

**Need:** The stream terraces within both of these drainages would typically have a high percentage of old-growth trees. However, only remnants remain due to the 1934 fire that overran these areas. With shade being limited, stream temperatures in both Pete King Creek and Fish Creek are currently above water quality standards. The re-establishment of shade providing trees is needed to reduce stream temperature to desired levels.

**Proposed Action: Reforestation of Shrubfields**—There are approximately

5,300 acres of shrubfields with none or low tree stocking, mostly within the Fish, Hungry, Deadman, Bimerick, and Glade Creek drainages. Currently, a mechanical slash buster is being used on about 600 acres of shrubfields in the Middle Butte area. As the brush is cut back, the prepared sites are being planted with seral tree species. At this time, it is proposed to monitor the effectiveness of this treatment and research that of other treatments, such as, slashing followed by a light burn, underplanting followed by release, and possible ground applications of herbicides. Following this monitoring and research effort, some or all of the 5,300 acres of shrubfields may be proposed for treatment.

**Purpose:** To comply with the NFMA mandate to restore and maintain appropriate forest cover; to put suitable lands back into optimal timber production; to allow for soil recovery; and to provide future thermal cover for wildlife.

**Need:** Seral shrubfields, comprised of ninebark, mountain maple, alder, snowberry, ocean spray, willow, and other species, have come to dominate these areas after repeated large fires eliminated tree seed sources. These past fires have reduced site productivity through changing soil physical and chemical properties along with surface soil erosion losses. Forest vegetation is slowly returning to areas with deeper soils, but without treatment, some of the shrubfields may remain for many years.

Although these shrubfields represent an important early seral stage, the areas they occupy must proceed through natural successional processes to allow soil recovery from past fires. To accommodate big game use, shrubfields must be permitted to shift spatially across the landscape over time. This process creates a mosaic pattern of forage and thermal cover areas beneficial to big game while allowing for soil restoration to occur.

**Proposed Action: Restoring Native Species Composition**—Off-site ponderosa pine plantations occupy a total of 330 acres in the Boundary Peak area and 1,950 acres in the Bimerick Creek drainage. During this planning period, approximately 1,000 acres of off-site ponderosa pine are proposed to be removed by use of timber harvest, slashing, and/or burning. Use of timber harvest is still very questionable at this time, since these trees are of poor form and quality (low value), and access to them is very limited. Local seed sources would be used to replant the sites with genetically adapted seral species.

**Purpose:** To better utilize these sites by replacing off-site ponderosa pine

with adapted stock; and to prevent the contamination of the local gene pool, which could affect the species' ability to adapt and thrive.

**Need:** After the 1934 fire these areas were planted with ponderosa pine by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The trees planted were from distant sources, including the Bitterroot, Cabinet, Chelan, and Deschutes National Forests. Recent research has shown that ponderosa pine is genetically adapted to specific elevations and geographic areas. This stock was not matched to the planting sites with those criteria. As a result, these trees have been slower growing than those from local seed sources, and are now falling victim to diseases that would normally not affect trees of this age. Root rots, blights, needle casts, and insect infestations have all been noted.

**Proposed Action: Control of Noxious Weeds**—The initial proposal is to prioritize where to control noxious weeds along all roads and trails, plus the grazing allotment area near Woodrat Mountain. The proposal will be further refined to concentrate control efforts on those areas receiving high use, such as, recreation areas and open roads. Methods of control to be analyzed include herbicides, manual or mechanical eradication, prescribed fire, and available biological control agents.

**Purpose:** To control new infestations and minimize the spread of noxious weeds; to comply with the Idaho Noxious Weed Law; and to participate in the integrated weed management system.

**Need:** Forest travel-ways (roads and trails) are the main seed depositories and transportation corridors for invasive/non-native plant species. Given the nature of use of the travel-ways within the analysis area (logging equipment, livestock grazing, backcountry horsemen, and weekend explorers), it would be safe to assume that all roads and trails have at least one invasive/non-native weed species established on them.

Surveys conducted along US Hwy 12 documented Spotted Knapweed (*Centaurea maculosa*) present continually from Kooskia to Lolo Pass, with scattered patches of Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Meadow Hawkweed (*Hieracium pretense*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), Common crupina (*Crupina vulgaris*), St. Johnswort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Dalmation Toadflax (*Linaria dalmatica*), Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), and Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*). Also documented were two potential invaders, Sulfur cinquefoil (*Potentilla recta*) and Everlasting peavine (*Lathyrus*

*latifolius*). Sulfur cinquefoil is the only species present that is known to persist under a forested canopy. It is not yet a listed Noxious Weed species in Idaho, but is considered a serious threat to big game winter range habitat.

In 1995, FS Road 101 was surveyed from U.S. Hwy 12 to Mex Mountain. This survey revealed Spotted Knapweed present almost continually on both sides of the road as well as scattered infestations of Dalmatian toadflax, Canada thistle, Everlasting peavine, St. Johnswort and Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*). Roads 417, 514, 455 and 418 were also traveled during this survey. Spotted Knapweed, Orange Hawkweed and Canada thistle were found on these roads.

**Proposed Action:** Watershed Restoration and Rehabilitation—Of all the watersheds within the analysis area, Pete King has had the greatest amount of mass wasting. Due to more stable landforms or timber management associated activities, the other watersheds have experienced less mass wasting. Treatments proposed include: removing sediment from stream channels; placing large organic debris in the creeks; placing seed, fertilizer, and straw mulch on exposed soil surfaces; and rehabilitating over-steepened road cutslopes and old skid trails and roads that remain exposed to rainfall and running water.

**Purpose:** To identify and stabilize stream sediment sources and provide a pathway of actions that lead to a healthy functioning watershed.

**Need:** The analysis area is composed of relatively managed watersheds, with the exceptions of Fish/Hungry Creeks and some of the face watersheds. Mass wasting, such as debris torrents associated with channels, increased substantially after the large fire in 1934. Large landslide events, mostly related to roads, occurred in the 1970s, 1987, and 1996. This year's event can be related to higher than normal rainfall and saturated soils. Except for Canyon/Deadman Creeks, the other major drainages are in the upper ranges of natural variability for sediment. Data on Canyon and Deadman Creeks show sediment gradually declining, but these low energy systems do not clean themselves out.

A range of alternatives will be considered, including a no action alternative and the proposals identified above. Based on the issues identified through scoping, all action alternatives will vary in the number and location of acres to be treated, the type of treatment, and the kind of mitigation measures. Issues will drive the formulation of feasible alternatives.

The EIS will analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative environmental effects of the alternatives. Past, present and projected activities on National Forest lands will be considered. The EIS will disclose the analysis of site-specific mitigation measures and their effectiveness.

Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process will continue to be used to:

1. Identify potential issues.
2. Identify major issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminate minor issues or those which have been covered by a relevant previous environmental analysis, such as the Clearwater Forest Plan EIS.
4. Identify alternatives to the proposed action.
5. Identify potential environmental effects of the proposed action and alternatives (i.e., direct, indirect and cumulative effects).
6. Determine potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

Preliminary issues identified as a result of internal and public scoping include: effects of the proposal on watersheds, air quality, economics, roadless areas, research natural areas, ecosystem management, social aspects, visual quality, heritage resources, the possible use of herbicides, helicopter logging systems, and safety. These issues will be verified, expanded and/or modified based on continued scoping for this proposal.

Public participation is important all through the analysis process. Two key time periods have been identified for receipt of formal comments on the proposal and analysis:

1. Scoping period, which starts with publication of this notice and continues for the next 45 days; and
2. Review of the Draft EIS in December 1996 thru February 1997. The Forest Service expects to file the Draft EIS with the Environmental Protection Agency in December 1996. The comment period on the Draft EIS will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the Federal Register. The Final EIS and Record of Decision are expected in May 1997.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice, at this early stage, of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of a draft EIS must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions.

*Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final EIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45-day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the Final EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues on the proposed action, comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the Draft EIS.

Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft EIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. (Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.)

The Forest Supervisor is the responsible official for this environmental impact statement. His address is Clearwater National Forest, Forest Supervisor's Office, 12730 Highway 12, Orofino, ID 83544.

Dated: July 30, 1996.  
James E. Caswell,  
Forest Supervisor, Responsible Official.  
[FR Doc. 96-20286 Filed 8-8-96; 8:45 am]  
BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

#### **Blue Mountains Natural Resources Institute, Board of Directors, Pacific Northwest Research Station, Oregon**

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Correction of meeting date.

**SUMMARY:** The Blue Mountains Natural Resources Institute (BMNRI) Board of Directors will meet on September 3, 1996, at Eastern Oregon State College, Hoke Hall, Room 309, 1410 L. Avenue, in La Grande, Oregon. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue until 4:00 p.m. Agenda items to be covered will include: (1) program status; (2) research results of specific projects; (3) outreach activities; (4) briefing on Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project and EIS alternatives; (5) election of board officers; (6) public comments. All