Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project

Idaho City Ranger District, Boise National Forest

Located In:
Boise County, Idaho

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USDA Forest Service, Boise National Forest

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Introduction

This Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents my decision to implement modified Alternative B, described under “My Decision” section below, and my finding that modified Alternative B will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, either individually or cumulatively.

On July 18, 2016, the Pioneer Fire began, when hot temperatures, strong winds, and dry conditions exacerbated by a lack of late-summer monsoonal moisture fueled the fire’s growth to more than 64,000 acres by August 9, 2016, and 190,000 acres by September 15, 2016. The fire affected 27 drainages within the Idaho City, Lowman, and Emmett Ranger Districts on the Forest. The Pioneer Fire burned with varying intensity and left a mosaic of burn patterns on the landscape, ranging from unburned islands to areas where tree crowns were completely consumed.

The South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project (South Pioneer Project) was proposed to mitigate threats from hazard trees, salvage merchantable dead trees, decommission unauthorized routes causing resource damage, and plant tree seedlings in portions of the area burned during the 2016 Pioneer Fire. The South Pioneer Project is located approximately 18 miles northeast of Idaho City, Idaho, and 48 miles northeast of Boise, Idaho, in Boise County. The project area covers approximately 39,100 acres in the Boise River watershed (Figure 1). The project area is located entirely on National Forest System (NFS) lands that fall within Boise County, Idaho.

The South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project Environmental Assessment (South Pioneer Project EA) documents the analyses of two alternatives: Alternative A (No Action) and Alternative B (Proposed Action) which was designed to meet the needs identified within the project area. This DN and FONSI hereby incorporates by reference the June 2017 South Pioneer Project EA, supporting resource reports, and biological assessment and letter of concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). These documents are all available for download from the Forest project website.

Relationship of the South Pioneer Project to the North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project

Considering comments received requesting clarification as to my rationale for completing two National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents for proposed salvage and reforestation work within the Pioneer Fire area, I have decided to provide this clarification prior to discussing my decision on the South Pioneer Project, as I did in my separate decision for the North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project (North Pioneer Project). Actions proposed for the South Pioneer Project have common features to those actions proposed under the North Pioneer Project. While actions share common timing, they do not fall within the same geographic area. As stated in comments received, it is recognized the projects share about 9 miles of a common boundary; however, this boundary is a ridgeline separating two distinct 4th order hydrological

1 https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694
units (subbasins) that drain to different river systems: the South Pioneer Project drains to the Boise River drainage and the North Pioneer Project drains to the Payette River drainage.

During field trips and other communications with interested State and County government officials and interested stakeholder groups, such as the Boise Forest Coalition and local individuals who recreate within the South or North Pioneer Project areas, we discussed the value of assessing the proposed activities in one versus two NEPA documents to more effectively address effects to interests, which in many cases, were distinctly different between the project areas.

**Recreational Users:** Providing safe recreational opportunities is one of the main objectives for undertaking this project. Most motorized and non-motorized recreationists using the South Pioneer Project area come from the Boise and Idaho City areas. They are looking for a specific type of recreational experience tied to unique features in the South Pioneer Project area that are not shared with the North Pioneer Project area, such as the yurt system and their associated oversnow, motorized, and nonmotorized trail system. If these users are displaced from the South Pioneer Project area and are looking for an alternative yurt system to recreate in, they would likely go to locations such as McCall. Snowmobile or motorized recreationists displaced from the South Pioneer Project area would not generally travel over the divide into the North Pioneer Project area; many of these users would go south to the Trinities or other areas south of the South Pioneer Project area which provide similar motorized and nonmotorized recreational experiences (refer to recreation technical report [project record]).

Recreational users in the North Pioneer Project area largely come from the Garden Valley and Lowman areas. Recreational opportunities in the North Pioneer Project area lean more toward less developed recreation (as compared to the yurt and trail system in the South Pioneer Project area), particularly due to the adjacency to the surrounding Inventoried Roadless Areas and their associated trail systems. The North Pioneer Project area road system also provides a key connection to areas north of the project area (e.g., Bear Valley, Deadwood Reservoir) and recreational opportunities shared between the Lowman, Emmett, and Cascade Ranger Districts.

The geographic divide used to separate the North and South Pioneer Project areas also corresponds with the division between State of Idaho Big Game Management Units in this area. The South Pioneer Project area falls within Big Game Management Unit 39, while the North Pioneer Project area falls within Units 33 and 35. This is an important management break as to how big game populations are managed by the State, and as identified by several hunters participating in meetings last fall, hunters historically return to the same game unit year to year. Thus, interests expressed by hunters participating in field trips and meetings focused largely on how the actions may affect use over the next several years in the specific unit of interest to them.

Separating disclosures by the geographic divide and Big Game Management Units provided the opportunity to more specifically address interests identified and to clarify the effects to these interests.

**County and State Economic Interests:** While the South and North Pioneer Project areas both fall within Boise County, economic benefits are not only realized at the County and State level. Local businesses also benefit from the recreational uses discussed above. Thus, South Pioneer Project area users largely contribute economic benefits to the community of Idaho City, while North Pioneer Project area users largely contribute economic benefits to the communities of Lowman and Garden Valley. Thus, how actions will affect recreational users that are contributing
to these communities varies by the type of use, which as identified above, varies between the South and North Pioneer Project areas.

**Jurisdictional and Management Emphasis:** In addition to the varied interests by user groups in the South versus North Pioneer Project areas, the geographic subbasin boundary between the two project areas is also the jurisdictional boundary between two Ranger Districts on the Forest: the South Pioneer Project area falls on the Idaho City Ranger District, while the North Pioneer Project area falls on the Lowman Ranger District. While both Ranger Districts fall within the Forest and share a common set of Forest-wide goals and objectives, each Ranger District and project area falls within different management areas. As outlined in the Boise National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), the South Pioneer Project area falls within Management Area (MA) 7, North Fork Boise River, and the North Pioneer Project area falls within MA 10, Upper South Fork Payette River (USDA Forest Service 2010a). A review of the Forest Plan management strategies for these two management areas clearly shows a distinction in management needs and direction for these areas to contribute to the desired outcomes identified in the Forest-scale management strategy.

In addition, these two Ranger Districts fall within two distinct planning and implementation zones on the Forest: the South Pioneer Project falls in the Forest South Zone and the North Pioneer Project falls in the Forest North Zone. These two zones support their own respective resource interdisciplinary teams (IDTs). While the zone teams coordinate closely to address common needs shared between the zones, project planning and implementation is typically specific to their respective zone geographic area. Thus, IDT members are most familiar with ground conditions on their respective zones. For example, the three past projects that provided important data and ground-validated information discussed in the South and North Pioneer Project EAs were the Becker Integrated Resource Management Project which fell entirely within the South Pioneer Project area and the Clear Creek Integrated Project and Rock Creek Resource Management Project that fell entirely within the North Pioneer Project area. Staff familiarity with the distinct project areas was an important consideration in how to proceed with the post-fire planning and restoration work, including immediate work completed last fall; the current South and North Pioneer Projects; and subsequent future work to address public health and safety needs, restoration, and recovery.
Figure 1. South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project area
My Rationale for Completing Two Environmental Assessments

Based on the above information, I determined that assessments needed to be separated by the distinct geographic boundaries and jurisdictional boundaries to effectively and efficiently address the varied State, County, and stakeholder interests identified above, as well as the distinct management area emphases and direction in the Forest Plan aligned with the subbasin geographic boundary. To determine if the analysis could be completed in two NEPA documents or a single NEPA document where the geographic boundary would be separated into their distinct sections, I reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) analysis scope requirements at 40 CFR 1508.25. As stated in this provision, to determine if an assessment should be considered in a single NEPA document or can be separated into more than one NEPA document, the following factors were considered. Following each factor, I provide my finding supporting my decision as to why completing two NEPA documents was appropriate.

1. Connected actions, which means that they are closely related and therefore should be discussed in the same NEPA document. Actions are connected if they:

   (i) Automatically trigger other actions which may require environmental impact statements.

   **My Conclusion:** Actions proposed in the South Pioneer Project have independent utility and would not automatically trigger any actions proposed in the North Pioneer Project, or vice versa. Hazard tree salvage, reforestation, and road management treatments proposed in the South Pioneer Project would not automatically trigger any similar actions proposed in the North Pioneer Project, and vice versa.

   (ii) Cannot or will not proceed unless other actions are taken previously or simultaneously.

   **My Conclusion:** Proposed salvage, hazard tree treatments, reforestation, and road management treatments in one project are not dependent on the other; no actions taken in one project must occur previously or simultaneously to actions in the other project. For example, no temporary roads are proposed for construction under the South Pioneer Project that would be needed to support access for the North Pioneer Project. While I may choose to combine areas within the two project areas into a single contract for implementation purposes (e.g., salvage sale or reforestation contracts), I could also keep the areas separated in different contract areas or packages without any measurable loss or gain in implementation efficiency (see project record, Implementation Planning Documentation).

   (iii) Are interdependent parts of a larger action and depend on the larger action for their justification.

   **My Conclusion:** Nothing within either of the proposed projects makes a “commitment” for actions proposed under the other project. Proposed salvage, hazard tree treatments, reforestation, and road management treatments in one project are not interdependent parts of a larger action that depend on the larger action for their justification. While I may choose to combine areas within the two project areas into a single contract for implementation purposes (e.g., salvage sale or reforestation contracts), I could also keep the areas separated in different contract areas or packages without any measurable loss or gain in implementation efficiency (see project record, Implementation Planning Documentation).
(2) Cumulative actions, which when viewed with other proposed actions have cumulatively significant impacts and should therefore be discussed in the same impact statement.

My Conclusion: Resource effects disclosures in the South Pioneer Project EA included consideration of potential effects from treatments proposed in the North Pioneer Project EA, as applicable. Close coordination between resource IDTs for both projects occurred throughout the planning process. Where the potential for cumulative effects between the projects existed for a resource area, IDT members provided their rationale on how they determined the appropriate geographic scale and timeframe to disclose associated direct, indirect, and cumulative effects (refer to resource technical reports posted on the project website2).

Following review of resource effects and the methodology used to reach the effects conclusions disclosed in the EAs with the IDT, I determined no significant cumulative effects existed between proposed treatments on the South Pioneer Project, or where applicable, between actions proposed on both the South and North Pioneer Projects. Refer to the FONSI below for additional discussions concerning my conclusions that no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative effects would occur as a result of implementing my decision.

(3) Similar actions, which when viewed with other reasonably foreseeable or proposed agency actions, have similarities that provide a basis for evaluating their environmental consequences together, such as common timing or geography. An agency may wish to analyze these actions in the same impact statement. It should do so when the best way to assess adequately the combined impacts of similar actions or reasonable alternatives to such actions is to treat them in a single impact statement.

My Conclusion: Actions proposed for the South Pioneer Project include actions common to those proposed on the North Pioneer Project. While actions share common timing, they do not fall within the same geographic area. As stated in comments received, it is recognized that the projects share about 9 miles of a common boundary; however, this boundary is a ridgeline separating two distinct 4th order hydrological units (subbasins) that drain to different river systems: the South Pioneer Project drains into the Boise River drainage and the North Pioneer Project drains into the Payette River drainage.

While some resources identified situations where cumulative effects may occur between the projects, the majority did not and I determined, as identified above, no significant or potentially significant cumulative effects would occur where resources identified an overlap. Had a single NEPA document been prepared, in many cases, the effects would have been separated to display effects to watersheds in the Payette River drainage from those in the Boise River drainage and their associated watersheds.

Consistent with Forest Plan management strategies and objectives, resource effects for a project are disclosed by subbasin (4th order hydrologic unit code [HUC]) and/or their associated watersheds (5th HUC) and subwatersheds (6th HUC). For example, for aquatic

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2 https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694
resources, Appendix B of the Forest Plan and associated Aquatic Conservation Strategy states the following (USDA Forest Service 2010a, p. B-1):

The [effects] Matrix has been designed for application during project-specific NEPA assessments to assist in project design and analysis. A hierarchal sequence is followed to ascertain which fish species and/or beneficial uses the Matrix is focused on, ensuring the most imperiled fish species or most limiting designated beneficial use is considered first. Project-level analyses are generally conducted at the watershed or subwatershed scale (5th or 6th field hydrologic units or HUs), which are the typical scales at which aquatic and water resource cumulative effects analyses are completed in a project NEPA analysis. Analyses may also be conducted at the subbasin scale (4th field HU) depending on the geographic extent and scope of the proposed action(s), and the scale at which cumulative effects need to be addressed in any project-specific NEPA analysis. The ID team and the appropriate line officer (District Ranger or Forest Supervisor) for each project (i.e., management action) determine the analysis scale(s). Where the action may influence listed fish species directly, indirectly or cumulatively, the line officer should determine the appropriate scale of analysis in conference with the [ESA] Level 1 streamlining team.

The geographic scale chosen for this project for disclosing resource effects to vegetation was the 6th HUC. Use of a 6th HUC, which is a subunit of the Forest Plan mid-scale analysis unit (5th HUC), is consistent with guidance of project-scale analysis identified in the Forest Plan. Appendix A of the Forest Plan states the following (USDA Forest Service 2010a, pp. A-2 through A-5):

Recent advances in theory and empirical studies of vegetation and landscape ecology indicate that, to achieve long-term biological diversity across landscapes, management needs to consider the major disturbance processes, including variability and scale, which determine ecosystem components and their spatial pattern (Baker 1992; Baker and Cai 1992; Hessburg et al. 2007). Because fire was historically a major disturbance process in the west, historical fire regimes have been recommended to help set context for the individual components of the desired conditions (Wallin et al. 1996).

...Hann et al. (2004) state that appropriate landscapes for evaluating fire regimes are “relatively large-scale, contiguous areas big enough to exhibit natural variation in fire regimes and associated vegetation.” They recommend basing the landscape size on the dominant historical fire regime within an area; appropriate landscapes can range from 500 to 300,000 acres in highly dissected topography. Spatial patterns are evaluated at the watershed (5th HU) landscape unit [for purposes of a Forest Planning mid-scale analysis] because, in most cases, this scale is large enough to represent the desired fire regime patch dynamics that created the largest patch sizes on the Forest (i.e., the lethal fire regimes).”

... (page A-4 to A-5) At the project level, opportunities exist to consider spatial patterns, how a project can affect spatial patterns, and what those effects (positive or negative) will be to plant and animal species. During project design, spatial pattern considerations are dependent upon current conditions and overriding management concerns for the area. Generally, these conditions and concerns are site-specific, depending on the project scale. Repeating patterns of change emerge at landscape scales, and some order can be found through descriptions of successional pathways, patch mosaics, and seral stages that facilitate understanding and managing vegetation at landscape scales.
As identified in the forested vegetation technical report for this project, and summarized in Chapter 3 of the South Pioneer Project EA, the analysis scale chosen for the project was the subwatershed scale (6th HUC) which are distinct landscape subunits within the broader 5th HUC landscape assessed during Forest Plan development. Use of the subwatersheds (6th HUCs) at the project/site scale analysis provides the context needed to understand the contribution of the project to maintain or restore desired spatial patterns within the Forest Plan analysis unit (watershed or 5th HUC). As identified in the methodology section of the forested vegetation technical report, the combined scale of the four subwatersheds included in the assessment is 66,968 acres. As identified above in the Forest Plan, appropriate landscape scales for assessments can range from 500 to 300,000 (USDA Forest Service 2010a) acres in highly dissected topography typical of the South Pioneer Fire project area.

The geographic scale for disclosing effects to wildlife resources varies by the wildlife species being assessed. However, the following assessment approach identified in Appendix E in the Forest Plan is applicable to all project planning work (USDA Forest Service 2010a):

As discussed in Chapter III of the Forest Plan (p. III-1), three analysis scales should be considered during plan implementation to fully understand the context of and effects (negative or beneficial) to ecosystem and species diversity likely to result from implemented actions. At each scale, consistent with WIGU15, the conservation principles discussed above should be used to assist in evaluations.

From larger to smaller, the following three scales should be addressed and/or assessed:

1. Mid scale: This scale of analysis was completed by the Forest interdisciplinary team (IDT) within the context of broader-scale findings, such as those identified in the ICBEMP and Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (IDFG 2005). This analysis is maintained in the planning record and will be updated periodically as part of Forest Plan monitoring and evaluation consistent with timelines established in Chapter IV of the Forest Plan. This analysis provides conservation and restoration priorities among 5th HUC watersheds.

2. Fine scale: This scale of assessment results in a better understanding of spatial and temporal relationships of threats, risks, and priority actions within a 5th HUC watershed. Typically, outcomes from this scale of assessment support what is referred to “tactical planning” and would be reflected by the Forest Leadership Team in updates to the Forest’s 5-year integrated plan for forest plan implementation (i.e., projects to be implemented to address Forest multiple-use priorities over the next 5 years). This 5-year plan integrates the various resource priorities for action along with other social and economic priorities, such as hazardous fuel reduction activities within the wildland-urban interface (WUI).

3. Site scale: Analysis at this scale supports site-specific planning and design of projects that implement priority actions identified in the Forest’s 5-year integrated plan.

Evaluations across these scales lead to the following:

- An understanding of the importance of each watershed within a planning unit in providing source environments, including source habitat, for species associated with habitat families in the short and long term.

- An understanding of what threats represent the greatest risk to species and their source environments and where action is needed in the short and long term.
• The ability to trace the logic of management priorities to address the threats that represent the greatest risks in the short term (i.e. this planning period); and ultimately the long term.

• The ability to provide the context needed to support the probable effect of a specific project activity and its likelihood of changing an identified threat to habitat, and what that change means in terms of decreasing or increasing short-term risks to habitats and associated species of conservation concern across their respective ranges within the planning unit.

This hierarchical and iterative approach to evaluating ecosystem and species diversity will likely be more rigorous where risks to ecosystems and species are high or where potential management is complex. To improve planning efficiencies, the rigor of analysis should be commensurate with the degree of risk a project represents to habitats and their associated species of concern.

Based on the above conclusions, I determined that separating the South and North Pioneer Projects into two NEPA documents would be consistent with CEQ regulations and provide the best opportunity to clearly communicate effects of proposed activities on the varied, and in many cases distinct, interests of stakeholders and management needs identified in the Forest Plan associated with these two project areas. This conclusion is supported when comparing comments received on the South Pioneer Project EA (48 comment letters) compared to the North Pioneer Project EA (18 comment letters). While some commenters, such as Boise County, Idaho State, industry, our local collaborative group and multi-state conservation groups, provided comments on both projects, several local stakeholders involved only commented on the project in which they primarily recrested and/or had an economic interest related to uses occurring within a specific project area.

Purpose and Need for Action

Purpose

Consistent with the goals and objectives identified in the Forest Plan, the purpose of the South Pioneer Project is to remove hazard trees affecting public health and safety along travel routes and within developed sites; restore portions of the landscape burned by the wildfire by initiating reforestation; reduce watershed impacts resulting from unauthorized routes; and recover forest economic value and benefits through salvage, generating revenues to support the accomplishment of project objectives.

Need

The following specific needs exist:

1. Mitigate the risks of hazard trees resulting from the Pioneer Fire along roads and trails open to public motorized and non-motorized use, and within developed sites.

Areas adjacent to many of the roads and trails open to the public and administrative motorized and non-motorized use (including groomed snowmobile and cross-country ski routes), as well as within developed sites (including yurts), within the project area were
heavily forested prior to the 2016 Pioneer Fire. These areas now have high densities of fire-killed trees. If left standing, these trees pose a risk of striking parked or moving vehicles, recreationists, and Forest Service and contract personnel using these routes and developed sites. Fire-killed trees could also fall when vehicles/users are not present, creating a travelway hazard or potentially blocking individuals behind or between trees across the roadway. Commercially harvesting hazard trees, or felling and leaving them onsite where commercial harvest is not consistent with resource objectives, would proactively mitigate many of these risks, substantially reducing the time, energy, and funding otherwise needed to mitigate these risks over multiple years by Forest Service personnel or service contractors.

2. Reestablish forested conditions to trend the project area towards Forest Plan desired conditions; in particular, increase the representation of early seral conifer species such as ponderosa pine.

3. A large portion of the project area, particularly within forest types classified to historically exhibit a nonlethal fire regime, burned at an uncharacteristically large scale with high intensity, creating patch sizes that are likely to take decades to naturally reestablish forested conditions. Strategically planting early seral species, including riparian vegetation, would create future seed sources and expedite recovery towards Forest Plan desired conditions.

4. Improve watershed conditions by decommissioning unauthorized roads currently degrading watershed conditions that fall within the project area.

5. Unauthorized road segments that were stable and not accessible prior to the fire are now visible following vegetation removal by the fire. Where fire impacts have left these unauthorized road segments unstable, a need exists to decommission segments to reduce degrading effects to the watershed.

6. Recover the economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to public health and safety, resource protection, and restoration identified in Needs 1 through 3 above.

Trees killed by this wildfire are losing value at an increased rate. Therefore, a need exists to salvage trees as quickly as possible. Expedited implementation allows the Forest to capture enough commodity value to market some of the trees. Often, if material proposed for removal cannot be sold, many of the project’s objectives associated with Needs 1–3 above cannot be met. Recovery of the economic value of forest products in a timely manner will also contribute to employment and income to local communities.

My Decision

Decision Authority

Pursuant to the delegation by the Secretary of Agriculture at 7 CFR 2.60 and Chief of the Forest Service at FSM 2404.2 and Exhibit 01 at FSM 2404.28, I have been delegated the authority to make this decision.
My Decision

Based upon my review of the effects analyses disclosed in the South Pioneer Project EA and consideration of the public comments received throughout the process, I have decided to implement Alternative B, the Proposed Action, as described in Chapter 1 of the South Pioneer Project EA, with the modifications described below (Table 1 and Figure 2).

**Changed Condition:** NFS road 312 is a collector road providing the only road access to Jackson Peak Lookout and the Graham area on the North Fork Boise River. The road begins at the junction with NFS road 384, approximately 4 miles from State Highway 21, and ends at the Johnson Creek Campground on the North Fork Boise River. The first 9 miles from the junction with NFS road 384 to the boundary between the Lowman and Idaho City Ranger Districts is a Maintenance Level (ML) 3 road which receives annual road maintenance and is suitable for passenger cars. Beyond the Idaho City Ranger District boundary, the road is maintained for high clearance vehicles.

On Wednesday May 31, 2017, road surface damage to NFS road 312 occurred approximately 2.1 miles from the junction with NFS road 385. The cause of the damage is attributed to a beaver dam upstream which diverted the melting snowpack onto the roadway. The roadway design was an insloped template with ditch, which provided inadequate road surface drainage to accommodate the diverted flow. As a result, the 5 ditch relief culverts along the affected road segment plugged with eroded road surface material, and the continuous diverted water flow resulted in approximately 1,800 feet of road damage.

The first 700 feet of the affected road segment has rutting ranging from 5 to 30 feet wide and 0 to 10 feet deep and three culverts need to be replaced. The next 420 feet has minor damage with one culvert needing to be replaced. The next 400 feet has rutting ranging from 2 to 16 feet wide and 0 to 6 feet deep and one culvert needs to be replaced. The uppermost 200 feet has minor damage with 1 culvert needing to be replaced.

The estimated timeframe to survey, determine the necessary repairs, and design this road segment has been scheduled with a completion date of approximately July 15. These surveys will provide essential roadwork repair specifications and costs needed to determine the best long-term solution. At this time, the Forest cannot confirm if repairs can be completed during the 2017 field season due to the undetermined extent of required repairs, associated costs, and ability to secure funding. Therefore, I have decided to modify Alternative B, the Proposed Action, in the South Pioneer Project EA as follows:

- Because vehicles can no longer drive beyond the washout point (identified on Figure 2), the area from the washout north and east up NFS road 312 will be converted from a combination of roadside hazard tree salvage and fell and leave onsite to all hazard tree fell and leave onsite (Figure 2).

- As a result, the acres of hazard and dead tree salvage will be reduced from 5,305 to 5,101 acres, a reduction of 3.8%. Conversely, hazard tree fell and leave onsite treatments will increase from 2,542 to 2,746 acres, an increase of 8% (Table 1).

- This reduction in salvage acres will only affect acres of hazard and dead tree salvage and fell and leave, it will not affect acres of dead tree salvage proposed to recover economic value to support accomplishment of Agency objectives associated with Needs 1 (hazard tree
treatment), 2 (reforestation), and 3 (decommissioning of unauthorized roads). Thus, the total acres of hazard tree and dead tree salvage will be reduced from 9,276 to 9,072 acres. This reduction will result in a corresponding reduction in volume removed, from 36.9 to 36.3 million board feet (MMBF) (Table 1).

- Miles of road maintenance to be conducted in support of project activities will also be reduced by 7.9 miles; the number of miles along NFS road 312 from the washout north and east that will no longer be used to support implementation activities.
- Acres of reforestation (Need 2) and miles of unauthorized road decommission (Need 3) will remain unchanged.

### Table 1. Summary of treatments to be implemented under the modified Alternative B, by need

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatments</th>
<th>Proposed Action Alternative</th>
<th>Modified Proposed Action</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need 1</strong>: Mitigate the risks of hazard trees resulting from the Pioneer Wildfire along roads and trails open to public motorized and non-motorized use, and within developed sites.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of hazard tree treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard tree fell and leave</td>
<td>2,542</td>
<td>2,746</td>
<td>+8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard and Dead Tree Salvage</td>
<td>5,305</td>
<td>5,101</td>
<td>−3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres of hazard tree treatment</td>
<td>7,847</td>
<td>7,847</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need 2</strong>: Reestablish forested conditions to trend the project area towards Forest Plan desired conditions; in particular, increase the representation of early seral conifer species such as ponderosa pine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acres of reforestation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural regeneration</td>
<td>4,703</td>
<td>4,703</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree planting</td>
<td>12,571</td>
<td>12,571</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian restoration</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitebark pine restoration</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres of reforestation</td>
<td>17,605</td>
<td>17,605</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need 3</strong>: Improve watershed conditions by decommissioning unauthorized roads currently degrading watershed conditions that fall within the project area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total miles of unauthorized road decommission</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need 4</strong>: Recover the economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to public health and safety, resource protection, and restoration identified in Needs 1 through 3 above.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres of hazard and dead tree salvage to recover economic value</td>
<td>5,305</td>
<td>5,101</td>
<td>−3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres of dead tree salvage to recover economic value</td>
<td>3,971</td>
<td>3,971</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total acres of hazard and dead tree salvage</strong></td>
<td>9,276</td>
<td>9,072</td>
<td>−2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated volume salvaged in MMBF</td>
<td>36.9 MMBF</td>
<td>36.5 MMBF</td>
<td>−1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential net revenue available to support Need 1, 2 and 3</td>
<td>$3,800,521</td>
<td>$3,790,741</td>
<td>−0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the washout on NFS road 312, road damage occurred along NFS road 385 (refer to project record supporting documentation). One culvert was washed out and road damage occurred around three other crossings. The culvert that was washed out will not be replaced through the South Pioneer Project, but addressed at a later date. The road damage around the other three crossings will be addressed through standard road maintenance, consistent with what
is already included under Alternative B. However, unlike the situation on NFS road 312, access to complete proposed hazard tree treatments north and south of the culvert washed out can occur along NFS roads already included under Alternative B. Thus, no additional changes are proposed for hazard and dead tree treatments identified in for Alternative B in the South Pioneer Project EA. The only resulting change would be additional light road maintenance on roads north of the washed-out culvert to support treatments.

Following review of modified Alternative B with the IDT, all resources determined the modification to Alternative B as presented in the South Pioneer Project EA will result in a negligible beneficial or negative effect to their respective resource. In all cases, it was determined the change in effects resulting from the modification would fall within the range of effects already disclosed for the alternatives considered in detail (i.e., the No Action Alternative [Alternative A] and Proposed Action [Alternative B]).

Thus, I directed the team to account for the environmental change in baseline conditions in their affected environment sections. Updates to environmental effects were not needed because the modification to the proposed action (Alternative B) and resulting effects were not substantial (40 CFR 1502.9(c) and FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, section 18). In all cases, as identified above, the IDT specialists identified effect from the NFS road 312 washout and road damage along NFS road 385 to their resource baselines were negligible, except for minor impacts to recreation until access is restored north of the NFS road 312 washout. However, this is not a high recreation use area, and effects would be temporary until road maintenance actions could be taken to repair NFS road 312 in the next 1 to 3 years.

As a result of this direction, the South Pioneer Project EA resource affected environments/baselines were updated, as needed, to reflect the washout on NFS roads 312 and 382. Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects were not updated because the change would not be substantial and the resulting effects would fall within the range of effects already disclosed in Chapter 3 of the South Pioneer Project EA.

**Details of the Selected Alternative, Modified Alternative B**

**Hazard Tree and Salvage Treatments**

Salvage harvest to address hazard trees and recover economic value will occur on approximately 9,072 acres using ground-based and cable logging systems (Table 2 and Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Logging System</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ground Based</td>
<td>8,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,072</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dead trees, as well as hazard trees, will be cut and removed from within salvage units. The 2016 Pioneer Fire created extensive large patches where little-to-no live forest canopy remains. It is within these high-mortality areas—now considered openings due to the lack of live trees—that salvage units will be located. Locations where salvage of dead and hazard trees occurs would appear more open than areas not salvaged. Salvage treatments within units will maintain the number of snags per acre identified in Design Feature VM-1 (refer to Appendix A).
Figure 2. Modified Alternative B hazard tree fell and leave onsite, hazard tree salvage areas, and other salvage units, as well as temporary road locations for the South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project.
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Hazard Tree Removal

Approximately 105.3 miles of open NFS roads and 70.1 miles of open motorized and nonmotorized NFS trails occur within the project area (Figure 2). Within a 200-foot safety buffer along both sides of these roads and trails, trees classified as hazard trees that are likely to strike these routes will be felled on approximately 7,847 acres; trees from 5,101 of these acres will be removed to help pay for the treatment. Hazard trees will be identified based on their risk of falling and their likelihood of striking the established route or site infrastructure (Figure 3). For example, more trees will likely be felled above a road (where a greater risk of the tree falling, sliding, or rolling down into the road exists) than below the road.

Riparian Conservation Area Hazard and Dead Tree Removal

In Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs) between the road and the water feature of salvage units and within the first site potential tree height (1st SPTH) in RCAs where the road intersects the stream perpendicularly, hazards trees will be felled and left onsite (Figure 4). However, within RCAs on the side of the road opposite the water feature (uphill side of the road), and outside of the 1st SPTH in RCAs where the road intersects the stream perpendicularly, harvesting and
removing hazard and dead trees will be allowed where consistent with design features\(^3\) and Forest Plan standards\(^4\). Outside of hazard treatment areas, salvage units will be delineated to exclude RCAs. Within RCAs, hazard and dead trees will be felled and removed on 657 acres and hazard trees will be felled and left onsite across 2,295 acres.

![Riparian hazard tree removal guideline depiction](image)

**Figure 4. Riparian hazard tree removal guideline depiction**

Exceptions to removing hazard trees between the road and the water feature or where the RCA intersects the road perpendicularly may be allowed for worker safety and/or to mitigate damage to road drainage infrastructure. Site-specific evaluation by resource specialists will be required prior to removing material in areas where the exception would be employed (Design Feature FH-1).

Felled hazard trees will be sold as various wood products or left onsite consistent with Forest Plan direction. During salvage unit layout, if a unit is eliminated from implementation, hazard trees located within this unit will be felled, but no other salvage treatments will be implemented. Hazard trees will be felled along motorized and nonmotorized trails within RCAs. Where the trails fall within the salvage units, these trees will be removed for their commercial value. If the trails fall outside a salvage unit, the hazard trees will be removed from the trail and left onsite.

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\(^3\) Hazard tree salvage unit would remove all hazard trees, as well as salvage any additional dead trees where consistent with design features in Appendix A of this EA.

\(^4\) TRST08: Salvage harvest in RCAs is allowed only where the wood products salvaged will not degrade or retard attainment of riparian, aquatic, hydrological, botanical, and terrestrial wildlife habitat desired conditions (USDA Forest Service 2010a)
Activity Fuels Management

Trees will be yarded whole to the landing to reduce compaction and aid in soil amelioration. The tops, limbs, and branches will be hauled back and slash material utilized to minimize soil and water movement and promote restoration of soil-hydrologic functions associated with the construction of temporary roads, landings, and skid trails. The piling and burning of slash could occur where needed to protect NFS improvements and facilities; address public safety; and maintain recreational access, use, and visual quality. No hand piling will occur below the road within RCAs, unless otherwise designated through site-specific evaluation. Refer to Design Features FF-1 and FH-8 in Appendix A.

Temporary Roads

Implementing this project will require constructing approximately 3.6 miles of temporary roads to facilitate salvage harvest activities (Figure 2). To minimize impacts to the environment and natural resources, 3.4 miles of unauthorized roads would be used as temporary roads (Figure 52). In addition, approximately 0.2 miles of new temporary roads are proposed to access landings where existing system roads and old alignments are not adequate for accessing strategic locations. Temporary roads will be constructed to access landings and will be rehabilitated upon completion of all harvest activities. Temporary roads will be decommissioned after use by recontouring to the approximate shape of the surrounding terrain (Design Feature FH-8, Appendix A). These temporary road segments are generally located on dry ridgetops not within wet/moist areas.

Figure 2 shows the locations of the temporary roads for this project.

National Forest System Road Management

To support large trucks and equipment used to implement the proposed action, road maintenance is proposed on approximately 107 miles5 of existing NFS roads. However, motorized access will remain unchanged, and no new NFS road will be constructed or decommissioned.

Maintenance activities will include clearing brush from the road shoulders to improve sight distance, blading and shaping the road, cleaning ditches, maintaining or improving drainage structures, and improving the road surface. When a ML 1 road (closed road) is opened and used for project implementation, it will only be open to administrative use, including timber haul. Culverts damaged by the wildfire will be replaced through road maintenance.

To address Purpose and Need 3, 4.4 miles of unauthorized routes, 3.4 miles of which will be used as temporary roads to implement proposed activities (see discussion above), are proposed for decommissioning (Figure 5; Design Feature FH-4, Appendix A).

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5 Miles of road maintenance were reduced from 115 to 107 because of the washout on NFS road 312 restricting access north and east of the washout. Essentially, approximately 8 miles of NFS road 312 will no longer be used during operations. (See email, Project Engineer, dated 6/13/2017 [project record].)
Access and Public Health and Safety

To address public health and safety, area closures to motorized and nonmotorized recreational uses will be in effect as needed through portions of the project area during implementation of proposed activities. To the maximum extent practicable\(^6\), notice of closures will be provided at least 2 weeks in advance in local papers and nearby public facilities. The only exception to these closures will be to permittees operating within the project area, who will be provided limited access consistent with their permits as public health and safety concerns allow (Design Feature PS-1, Appendix A).

Beginning in June 2017, yurts operated in cooperation with the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) and located within and immediately adjacent to the treatment areas, and their associated access system, will be closed to public use until November 2017. These closures are necessary to minimize risks to public health and safety during salvage sale operations (e.g., road haul, tree felling). In November 2017, 3 of the 5 yurts will be open for use: Stargazer, Skyline, and Rocky Ridge. The remaining two yurts—Banner and Elkhorn—will be evaluated as to public health and safety concerns and may be reopened if hazards have been reduced. If, at any time prior to November 2017, the Agency determines public health and safety concerns have been resolved for one or more yurts, the Agency will contact IDPR to inform them that operations may once again resume.

Reforestation

Natural regeneration of deciduous and coniferous trees is desired. To promote and capitalize on natural recovery where it aligns with trajectories for desired conditions, ecosystem response will be monitored, starting in summer 2017. In large, high-severity patches, where limited-to-no seed sources remain, sparse natural regeneration may result in delayed successional trajectories or altered vegetation states (Kemp et al. 2015). Thus, to contribute to accomplishing Purpose and Need 2, reforesting strategic locations within the fire perimeter to establish future seed sources with native, long-lived early seral tree species (e.g., ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, and whitebark pine) will occur to enhance the overall recovery process and trend the vegetation component toward desired future conditions (Table 3).

Where a tree planting need overlaps with proposed salvage activities, seedlings will be planted following the completion of harvest operations. Tree seedlings will also be planted in areas identified to have a reforestation need that do not overlap with salvage locations, such as priority locations for wildlife, aquatics, and recreation, and sites identified to reestablish a future seed source for long-term forest recovery (Figure 2 and Figure 5).

Based on monitoring of forest recovery within these locations, strategic sites (units) will be planted at historical densities using variable spacing to foster long-term restoration objectives identified in the Forest Plan.

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\(^6\) Maximum Extent Practicable—Available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes (40 CFR 230.10(a)(2)).
Figure 5. Reforestation areas and location of unauthorized routes to be decommissioned
Table 3. Reforestation/restoration summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reforestation</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural regeneration</td>
<td>4,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree planting</td>
<td>12,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riparian restoration</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitebark pine reforestation</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>17,605</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Design Features**

My decision for the South Pioneer Project has been designed to avoid or minimize undesirable impacts to resources, to the maximum extent practicable\(^7\), and will comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and direction. The IDT developed the project design features to minimize or avoid potential adverse effects from the proposed action (refer to Appendix A). The design features are based on Forest Plan direction and policy, best available science, and site-specific effectiveness evaluations (refer to Appendix A of the EA) and will be applied (except where specifically stated) as an integral part of project implementation.

The South Pioneer Project incorporates design features that reflect best management practices (BMPs) to help meet the requirements of the Clean Water Act. Section 208 of the Clean Water Act authorizes and encourages State and local management of nonpoint pollution sources, which include forest practices. The *National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands—Volume 1: National Core BMP Technical Guide* states the following (USDA Forest Service 2012):

> ...site-specific BMP prescriptions are developed based on the proposed activity, water quality objectives, soils, topography, geology, vegetation, climate, and other site-specific factors and are designed to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential adverse impacts to soil, water quality, and riparian resources. State BMPs, regional Forest Service guidance, land management plan standards and guidelines, monitoring results, and professional judgment are all used to develop site-specific BMP prescriptions.

Additionally, the Idaho Forest Practices Act rules includes mandatory BMPs that protect, maintain, and enhance Idaho’s forests and maintain high water quality. Design features included in Appendix A were developed to be consistent with applicable requirements.

All applicable design features are reflective of BMPs and will be applied to activities proposed in the South Pioneer Project area. A summary of the effectiveness of each design feature is provided in Appendix A of the South Pioneer Project EA. Contract provisions required in timber contracts are the mechanism by which design features/BMPs are implemented during activities. Additionally, monitoring of BMPs occurs during and after harvest to ensure correct implementation and effectiveness.

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\(^7\) Maximum Extent Practicable—Available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics in light of overall project purposes (40 CFR 230.10(a)(2)).
Project Monitoring Activities, Adaptive Management and Addressing New Information/Changed Circumstances

Project Level Monitoring\(^8\): Monitoring is the process of periodically and systematically gathering and analyzing data to understand trends over time. The most common monitoring is related to implementation (did we do what we said we were going to do?) and effectiveness (did we achieve our desired results?).

Standard timber sale contract provisions will be used to direct how sale activities are conducted. Other activities performed under contract (such as road work), will be monitored by a contracting officer’s representative to ensure activities are implemented as designed. For example, sale administrators and other contracting representatives will monitor all timber sales to ensure activities are conducted in accordance with contract specifications (e.g., activities occur where and when they should per the project specific design features in Appendix A, which were developed to protect resources such as soils and wildlife; that yarding is accomplished as planned to protect soils; or that seedlings are planted at the appropriate spacing).

Regeneration monitoring (stocking surveys) will also be completed to assess reforestation needs and whether reforestation objectives were accomplished. Reforestation (plantation) survival surveys will be completed following the first and third growing season to determine mortality causes and to estimate seedling survival. Reforestation survival exams, as required by FSM 2472.4, FSM 2496.14, and FSH 2409.14 (Chapter 61.4), will use national sampling methods and standards to promote consistency in reporting seedling survival data.

Adaptive Management: As defined in 36 CFR 220.3, adaptive management is a system of management practices based on clearly identified outcomes, and monitoring to determine if management actions are meeting those outcomes; and, if not, to facilitate management changes that will best ensure that those outcomes are met or re-evaluated. When applying adaptive management to a proposal, the adjustments that may be made when monitoring during project implementation indicates that action is not having the intended effect, or is causing unintended or undesirable effects, must be clearly defined. The EA must disclose not only the effects of the Proposed Action but also the effect of the adjustment identified in the adaptive management strategy (AMS). The AMS must also describe the monitoring that would occur to inform the responsible official during implementation whether the action is having its intended effect [(36 CFR 220.5(e)(2) and §220.7(b)(2)(iv)]. Adaptive management provides an implementation tool that goes beyond the “predict-mitigate-implement” model and incorporates an “implement-monitor-adapt” strategy that provides flexibility to account for inaccurate initial assumptions, adapt to changes in environmental conditions, or to respond to subsequent monitoring information that indicates desired conditions are not being met (FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, section 14.1).

To ensure consistency with Forest Plan direction SCST02 and SCGU02 pertaining to achievement of visual quality objectives (VQOs), viewsheds would be monitored at year 3 and 5 following completion of proposed activities to determine if the objective VQO identified in

\(^8\) Forest Plan monitoring discussed in the South Pioneer Project EA that will be conducted in the Pioneer Fire area is conducted consistent with actions identified in the Forest Plan. They are not monitoring activities specifically tied to this project, and thus are not included as part of this decision.
Forest Plan MA 7 standard 0763, as amended by the 2016 Becker Integrated Resource Project decision, has been attained. If attainment has not been reached, as part of adaptive management, additional rehabilitation measures consistent with Design Features NX-2, FH-7, and FH-8 identified in Appendix A will be implemented. Refer to Appendix A for a more detailed discussion as to the adjustments that may be made when monitoring during project implementation indicates that the action is not having its intended effect. Refer to the EA for a disclosure of the effects of the adjustment that may be implemented as described in Appendix A.

**Addressing New Information and/or Changed Circumstances:** The implementation layout for hazard and dead tree salvage sales is complete, including identification of temporary road locations, salvage unit boundaries, and haul routes. Layout of hazard tree fell and leave units are in progress. The wildlife and botany resources surveys are approximately two-thirds complete at this time (Appendix A, Project Monitoring). When the final resource survey work is complete, hazard and dead tree salvage unit layout may be modified to meet design features identified in Appendix A associated with resource survey work.

If, at any point, surveys discover a site condition not adequately addressed by project design features and environmental analysis for this project, a changed condition analysis would be completed. FSH 1909.15 (Chapter 10, Section 18) provides direction on review and documentation of new information received after a decision has been made. Through this process, the responsible official must consider whether the new information or changed circumstances are within the scope and range of effects considered in the original analysis. If the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to an environmental document is not necessary, implementation should continue. If the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to this environmental assessment is necessary, the IDT would conduct the additional analysis and documentation needed as outlined in FSH 1909.15 (Chapter 10, Section 18.4, “Reconsideration of Decisions Based on Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact”). All changed condition reports and letters would be made available to the public via the project website.

**Rationale for My Decision**

Compared to the No Action Alternative, I believe the selected alternative represents a more balanced approach to achieving the purpose and need for action, responding to the desired conditions in the Forest Plan, and addressing public comments. My decision was based on a thorough review of the EA and supporting documentation, and consideration of how well my selected alternative achieves the purpose and need for the project and addresses the public comments and issues that were raised, compared to the No Action Alternative.

Following is the rationale for my decision to select modified Alternative B and adopt the Project as described above under My Decision. It reflects how I have considered each question in the “What Decisions are to be Made” section of the EA, including how the alternative addresses concerns identified from public comments received during the 30-day notice and comment period.
How well does the alternative meet the purpose and need described in this Environmental Assessment?

Consistent with the goals and objectives identified in the Forest Plan, the purpose and need of the South Pioneer Project is to mitigate hazard trees affecting public health and safety along travel routes and within developed sites; restore portions of the landscape burned by the wildfire by initiating reforestation; reduce watershed impacts resulting from unauthorized routes; and recover forest economic value and benefits through salvage, generating revenues to support the accomplishment of project objectives. My decision meets each aspect of the project purpose and need as follows.

Mitigate the risks of hazard trees resulting from the Pioneer Fire along roads and trails open to public motorized and non-motorized use, and within developed sites.

As the Forest Supervisor of the Boise National Forest, I have a responsibility for the safe operation and management of roads, trails, and recreation infrastructure and must “…to the extent permitted by funding levels, systematically provide for elimination of identified hazards” (FSM 7733.04c and FSM 2330.6a).

My decision will accomplish this need and progress the project area toward Forest Plan desired conditions and contribute to accomplishing Forest Plan goals and objectives related public health and safety, transportation system, and recreation infrastructure management (e.g., trails and trailheads). The following are key Forest Plan goals and objectives:

- **Forest Plan Objective FROB03**: Identify safety hazards on Forest classified roads, establish improvement priorities, correct or mitigate the hazard.
- **Forest Plan Goal REGO02**: Plan and manage the recreation program and recreation resources to meet established standards (i.e., Meaningful Measures) to provide for health and cleanliness, safety and security, facility conditions, responsiveness to customers, environmental setting and permit administration.

Approximately 105.3 miles of open NFS roads and 70.1 miles of open motorized and nonmotorized NFS trails within the project area have been identified as needing hazard tree abatement. In addition, the project area includes 27.6 miles of NFS roads that are groomed and maintained as snowmobile trails. Approximately 7,847 acres along these roads and trails will be treated to remove hazard trees threatening public health and safety.

Mitigating hazard trees along roads and trails is essential for providing safe access to the area for the visiting public as well as Forest Service employees and contractors. The road systems in this area are used by the public for recreational uses throughout the year. Recreational activities include hunting, dispersed camping, horseback riding, hiking, viewing scenery and wildlife, off-highway vehicle (OHV) use, snowmobiling, backcountry skiing, and gathering of special forest and cultural products (e.g., mushrooms and fuelwood). In addition, these road systems are crucial to providing access to Forest Service employees for future land management and fire suppression activities in this area.

Trees posing immediate hazards (failure could occur at any time) along travel routes and around developed sites to remain open during winter 2016/2017 were addressed during fire suppression and through ongoing post-fire actions initiated in fall 2016. These activities, however, did not mitigate concerns related to the trees that will become hazards in the 2017/2018 field seasons, as
they rapidly become weakened from their fire injuries and by winter weather. If these hazard
trees are not removed, many of the roads and trails in the project area will become unsafe for use
by the public and Forest Service employees and contractors in 2017.

As discussed under the No Action Alternative, the Forest’s annual maintenance program would
address hazards along these routes where funding and workforce capacity allow. However,
reliance on the annual maintenance program and the limited funding available, would result in
closures continuing in several areas. Continuing to keep the roads and trails closed for extended
periods of time is not a reasonable option due to the access they provide for Agency management
and access to private inholdings (Figure 2) and the following dispersed and developed
recreational opportunities important to local State and County economic goals:

- Yurt program management with IDPR, including the multiple yurts and associated trail
  systems. Revenues generated from this yurt program helps generate funding for other
  programs provided by IDPR, such as the Park and Ski trail grooming (IDPR 2017)
- Multiple motorized and non-motorized winter and summer trailhead facilities, including
  Whoop-Um-Up, Banner Ridge, Lamar, and Gold Fork
- Edna Creek and Whoop-Um-Up campgrounds
- Beaver Creek Cabin

Implementing my decision will greatly improve public access to the recreational opportunities
identified above by substantially reducing hazardous conditions along roads and trails. With
approval of the Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) by the Chief of the Forest Service,
my decision will be implemented immediately, allowing for mitigation of many of these hazards
(i.e., salvage and fell and leave on site) in the upcoming 2017 field season, before major tree
deterioration occurs with an accompanying increase in safety risks to those felling the trees and
the public.

Reestablish forested conditions to trend the project area towards Forest Plan desired
conditions; in particular, increase the representation of early seral conifer species such as
ponderosa pine.

My decision will accomplish this need and progress the project area toward Forest Plan desired
conditions and contribute to accomplishing Forest Plan goals and objectives related to
reestablishing forest conditions, including increasing the representation of early seral conifer
species such as ponderosa pine. The following are key Forest Plan goals and objectives:

- **Forest Plan Goal, VEGO01**: The diversity plant community components, including species
  composition, size classes, canopy cover, structure, snags, and coarse woody debris fall within
  the desired range of conditions described in Appendix A (USDA Forest Service 2010a) and
  contribute to achievement of Forest Plan multiple-use objectives.
- **Forest Plan Goal, VEGO04**: The diversity, distribution and abundance of vegetative
  conditions across the planning unit support the long term sustainability of native and desired
  non-native wildlife species.
- **Forest Plan, Management Area 7 Objective, 0734**: Maintain or restore know populations
  and habitats of TEPSC plant species, including Idaho douglasia, to contribute to the long-
  term viability of these species.
The Pioneer Fire burned over 190,000 acres; 47% of the total fire area burned at high vegetation burn severity (>75% basal area loss). Within the South Pioneer Project area, 47% burned at high vegetation burn severity.

An assessment of uncharacteristic disturbance for the Pioneer Fire was completed based on historical fire severity patch sizes (USDA Forest Service 2010a). This assessment is useful in determining where vegetation recovery and response is likely to be either delayed or deviate from the desired trajectory for structure, composition, and function identified in Appendix A of the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2010a). For example, the vegetation burn severity in the nonlethal fire regime would typically be very low to moderate with small lethal patches. However, with the Pioneer Fire, large patches burned at high severity, which is uncharacteristic of this fire regime. Based on this assessment, the nonlethal fire regime had the most uncharacteristic burn severity (24,286 acres), followed by the mixed1 fire regime (7,761 acres), and 333 acres of small patches of other fire regimes juxtaposed in between.

Implementation of my decision includes planting early seral seedlings, such as whitebark pine; ponderosa pine; and, in some cases, Douglas-fir. As a result of tree planting within the project area, the future forest composition will include more white pine blister rust-resistant whitebark pine and more early seral conifer species, such as ponderosa pine and/or Douglas-fir. Planting of 294 acres of whitebark pine will promote recovery of high-elevation ecosystems. Furthermore, in large, high-severity burn patches, where limited-to-no seed sources remain, sparse natural regeneration will be enhanced with 12,571 acres of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir planting in locations and patches where they will serve as seed sources for future natural regeneration of the desired species for the fire regime. Planting 37 acres of riparian trees and shrubs will promote establishment of desired species and increase the rate of development of stream shading for aquatic habitat in Upper Crooked River, Middle Crooked River, and Lower Crooked River.

As concluded by the IDT specialists for this project following review of published science related to post-disturbance wildfire responses, by planting seedlings grown from locally collected seed sources, often from trees which exhibited superior phenotypes (physical attributes of resilience and vigor) and in the case of whitebark pine, genetic resistance to white pine blister rust, implementation of my decision will help “…facilitate ecosystem recovery…” as Beschta et al. (2004) recommends, and would help restore “lost or damaged parts of the ecosystems…” as Karr et al. (2004) recommends. In addition, by planting ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir where seed sources are inadequate to serve as natural sources, the project would meet the intent of Beschta et al. (2004) when the authors state, “in other instances, planting of conifers may be needed where seed sources of native species have been lost…”. (EA Chapter 3, “Forested Vegetation” section).

Improve watershed conditions by decommissioning unauthorized roads currently degrading watershed conditions that fall within the project area.

My decision will accomplish this need and progress the project area toward Forest Plan desired conditions and contribute to accomplishing Forest Plan goals and objectives related improving/restoring watershed conditions, soil productivity and fish habitat. The following are key Forest Plan goals and objectives:

- **Forest Plan Objective, SW0818**: Reduce road-related effects on soil productivity, water quality, and aquatic/riparian species and their habitats. Refer to the Watershed and Aquatic
Restoration Strategy (WARS) for mid-scale prioritization indicators to assist in fine and site/project scale restoration prioritization planning.

- **Forest Plan, Management Area 7 Objective, 0726**: Restore fish habitat by reducing sediment delivery and repairing instream structures, with emphasis on Pikes Fork, Beaver Creek and Edna Creek.

- **Forest Plan, Management Area 7 Objective, 0727**: Initiate restoration of watershed conditions and fish habitat in the Pikes Fork and Upper Bear River sub-watersheds to help strengthen local bull trout populations.

- **Forest Plan, Management Area 7 Objective, 0728**: Continue to design and implement road-related watershed restoration projects in the North Fork Boise River Recovery Area.

Decommissioning will occur on approximately 4.4 miles of unauthorized roads within the project area, with 3.4 miles of these roads to be used as temporary roads to facilitate project activities prior to decommissioning. The unauthorized road stabilization activities are expected to reduce sediment delivery to streams and/or decrease the magnitude of post-fire storm damage that may occur within the first year (EA, Chapter 3, “Hydrology Resources” section), as well as improve riparian habitat conditions. Decommissioning these authorized roads will also reduce total soil resource commitments and return these acres back to production (EA, Chapter 3, “Soils Resource” section). Decommissioning these unauthorized roads will also improve wildlife habitat by reducing habitat fragmentation.

Recover the economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to public health and safety, resource protection, and restoration identified in Needs 1 through 3 above.

My decision will accomplish this need. The following are key Forest Plan goals:

- **Forest Plan Goal, SEGO02**: Promote cooperation among stakeholders by involving them in planning, implementation, and monitoring Forest land management activities to better understand the trade-offs needed to make informed decisions.

- **Forest Plan Goal, SEGO03**: Develop sustainable land uses and management strategies that contribute to economic development goals.

As discussed with stakeholders throughout the planning process, timing of hazard tree removal and salvage harvest is critical in achieving this purpose and need. Selling the material as soon as possible best ensures product viability and bid values that can help fund hazard tree fell and leave onsite treatments, reforestation, and other restoration work important to supporting sustainable land uses. The most reliable, cost effective, and environmentally favorable months to harvest timber and perform associated road work in the project area are June through October. The spring and fall months on the Forest tend to be very wet and not conducive to reliable harvest operations. Winter logging is feasible in late December/early January if the ground is frozen or covered with snow, which can be uncertain and varies from year to year.
The combination of my decision and approval of the ESD\(^9\) by the Chief on May 31, 2017, will allow immediate implementation to occur and thus:

- Avoid an estimated loss of commodity value of 30% or more, due to a decrease in timber volume and a substantial decrease in timber value (nearly $1,700,000 potential loss);
- Reduce the chances of a no-bid sale if the sale is not offered until December 2017;
- Allow for timber volumes to be salvaged during the summer of 2017 with greater commodity value recovery of the salvageable wood products important to accomplishing project objectives for hazard tree removal; habitat and watershed improvement; and forest restoration, including reforestation; and
- Result in an estimated revenue of $3,790,741 to the Forest available to address removal of hazard trees through fell and leave onsite across 2,746 acres adjacent to open roads and trails, reforestation, and other restoration.

Addressing hazard trees as quickly as possible in 2017 and 2018 will allow access important to Agency management and private inholdings and to support dispersed and developed recreational opportunities to resume sooner and with a greater level of consistency over time than would occur under no action. Providing consistent access and initiating restoration activities through reforestation activities addressed key interests to stakeholders actively involved in the planning of this project that support sustainable land uses and management strategies that will contribute to economic development goals.

**How well does the alternative address the comments received from interested parties?**

As discussed in detail under the “Summary of Public Involvement” section below, extensive public involvement efforts were used to develop the Proposed Action. These efforts included meetings and phone calls with a local collaborative group, the Boise Forest Coalition; tribal and timber industry representatives; County commissioners; State agencies (Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department Fish and Game, and Idaho Department of Lands); and other interested stakeholders from October 2016 through January 2017. District Rangers from the Idaho City and Lowman Ranger Districts hosted field trips with interested stakeholders in October and November 2016.

This extensive public involvement effort continued through winter and spring 2017, with a focus on ensuring we clearly understood the varied interests and concerns with actions being proposed so that we could address them through this assessment process. Agency representatives have participated in meetings as requested by commenters to discuss their comments, including how the Agency intends to respond to those comments (e.g., updates to the EA to clarify actions proposed, effects conclusions). Similar to what was done in response to scoping comments, a

\(^9\) The ESD is posted on the project website under the “Supporting” tab: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694)
comment response document to comments received during the 30-day notice and comment period on the EA was prepared and is included as part of this decision (Appendix B)\(^{10}\).

Comments received throughout the planning process reflected the varied opinions of the effects of salvage logging and active restoration within wildfire areas (refer to scoping comments and responses and EA comments and responses [Appendix B] posted on the project website). A key focus of comments pertained to salvage logging. Comments identified that salvage logging is one aspect of post-fire management that may be used to address worker and public safety issues, risks along roads, and risks to infrastructure such as buildings and recreational facilities. Salvage logging may also be appropriate to recover economic value and support community resiliency. The ecological consequences of salvage, however, are often considered negative from the perspective to soils, hydrology, and wildlife habitat resources, although wildlife species responses vary.

To better understand tradeoffs so that we could address the varied comments received in this assessment process, I and my IDT reviewed the science surrounding the salvage logging and active fire restoration debates the Forest had gathered, as well as peer reviewed science papers identified by commenters. An important synopsis document of the available science surrounding these debates was completed in 2015 by scientists from Oregon State University and the Pacific Northwest Research Station. These efforts resulted in a literature review concerning the *Ecological Effects of Post-fire Salvage Logging in the Pacific Northwest* (Reilly et al. 2015)\(^{11}\).

Information gathered during this IDT resulted in the development of the screening process identified in Chapter 1 of the EA that the Agency used to determine locations to remove hazard and dead trees within the Pioneer Fire area to address treatment priorities 1 (hazard tree removal) and 2 (salvage of other dead trees) within the South Pioneer Project area. As disclosed in Chapter 3 by each resource area, this screening process in combination with the design features identified in Appendix A of this decision resulted in direct, indirect, and cumulative effects from implementing my decision that would not result in significant effects (refer to FONSI). For example, following are conclusions in Chapter 3 of the EA for soils, hydrology, and wildlife habitat resources identified in science reviews above as key resource areas of concern:

- Compared to no action, disclosures in Chapter 3 identify that some aspects of restoration to the soil resource would be delayed in the temporary to short term where salvage logging occurred. However, within 5–10 years, restoration efforts related to the effects to the soil resource (e.g., detrimental soil disturbance) would be consistent with the outcome of no action (see EA, Chapter 3, “Soils Resource” section).
- Conclusions in the EA concerning the hydrology resource determined that implementing my decision would maintain the temperature, sediment, water yield, chemical contaminants, and road density watershed condition indicators. While some temporary and/or short-term effects are possible, they would not measurably degrade water quality conditions because they are

\(^{10}\) Appendix B of this decision document, Response to Public Comments received during the EA 30-day notice and comment period is posted on the Project website, “Decision” tab: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694)

\(^{11}\) Science documents published after this review in 2016 and 2017 gathered by Agency personnel and identified by stakeholders through their comments on the EA released in April 2017, provided similar information consistent with findings in this 2015 review.
anticipated to be immeasurable and/or negligible within the analysis area. In addition, short and long-term beneficial effects are expected to provide to water quality by reducing the effects associated with unauthorized roads (Need 3) and enhancing riparian functionality through riparian plantings (Need 2).

- Conclusions in the EA concerning wildlife resources, consistent with that found in science reviews, were variable. For example, white-headed woodpecker habitat within the project area was largely impacted by the wildfire, therefore it was concluded that, "Under both alternatives [no action and proposed action] the likelihood of persistence of white-headed woodpecker in the project area is low in the temporary and short-term timeframes. Source habitat is not abundant and occurs as highly fragmented stands that are unlikely to provide for a single home range for a breeding pair. Under the Proposed Action, breeding white-headed woodpeckers may be impacted, though risks of affecting reproductive success have been reduced by the inclusion of Design Feature WL-1. The primary difference between the two alternatives is that under the Proposed Action, recovery of source habitat capacity would begin sooner due to reforestation, however benefits would not be realized for decades or well into the long-term.”

Conversely, for a species whose habitat is related to disturbance, such as black-backed woodpecker habitat, the disclosures in the EA concluded, “For the black-backed woodpecker, the Proposed Action would reduce source habitat from 20,548 acres to 17,877 acres within the South Pioneer Project area in the temporary timeframe. The effects of salvage harvest and hazard tree treatments on habitat abundance extends into the short-term timeframe. By the end of the short-term, source habitat abundance would be the same under both alternatives [No Action and the Proposed Action] due to the ephemeral nature of habitat provided by severely burned forests. Enough source habitat remains within the Project area that black-backed woodpecker numbers are expected to increase in the next few years as the woodpeckers colonize the burned areas to take advantage of abundant food resources, with subsequent declines in concert with declining bark- and wood-boring beetle populations as the burn ages, similar to the No Action Alternative. The temporary and short-term loss of source habitat under the Proposed Action would not change the overall trend for population (rapid increase, followed by a decline or source habitat (decline) for this species.”

Chapter 3 of the EA provides clear disclosures of effects to the various biological and physical resources that would be affected by implementing my decision, none of which identify significant environmental effects (refer to FONSI below). Thus, in considering the tradeoffs between the insignificant ecological effects of implementing my decision with those interests identified in comments to use salvage logging to remove hazard trees needed to address worker and public safety issues, I concluded my decision would balance the varied interest and needs provided by stakeholders involved with this assessment process.

In light of the insignificant ecological effects that will result from implementing my decision to salvage hazard and dead trees to recover economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives identified in Needs 1, 2, and 3 (see FONSI for more detail), I believe my decision does balance the varied interests expressed by the stakeholders involved with this assessment process.
Does the alternative mitigate potential adverse effects identified in the analysis as needed to support a finding of no significant impacts?

The IDT did not identify any significant adverse effects associated with implementing my decision as documented in Chapter 3 of the EA. The specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects fall within standards set forth by the Forest Plan and are consistent with applicable environmental laws (see “Findings Required by Laws and Regulations” section below). The analyses documented in the EA and record documents support a FONSI as detailed below in the “Finding of No Significant Impact” section.

Emergency Situation Determination

An ESD was requested for this project to facilitate immediate implementation of the proposed activities during the 2017 field season. Approval of an ESD allows a project to proceed without first going through the pre-decisional objection period (36 CFR 218).

An emergency situation is defined at 36 CFR 218.21(b) as follows.

A situation on National Forest System (NFS) lands for which immediate implementation of a decision is necessary to achieve one or more of the following:

1. Relief from hazards threatening human health and safety
2. Mitigation of threats to natural resources on NFS or adjacent lands
3. Avoiding a loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to resource protection or restoration.

As identified in the Forest and Regional ESD request to the Chief, without an ESD, the earliest the Forest would be able to award sales would be December 2017, which substantially shortens the 2017 operating season. A shortened operating season would mean the burned trees would continue to deteriorate, which could jeopardize the Forest Service’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to recovery of commodity value that will contribute to reducing hazards to public and worker health and safety and mitigate threats to NFS lands and project actions that would protect and restore resources in the post-fire environment.

Approval of the ESD for the South Pioneer Project would accomplish the following:

- Avoid an estimated loss of commodity value of 30% or more, due to a decrease in timber volume and a substantial decrease in timber value (nearly $1,700,000 potential loss)
- Reduce the chances of a no-bid sale if the sale is not offered until December 2017
- Allow for timber volumes to be salvaged during summer 2017 with greater commodity value recovery of the salvageable wood products important to accomplishing project objectives for hazard tree removal; habitat and watershed improvement; and forest restoration, including reforestation
- Result in an estimated revenue of $3,790,741 to the Forest available to address removal of hazard trees through fell and leave onsite across 2,746 acres adjacent to open roads and trails, reforestation, and other restoration.
The Chief of the Forest Service approved the request for an ESD on May 31, 2017. As per Forest Service Regulations (36 CFR 218.21(a)), only the Chief and Associate Chief of the Forest Service may grant an ESD. In the Chief’s approval documentation, he agreed with the Forest and Regional conclusion that, “Timing of hazard tree removal and salvage harvest is critical in achieving the purpose and need for this project. Selling the material as soon as possible best ensures product viability and bid values that can help fund reforestation and other restoration work. The most reliable, cost effective and environmentally favorable months to harvest timber and perform associated road work in the project area are June through October. The spring and fall months on the Boise NF tend to be very wet and not conducive to reliable harvest operations. Winter logging is feasible late December/early January if the ground is frozen or covered with snow, which can be uncertain, varying from year to year.”

To further expedite initiation of operations as early as possible in the 2017 operating season, the Chief also approved the Forest and Regional request in the ESD to allow timber sale and stewardship contracts to be advertised prior to issuing the NEPA project decision. Allowing this early advertisement will allow the Forest to start awarding timber sale and stewardship contracts in July, immediately following issuance of the NEPA project decision.

I recognize that approval of the ESD for this project changed the standard public involvement process for the project by allowing it to be implemented without first going through the 36 CFR 218 pre-decisional objection process. While many stakeholders were supportive of the need for an ESD for the reasons described above, some were concerned about how public opportunities for review and input would occur as needed to inform the analysis and my decision. To address concerns raised, I purposely implemented an extensive public involvement process that started last fall when we were developing the Proposed Action. This public involvement process is summarized in the next section, including my plans to continue this process through the implementation phase of this project.

Summary of Public Involvement

Public and Other Federal, State, County, and Tribal Government Involvement

Extensive public involvement efforts were used to develop the Proposed Action (refer to Appendix C). These efforts included meetings and phone calls with a local collaborative group (Boise Forest Coalition); tribal and timber industry representatives; County commissioners; and State agencies (Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Idaho Department Fish and Game, and Idaho Department of Lands) from October 2016 through May 2017. District Rangers from the Idaho City and Lowman Ranger Districts hosted field trips with interested stakeholders in October and November 2016. The intent of the Forest to request an ESD was discussed during these field trips, and participants expressed strong support for the ESD request, citing concerns that delays in implementing the project would greatly reduce the merchantability of the burned timber and reduce the possibility to successfully address hazard trees and recover economic value of work products to help support future reforestation and restoration work.

During the analysis process for EA preparation, Agency representatives met informally with interested parties to discuss the project when requested. We received initial comments from the
Boise Forest Coalition in October 2016 with thoughts on how to address needs associated with the Pioneer Fire. The District Ranger and project team leader met with the Boise Forest Coalition to discuss this project in December 2016, January 2017, and February 2017. The District Ranger, project team leader, and other resource specialists have continued discussions with the collaborative group throughout the planning process. Forest staff presented information and participated in a panel discussion covering the Pioneer Fire and proposed activities at the Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership in March 2017; this panel included a diverse range of stakeholders and collaborative groups from across the state. Forest staff provided a similar panel discussion and presentation at the Idaho Environmental Forum later in the month, further broadening the dispersal of information and feedback from interested public.

The South Pioneer Project proposal was first described in the January 2017 edition of the Forest’s quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA). The SOPA is available on the Forest public website. A legal notice for the 30-day scoping comment period was published in the Forest paper of record, the Idaho Statesman, on January 28, 2017.

The Forest Service formally notified the public of the ESD request in both the scoping letter to the public and associated legal notice and public meetings. The scoping letter was mailed to approximately 197 interested individuals and groups, including State and local government agencies, elected officials, environmental advocacy groups, adjacent property owners, recreational groups, and the general public. Additionally, a scoping bulletin was emailed to 695 project subscribers. The packet was also provided to the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of Duck Valley, Shoshone Bannock Tribes of Fort Hall, and Nez Perce Tribe. Project information and documents were also posted on the project website.

We received 23 written comments from individuals, organizations, County government, State agencies, and industry. Comments received during scoping and responses to the comments are posted on the project website. The Proposed Action was updated, including adding design features responsive to comments received. Three additional alternatives were also considered, but not carried into detailed study.

The EA was released for a 30-day notice and comment the week of April 25, with a legal notice starting the comment period published on April 27. The EA was mailed to 20 individuals, agencies, and groups, and Gov-delivery email notifications were delivered to 697 interested parties who chose to receive and download electronic documents. The 30-day comment period ended May 30. In response to these efforts, 48 interested parties provided written comments on a variety of interests and concerns. As was done with scoping comments, all comments received were fully reviewed and responded to. Agency representatives participated in meetings as requested by commenters to discuss their comments, including how the Agency intended to respond to those comments (e.g., updates to the EA to clarify actions proposed, relationship to the Forest Plan, effects conclusions). Similar to what was done in response to scoping

12 https://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/forest-level.php?110402
13 https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694
14 https://cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public//ReadingRoom?Project=50694
documents, a comment response document was prepared and is included as part of this decision document (Appendix B, posted on the project website\textsuperscript{15}).

On June 7, 2017, the Forest notified interested stakeholders that the Chief of the Forest Service had approved the ESD request for the South Pioneer Project. As was discussed with stakeholders throughout the planning process and described in Chapter 1 of this EA, approval of the ESD allows the Forest to implement the project immediately following issuance of the NEPA decision for this project, expediting the public health and safety work and avoiding loss of commodity value that would jeopardize accomplishing project objectives.

Comments received both formally and informally throughout the assessment period were key to informing my decision. In many cases, concerns were addressed in updates to the analysis and disclosure of effects in Chapter 3 or in the project record in the response to comments. I and my staff have also discussed our plans to continue offering opportunities to keep people informed throughout the implementation phase, including field tours this summer and fall, with many of the stakeholders who have been actively involved with the planning of this project.

Contact, review, and involvement with other federal and State agencies indicates no major conflicts between the activities to be implemented under my decision and the goals and objectives of other federal, State, or local governmental entities. Chapter 4 of the EA summarizes the involvement that has occurred with other federal and State agencies and local governments.

### Alternative Development

Issues identified in Chapter 2 of the EA and other concerns raised were used to generate a preliminary set of alternatives, which were divided into “alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail” and “alternatives analyzed in detail.” Both sets of alternatives are included in the reasonable range of alternatives I considered.

### Alternatives Not Considered in Detail

Three alternatives are identified in Chapter 2 of the EA that I considered and eliminated from detailed study. Chapter 2 of the EA provides a detailed summary of these alternatives and discussions as to why they were not considered in detail. Below is a brief summary of what the three alternatives are and why they were eliminated.

**Alternative 1**

Alternative 1 proposed to leave no snags in areas salvaged or, in areas where snags must be left, to not leave the high valued trees as snags (e.g., Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine), but instead leave the lower valued species (e.g., Englemann spruce”). This alternative was considered but eliminated from detailed study for the following reasons.

Retention of snags and coarse wood at levels identified in Forest Plan standards would help retain structure within the salvage units for snag- and cavity-dependent wildlife species on a site, address soil productivity objectives, and support riparian function and process objectives in RCAs where treatments are proposed. Therefore, to meet these important ecological needs and to

\textsuperscript{15} \url{https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694}
be consistent with the Forest Plan, the alternative to leave no snags, or not leave high valued
trees as snags, was eliminated from detailed analysis.

**Alternative 2**

Alternative 2 proposed to expand treatments into adjacent manageable areas that are, and will be,
affected. This alternative was considered but eliminated from detailed study for the following
reasons.

A primary consideration as to the scope and scale of what was included as part of the proposed
action was to ensure areas selected for salvage fell within the sideboards of the ESD factors
above, fell within the ecological considerations used in the salvage location screening process
identified in Chapter 1, and did not exceed the Agency’s workforce capacity to complete the
NEPA process and field implementation work so implementation could begin in early summer
2017. A delay in implementation caused by expanding into areas not directly affected by the
wildfire, and thus precluding approval of an ESD, could result in up to a 45% loss in product
value based on the timber sale feasibility analysis conducted for the project (refer to project
record). Thus, based on these considerations, the Agency believes the Proposed Action reflects
the scope and scale of what could be practicably accomplished, and the alternative to expand
treatments into adjacent manageable areas was eliminated from detailed analysis.

**Alternative 3**

Alternative 3 proposed to maximize the economic value recovered through salvage. This
alternative was considered but eliminated from detailed study for the following reasons.

This alternative was eliminated from detailed analysis because with approval of an ESD, the
recovered value of the timber would be maximized within the framework of ecological,
economic, and workforce capacity considerations pertaining to meeting timelines for
implementing the Proposed Action, allowing the agency to accomplish project objectives directly
related to resource protection and restoration included as part of the project purpose and need.

**Alternatives Analyzed in Detail**

Other than the issues identified above that generated the alternatives considered but not analyzed
in detail, no other major issues/conflicts to the Proposed Action were identified that were not
resolved through updates to the Proposed Action, including the addition of design features. Thus,
no additional alternatives were developed to be analyzed in detail, other than the No Action
Alternative. As described above, the No Action Alternative addresses those comments that
salvage logging should not occur. Refer to comment response and analysis documentation in the
project record and summaries posted on the project website.

**Alternative A—No Action**

The No Action Alternative would not preclude activities already approved in this area or activities
planned as separate projects. A list of ongoing and foreseeable future actions is described in
Appendix B of the South Pioneer Project EA.

Under the No Action Alternative, none of the salvage operations and associated temporary road
construction and use, reforestation, or decommissioning of unauthorized roads would occur. Without
the salvage operations, the economic value of forest products would not be recovered to support
hazard tree removal and subsequent restoration, reforestation, and other recovery actions within the project area. Thus, the Agency would be dependent on annual funding appropriations to accomplish these tasks. In addition, without salvage operations, there would be limited contribution to employment and income in local communities.

As time passes, the number of hazard trees is anticipated to increase as more trees killed by the fire begin to fall apart or fall over. The majority of hazard trees will likely fall between 3 and 9 years following the fire. Without removing hazard trees, the No Action Alternative will result in a higher risk to public and worker health and safety along travel routes and within and around developed sites and administrative sites.

Thus, under the No Action Alternative, hazard tree assessments would be completed annually, as budgets allow, prior to opening sites, trails, and roads in order to meet Forest Service handbook direction and policy to address hazard trees around Forest Service developed sites and along NFS roads and trails to remain open to public use (FSH 7709.59, section 41.7(2)(b); FSM2330.6(a)). Hazard trees posing an imminent threat to human safety or infrastructure along open roads, trailheads, and developed sites would be felled using existing management direction, contingent on annual funding availability. This approach may mean that areas within the fire perimeter where funding levels would not allow hazard trees to be addressed within a current season would remain closed to the public and Agency personnel for extended periods of time until the hazard to public health and safety and/or infrastructure could be addressed.

Areas within the project area that experienced moderate-to-high burn severity are likely to develop large brush fields dominated by dense shrubs for several decades as reforestation efforts are delayed due to unsafe working conditions. This impact would result primarily from reduced access to reforestation areas due to road/trail closures where hazard trees could not be addressed within annual funding levels, as well as employee safety concerns within reforestation areas with abundant hazard trees.

I did not select this alternative because, as discussed above, it did not meet the purpose and need for this project. Not implementing hazard and dead tree salvage would result in a loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives to address hazard trees (Need 1) and reforest areas within the project area (Need 2) and would not decommission unstable unauthorized roads currently degrading affected watersheds (Need 3). In addition, not recovering the economic value of forest products in a timely manner would also impact employment and income opportunities for local communities that are already experiencing impacts from the effects of the Pioneer Fire on recreation and other multiple resource uses.

Alternative B—Proposed Action

I selected Alternative B as described in the EA, with modifications as identified under the “My Decision” section above. Refer to the “Rationale for My Decision” section above for greater detail as to why I selected modified Alternative B.
**Additional alternatives suggested in comments received during the EA 30-day notice and comment period that were not identified in scoping comments**

In addition to the two alternatives evaluated in detail and the three alternatives considered but not analyzed in detail described in Chapter 2 of the EA, five additional alternatives were suggested by two stakeholders in comments during the 30-day notice and comment period. These alternatives were not identified or requested during the scoping period for this project and for the reasons documented below, following review with the IDT, I have determined that these five additional alternatives will not be carried into detailed study in the EA.

The following two comments were received during the EA 30-day notice and comment period that identified or requested consideration of five additional alternatives:

- “In its rush to complete the perfunctory public involvement it conducts, the FS neglects to consider alternative actions. This includes: closing some or all of the roads and developed sites where the “hazards” exist; concentrating logging on only the identified “hazard” sites; conducting only tree felling in those “hazard” sites; and, one that conducts necessary reforestation only (which the EAs say must be completed—but under separate NEPA if no action alternative is implemented). Such actions may well have alleviated the so-called hazards much more efficiently.” (Comment letter received from Jeff Juel, on behalf of himself, Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR), Wildlands Defense, Native Ecosystems Council and Idaho Sporting Congress on May 17, 2017.)

- “You have failed to address an alternative that would only remove hazards in area that provide the minimum access to mining, permits and yurts while leaving the maximum area closed for natural recovery.” (Comment letter received from Kathleen S. Roche on May 15, 2017.)

The alternatives suggested in these two comment letters did not specifically identify any unresolved conflicts with the Proposed Action (my selected alternative) that would be resolved by the alternatives suggested. Thus, in my consideration of these alternatives discussed below, my assumption is the primary interest is reducing the negative effects to resources that may result from salvage logging as generally described by these commenters elsewhere in their respective letters. As a result, in determining the disposition of these alternatives, I assumed the five suggested alternatives below are believed to reduce effects disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA for the selected alternative to something within the range of effects falling between that disclosed for the selected alternative and the No Action Alternative.

**Alternative 1:** Closing some or all of the roads and developed sites where the “hazards” exist.

The resulting effect of this alternative would be very similar to that described for the No Action Alternative. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need identified for this project, nor would it balance the varied interests expressed by stakeholders who have been actively involved with this assessment process since fall 2016.

From a process standpoint, this alternative would result in effects that fall within the range of those disclosed for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action (the selected alternative). Thus, for the reasons stated above, I have considered this alternative but will not carry it into detailed analysis.
**Alternative 2:** Concentrating logging on only the identified “hazard” sites.

While this alternative would address Purpose and Need 1 and partly meet Need 4, it would not address Purpose and Need 2 and 3. As disclosed in the EA, the effects conclusions to the biological and physical resource ecological considerations disclosed in Chapter 3 of implementing my decision are not significant. A key purpose and need for this project is to recover the economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to public health and safety, resource protection, and restoration identified in Needs 1 through 3. While this alternative would accomplish this in part by salvaging hazard trees, as the economic analysis supporting documentation in the record demonstrates, value recovered from the salvage of hazard trees only would not be sufficient to cover the cost of fell and leave hazard tree treatments (Need 1), reforestation objectives (Need 2), and watershed stabilization work (Need 3).

I do not believe this alternative would be responsive to, nor balance, the varied interests expressed by the stakeholders involved with this assessment process identified earlier under my decision rationale. Thus, for the reasons stated above, I have considered this alternative but will not carry it into detailed analysis.

From a process standpoint, this alternative would result in effects that fall within the range of those disclosed for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action (the selected alternative). Thus, for the reasons stated above, I have considered this alternative but will not carry it into detailed analysis.

**Alternative 3:** Conducting only tree felling in those “hazard” sites.

This alternative would only address Purpose and Need 1. However, by not salvaging hazard and other dead trees, a key purpose and need for this project to recover the economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to public health and safety, resource protection, and restoration identified in Needs 1 through 3 would not be realized. While this alternative would appear to accomplish Purpose and Need 1 by felling and leaving hazard trees, the reality is that without the value recovered from the salvage of hazard trees and other dead trees, the ability to fully accomplish Purpose and Need 1 would be similar to that described under the No Action Alternative.

As described for the No Action Alternative, absent the removal of hazard trees through salvage as identified in the selected alternative, hazard tree assessments would be completed annually prior to opening sites, trails, and roads in order to meet Forest Service handbook direction and policy to address hazard trees around Forest Service developed sites and along NFS roads and trails to remain open to public use (FSH 7709.59, section 41.7(2)(b); FSM2330.6(a)). Hazard trees posing an imminent threat to human safety or infrastructure along open roads, trailheads, and developed sites would be felled using existing management direction, contingent on annual funding availability. This approach may mean that areas within the fire perimeter where funding levels would not allow hazard trees to be addressed within a current season would remain closed to the public and Agency personnel for extended periods of time until the hazard to public health and safety and/or infrastructure could be addressed.

I do not believe this alternative is responsive to, nor balances, the varied interests expressed by the stakeholders involved with this assessment process identified earlier under my decision.
rationale, particularly where no significant effects to resources have been identified from implementing my selected alternative.

From a process standpoint, this alternative would result in effects that fall within the range of those disclosed for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action (the selected alternative). Thus, for the reasons stated above, I have considered this alternative but will not carry it into detailed analysis.

**Alternative 4:** Conduct the necessary reforestation only.

This alternative would only address Purpose and Need 2. It would not address the primary priority of this project which is to immediately address the public health and safety issues resulting from the abundance of hazard trees along roads and trials that would otherwise be open to public use, as well as not address other factors important for restoration needs within this area, including decommissioning unstable unauthorized routes.

In addition, in light of the resulting insignificant effects conclusions to the biological and physical resource ecological considerations documented in the EA, salvaging additional dead trees within the context of my decision to recover the economic value of forest products in a timely manner to avoid loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency’s ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to public health and safety, resource protection, and restoration identified in Needs 1 through 3 would not be accomplished under this proposed alternative. As discussed above, I do not believe this would be responsive to, nor balance, the varied interests expressed by the stakeholders involved with this assessment process.

From a process standpoint, this alternative would result in effects that fall within the range of those disclosed for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action (the selected alternative). Thus, for the reasons stated above, I have considered this alternative but will not carry it into detailed analysis.

**Alternative 5:** Only remove hazards in area that provide the minimum access to mining, permits and yurts while leaving the maximum area closed for natural recovery.

Similar to Alternatives 1 and 3 suggested above, the resulting effect of this alternative would be similar to that described for the No Action Alternative. This alternative would not meet the purpose and needs identified for this project, nor would it balance the varied interests expressed by stakeholders actively involved with this assessment process since fall 2016.

From a process standpoint, this alternative would result in effects that fall within the range of those disclosed for the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action (the selected alternative). Thus, for the reasons stated above, I have considered this alternative but will not carry it into detailed analysis.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

I have reviewed the CEQ Regulations for significance (40 CFR 1508.27) and have determined this decision is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment, either individually or cumulatively. Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to Section 102 (2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 is not required. This determination is based on the following context and intensity factors as outlined in 40 CFR 1508.27(a) and (b), respectively.
Context

The selected alternative will be limited in geographic application [40 CFR 1508.27(a)].

The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts, such as society as a whole (human, national); the affected region; the affected interests; and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the Proposed Action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant (40 CFR 1508.27).

The Pioneer Fire began on July 18, 2016, when hot temperatures, strong winds, and dry conditions exacerbated by a lack of late-summer monsoonal moisture fueled the fire’s growth to more than 64,000 acres by August 9, 2016, and over 190,000 acres by September 15, 2016. The fire affected 27 drainages within the Idaho City, Lowman, and Emmett Ranger Districts on the Forest. The South Pioneer Project is located approximately 18 miles northeast of Idaho City, Idaho, and 48 miles northeast of Boise, Idaho, in Boise County. The project area covers approximately 39,100 acres in the Boise River watershed.

The Pioneer Fire burned with varying vegetative burn severity, leaving a mosaic of burn patterns on the landscape, ranging from unburned islands to areas where tree crowns were completely consumed. Of the 194,900 acres within the fire perimeter, approximately 47% of the fire area burned at severities resulting in 75% or greater basal area loss. Within the South Pioneer Project area, nearly 47% of the area burned at severities resulting in 75% or greater basal area loss.

Hazard and dead trees will be treated on approximately 7,847 acres within the 39,100-acre South Pioneer Project area; 2,746 acres will be fell and leave hazard trees onsite, 5,101 acres will be hazard and dead tree salvage, and 3,971 acres will be salvage of other dead trees to generate revenues to, in part, fund the fell and leave hazard trees onsite treatments. Thus, of the 11,818 acres to be treated, salvage harvest to address hazard trees and recover economic value would occur on approximately 9,072 acres using ground-based and cable logging systems under my decision. This represents 4.7% of the total 194,900 acres within the Pioneer Fire area.

Other hazard tree salvage treatments completed in the Pioneer Fire area during fall 2016 included the Beaver Creek North Roadside Hazard Tree Salvage Sale (266 acres); Beaver Creek South Roadside Hazard Tree Salvage Sale (119 acres); Coulter Roadside Hazard Tree Salvage Sale (37 acres); and Pines Flat Developed Campground Hazard Tree Salvage Sale (60 acres). Additional hazard and dead tree salvage treatments are proposed in the North Pioneer Project area on 5,681 acres. Thus, the total acres of hazard and dead tree salvage that have occurred, are ongoing, or are proposed within the Pioneer Fire area is 15,235 acres or 7.8% of the total 194,900 acres affected by the 2016 Pioneer fire.

As discussed in more detail below for the intensity factors of significance, the context of this proposal is largely limited to the locale of the project area. Even in a local context, this proposal will not pose significant short- or long-term effects. The proposal’s relatively small scale limits its effects on the natural resource values and uses, including when considered in context of the other past, ongoing, and proposed projects identified above within the 194,900-acre Pioneer Fire area. The analysis of potential environmental impacts related to project activities disclosed in the supporting EA demonstrates that no aspect of the proposal will result in any significant impacts.

The proposal is a site-specific action that does not have international, national, regional, or statewide importance. The physical and biological effects of the selected actions were analyzed.
at appropriate scales, such as within the project area, adjacent to the project area, or across a larger landscape that considered other past, ongoing, and proposed activities, such as South Pioneer Project activities, where applicable. The analysis area may differ for different resource areas and rationale for the selection of each of the analysis areas is provided in individual specialist reports, including whether other past, ongoing, or proposed actions discussed above were applicable for consideration in their specific analyses. The analyses summarized within the South Pioneer Project EA and supported by resource technical reports (located in the project record and posted on the project website during the EA comment period) focus on relevant aspects of my selected alternative that have a potential for adverse effects.

Intensity

Intensity refers to the severity of the expected project impacts. I have thoroughly reviewed the environmental effects disclosed in the South Pioneer Project EA and the beneficial effects to public health and safety resulting from implementing my selected alternative do not bias my finding of no significant environmental effects described below. I have also considered any adverse effects to each resource area as per 40 CFR 1508.27, which states that impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the federal agency believes the effect will be beneficial.

My finding of no significant impact is based on the context of the project discussed above and intensity of effects using the 10 following factors identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b).

1. **My decision will not result in any significant beneficial or adverse effects** [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)].

Adverse and beneficial impacts have been disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA. The analyses documented in the EA and supporting project record considered not only the direct and indirect effects of the project, but also its contribution to cumulative effects. Past, present, and foreseeable actions have been included in the analyses. Adverse effects from the selected alternative have been minimized or eliminated through project design features (Appendix A). For this project, there are no known long-term adverse effects or cumulative effects to resources, including soils, wildlife, water quality, fisheries, recreation, or heritage resources, disclosed in Chapter 3 of the EA. I therefore conclude that the specific direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of my selected alternative, modified Alternative B, are not significant, and this action does not rely on beneficial effects to override any adverse environmental effects.

2. **The selected alternative will not result in substantive effects on public health or safety** [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)].

I find that this project will provide a long-term beneficial effect to public health and safety by improving public, administrative, and operational safety along NFS roads. Hazard trees will be treated along 105.3 miles of open NFS roads and 70.1 miles of open motorized and nonmotorized NFS trails, 27.6 miles of NFS roads that are groomed and maintained as snowmobile trails, within and/or adjacent to developed campgrounds, multiple trailheads within the area, yurts and their associated trail systems, and the Beaver Creek Cabin. Removal of hazard trees along roads, trails, and recreational facilities identified above is essential for providing safe access to the area for the visiting public as well as Forest Service employees and contractors.
Approval of the ESD by the Chief of the Forest Service allows for treating many of these hazards in the upcoming 2017 field season, before major tree deterioration occurs with its accompanying increase in safety risks to those felling the trees and to the public if they are not mitigated. Treating these hazard trees will allow the fire closure in the areas to be lifted in 2017 and 2018. More information is available in the decision rationale section.

Also, salvage harvesting will mitigate the safety hazards posed by the large numbers of standing dead trees. These dead trees can fall at any time, posing a continued threat to people working or recreating in the forest within this high use recreation area. While not all dead trees will be salvaged within the salvage units and project area, safety hazards to recreationist and work crews will be substantially reduced by salvage tree removal.

For air quality, the analysis shows that effects of the selected alternative to air quality are anticipated to be limited, as only a minor amount of burning will occur specific to landing piles and some hand piles near values at risk. Because piles will be dispersed across the treatment areas of the project, and ignition will occur over multiple days through the fall and early winter, only a portion of the total potential smoke volume will be released on any given day. All burning will comply with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group Smoke Management Plan and recommendations and is designed to meet the requirements of State of Idaho IDAPA (State administrative rule for air quality) and the policies of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) Interim Air Quality Policy on Wildland and Prescribed Fires (Interim Policy). Refer to the project record fuels and air quality resource technical report for the detailed supporting analysis.

Design features associated with my decision (Appendix A) will minimize potential impacts on public health and safety during and after implementation, including safety on roads and trails open to public access. Specifically, Design Features PS-1 and PS-2 have been developed to mitigate conflicts between public use and project-related implementation activities (EA Chapter 3 and Appendix A).

3. My decision will not result in any significant effects on any unique characteristics of the geographic area, historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(3)].

No adverse effects to cultural resources are expected from implementing the selected alternative. By incorporating Design Features CR-1 and CR-2, adverse effects to cultural resources will be adequately avoided (concurrence from Idaho State Historic Preservation Office on May 8, 2017, project file).

No unique parklands, prime farmlands, wilderness, or potential wilderness are located in the project area. No long-term measurable negative effects to riparian areas or wetlands are expected with this project because we will be using BMPs and riparian habitat conservation area standards (see Appendix A for a full list of applicable design features; Chapter 3 effects disclosures for hydrology and fisheries resources; biological assessment for the project).

The analysis documented in the EA discloses that Alternative B will not result in any significant effects on inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) (EA Chapter 3 and supporting resource technical
4. **The selected alternative will not result in any effects that are likely to be highly controversial [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)].**

Controversy in this context refers to situations where substantial dispute as to the size, nature, or effect of the federal action exists, rather than opposition to its implementation. The scientific basis for the analysis is contained in the project record and summarized in the EA. Standard analysis techniques and models were used, and limitations of those models were summarized in the EA where pertinent, with greater detail included in resource technical reports contained in the project record. Literature supporting the use of these models, as used in this analysis, is contained in the project record.

As disclosed in Chapter 1, the analysis presented in the EA reflects management direction, findings, and conclusions issued in the 2010 Forest Plan to integrate a wildlife conservation strategy (WCS) for the forested biological community. This Forest Plan WCS complements the Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (Idaho CWCS) by building on the broad-scale conservation needs identified in the Idaho CWCS for the Forest area and represents a thorough review and consideration of the best available science applicable to management of forested landscape on the Forest, including use of salvage operations.

The draft WCS, including its assumptions and methodology, was evaluated through a science consistency review (USDA Forest Service 2010b, section 3.2.1.1). The review concluded that, while the draft WCS was generally consistent with available scientific information, it could be improved by addressing the reviewer’s comments (WCS project record, Science Consistency Review and Agency Response). The draft WCS was subsequently updated to address the reviewers’ comments before it was finalized (Nutt et al. 2010).

Comments received during scoping and during the 30-day notice and comment period on the EA reflected the varied opinions of the effects of salvage logging. For example, salvage logging is one aspect of post-fire management and may be used to address worker and public safety issues, risks along roads, and risks to infrastructure such as buildings and recreational facilities. Salvage logging may also be appropriate to recover economic value and support community resiliency. The ecological consequences of salvage, however, are often considered negative from the perspective of soils, hydrology, and wildlife habitat resources, although wildlife species responses vary.

As stated in Chapter 2 of the EA, in 2015, scientists from Oregon State University and the Pacific Northwest Research Station completed a literature review concerning the *Ecological Effects of Post-fire Salvage Logging in the Pacific Northwest* (Reilly et al. 2015). These scientists found the
ecological effects of post-fire salvage logging vary depending on the treatment, fire severity, and biological setting (Peterson et al. 2009). The controversy focuses mainly on the ecological consequences of salvage logging. The premise of the arguments is that there are no ecological benefits to salvage logging (Hutto 2006, Karr et al. 2004, Beschta et al. 2004, Lindenmayer and Noss 2006).

Several components of salvage logging were of key interest to stakeholders, including post-fire regeneration; the importance of the loss of biological legacies, in particular large snags and large live trees; effects to wildlife species specifically associated with recently burned forests; effects to burned and exposed soils; and effects to riparian areas. Several of these key factors are addressed within the Forest Plan management strategies in order to support the Agency’s multiple use objectives and sustainable use. This is precisely why the IDT reviewed the pre- and post-fire ecosystem in and around this project area. This is also why the IDT reviewed available field data and the latest science recommendations and findings to develop a comprehensive site-specific Proposed Action. As a result of these efforts, my selected alternative incorporated a screening process to identify areas for hazard and dead tree removal that minimizes effects to resources based on best available science, and results in a comprehensive set of effective design features that will avoid, minimize, or mitigate the potential for undesirable ecological effects associated with post-disturbance logging activities. The design features are included in Appendix A of this decision. In response to comments received during the EA comment period, the list of design features in Appendix A of the EA has been updated to provide a summary of design feature effectiveness discussed in detail in supporting technical reports and other project record documents.

The EA and supporting resource technical reports cite dozens of peer-reviewed scientific documents used in the analysis and the EA, supporting technical reports, and response to comments address opposing science. A full list of the references used in the environmental analysis is provided in the “Literature Cited” section of the EA, and Appendix B of this decision includes responses to opposing science identified during the EA comment period.

Of critical importance is the overall scale of the proposed activities within the burned area. As discussed in the preceding context discussion, hazard and dead trees will be salvaged on approximately 9,072 acres within the 39,100-acre South Pioneer Project area. This area represents 4.7% of the total 194,900 acres within the Pioneer Fire area. When considered with the combination of other past, present, and proposed salvage treatments within the Pioneer Fire area, a total of 15,235 acres would be salvaged, or 7.8% of the total 194,900 acres affected by the 2016 Pioneer fire. Thus, even with the controversy surrounding the post-disturbance logging and efforts identified above to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential effects, placing the scale of the total Pioneer Fire area to be affected by salvage within the context of the total area affected by the fire would limit the scope of effect from salvage logging to insignificant.

Also, the Forest has taken steps to help address the controversy through its extensive public involvement efforts (see Appendix C of this decision). The Forest started public involvement in October 2016 before the fire was considered extinguished. Initial public involvement efforts were used to develop the Proposed Action. These included meetings and phone calls with a local collaborative group, tribal representatives, timber industry representatives, and County Commissioners in fall 2016 and early winter 2017 (see Appendix C of this decision). As the Forest has done since fall 2016, we will continue meeting with interested groups and members of
the public throughout the life of this project, including providing opportunities for joint project field trips as suggested by our local collaborative group, the Boise Forest Coalition.

I believe that the activities proposed for the South Pioneer Project analyzed in the accompanying EA were designed to balance both the ecological and economic concerns presented by the post-fire conditions in the planning area. Information to be gained from post-salvage monitoring to be conducted by the Forest and the Pacific Northwest Research Station, University of Washington, and Boise State University (see Chapter 1 of the EA) has the potential to contribute to future proposals for and decisions about post-disturbance management in similar areas guided by multiple-use land management objectives.

For purposes of the EA completed in support of this decision, I have determined the appropriate comparison to address the tradeoffs between ecological considerations and economic objectives pertaining to salvage logging as recommended by Karr et al. (2004), Beschta et al. (2004), and Lindenmayer and Noss (2006), while also considering public health and safety consistent with Forest Plan desired conditions, objectives, and standards, was the comparison of effects disclosed in Chapter 3 between the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action. As clearly disclosed in the EA supporting my decision, there were no significant beneficial or adverse environmental effects to the ecological factors typically surrounding the controversy of salvage logging (see EA, Chapter 3).

5. **The effects associated with the selected alternative will not result in any highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)].**

The environmental analysis, including the EA, resource technical reports, biological assessments, and biological evaluations, determined the selected alternative will not involve any highly uncertain or unknown risks (EA Chapter 3 and resource technical reports and biological assessments and evaluations contained in the project record and posted on the project website). Management activities associated with my decision are typical of those successfully implemented in the past on NFS lands.

The selected actions are similar to actions implemented in other areas on NFS, State, County, and private lands. Effects will be similar to those of past actions because the selected alternative does not include any unusual management actions; and these actions are based on sound scientific research and previous salvage projects on the Forest and within the Intermountain West. The analysis considered the effects of past actions, including past timber harvests and salvage projects (see project record a complete list of past harvest activities), as a frame of reference in conjunction with the estimated effects of the proposal; see individual specialist reports for this analysis. It is my conclusion that there are no unique or unusual characteristics of the area, which have not been previously encountered, that will constitute an unknown risk to the human environment, including the salvage operations.

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16 As stated under the section “My Decision”, subsection “Changed Condition”, following review of the modification to the proposed action resulting from the Road 312 washout with the Interdisciplinary Team, I determined that for all resources that the resulting change would result in a negligible beneficial or negative effect to their respective resource and fell within the range of effects already disclosed for alternatives addressed in detail in the EA. Thus, updates to environmental effects in the EA were not needed (40 CFR 1502.9(c); FSH 1909.15(10(18))).
6. My decision does not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)].

My decision is consistent with direction found in the 2010 Forest Plan (EA Chapter 3 and Forest Plan Consistency Table in the project record). Implementing my decision will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects nor does it represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. As discussed earlier in my decision, this includes consideration of proposals identified in the North Pioneer Project, which have independent utility to those proposed in my selected alternative for the South Pioneer Project in that actions are not connected nor dependent upon each other. Thus, making a decision on this project did not set a precedent for making the decision on the North Pioneer Project or any future projects.

7. The analysis documented in the EA discloses that my decision is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)].

As defined in this provision, significance exists if it is reasonable to anticipate a cumulatively significant impact on the environment. Significance cannot be avoided by terming and action temporary or by breaking it down into small component parts.

A comment raised concerning this topic is, “The Pioneer Fire Recovery and Restoration proposal would log about 15,000 acres and remove approximately 70 million board feet of trees. Also, 10.6 miles of temporary roads would be constructed and maintenance would occur on 293 miles of existing national forest system roads. Clearly, this would be a huge undertaking, intensively logging and disturbing over 23 square miles of public lands, in watersheds that are recovering from past unsustainable logging and road building and are still not functioning properly. Yet the FS has already concluded there will be no significant impacts, and to narrow the scope of analysis to justify that conclusion the agency has broken up the analysis into two separate Environmental Assessments.” (Comment letter received from Jeff Juel, on behalf of himself, Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR), Wildlands Defense, Native Ecosystems Council and Idaho Sporting Congress on May 17, 2017.)

At the beginning of my decision under the section “Relationship of the South Pioneer Project to the North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project,” I provide the rationale as to why I completed two NEPA documents for proposed salvage and reforestation work within the Pioneer Fire area. Included in the discussion is my conclusion that resource effects disclosures in the South Pioneer Project EA considered potential effects from treatments proposed in the South Pioneer Project EA, as applicable. Close coordination between resource IDTs for both projects occurred throughout the planning process. Where a resource IDT member identified the potential for cumulative effects between the projects for their resource, they provided their rationale as to why this was the case in discussions of how they determined the appropriate geographic scale and timeframe to disclose associated direct, indirect, and cumulative effects (resource technical reports located in the project record and posted on the project [website](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694)).
Following review of resource effects and the methodology used to reach effects conclusions disclosed in the South Pioneer Project EA with the IDT, I determined there were no significant cumulative effects between proposed treatments on the South Pioneer Project, or where applicable, between actions proposed on both the South and North Pioneer Projects, or other past, present, or known future projects (refer to Appendix B of the EA for descriptions of actions considered, by resource, in cumulative effects assessments).

8. **My decision will not adversely affect sites or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will it cause the loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)].**

Activities to be implemented under Alternative B, as modified in this decision, are expected to have No Adverse Effect on historic properties in the project area. Applying project Design Features CR-1 and CR-2 will ensure known and newly discovered historic properties and cultural sites be protected during implementation (EA Chapter 3). The State Historic Preservation Office has reviewed the resource report and concurred on May 8, 2017, with the no adverse effects determination.

9. **My decision will not adversely affect threatened or endangered species or their habitats [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)].**

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) (16 USC 35 §§1531 et seq. 1988) provides for the protection and conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animal species. The Proposed Action was assessed to determine its effects on threatened and endangered plant and animal species. A project-specific ESA list was generated from the USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) [website](http://ecos.fws.gov/ipac) and is available in the project record.

In their May 23, 2017, concurrence letter for determinations reached in the biological assessment completed in support of the South Pioneer Project, the USFWS concluded the following:

**Service concurrence that the Project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect bull trout or designated critical habitat is based on information and analyses provided in the Assessment. Project design features include integral conservation measures designed to avoid or minimize Project impacts, including effects to individual bull trout, sediment input, stream temperatures and riparian vegetation, large woody debris, drainage network, and chemical contamination. Our concurrence is summarized in the following rationales:**

1. **The confirmed bull trout spawning and rearing reaches are located upstream of the Project area in upper Crooked River near Trapper Flat and spawning adults or rearing juveniles will not be affected by Project activities. Lower and middle Crooked River, Pikes Fork, and Banner Creek function as FMO habitat but no in-stream activities are planned in the Project area. Migrating, foraging, or overwintering adult and sub-adult bull trout may be temporarily disturbed by hazard tree felling in RCAs but few hazard trees are expected to be felled near stream banks or into the stream. Any bull trout that may be in the vicinity**
will be able to freely move away from the activity, seek cover, and return when the
temporary disturbance is ended. The few hazard trees that may be felled into the stream
are unlikely to present a barrier to bull trout migrations. Water drafting operations will
meet all USFWS and NMFS intake screen criteria to prevent potential entrainment or
injury to juvenile bull trout. The locations, methods, and timing of water drafting
operations will be selected to minimize disturbance of bull trout to negligible levels. The
reproductive success, survival, or fitness of any individual bull trout is not expected to be
affected. Any direct effects to bull trout are therefore expected to be local, short term, and
insignificant.

2. Conservation measures, project design, and BMPs are sufficient to limit the amount of
sediment that may enter the waterway to insignificant levels. In combination with the 240
foot width of the RCA, the post-fire riparian vegetation is sufficiently intact to control
sediment delivery to bull trout critical habitat (Assessment, pp. 42-45). Sediment modeling
and monitoring data from previous Forest fire salvage projects or integrated resource
projects indicate that sediment travel distances are expected to be less than RCA buffer
width for most Project activities (Assessment, Appendix A). Although hazard tree felling
will occur within RCAs, no logs will be removed from between the road and the water
feature and no ground disturbance or sediment production is expected from hand felling
trees. Hazard tree felling with removal will occur above the road within 372 acres of RCAs
adjacent to bull trout critical habitat (Assessment, Table 18), but conservation measures
will minimize soil disturbance by keeping machinery on the existing road prism, using
cable suspension methods, and yarding trees whole to the road. Erosion control devices
are required where road management activities occur in RCAs and improvement of the
road drainage network, including maintenance of the road surface, waterbars, cross drain
culverts, inlets, outlets, and ditches will reduce delivery of sediment. No temporary road
construction will occur within RCAs adjacent to critical habitat (Assessment, Table 18).
Sediment delivery from salvage harvest units is not expected due to a combination of BMPs
to reduce erosion from skid trails and by limiting salvage units to locations outside of
RCAs. Erosion control actions during the post-fire Burned Area Emergency Response
(BAER) identified and treated areas of high soil burn severity with high erosion or
landslide potential and no Project activities will occur in those units. Thus, under normal
climatic conditions, any sediment delivery due to Project activities is expected to be
insignificant.

3. Project activities are not likely to significantly increase stream temperatures in bull trout
critical habitat. Loss of tree canopy cover and overstory shade from the Pioneer Fire will
be the primary cause of higher stream temperatures in the burned areas for several years.
Although fire-killed standing trees still provide some shade that may ameliorate
temperature increases, about 80 percent of effective shade comes from trees within 60 feet
of the stream (Assessment, pp. 69-70). Trees with live canopies will be left standing in all
RCAs. Only trees that meet the definition of hazard will be felled within RCAs and few are
expected to be felled within 60 feet of the stream. All salvage harvest units are located
outside of RCAs and no trees will be felled within the 240 foot wide buffer at those sites.
Thus, any increase in stream temperatures that may be due to Project activities is likely to
be insignificant.
4. The removal of hazard and dead trees during the Project is unlikely to significantly affect the amount of LWD and associated habitat complexity in bull trout critical habitat. Existing LWD within stream channels will not be affected by the Project. Riparian areas are the source for input of large woody debris (LWD) in streams, but only trees that meet the definition of hazard will be felled in RCAs and none will be removed from between the road and the stream so these will still be available for recruitment. Numerous live trees and standing dead trees that are not a hazard will eventually fall in the RCA and be available for future recruitment to the stream. Overall, channel complexity and structure, wetted width to depth ratios, and usable habitat area will not be affected by the Project. Thus, in both the short and long term, the effect of Project activities on the habitat complexity of bull trout critical habitat is expected to be insignificant.

5. The construction of temporary roads, reconstruction of maintenance level 1 roads, and removal of hazard and dead trees could change peak or base stream flows by increasing the drainage network. Construction of 3.6 miles of temporary roads for Project activities will increase road density by only 0.02 mi/mi² in the Project area (Assessment, p. 85). The resulting increase in drainage network will be short term and minor, as most temporary roads will be constructed on existing (unauthorized) road prisms or near dry ridgetops and decommissioned by the conclusion of the Project. Maintenance level 1 roads will be closed and allowed to naturally re-vegetate. The removal of hazard and dead or dying trees will occur in a relatively small area of the affected subwatersheds and any potential increases in water yield due to salvage are predicted to be undetectable. The hydrograph will continue to be dominated by post-fire watershed processes associated with the Pioneer Fire. Improvement of the road drainage network, including maintenance of road surfaces, waterbars, crossdrain culverts, inlets, outlets, and ditches will help reduce the effects of the temporary increase in road density to insignificant levels.

6. Conservation measures, including fuel storage locations, restrictions on refueling of equipment, and stream buffer distances for application of magnesium chloride during dust abatement, will reduce the potential for fuel or chemical contamination of bull trout critical habitat to insignificant levels.

USFWS concurrence that the South Pioneer Project is not likely to adversely affect Canada lynx is based on the following rationales:

1. The majority of Project actions will occur outside of suitable lynx habitat (Assessment, Tables 29 and 30). Direct or indirect effects to lynx are identified in the assessment but are insignificant due to the small area that may be affected and the abundance of affected habitat structural feature (snags/downed logs) elsewhere in the landscape.

2. High quality denning and foraging habitat is limited and poorly distributed across the project area, indicating most LAUs function as dispersal habitat and likely preclude long-term occupancy.

3. Very few lynx have been documented in the two LAUs that overlap the Project area. Only one sighting (a confirmed track in the snow in 1998) has occurred within the Project area. There is no evidence of a reproducing population on the Boise National Forest. The likelihood of occupancy of individual lynx at the locations where and when the actions would occur is very low, reducing the risk of disturbance and displacement to discountable levels.
In addition, in their May 23, 2017, concurrence letter for this project, the USFWS acknowledges the Forest’s determination that the South Pioneer Project is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of North American wolverine, which is currently proposed for listing under ESA.

The USFWS also reviewed conclusions reached by Agency personnel as to whether the effects resulting from the changed condition along NFS roads 312 and 385 changed determinations reached in the biological assessment or their May 23, 2017, concurrence letter. On June 14, 2017, the USFWS provided the following email response:

"Thank you for providing the draft addendum to the Biological Assessment of the Pioneer South Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project. The addendum assesses the changes to the environmental baseline due to the storm and runoff related damage to roads NFSR 312 and NFSR 385 in the project area. The Service reviewed the draft addendum and consider it sufficient to assess those changes. We also discussed the environmental changes and conclusions during the presentation to the Level 1 Team on June 14. For your records, this email serves as verification that your conclusions are still valid that the subject actions are not likely to adversely affect bull trout, bull trout critical habitat, or Canada lynx and are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the North American wolverine."

10. **My decision is consistent with federal, State, and local laws and requirements imposed for the protection of the environment [40 FR 1508.27(b)(10)].**

The IDT evaluated my decision as to compliance under the laws, regulations, and requirements relating to federal natural resource management. Several of the design features (Appendix A) were developed and incorporated to ensure these requirements will be met. Based on the evaluations completed by the IDT; my review of comments received on the EA; and formal or informal consultation with other federal, State, local and tribal governments, I have determined that implementing this decision will be in compliance with applicable federal, State, and County laws, regulations, or other permitting requirements. My decision meets federal, State, and local laws for air quality, heritage resources or cultural sites, water quality, threatened and endangered species, noxious weeds, and fisheries resources (EA Chapter 3). It also meets NEPA disclosure requirements (EA and this FONSI). Chapter 1 of the EA and the “Rationale for My Decision” section of this document disclose the consistency of my decision with applicable laws and regulations relating to federal natural resource management, and I did not identify any consistency issues with other State or local laws and requirements. Chapter 3 of the EA and the project record provide supporting information.

**Findings Required by Laws and Regulations**

**National Forest Management Act**

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires that projects and activities be consistent with the governing Forest Plan (16 USC 1604 (i)). My decision incorporates appropriate land and resource management plan direction from the Forest Plan as summarized above under the “Rationale for My Decision” section and discussed in greater detail in the EA (EA Chapters 1 and 3). I have determined that implementing my decision, modified Alternative B, is consistent
with the goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines in the 2010 Forest Plan (for further information, see the Forest Plan Consistency Table available in the project record).

**In addition to Forest Plan Consistency, the National Forest Management Act and Accompanying Regulations Require that Several Specific Findings Be Documented at the Project Level**

**Diversity of Plant and Animal Communities [16 U.S.C. § 1604(g)(3)(B)]**

I have determined the assessment method used to support the South Pioneer Project wildlife and rare plant conclusions is reasonable and scientifically based and is consistent with those completed in support of the 2010 Forest Plan amendments. The 2010 Forest Plan amendments, which incorporated a WCS, included a set of assumptions and analysis methodology which were evaluated through a science consistency review and provide the foundation from which the effects of this project to wildlife and their associated habitat can be related to those at the planning unit scale.

In making a determination of compliance with NFMA in this DN and FONSI, I considered existing or reasonably foreseeable conservation measures, including consistency with the Idaho CWCS. In accordance with the theme of ecosystem management, I placed reasonable reliance upon assessments of (1) species with habitat needs that are roughly the same; (2) a group of species generally thought to perform the same or similar ecosystem functions; and/or (3) the continued integrity and function of ecosystem(s) in which a species is found (EA Chapter 3, wildlife and botanical technical reports in the project record, and Record of Decision for the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Forest Plan Amendment to Facilitate Implementation of the 2010 Plan Scale Wildlife Conservation Strategy: Phase 1—Forested Biological Community [USDA Forest Service 2010c]).

**Timber Harvest [16 U.S.C. § 1604(g)(3)(E)]**

A Responsible Official may authorize site-specific projects and activities to harvest timber on NFS lands only where the following applies:

- **Soil, slope, or other watershed conditions will not be irreversibly damaged** (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(i))—All areas proposed for treatment are consistent with this requirement (see EA Chapter 3, “Soil Resources” and “Hydrology Resources” sections and the hydrology and soils specialist report available in the project record and posted on the project website).

- **There is assurance that the lands can be adequately restocked within five years after final regeneration harvest** (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(ii))—Technology and professional knowledge were applied to ensure that adequate stocking will occur within 5 years after harvest. The selected alternative includes up to 12,571 acres of reforestation. Tree seedlings will be planted in salvage units and in the roadside and trailside hazard tree removal areas where stocking cannot be ensured with natural regeneration or residual live trees following completion of harvest activities.

While trees planted outside hazard and dead tree salvage units do not fall under this NFMA provision, tree seedlings will also be planted in areas within or adjacent to the units where salvage treatments are not being conducted and where the fire burned with enough extent and
severity to create a reforestation need. See the EA, Chapter 3 “Forest Vegetation” section and the vegetation resource technical report in the project record and posted on the project website for more details.

- **Protection is provided for streams, streambanks, shorelines, lakes, wetlands, and other bodies of water from detrimental changes in water temperatures, blockages of water courses, and deposits of sediment, where harvests are likely to seriously and adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iii))**—Proposed activities under the selected alternative will not seriously or adversely affect water conditions or fish habitat. Implementing my decision will maintain the existing functionality of the watershed condition indicators in the temporary, short-term, and long-term timeframes important to the restoration and recovery of fish habitat following the Pioneer Fire (EA Chapter 3, “Fisheries” and “Hydrology Resources” sections, technical reports in the project record and posted on the project website). This conclusion is also supported in the project biological assessment and USFWS concurrence letter (May 23, 2017) and verification email (June 14, 2017) stating that the changed conditions resulting in modifications to Alternative B did not change effects in the biological assessment or conclusions in their concurrence letter, as documented in the relevant resource technical reports.

- **The harvesting system to be used is not selected primarily because it will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output of timber (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(E)(iv))**—The harvest systems proposed under my decision were identified as the system that best accomplished the multiple resource objectives associated with accomplishment of project purpose and need.

Clearcutting and Even-aged Management [16 U.S.C. § 1604(g)(3)(F)]

NFMA limits clearcutting and other even-aged harvest to situations where the following applies:

- **For clearcutting, it is determined to be the optimum method, and for other such cuts it is determined to be appropriate, to meet the objectives and requirements of the relevant land management plan (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(i))**—Because the regeneration need within the proposed salvage units was created by wildfire, no clearcuts are proposed under modified Alternative B (EA Chapter 3, “Forest Vegetation” section).

- **The interdisciplinary review as determined by the Secretary has been completed and the potential environmental, biological, esthetic, engineering, and economic impacts on each advertised sale area have been assessed, as well as the consistency of the sale with the multiple use of the general area (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(ii))**—Chapter 3 of the EA discloses the potential environmental and biological, aesthetic, engineering, and economic impacts on areas to be treated. The South Pioneer Project has also been determined to be consistent with the multiple-use objectives for this area identified in the 2010 Forest Plan (see previous section of this document as well as the Forest Plan Consistency Table available in the project record).

- **Cut blocks, patches, or strips are shaped and blended to the extent practicable with the natural terrain (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(iii))**—Disclosures in Chapter 3 of the EA and the scenic environment technical report (project record and posted on the project website) regarding the visual quality resource indicate that implementing my decision will meet the visual quality objectives for the area.
• Cuts are carried out according to the maximum size limit requirements for areas to be cut during one harvest operation, provided, that such limits shall not apply to the size of areas harvested as a result of natural catastrophic conditions such as fire, insect and disease attack, or windstorm (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(iv))—All treatments meet 2010 Forest Plan standard requirements (i.e., TRST02 and TRST03) for maximum size openings (see previous section of this decision as well as the Forest Plan Consistency Table available in the project record). As identified under this provision, limits shall not apply to the size of areas harvested as a result of natural catastrophic conditions such as fire.

• Such cuts are carried out in a manner consistent with the protection of soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and aesthetic resources, and the regeneration of the timber resource (16 USC 1604(g)(3)(F)(v))—Chapter 3 of the EA discloses activities to be implemented in this decision are consistent with 2010 Forest Plan requirements for protecting soil, watershed, fish, wildlife, recreation, and visual quality resources and the regeneration of the timber resource (EA Chapter 3). Related findings are documented in the Forest Plan Consistency Table (available in the project record).

Lands Suitable for Timber Production [16 U.S.C. § 1604(k)]

Identify lands within the management area which are not suited for timber production (16 USC 1604(k))—Salvage treatments included in my decision, modified Alternative B, occur within Forest Plan Management Prescription Category (MPC) 5.1. As such, all acres of hazard and dead tree salvage outside of RCAs have been determined to be suited for timber production. All acres of hazard tree salvage within RCAs have been identified as not suited for timber production consistent with Forest Plan direction (Standard TRST04). Consistent with NFMA, hazard tree salvage treatments within RCAs occurring on lands identified as not suited for timber production were salvaged to address public health and safety issues and were only done where consistent with Forest Plan standard TRST08.

Culmination of Mean Annual Increment of Growth [16 U.S.C. § 1604(m)]

Stands of trees are harvested according to requirements for culmination of mean annual increment of growth (16 U.S.C. 1604(m)—My decision will only salvage dead trees, except in situations where live trees are considered hazard trees along road and trail corridors. In both of these treatment situation, this provision is not applicable

Temporary Roads [16 U.S.C. § 1608(b)]

Unless the necessity for a permanent road is set forth in the forest development road system plan, any road constructed on land of the NFS in connection with a timber contract or other permit or lease shall be designed with the goal of reestablishing vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover has been disturbed by the construction of the road, within ten years after the termination of the contract, permit, or lease either through artificial or natural means. Such action shall be taken unless it is later determined that the road is needed for use as a part of the National Forest Transportation System (16 USC 1608(b))—As disclosed in Appendix A of my decision, Design Feature FH-8 requires all temporary roads built under my decision to be fully obliterated upon completion of project activities with the goal of reestablishing vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover has been
disturbed by road construction within 10 years. Refer to EA Chapter 3, “Hydrology Resources,” “Soils Resources,” and Transportation” sections for supporting effects conclusions.

Road Standards [16 U.S.C. § 1608(c)]

Roads constructed on NFS lands shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources (16 USC 1608(c))—No new NFS roads are proposed to be authorized or constructed on NFS lands under my decision. All NFS roads to be used to implement my decision have been designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources (see EA Chapter 3 for disclosure of effects by resource and the hydrology, fisheries, wildlife, transportation, economic, and recreation technical reports and the Forest-wide Transportation Analysis Plan).

Clean Air Act

The air quality analysis shows that effects of the selected alternative to air quality are anticipated to be limited, as only a minor amount of burning will occur, specific to landing piles and some hand piles near values at risk. Because piles will be dispersed across the treatment areas of the project, and ignition will occur over multiple days through the fall and early winter, only a portion of the total potential smoke volume will be released on any given day.

Northern Ada County Maintenance Area for PM10 and carbon monoxide (CO) lies 30 miles to the southwest of the closest potential pile location within the project area. Prevailing winds out of the southwest will prevent any smoke intrusion into the Maintenance Area. The Sawtooth Wilderness, a Class I Area, lies 15 miles to the east of the closest potential pile location. The distance between the Sawtooth Wilderness and the prevailing wind should result in smoke dispersing or entirely avoiding the Wilderness (see fuels and air quality technical report in the project record and posted on the project website).

All burning will comply with the Montana/Idaho Airshed Group Smoke Management Plan and recommendations and is designed to meet the requirements of State of Idaho IDAPA (State administrative rule for air quality) and the policies of the EPA’s Interim Policy. Refer to the fuels and air quality resource technical report in the project record and posted on the project website for the detailed supporting analysis.

Clean Water Act (Federal Water Pollution Control Act)

The Clean Water Act (CWA) regulates point source and non-point source discharge as well as dredging and filling activities to waterbodies of the United States. The CWA also regulates water quality standards and anti-degradation policies. None of the activities proposed within modified Alternative B will constitute a point source discharge. Therefore, the proposed activities will be regulated under the Idaho Non-Point Source Management Plan.

Proposed Action activities comply with non-point source management plan goals by reducing the effects of management activities by applying BMPs (Appendix A) to reduce sediment delivery and/or impacts to stream temperature (see Idaho Nonpoint Source Management Plan checklist documentation, effects analysis for temperature and sediment in EA Chapter 3 in the “Hydrology Resources” section and the hydrology technical report in the project record and posted on the project website).
Endangered Species Act

The ESA (16 USC 35 §§1531 et seq. 1988) provides for the protection and conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animal species. Implementing my decision was assessed to determine the effects on threatened and endangered plant and animal species. The USFWS concurred on May 23, 2017, with the Agency’s determination. Refer to FONSI, Intensity Criteria 9, for details.

The USFWS also reviewed conclusions reached by Agency personnel as to whether the effects resulting from the changed condition along NFS roads 312 and 385 changed determinations reached in the biological assessment or their May 23, 2017, concurrence letter. On June 14, 2017, the USFWS provided email verification that “…conclusions are still valid that the subject actions are not likely to adversely affect bull trout, bull trout critical habitat, or Canada lynx and are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the North American wolverine.”

Facilitation of Hunting Heritage and Wildlife Conservation (Executive Order 13443)

On August 16, 2007, President George Bush signed an executive order directing appropriate federal agencies to facilitate the expansion and enhancement of hunting opportunities and the management of game species and their habitat (FR Vol. 72, No. 160, August 20, 2007).

The project area provides habitat for several game species, including deer, elk, black bear, mountain lion, wolf, and forest grouse. The effects to wolves and elk are considered in EA Chapter 3, “Wildlife” section. Mitigation has been included to minimize and avoid impacts to these species (Appendix A) so that habitat is provided to support Idaho Department of Fish and Game’s population objectives. Mountain lion presence is largely tied to the presence of deer, and maintaining deer habitat is the primary consideration for this species.

Black bears are habitat generalists. While they prefer mixed deciduous-coniferous forests with thick understories, they will utilize a variety of habitats. Special habitat features include fallen logs and debris, and standing hollow trees that provide denning sites for bears. Special habitat features that may provide suitable denning sites would be maintained during treatments proposed under modified Alternative B, my selected alternative.

Dusky grouse, spruce grouse, and ruffed grouse are all present in the project area. Habitat use and needs vary between the species. Dusky grouse are found in open coniferous forests, often with a fir component. Douglas-fir provides day roosts, and the buds and needles are an important winter food. Subalpine fir, with its dense foliage, is often selected as a night roost. Ruffed grouse utilize dense forests with some deciduous trees or shrubs. Aspen is an important component of habitat. Young forests provide optimum habitat for the species. Spruce grouse occupy coniferous forests that include short-needled trees (lodgepole pine, spruce-fir). Vaccinium species (huckleberry) are a common component of spruce grouse habitats. Key features for spruce grouse include forest structure that provides cover (i.e., lodgepole pine prior to self-pruning). All three grouse species are associated with forested habitats. Habitat for all three species will be maintained and restored in the project area. Aspen enhancements following fire restoration actions under my decision will improve habitat conditions, particularly for ruffed grouse, which is often associated with this deciduous tree.
Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 Floodplains and Wetlands

My decision is consistent with Executive Orders (EOs) 11988 and 11990. Soil, water, riparian and aquatic (SWRA) resource standards and guidelines in the 2010 Forest Plan were specifically designed to ensure management actions implementing the Forest Plan, such as this one, will avoid or minimize short- and long-term impacts to floodplains as required under this executive order. EA Chapter 3, “Hydrology Resources” and “Fisheries” sections disclose the anticipated effects to these resources. Determinations of consistency with Forest Plan standards and guidelines are specifically addressed in the Forest Plan Consistency Table available in the project record and the hydrology and fisheries technical reports available in the project record and project website.\(^{19}\)

The activities to be implemented under my decision are not expected to result in modifications of the floodplain that will negatively affect the ability of the watershed to moderate flood flows, consistent with EO 11988. Removing stream crossings on unauthorized routes proposed for decommissioning is expected to increase the conveyance flood flows and associated debris at those locations, which would benefit floodplains within the project area (EA Chapter 3, “Hydrology Resources” section and hydrology technical report available in the project record and posted on the project website).

Wetlands occur within riparian areas along some stream segments within the project area. The proposed hazard tree treatments within riparian areas will not impact restoration objectives. BMPs and design features intended to protect stream and riparian functions and processes are expected to also provide protection of riparian area wetlands, consistent with EO11990 (EA Chapter 3, “Hydrology Resources” section and hydrology technical report in the project record and posted on the project website).

Executive Order 12898 Environmental Justice

EO 12898 directs federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations. I have determined from the analysis disclosed in the EA that implementing my decision will comply with EO 12898 (EA Chapter 3). Actions under my decision, modified Alternative B, were assessed to determine whether they would have disproportionately high and adverse human health, including social and economic effects, on minority or low-income human populations. No such effects were identified.

Executive Order 13186 and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) decrees that all migratory birds and their parts, including eggs, nests, and feathers, be fully protected. Under the MBTA, taking, killing, or possessing migratory birds is unlawful. “Take” is defined in the MBTA to include any attempt at hunting, pursuing, wounding, killing, possessing, or transporting, by any means or in any manner, any migratory bird, nest, egg, or part thereof. A migratory bird is any species or family of birds that live, reproduce, or migrate within or across international borders at some point during their

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\(^{19}\) [https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694)
annual life cycle. The original intent of the MBTA was to put an end to the commercial trade of birds and their feathers, an activity that had wreaked havoc on the populations of many native bird species. On January 17, 2001, President William Clinton signed EO 13186, directing executive departments and agencies to take certain actions to further implement the MBTA (FR Vol. 66, No.11, January 17, 2001). The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act affords additional protection to all bald and golden eagles.

In direct response to EO 13186, the Forest Service and USFWS entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to promote the conservation of migratory birds (USDA Forest Service and USDI FWS 2008). One of the steps outlined for the Forest Service in the MOU is applicable to this analysis: “Within the NEPA process, evaluate the effects of Agency actions on migratory birds, focusing first on species of management concern along with their priority habitats and key risk factors.” The Forest Service additionally agreed, to the extent practicable, to evaluate and balance benefits against adverse effects, to pursue opportunities to restore or enhance migratory bird habitat, and to consider approaches for minimizing take that is incidental to otherwise lawful activities.

Implementing my decision will comply with the MBTA and the USFWS Director’s Order 131 related to the applicability of the MBTA to federal agencies and requirements for permits for “take.” In addition, this project complies with EO 13186 because the analysis meets agency obligations as defined in the MOU (USDA Forest Service and USDI FWS 2008) designed to complement EO 13186. However, “unintentional take” of individuals may occur during proposed activities. Migratory bird species are analyzed and discussed in the wildlife technical report, with supporting information provided in the project record. If new requirements or direction result from subsequent interagency memorandums of understanding pursuant to EO 13186, this project would be reevaluated to ensure consistency.

Executive Order 13112 Invasive Species

EO 13112 on Invasive Species directs that federal agencies should not authorize any activities that will increase the spread of invasive species. The Forest Plan requires integrated pest management methods be used to contain and control the spread of invasive species, following the Region 4 Forest Service Handbook (FSH 2080). These procedures will be implemented under my decision; refer to Design Features NX-1 through NX-4 (EA Chapter 3, “Noxious Weeds” section and Appendix A of this decision).

While implementing my decision could increase the potential for the introduction of new noxious weed species or spread of known noxious weed species in the project area based on the proposed ground-disturbing activities and temporary modification of the transportation system, design feature mitigations diminish the risk for weed dispersal and careful and timely monitoring and treatment will avoid or minimize the likelihood of introduction and/or spread of weeds in disturbed areas. Refer to the noxious weeds technical report available in the project record and posted on the project website for the detailed supporting analysis.

Executive Order 13175 Consultation with Tribal Governments

EO 13175 requires regular and meaningful consultation between federal and tribal government officials on federal policies with tribal implications. As described earlier in this decision, regular notification and consultation processes with potentially affected tribes has occurred throughout
the planning process for this project (see Appendix C). The tribal notification and consultation processes did not result in the identification of any potential impacts to treaty rights, treaty resources, or other unextinguished tribal rights and interests.

**National Historic Preservation Act**

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their activities and programs on historic properties. Federal activities and programs are defined as “undertakings” by 36 CFR §800 regulations implementing NHPA Section 106.

Implementing my decision will not have any direct or indirect effects on historically significant sites. Activities in my decision, including prescribed fire, are expected to have *No Adverse Effect* on historic properties in the project area. Applying project Design Features CR-1 and CR-2 will ensure known and newly discovered historic properties and cultural sites will be protected during project implementation (EA Chapter 3 and Appendix A). Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office concluded on May 1, 2017, concurrence with the No Adverse Effect determination.

**Idaho Roadless Rule**

I have determined that implementing my decision is consistent with the Idaho Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294). My conclusion is supported by disclosures in the EA that effects to the roadless characteristics resulting from implementing the selected alternative will not result in direct effects to the existing roadless characteristics or wilderness attributes of the Ten Mile/Black Warrior IRA since no activities are proposed within this IRA. No measurable effects to the roadless characteristics of the Ten Mile/Black Warrior IRA are expected and the character of this IRA would be maintained similar to current conditions following implementation of the selected alternative. Implementing the selected alternative is also not be expected to effect the potential suitability for future wilderness designation of the Ten Mile/Black Warrior IRA given that the effects to the wilderness attributes will be unmeasurable at the scale of the IRA (118,813 acres).

**Idaho Stream Alteration Act**

No stream crossings will be constructed with the temporary road construction or road maintenance included under the selected alternative, so stream alteration permits from the Idaho Department of Water Resources will not be required (refer to the hydrology and transportation technical reports available in the project record and posted on the project website for supporting documentation).

**Idaho Forest Practices Act**

Rules pertaining to the Idaho Forest Practices Act (IFPA) will be implemented under my decision. In addition, logging operations and road maintenance activities will be administered on the ground by Forest Service personnel to ensure compliance with any contract requirements associated with IFPA requirements (EA Chapter 3, “Forested Vegetation” and “Transportation” sections and the vegetation and transportation technical reports in the project record and posted on the project website).
Additionally, the IFPA requires a 75-foot-wide tree retention buffer for fish bearing streams, with two options for retaining enough trees within this zone to allow for adequate stream shading. Not removing hazard trees within 1 SPTH from each stream channel and only felling and leaving on site trees identified as hazard within this area under the selected alternative, will meet the IFPA shade rule based on stand exam data calculated using Option 1 of the IFPA formula for Class 1 Streams. Refer to “Hydrology Resources” and “Fisheries” sections in the EA and supporting technical reports for effects disclosures and conclusions as to effects to water temperature.

**National Environmental Policy Act**

In addition to minor edits and corrections, some changes were made to the EA in response to comments. These changes are reflected throughout the updated EA, with changes summarized Chapter 2 of the EA, section “Comments Received during the EA 30-day Notice and Comment Period.” The updated information disclosed in the EA falls within the scope of the analysis depicted in the EA released for 30-day notice and comment, and in most cases, simply provides additional explanation in response to comments received during the EA comment period.

The EA disclosures support the following specific elements discussed in NEPA.

**Prime Farmland, Rangeland, and Forest Land**

No prime farmlands, rangelands, or forest lands are located on the Forest, therefore, no effects to prime farmland, rangeland, or forest lands will occur with the implementation of modified Alternative B (EA Chapter 3; determination under My Decision that effects resulting from modifications to Alternative B would not measurably change effects disclosed in the EA for Alternative B).

**Best Available Science**

The effects disclosures summarized in this EA are based on a review of resource technical reports in the project record. In those reports, the IDT members based their analyses on data collected during field surveys, skilled interpretations of data and maps, and application of professional judgment from observations and evaluation of data, and integrated relevant scientific information and responsible opposing views where raised by internal or external sources. Refer to Appendix B of this decision for Agency responses to comments received during the 30-day notice and comment period on the EA and to the project website for responses to scoping comments concerning this topic. Also see the “Literature Cited” section in this EA and each project resource technical report in the project record and posted on the project website.

This document is tiered to the FEIS and planning record for the 2003 Forest Plan. This document is also tiered to the Final Environmental Impact Statement Supporting Forest Plan Amendments to Integrate the Boise National Forest WCS [Wildlife Conservation Strategy], Phase 1: Forested Biological Community (USDA Forest Service 2010b) and the 2003 Forest Plan as amended in 2010 (USDA Forest Service 2010a). This documentation includes monitoring reports. Analyses from the 2003 FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2003a) and the 2010 FEIS (USDA Forest Service 2010b) have been referenced rather than repeated in some instances. Analyses pertaining to the 2003 Forest Plan FEIS for the 2003 Forest Plan and the FEIS for the 2010 amendments to the Forest Plan are contained in the planning record located at the Forest Supervisor’s Office in
Boise, Idaho (USDA Forest Service 2003a, 2010a). Unless specifically noted otherwise, detailed information supporting the analyses presented in this document is contained in the project record located at the Supervisor’s Office of the Boise National Forest.

**Administrative Review and Implementation**

An ESD expedites the time period in which salvage sales could be offered to the public by allowing implementation of the project immediately after a decision on the project has been signed and published. An ESD pursuant to 36 CFR 218.21 was granted by the Chief of the Forest Service for this project on May 31, 2017. When it is determined that an emergency situation exists with respects to all or part of the proposed project or activity, the Proposed Action shall not be subject to the predecisional objection process and implementation may proceed immediately after notification that a decision has been made and documented in a decision notice (36 CFR 218.21(d)(1). The ESD documentation is posted on the project website.20

**Contact Information and Responsible Office**

For further information concerning the South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project, please contact Brant Petersen, Idaho City District Ranger at bpetersen02@fs.fed.us or by phone at (208) 392-6681 or John Riling, Team Leader, at jriling@fs.fed.us or by phone at 208-373-4171.

_Cecilia R. Seesholtz_  
Forest Supervisor  
Boise National Forest

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20 [https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694)
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Appendix A: Design Features, Monitoring Elements, and Adaptive Management Strategy

Design Features

Cultural Resources

CR-1. Avoid and protect all known historic properties during project implementation.

CR-2. If any cultural materials are encountered during the course of the project, all ground disturbing activities in the immediate vicinity of the discovery will cease until the Forest Archeologist is notified, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and potentially affected Indian tribes are consulted.

Fire/Fuels

FF-1. Pile and burn or disseminate activity fuels, consistent with Design Features FH-8 and TH-2, where needed to protect National Forest System improvements and facilities; address public safety; and maintain recreational access, use, and visual quality. No hand piling will occur below the road within RCAs, unless otherwise designated through site-specific evaluation by the Hydrologist or Fish Biologist consistent with Design Feature FH-1.

Fisheries, Hydrology, and Soils

FH-1. To maintain riparian functions and water quality, all perennial streams (year-round surface flow) have a designated 240 foot RCA width while intermittent streams (flows some part of the year and have defined bed and banks), springs, ponds, and wetlands have a designated 120 foot RCA width. Stream features are identified in the stream layer (Boise National Forest GIS Database) or as identified in the field. The following apply to the above-defined RCA widths:

- **Salvage Dead Trees**—No harvest will occur within RCAs associated with salvage harvest areas identified for the purpose of recovering economic value.

- **Hazard and Dead Tree Salvage**—Salvage and removal of hazard trees will occur within RCAs along roads and trails identified for hazard tree removal. Harvesting and removing road/trail-side hazard trees will occur on the side of the road or trail opposite the water feature (uphill side of the road) where they run parallel with the steam feature (Figure A-1). Where RCAs intersect the road perpendicularly, no tree removal will be allowed with some limited exceptions. No new landing construction will occur within RCAs, and mechanized equipment will be restricted to existing road prisms within the RCA.

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Footnotes:

21Removal or relocation of hazard trees may be allowed if falling and leaving onsite would result in one of two situations: 1) hazardous working conditions for felling operations (i.e., lack of escape routes or stacking of tree boles such that there is unpredictable movement when felled trees come to rest) or 2) downed trees would compromise road prisms, bridges, and/or drainage features associated with the road. The Forest or District Fish Biologist, Hydrologist, and/or Transportation Engineer will coordinate with the appropriate Timber Management Assistant to evaluate these areas to ensure trees can be removed without causing unacceptable effects to soil, water, riparian, or aquatic resources.
• **Hazard Tree Fell and Leave**—Road/trail-side hazard trees that occur within RCAs between the road and the water feature (stream side of the road) or where the RCA intersects the road perpendicularly will be felled and left onsite (Figure A-1) with some limited exceptions.

![Figure A-1. Example of treatment zones along roads and trails identified for either salvage or felling with an emphasis on hazard tree mitigation. This example shows how treatments would be applied within RCAs and outside of RCAs](image)

**FH-2.** Water drafting locations, methods, and timing shall be approved by the Forest Service Contract Administrator in consultation with the Fisheries Biologist and/or Hydrologist. Screens on intake hoses will meet all U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) criteria (e.g., 3/32 mesh with sufficient surface area).

**FH-3.** No fuel shall be stored in RCAs. Refueling or servicing of vehicles or equipment shall not occur within RCAs unless no other alternative exists. In the event there is no acceptable alternative site for these activities, refueling or servicing sites must be approved by the Forest Service Contract Administrator in consultation with the District Hydrologist and/or Fish Biologist and have an approved spill containment plan commensurate with the amount of fuel. All equipment shall be in good repair and free of leakage of lubricants, fuels, coolants, and hydraulic fluid.

**FH-4.** To minimize soil and water movement and promote restoration of soil-hydrologic functions, unauthorized route decommissioning may include, but is not limited to, some or all of the following activities: scarification of road bed; partial to full re-contour; removal of culverts and stabilization of stream crossings; elimination of access from connecting roads utilizing barrier devices, such as boulders, berms, and slash material at access points; and application of seed/mulch at all disturbed areas with a seed mixture approved by the Forest Service Botanist. Determination of methods to be used will be completed on a site-by-site basis during Project implementation.
FH-5. Erosion control devices are required where activities occur in RCAs to minimize sediment delivery to streams from road management activities, including temporary road construction, road maintenance, and/or unauthorized route decommissioning. Erosion control devices may include, but are not limited to, certified weed-free straw wattles or bales, slash filter windrows, and/or biodegradable erosion cloth. The District Hydrologist or Fisheries Biologist will consult with the Forest Service Contract Administrator in determining the most effective sediment control method. Erosion control materials will be allowed to deteriorate in place.

FH-6. To maintain the condition of the roads and to minimize soil movement from road surfaces, snow removal shall be done in a manner to preserve and protect the roads to ensure safe and efficient travel as well as prevent unacceptable erosion damage to roads, streams, and adjacent lands:

- A minimum depth of 6 inches of snow must be left to protect roadways and bridges.
- During snow removal operations, banks shall not be undercut nor shall gravel or other road surfacing material be bladed off the roadway surface.
- Snow removal work also includes removing snow slides, minor earth slides, fallen timber, and boulders obstructing normal road surface width, including turnouts. All debris, except snow and ice that is removed from the road surface and ditch, will be deposited away from stream channels at approved locations.
- Drainages and culverts shall be kept functional during and following the roadway use. Any dirt or other inorganic materials cleaned from culvert inlets will be deposited away from stream channels at approved locations.
- Snow berms will not be left on the road surface. Berms left on the shoulder of the road will be removed and/or drainage holes shall be opened and maintained. Drainage holes shall be spaced as required to obtain satisfactory surface drainage without discharge on erodible fill slopes.

FH-7. To prevent degradation of previous and ongoing Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) actions, the functionality of emergency actions implemented under BAER will be protected. BAER actions include hillslope seeding and mulching, road and trail drainage improvements, hillslope stabilization and motor vehicle access restrictions, hazard warning signs, and noxious weed/invasive plant treatments. Any damage to previously implemented BAER actions from the proposed action will be repaired within a reasonable timeframe, but not to exceed 72 hours. However, any damage to previously completed BAER actions will be repaired immediately if threats to human life and safety are expected; or damage to infrastructure related to BAER actions will be repaired immediately if the damage will result in resource impacts (e.g. culvert failure and water quality). Otherwise, damage or impairment of functionality will be repaired or corrected concurrent with erosion control activities needed for salvage harvest and felling of drop-and-leave hazard trees.

FH-8. To minimize soil and water movement and promote the restoration of soil-hydrologic functions associated with the construction of temporary roads, landings, and skid trails, the following will be implemented upon completion of Project activities:

- Temporary Roads—Decommission temporary roads by full obliteration along entire length of disturbance. Upon completion of Project activities, all temporary roads used to implement
Project activities will be reclaimed by ripping or scarifying compacted surfaces to a depth of 12 inches; re-contouring excavated segments to the original slope; and scattering slash or mulch to achieve effective ground cover over at least 50% of the reclaimed surface.

- Landings—Reshape constructed landings used in association with this Project to provide adequate drainage. Constructed landings will be ripped to a depth of 12–18 inches, with slash and/or mulch evenly distributed to achieve effective ground cover over at least 50% of the reclaimed surface.

- Excavated Skid Trails—All newly constructed and existing excavated skid trails used to implement project activities will be reclaimed by ripping or scarifying compacted surfaces to a depth of 12 inches; re-contouring excavated segments to the original slope; and scattering slash or mulch to achieve effective ground cover over at least 50% of the reclaimed surface.

- Skid Trails—Where Primary and Secondary skid trails are located in moderate or high soil burn severity and the Soils Resource analysis identifies moderate-to-high sensitivity, apply the same restoration prescription for excavated skid trails described above. On remaining Primary and Secondary skid trails, remove interior and lateral berms and construct waterbars at angles and at locations to not concentrate flow into natural flow path or swales, and where possible, divert runoff into vegetated, stable areas. Where sediment buffers are lacking or where runout can concentrate flow, utilize slash or other debris at waterbar outlets to diffuse runoff and store sediment. Utilize available slash material for erosion control to minimize soil movement and sediment delivery by placing logs or slash against the ground surface perpendicular to the slope fall-line, and mulch as needed to achieve effective ground cover over at least 50% of the reclaimed area. On Primary skid trails, scarify the trail tread to address soil compaction and initiate soil restoration.

In addition to the above actions, the following will be implemented following completion of Project activities:

- All reclaimed areas will be revegetated with certified weed-free grasses, shrubs, and/or trees to expedite vegetative recovery and further reduce potential sediment delivery. Any material used for revegetation activities will meet requirements of Design Feature NX-2.

- All constructed landings and skid trails will be closed to public use by recontouring access points the first 100 feet or sight distance, whichever is less. If needed, barriers, such as rock, earthen berms, or large coarse woody debris, will be placed to deter unauthorized use. Landing slash or mulch will be used to restore soil-hydrologic function and process and minimize soil and water movement (see Design Feature TH-2).

**FH-9.** Waste resulting from road and trail activities, logging operations, and burning operations (e.g., crankcase oil, filters, grease tubes, oil containers, or other nonbiodegradable waste) shall be removed from the operating area and disposed of properly.

**FH-10.** Ensure that a spill containment kit, commensurate with the amount of fuel stored, and supplies (e.g., shovels, absorbent pads, straw bales, and/or booms) are onsite when equipment or service vehicles are within the Project area. If a spill should occur, State and federal regulations regarding spills would be followed (e.g., any spills resulting in a detectable sheen on water shall be reported to the Environmental Protection Agency National Response Center [1-800-424-8802] and Idaho Department of Environmental Quality [1-800-632-800], and cleanup be initiated within 24 hours of the spill).
**Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the South Pioneer Project**

**FH-11.** Use the SINMAP analysis results in addition to guidelines developed by Chatwin et al. (1994) during project implementation to field-verify or identify moderate- and high-hazard landslide prone areas where commercial timber harvest and road construction is proposed. Site-specific management measures or mitigations shall be required where the proposed activities might initiate landslides.

**Minerals/Geology**

**MG-1.** Reasonable access for mining claimants will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Minerals Administrator, Timber Sale Administrator, and District Ranger.

**Noxious Weeds**

**NX-1.** Avoid or reduce the introduction and spread of weed seeds and propagates by including provisions in all contracts to ensure appropriate off-road equipment is cleaned. All contractors and/or purchaser of any timber sale shall be required to ensure that, prior to moving onto the National Forest System lands, all off-road equipment is cleaned and free of soil, seeds, vegetative matter, or other debris that could contain seeds.

**NX-2.** Ensure seed mixes and/or plant materials used during restoration and soil erosion prevention activities is comprised of certified weed-free native or desirable nonnative seed mixes and/or native cultivars, as recommended by the Forest or District Botanist.

**NX-3.** Require all straw and/or hay brought to the project area for land management purposes be certified weed-free.

**NX-4.** During project implementation, report the identification of undocumented noxious weed populations in the project area to the District Weed specialist for inclusion in noxious weed treatment plans as provided for in existing plans and environmental documents in effect at the time of implementation.

**Traffic and Public Safety**

**PS-1.** A closure order will be issued for public safety when logging operations are occurring within sale areas and associated haul routes. To the maximum extent practicable, notice of closures will be provided at least 2 weeks in advance in local papers and nearby public facilities. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Southwest Region) will be notified of closure orders to facilitate getting information to the public, including hunters.

**PS-2.** Logging contractors shall install signs to notify the public of hazards with respect to active logging truck traffic. Signs will be located near the public access entry points to the project area. The contractor will be responsible for maintaining the signs during the life of the project.

**Recreation**

**RE-1.** Coordinate Purchaser/Contractor campsites with the Recreation Specialist to avoid or minimize impacts to dispersed recreation users.

**RE-2.** Trees will be directionally felled away from authorized trails where feasible. Any stumps within 3 feet of the finished slope of the trail will be flush cut to meet Forest Service trail standards.

**RE-3.** Identify project area authorized trails in the timber sale contract. For the authorized trails falling within or immediately adjacent to harvest units, specific contract provisions will be
included to protect National Forest System improvements; maintain access or use; and protect or minimize impacts to trail surfaces, trail heads, trail access, and recreation opportunities. The Sale Administrator shall designate all skid trails crossing authorized trails and shall consult with the Recreation Specialist on appropriate maintenance or repair necessary to return the trail to its preexisting condition.

**RE-4.** Prohibit snow plowing on the following roads within the Project area from November 15 to April 15 to allow winter access to yurts: NFS 394B (Stargaze Yurt), NFS 362F (Skyline Yurt), and 025M/362D (Rocky Ridge Yurt).

**Range Management**

**RM-1.** Notify the Range Management Specialist of the timing of project activities, including salvage and hazard tree felling, reforestation, and road activities. Inform permittee(s), through the allotment annual operating instructions (AOIs), of pending project activities to minimize the potential for conflicts and allow for short-term modification of grazing practices where necessary. Short-term modifications of grazing practices will be coordinated with the Hydrologist, Fish Biologist, Silviculturist, and Soil Scientist to ensure compliance with the Forest Plan Rangeland Resource direction and to support recovery of desired vegetation conditions and related biophysical resources.

**Rare Plants**

**RP-1.** Protect all live and dead whitebark pine trees unless they pose an imminent hazard to public safety. Avoid damaging live whitebark pine trees during implementation to the maximum extent practicable.²

**RP-2.** Project activities would avoid to the maximum extent practicable² occupied and/or field verified high potential habitat of Sacajawea’s bitterroot or Idaho dwarf-primrose. Plant Consideration Areas (PCAs) will be developed by the Forest Botanist for occupied habitat within the project area. The PCA shall include a 500-meter zone from the outside edge of the occupied habitat area. The PCA (Figure A-2) shall include zones formed by concentric rings (100 meters, 300 meters, 500 meters), originating from the outside edge of the occupied habitat area to the 500-meter line. The following direction will apply to these zones:

- Prior to salvage and hazard tree felling operations occurring in PCAs, and during the growing season (approximately May–July), Sacajawea’s bitterroot populations (Pilot Peak PCA) will be identified and flagged by Forest Botany staff. Felling operations shall be performed in a manner to avoid felling trees into those identified areas.
- No salvage shall occur in occupied habitat and within the 100-meter buffer zone, unless approved by the Forest Botanist. Felling and removing by whole tree yarding may occur within the 300- and 500-meter buffers.
- No log decking, newly constructed landings, equipment/vehicle turnarounds, or off-road equipment use will occur within the PCAs outside of existing road prisms.

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² Maximum Extent Practicable—Available and capable of being done after taking into consideration cost, existing technology, and logistics considering overall project purposes (40 CFR 230.10(a)(2))
• Piling and burning is not allowed within the occupied habitat or 100-meter buffer zone of the PCAs. Slash generated from harvest/salvage activities within a PCA will be lopped and scattered within the harvest area or piled/burned within the existing road prism.

• Dust abatement shall occur along roads within the PCAs (i.e., NFS roads 380) during project activities. This dust abatement shall be conducted via water application to minimize impacts from dust to rare plants and pollinator forage resources.

Figure A-2. Example of Plant Consideration Areas (PCAs) along roads and trails identified for either salvage or felling with an emphasis on hazard tree mitigation. This example shows how treatments would be applied within PCAs Zones

RP-3. To protect rare plant species associated with riparian habitats, no decked material or slash piles will be allowed in riparian plant communities. Decking of material is allowed during winter operations while the ground is frozen or snow covered.

RP-4. Heavy equipment or other machinery used in salvage or felling operations is to remain outside of riparian plant communities or restricted, as stated in Design Feature FH-1, to existing road prisms within RCAs.

RP-5. Field surveys will be conducted prior to salvage operations, as needed, where a high potential for occupied rare plant habitat is identified or additional information is needed in known occupied habitat. Site-specific protection measures will be developed by the Forest Botanist in coordination with implementation personnel. If necessary, new protective measures or modification of the existing design features will be applied thru timber sale contract provision B(T)6.24 or other direction.

RP-6. Tree planting in the whitebark pine reforestation units will avoid planting natural openings not supporting trees. To prevent disturbance and conifer encroachment in occupied, but dormant,
Sacajawea bitterroot habitat, tree seedlings will be planted no farther than 10 feet from evidence of a previously existing tree.

**Timber Harvest**

**TH-1.** Snow plowing may occur on established groomed ski and snow machine trails within the project area and on all haul routes as needed to facilitate salvage harvest and hazard tree removal activities, except as stated in RE-4.

**TH-2.** Transport yard trees whole to the landing and manufacture them at the landing to reduce compaction and aid in soil amelioration. After manufacturing, the tops/limbs/branches will be hauled back and utilized as slash material on skid trails within tractor/jammer units or utilized on temporary roads and landings. Apply slash to temporary roads or landings (see FH-8).

**TH-3.** Limit the grade of constructed skid trails to a maximum of 30%.

**TH-4.** Temporary roads and skid trails used to facilitate proposed mechanical treatments are either identified as new locations or aligned with existing unauthorized roads. The time between constructing and decommissioning each temporary road and skid trail will be minimized to the maximum extent practicable. Both activities (constructing and decommissioning) will generally occur during the same field season. However, additional mitigation (e.g., water bars/cross ditches, slash filter windrows, silt fencing, straw bales/wattles) will be applied to temporary roads and skid trails that remain operational/open over the winter to minimize soil erosion and sediment delivery during spring snowmelt and runoff.

**Engineering/Transportation**

**TR-1.** Road maintenance will be performed on NFS roads to reduce resource impacts during implementation and improve watershed conditions. Road maintenance activities will include, but are not limited to, road prism blading, spot aggregate placement, drainage improvements, roadway clearing, and roadway ditch/culvert cleaning.

**TR-2.** Magnesium chloride (MgCl\textsubscript{2}) will be applied to about 6 miles of NFS road 384 road to mitigate dust and increase visibility for public use. Applying MgCl\textsubscript{2} will be prohibited within 6.1 meters (~20 feet) of designated critical bull trout habitat (i.e., Crooked River and Pikes Fork) and within 3.0 meters (~10 feet) of live water stream crossings within the project area. This mitigation is designed to protect listed bull trout and their habitat from direct entry of MgCl\textsubscript{2} during application (wind or splash from vehicles travelling on roadway) as well as movement of MgCl\textsubscript{2} ions over time that could indirectly enter habitat following application (run-off from rainstorm following treatment).

**Wildlife Resources**

**WL-1.** Appropriate provisions (i.e., provision B(T)(6.24) to provide protective measures for known Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate and Region 4 Sensitive (TEPC/S) wildlife species and habitats shall be included in all contracts. If new TEPC/S species, denning, nesting, or roosting sites are discovered during implementation, the Wildlife Biologist shall be contacted to specify mitigation measures needed to avoid or minimize impacts. The Wildlife Biologist, Contract Representative, and other appropriate resource representatives will coordinate any needed modifications to prescribed treatments or activities to maintain key features of nesting/denning/roosting habitat, to avoid disrupting nesting/denning activities, and to comply with Forest Plan direction and/or law.
WL-2. Trees and snags with raptor nests (i.e., large stick nests) shall be retained. The Wildlife Biologist shall be notified if any raptor nests are discovered during layout and implementation. The Wildlife Biologist will make a site-specific assessment to determine raptor occupancy; species; and any appropriate protective measures (e.g., timing restrictions, no-treatment buffers, prescription modifications). Raptor nest trees and snags identified as hazard trees may be felled but only after consultation with the Wildlife Biologist and a determination of occupancy and appropriate timing of the action to avoid impacts to nesting raptors.

WL-3. Public motorized use shall be restricted on Maintenance Level (ML) 1, ML 2A, seasonally closed, and temporary roads used for implementing project activities. While these routes may be used for implementation purposes, they will remain closed to public motorized uses to minimize impacts to wildlife. Temporary, ML 1, and ML 2A roads shall not be put on the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). Signage and/or barriers will be used as appropriate to prevent motorized use by the public. Public access on gated roads that are seasonally open shall only be allowed during the open period designated on the MVUM. Temporary roads shall be decommissioned and ML 1/ML 2A roads shall be effectively re-closed as soon as practicable following salvage operations.

WL-4. Operational loss of aspen snags (>8 inches dbh) will be avoided to the maximum extent practicable during salvage harvest.

WL-5. Hazard tree felling, salvage harvest, temporary road construction, and ML 1 road opening/maintenance activities shall be prohibited within identified flammulated owl historical nesting areas from May 1 through August 15 until annual surveys have been completed by a Wildlife Biologist or technician. Surveys, using an established protocol, shall be conducted during the optimal detection period of the breeding season (approximately May 15–June 30) to assess occupancy and locate active nest sites. Site-specific protection measures for active nest sites falling within hazard tree felling and salvage harvest areas will be developed by the Wildlife Biologist in coordination with implementation personnel. Nest trees shall not be harvested in salvage areas outside of hazard tree removal zones. Nest trees identified as hazard trees may be felled or harvested; however, they shall not be felled during the breeding season (May 1–August 15) if occupied.

WL-6. In patches of low-to-moderate vegetation burn severity within 300 feet of open NFS routes, sign or mark large ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir snags (>20 inches dbh) that are not deemed hazards to human health and safety. Snags will be marked using a combination of “Wildlife Tree” signs affixed to the snag and/or orange tree-marking paint. Marking these snags will occur during or after implementation of the proposed salvage and hazard tree felling actions, but before the area is opened up for personal use firewood collection.

WL-7. Hazard tree felling, salvage harvest, temporary road construction/decommissioning, ML 1 road reopening/closing shall not be implemented within calving protection areas from May 1 through June 30.

Vegetation Management

VM-1. Retain at least the maximum number of snags post-implementation depicted in Table A-6 (USDA Forest Service 2010, Appendix A) within each size class where available by salvage harvest unit.
Table A-1. Minimum snags retained post-implementation (derived from Forest Plan, Appendix A Table A-6 for the Salvage [Non-Hazard-Tree] PVGs (PVGs 1–4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Snag Class</th>
<th>PVG 1 Snags/Acre</th>
<th>PVG 2 Snags/Acre</th>
<th>PVG 3 Snags/Acre</th>
<th>PVG 4 Snags/Acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10–19.9 inches</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥20 inches</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Height</td>
<td>15 feet</td>
<td>30 feet</td>
<td>30 feet</td>
<td>30 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Where large snags (>20 inches dbh) are unavailable, additional snags (>10 inches dbh) shall be retained where available to meet at least the maximum total number snags per acre depicted in Table A-6.
- If substituting smaller snags for the larger (>20 inches dbh) snag class is necessary, the replacements shall consist of snags from the largest diameters available.
- The average diameter of retention snags shall be equal to or greater than the average diameter of salvaged snags (i.e., retained snags will be a representative sample of the range of snag diameter at breast height pre-harvest).
- If a harvest unit includes both hazard tree salvage and salvage outside hazard tree removal areas, then the design feature for minimal snag retention shall be met for the entire harvest unit; however, snags shall be retained in the portion of the unit located away from the open road or trail where hazard trees are a concern.
- Snag species marked for retention will give preference to ponderosa pine first, and then Douglas-fir. In units where ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir are co-dominant, both species will be retained although ponderosa pine representation will be greater. Lodgepole pine snags may also contribute to minimum snags per acre standards in harvest units where lodgepole pine is a major seral component.
- Snags shall be retained in clumps as well as some individuals scattered across the harvest unit.
- A portion of the imminently dead trees (90% probability of mortality) shall be retained onsite to meet the minimum snag retention standard. The ‘portion’ retained should be similar to their representation in the salvage unit (i.e., if 10% of the salvageable trees fall within this group, then approximately 10% of the retained snags would come from this group).

VM-2. Bedding of sheep and salting of livestock in plantations will be prohibited until plantation trees have grown to a size that reduces their susceptibility to damage from livestock (Forest Plan Standard RAST08 [USDA Forest Service 2010]). Livestock use should be discouraged within plantations until they have been certified, minimizing conflicts as outlined in Design Feature RM-1.

VM-3. Livestock use should be discouraged in progeny sites, seed orchards, and plantations that have not been certified (Forest Plan Guideline RAGU06 [USDA Forest Service 2010, p. III-48]). While livestock are present within the allotment and pasture(s) with reforestation units for up to 5 years following planting, the permittee is required to employ a herder/rider to either ensure livestock are not within reforestation units and/or to push livestock from units. If the permittee
cannot keep livestock out of reforestation units, the permittee would be required to take non-use for resource protection in the project area with reforestation units for up to 5 years.

**Visual Quality**

**VQ-1.** Constructed log landings, roads, gravel pits, borrow areas, and bladed skid trails should be minimized within sensitive view sheds to the maximum extent possible.

**VQ-2.** In sensitivity level 1, foreground areas around developed sites and State Highway 21 (e.g., campgrounds, developed viewpoints, trails, and trailheads) stumps should be cut flush within the first 100 feet and 6 inches or less in height from 100 to 300 feet. From sensitivity level 2 trails and yurts, stumps should be cut flush within the first 100 feet and 6 inches or less in height from 100-300 feet; stumps should be cut to 6 inches or less in height within the immediate foreground (300 feet) of roads. Color contrast caused by bright fresh cut stump faces should be reduced by covering or dusting stump faces with a soil or duff material.

**Table A-2. Roads and trails by sensitivity level and stump height treatment type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name or Number</th>
<th>Facility Type</th>
<th>Sensitivity Level</th>
<th>0–100 feet Treatment Type</th>
<th>100–300 feet Treatment Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State Highway 21</td>
<td>State Highway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna Creek CG</td>
<td>Campground</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road 312</td>
<td>NFS Road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road 316</td>
<td>NFS Road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road 351</td>
<td>NFS Road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road 384</td>
<td>NFS Road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkhorn</td>
<td>Yurt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Ridge</td>
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<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
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<td>Skyline</td>
<td>Yurt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stargaze</td>
<td>Yurt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 700</td>
<td>Trail</td>
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<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 701</td>
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<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 703</td>
<td>Trail</td>
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<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trail 704</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 707</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 708</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 709</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trail 710</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Flush</td>
<td>Less than 6 inches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Temporary roads and skid trails should blend into the characteristic landscape of the surrounding area to the maximum extent practicable. To accomplish this blending, practices such as the following should be considered and implemented where applicable:

- Design cut and fill banks to be sloped to accommodate natural revegetation and to reduce sharp contrasts viewed from any distance.

- Where skid trails meet sensitivity level 1 and 2 roads, they should intersect at a right angle and, where practicable, curve within 100 feet from the road to minimize the length of the visible skid trail corridor from the road, and debris should be scattered across the skid trail from the road edge out 50 feet in both directions.

- Where skid trails meet sensitivity level 1 and 2 trails, debris should be scattered across the skid trail from the trail edge out 50 feet in both directions.

### Monitoring Elements

#### Rare Plants

Prior to implementing any hazard tree fell and leave or hazard tree fell and remove actions on roads or trails in the South Pioneer Salvage and Reforestation project area, the overlap with the Plant Conservation Areas (PCA) for the Pilot Peak population of Sacajawea’s bitterroot (*Lewisia sacajawean*) must be delineated on the ground (Design Feature RP-2) (Priority 1 in 2017 Botany Survey Plan, project record). Occupied habitat and the surrounding 100-meter buffer will be marked as fell and leave only zones, and piling/burning within those areas will be prohibited. Fell and removal of hazard trees will be allowed within the outer rings of the PCA (300/500 meters) at Pilot Peak, but some restrictions will apply.

For complete details of the road and trailside hazard tree activities within Sacajawea’s bitterroot PCAs see Priority 1 in the 2017 Botany Survey Plan (project record). Population monitoring of other rare plant populations that may have been affected by the Pioneer Fire is described in Priority 2 and 3 of the 2017 Botany Survey Plan (project record).
Reforestation

Regeneration monitoring (stocking and walkthrough surveys) would be completed to assess reforestation needs and whether reforestation objectives were accomplished for all areas identified for reforestation activities, including locations classified in the EA for natural regeneration, tree planting, riparian restoration, and whitebark pine reforestation. Artificial regeneration (tree planting or seeding) needs will be determined based on stocking standards in the Forest Plan (TRST01) and site-specific conditions evaluated by a certified silviculturist. If a site requires planting, reforestation (plantation) survival surveys would be completed, in accordance with the Silvicultural Practices Handbook (FSH 2409.17), following the first and third growing season to determine mortality causes and to estimate seedling survival. Reforestation survival exams, as required by FSM 2472.4, FSM 2496.14, and FSH 2409.14 (Chapter 61.4 [draft]), would utilize national sampling methods and standards to promote consistency in reporting seedling survival data.

Terrestrial Wildlife

Flammulated Owl

Surveys would be implemented annually for flammulated owl utilizing the Northern Region Landbird Monitoring Program—Flammulated Owl Protocol (Cilimburg 2007). Surveys would occur in the project area during salvage and hazard tree treatment implementation and 2 years post-implementation. Established routes along open NFS roads would be used. Surveys would occur between May 15 and June 30. Coordination would occur between the Timber Sale Administrator and Wildlife Biologist prior to May 1 to identify priority survey routes based upon anticipated implementation schedules for areas where historically occupied habitats overlap proposed salvage and hazard tree treatments. The purpose of the monitoring is to survey for occupancy as it relates to Design Features WL-1, WL-2, and WL-5, monitor the effects of salvage and hazard tree treatments in occupied habitat upon continued occupancy, and monitor the effectiveness of Design Features WL-1 and WL-2.

Adaptive Management Strategy—Revegetation to Provide Screening of Ground Disturbances in South Pioneer Salvage and Reforestation Area

South Pioneer—Adaptive Management Strategy for Visual Quality Objectives

Monitoring included in the proposed action for the South Pioneer Salvage and Reforestation EA are discussed in the “Monitoring Activities” section in Chapter 1. Monitoring of viewsheds would occur as outlined in the monitoring plan (Table A-3) following completion of proposed activities to determine if the objective Visual Quality Objective (VQO) identified in Forest Plan Management Area (MA) 7 standard 0763, as amended by the 2016 Becker Integrated Resource Project Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (DN/FONSI) (USDA Forest Service 2016), has been attained. If monitoring indicates the VQOs have been met, no additional rehabilitation measures would be implemented. If attainment has not been reached, as part of adaptive management, additional rehabilitation measures consistent with Design Features FH-7, FH-8, and NX-2 would be implemented.
Monitoring of MA 7 standard 0763 (USDA Forest Service 2010a, p. III-192)\(^{23}\) states, “Meet the VQOs as represented on the Forest VQO Map, and where indicated with bold text in the table below as viewed from the following areas/corridors.” The sensitive travel routes and/or use areas identified for monitoring were selected based on which travel routes/areas are assigned a sensitivity level 1 or 2 and where no salvage acres are visible from the route or area based on the viewshed analysis in MA 7.

Table A-3. Management Area 7 Standard 0763 table identifying the sensitive travel routes or use areas to be monitored in bold text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensitive Travel Route or Use Area</th>
<th>Sensitivity Level</th>
<th>Visual Quality Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway 21, except as identified below from Banner Ridge South to Whoop-um Up Trailhead</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highway 21 from Banner Ridge South to Whoop-um Up Trailhead</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Trails 051, 158, 197</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edna Creek, Black Rock Campgrounds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Roads 312, 316, 327, 348, 384</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Roads 315, 333, 351</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Trails 048, 049, 166, 167, 168, 169</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Trail 171</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Trails, non-motorized summer: 700 - 730</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Trails, non-motorized winter: 700-730</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yurts: Whispering Pine, Rocky Ridge, Stargaze, Skyline, Banner Ridge and Elkhorn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forest Plan direction also includes the following standard and guideline regarding the duration of time allowed for a site to recover to the objective VQO identified in Standard 0763 following a disturbance:

- SCST02—Allow for short-term reductions in VQOs to accommodate Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) projects, emergency needs for protection of investments, and public safety needs. When reducing VQOs, attempt to meet the next-highest objective at the closest viewer distance or most relevant distance given the probable sensitive viewer.
- SCGU02—Duration of visual impacts from ground disturbing and vegetation removal activities to allow for herbaceous vegetative recovery of ground cover may extend to three

years in fgR, fgPR, mgR, and mgPR. Consider timely initiation of reseeding in areas where natural recovery is questionable.

Where SCST02 requires meeting the VQO within 3–15 years (short-term as defined in the Forest Plan, Chapter 3), then scheduled monitoring for revegetation in areas, would occur in the fall prior to leaf drop when plants are fully grown for the year, and are fully leafed out. Revegetation growth would be monitored at year 5 following implementation of planting activities and seeding activities.

If monitoring indicates the adaptive management actions are triggered (Table A-4), then adaptive management action would be taken, and monitoring would be completed every other year for up to 15 years or until the shrubs reach an average height of 2 feet and combined forb, shrub, and tree coverage is greater than 20% in 70% of the viewshed.

If shrubs/tree height and forb/shrub/tree cover is reached, then monitoring would cease.

Where SCGU02 directs the Forest Service to meet the VQO within 3 years, to the maximum extent practicable, scheduled monitoring for revegetation in areas, would occur in the fall prior to leaf drop when plants are fully grown for the year, and are fully leafed out. Revegetation growth would be monitored for 3 years following planting and seeding activities. Revegetation would be monitored at year 3 following implementation of planting and seeding activities.

If monitoring indicates that the adaptive management actions are triggered, then adaptive management action would be taken and monitoring would be completed every other year for up to 9 years or until the shrubs/trees reach an average height of 2 feet, and combined forb/shrub/tree coverage is greater than 20% in 70% of the viewshed.

If shrub/tree height and forb/shrub cover is reached, then monitoring would cease.

If, during monitoring, vegetation has not reached the necessary height and coverage along designated sensitive routes (bold text in Table A-3) and ground disturbances are not screened to a degree that the threshold/trigger points outlined in Table A-4 and Figure A-3, then additional efforts to meet the expected outcomes will be taken.

Table A-4 and Figure A-3 summarize the thresholds/trigger points, actions, and timing for the adaptive management strategy for the South Pioneer Project area. Monitoring would be completed as described above to determine if trigger points are reached, and the actions taken to remedy impacts to scenery resource related to screening ground disturbances of the harvest areas.
Table A-4. Summary of the reforestation unit(s) adaptive management strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetation Height and Coverage</th>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>Adaptive Management Action</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                | If shrubs and trees have not reached a height of two feet in the foreground (0 to 300 feet from sensitive travel route/areas) and combined shrub/forb/tree cover has not reached 20% (in 70% of the viewshed). | Areas of low coverage along sensitive travel routes and areas of concern, denoted above in **bold** text in Standard 0763 table, would be planted with native shrubs and/or trees and, if appropriate, seeded with the approved seed mix (refer to Design Feature NX-2). Tree seedlings and shrubs would be planted in areas with low survival rate (<50% coverage). Planting and seeding would occur late in the fall prior to rains and snowfall. | Monitoring would be completed at the end of the growing season when shrubs and forbs have reached their full expansion and range for the season. Monitoring would occur as described below:  
  - For Standard SCST02: every other year following adjustment until year 15 after proposed action implementation or until desired conditions are met.  
  - For Guideline SCGU02: every year following adjustment until year 3 after proposed action implementation or until desired conditions are met.  
  The adaptive management action would be put in place in the fall, prior to fall rain and/or snowfall. |
Figure A-3. Graphic of monitoring triggers and thresholds
Appendix B: Agency Response to Comments Received During the 30-day Notice and Comment Period on the EA

The Response to Comments document is posted on the project [website](https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694).

To access the Response to Comments document, please click on the “Decision” under the Project Documents heading near the bottom of the web page which will open the “Decision Tab” where this document is located.
Appendix C: Summary of Public Involvement for this Project and efforts for the overall Pioneer Fire Area since August 2016
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Table C-1. Pioneer Fire public communication summary, including for fire suppression, BAER, actions taken to address public health and safety, restoration, recovery and opportunities to salvage wood products as needed to avoid a loss of commodity value sufficient to jeopardize the Agency's ability to accomplish project objectives directly related to resource protection or restoration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONS PRESENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08/24/16</td>
<td>LT. Governor Call</td>
<td>• Discuss salvage logging                                                                rende.</td>
<td>• Forest Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/01/16</td>
<td>Boise Forest Coalition (BFC) Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>• Receive update on Pioneer Fire suppression, BAER, and Restoration planning efforts</td>
<td>• BFC members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/08/16</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>• Update on suppression activities and South BAER work that overlapped the South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project area.</td>
<td>• Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Representatives, including Chairman's consultation designee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/14/16</td>
<td>Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Meeting</td>
<td>• Discuss Pioneer Fire and wildlife issues</td>
<td>• Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison and Archeologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/14/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Spoke about restoration opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/14/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest plans for salvage and coordination of public information to hunting community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/14/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Participation in upcoming field reviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/27/16</td>
<td>Pioneer Fire Recovery and Restoration Tour</td>
<td>• Transparency tour, collection forum for public and stakeholder questions and concerns</td>
<td>• Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/16</td>
<td>Idaho Statesman Interview</td>
<td>• Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation focus, emphasis on yurts.</td>
<td>• Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>• <a href="http://www.idahostatesman.com/outdoors/playing-outdoors/article107735427.html">link</a></td>
<td>• Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13/16</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>• Update on suppression activities</td>
<td>• County Commissioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Update on South Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) work and introduction on North BAER work; combined BAER efforts to include the project areas for both the North and South projects to be proposed later during the fall of 2016</td>
<td>• Congressional Staffers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13/16</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss/consult on immediate post fire activities to address public health and safety tied to hazard trees along travel routes and within developed sites to be used in the winter (i.e., snowmobile routes)</td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• A prominent US daily newspaper, serving the Boise, Idaho metropolitan area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Print Recipients: Approximately 32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/12/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Digital Recipients: Approximately 3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/13/16</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/13/16</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/17/16</td>
<td>Forest Health Protection (FHP)</td>
<td>• Team 1 members meet with FHP to discuss hazard tree identification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• FHP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/26/16</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
<td>• Pioneer Fire Update</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• United States Fish &amp; Wildlife Service (USFWS)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• National Marine Fisheries Service/National Oceanic &amp; Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/27/16</td>
<td>Pioneer Fire Recovery &amp; Restoration Tour</td>
<td>• Stakeholder field review to discuss:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recovery &amp; Reforestation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Salvage Logging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Proposed actions in Riparian Conservation Areas (RCAs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Industry</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• County Commissioners</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Congressional Staffers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28/16</td>
<td>State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) meeting and Field Review</td>
<td>• Field review of Pioneer Fire actions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• SHPO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/31/16</td>
<td>SHPO Consultation</td>
<td>• Consultation on management activities associated with the Pioneer Fire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• BS-17-3264: Pioneer Fire Forest Roads 362 &amp; 380 hazard tree removal</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• SHPO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/02/16</td>
<td>Region 4 Board of Directors Tour</td>
<td>• Regional Directors meeting &amp; field review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/02/16</td>
<td>US Geological Survey (USGS) &amp; Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) Field Review</td>
<td>• Field Tour: Rock Creek drainage at mouth &amp; Clear Creek National Forest System (NFS) road 582</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Initial review to provide USGS and IDEQ on-the-ground view of post-fire conditions relative to potential for debris flows and flooding</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• IDEQ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• USGS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/03/16</td>
<td>BFC Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>• Review Charter and membership</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Receive updates on Boise National Forest projects</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Receive update on Pioneer Fire and discuss next steps for BFC involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• County Commissioners</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Congressional Staffers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 11/04/16   | BAER Tour                                                                        | • Media tour focusing on safety messages and purpose of BAER work. Locations included:  
  • Hot Springs Campground  
  • Clear Creek  
• KIVI Channel 6 is the ABC-affiliated television station for the Treasure and Magic Valleys of Idaho.  
• KNIN Channel 9 is the Fox-affiliated television station for Southwest Idaho  
• Idaho Statesman  
• Idaho World                                                                                                                                 |
| 11/07/16   | Pioneer Fire Recovery & Restoration External Update released                     | • First released external update, used Pioneer Fire Information list  
• 476 diverse subscribers                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/08/16   | Pine Flats Hazard Tree Salvage Project, Campground Tour and project evaluation    | • discussed the marking criteria for fire damaged trees and looked at examples  
• Slash treatment options  
• looked for indicators of root rot or stem decay  
• Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team personnel                                                                                                                                 |
| 11/10/16   | Idaho Water Supply Meeting                                                       | • Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) office in Boise, presentation on the Pioneer BAER assessment and treatments  
• IDWR  
• Forest Service Personnel                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 11/10/16   | Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation Meeting                                      | • Update on South BAER work and introduction on North BAER work; combined BAER efforts to include the project areas for both the North and South projects to be proposed later during the fall of 2016  
• Discuss/consult on immediate post fire activities to address public health and safety tied to hazard trees along travel routes and within developed sites to be used in the winter (i.e., snowmobile routes)  
• Introduced proposed action development for the North and South Pioneer Fire salvage and Reforestation Project  
• Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Representatives, including Chairman’s consultation designee  
• Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Archeologist, BAER Team Lead, District Ranger-Stephaney Kerley, South Pioneer Project Ranger-Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger Lead-John Kidd |
| 11/17/16   | BFC meeting                                                                      | • The forest met with the BFC about riparian conservation areas (RCAs)  
• Collaborative  
• Forest Service Personnel                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 11/18/16   | Winter Recreation Meeting                                                        | • Brant Petersen met with a local winter recreation group to discuss safety considerations  
• Recreationists  
• Forest Service Personnel                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 11/18/16   | Idaho Forest Practices Act Advisory Committee                                   | • Associated Logging Contractors Building in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho. Presentation on the Pioneer BAER assessment and treatments  
• Industry                                                                                                                                                                                          |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/22/16</td>
<td>Field review of Clear Creek and South Fork Payette River</td>
<td>• In response to concerns from the District Ranger about potential downstream risks from post-fire conditions such as debris flows, transportable/floatable woody debris, and flooding concerns, a field trip was taken by the North and South Zone Hydrologists in the Clear Creek Drainage (Lowman Range District) to evaluate and discuss the need for preemptive action related to those concerns. Rick Ward from IDFG also attended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/01/16</td>
<td>BFC Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>• Review and approve changes to the charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Receive update on November 17 RCA meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Receive update on Pioneer Fire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 12/01/16   | SHPO Consultation                                                                 | • SHPO Consultation BS-17-3275: Pioneer Fire NFS road 362N hazard tree removal
• BS-17-3270: Pioneer Fire Pine Flats Campground hazard tree removal |
| 12/01/16   | Kiwanis Club Meeting                                                               | • Update on Pioneer Fire and planning efforts                                 |
| 12/06/16   | Pioneer Fire Recovery & Restoration External Update released                      | • Used govdelivery platform to distribute                                     |
| 12/12/16   | Pioneer Fire Roadside Hazard Tree Salvage Project CE—Field Visit with Regional Office Timber Staff to Coulter Sale | • Asses how the Regional Forester waivers granted for the Coulter Roadside Hazard Timber Sale were being implemented on the ground |
|            |                                                                                   | • Regional Office Measurement specialists
• Timber Program manager
• Forest Service personnel
• Purchaser representative for Boise Cascade |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/14/16</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
<td>• Phase 1 meeting • Emergency consultation-Pioneer Fire • 2016 BAER work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel • USFWS • NOAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/17</td>
<td>Pine Flats Tour and Brown Brothers Logging Interview</td>
<td>• On-site recording of Pioneer Fire hazard tree salvage logging within the high use Pine Flats Campground site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Industry (Boise Cascade &amp; Brown Brothers) • Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/11/17</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
<td>• Strategy of consultation • Emergency actions &amp; proposed BAER projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel • USFWS • NOAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/17/17</td>
<td>Pioneer Fire Recovery &amp; Restoration External Update released</td>
<td>• Used govdelivery platform to distribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 675 diverse subscribers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/24/17</td>
<td>BFC Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>• Vote in new Steering Committee Members • Receive information on IFRP Conference, Bogus Basin Decision and the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) • Review and provide feedback on Pioneer Fire Draft Proposed Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative • Industry • County Commissioners • Congressional Staffers • Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/28/17</td>
<td>Public Scoping</td>
<td>• Web Posting of Scoping Letters and Attachments • Hard copy mailing of Scoping Letters and Attachments • Tribal letters and emails of Scoping Letters and Attachments • GovDelivery Bulletin to Project subscribers • Legal Notices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• North Project web page: <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50789">https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50789</a> • South Project web page <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694">https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694</a> • Hardcopy mailing list included 198 agencies, groups, and individuals for the North Pioneer Project and 147 agencies, groups, and individuals for the South Pioneer Project • Tribal scoping letters and emails were sent to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (North and South) and the Nez Perce Tribe (North Only) • Govdelivery bulletin sent to 695 subscribers on the North Project and 686 subscribers on the South Project • Legal notices published in the Idaho Statesman (newspaper of record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/30/17</td>
<td>Idaho Parks and Recreation (IDPR) Event</td>
<td>• IDPR sponsored event, fundraiser and information exchange to restore yurts within the Boise National Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Collaborative • Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/30/17</td>
<td>AFRC Meeting: Payette National Forest first hour and Boise National Forest last hour concerning Pioneer Fire. Presented estimated volume and total acres.</td>
<td>• Industry&lt;br&gt;• Congressional Staffers&lt;br&gt;• Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06/17</td>
<td>Update on Pioneer Fire and planning efforts</td>
<td>• Boise County Commissioners&lt;br&gt;• Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/08/17</td>
<td>An open house forum in Boise, for the public to ask questions and provide written/electronic response to the proposed actions (scoping documents).</td>
<td>• Idaho Statesman&lt;br&gt;• Idaho World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/09/17</td>
<td>Phase 1 North &amp; South Pioneer Fire Projects</td>
<td>• Forest Service Personnel&lt;br&gt;• USFWS&lt;br&gt;• NOAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/09/17</td>
<td>An open house forum in Idaho City, for the public to ask questions and provide written/electronic response to the proposed actions (scoping documents).</td>
<td>• 297 emails—Boise Basin School District&lt;br&gt;• Idaho World—1415 contacts&lt;br&gt;• Idaho Statesman&lt;br&gt;• Idaho World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/09/17</td>
<td>Update: BAER 2016 actions completed; BAER 2017 actions to start when weather permits this spring/summer&lt;br&gt;Update: Hazard tree falling along snowmobile routes and around yurts: completed&lt;br&gt;Update: Hazard Tree Removal Projects on Road 380 and South Road 362&lt;br&gt;Update: Pine Flats Campground Hazard Tree Removal Project&lt;br&gt;Update: North NFS road 362 Hazard Tree Removal Project&lt;br&gt;Update: South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project&lt;br&gt;Update: North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project&lt;br&gt;Introduction: additional public health and safety resource protection, recovery and restoration projects to be developed in 2017–2018</td>
<td>• Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Representatives, including Chairman’s consultation designee&lt;br&gt;• Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Archeologist, BAER Team Lead, District Ranger-Stephaney Kerley, South Pioneer Project Ranger-Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger Lead-John Kidd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/10/17</td>
<td>An open house forum in Garden Valley, for the public to ask questions and provide written/electronic response to the proposed actions (scoping documents).</td>
<td>• 320 emails—Garden Valley School District&lt;br&gt;• Idaho World—1415 contacts&lt;br&gt;• Idaho Statesman&lt;br&gt;• Idaho World</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the South Pioneer Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Topics and Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/23/17</td>
<td>BFC Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Review and discuss draft Pioneer Fire scoping comments, Receive information on upcoming Pioneer Fire research projects, Review and discuss Idaho Parks and Recreation proposed trail project, Collaborative, Industry, County Commissioners, Congressional Staffers, Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/28/17</td>
<td>South Fork, Payette River Meeting</td>
<td>Discussed the increased potential for flooding and debris flows on the South Fork Payette River due to the Pioneer Fire, Discussed agency roles and responsibilities, (information sharing) coordinated public communications regarding river conditions, USFS, BLM, IDEQ, USGS Idaho Water Resources, Idaho Outfitter &amp; Guide Licensing Board, Idaho Office of Emergency Management, Idaho Department of Lands, Garden Valley Fire Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1/17–3/2/17</td>
<td>Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership (IFRP) Conference</td>
<td>Panel discussion on the Pioneer Fire, including planned and ongoing recovery and restoration efforts, Forest Service Personnel, Stakeholders representing collaborative groups from across the state of Idaho, Congressional Representatives, (Complete list located in project record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2/17–3/5/17</td>
<td>Idaho Sportsman Show</td>
<td>An opportunity to answer public questions and concerns regarding the Pioneer Fire efforts, Opportunity to thank the public for their continued support with future Pioneer Fire recovery and restoration efforts, Guides, Outfitters, Forest Recreationists, Forest Service Personnel, Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/08/17</td>
<td>Fort Hall Shoshone-Bannock Technical Team Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>Updates provided to Tribal Representatives. Previous communication had been through email, phone calls and letters, Hazard tree falling along snowmobile routes and around yurts: completed, Hazard Tree Removal Projects on Road 380 and South Road 362, Pine Flats Campground Hazard Tree Removal Project, North Road 362 Hazard Tree Removal Project, South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project, North Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Project, Introduction: additional public health and safety resource protection, recovery and restoration projects to be developed in 2017–2018, Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Representatives, including Chairman’s consultation designee, Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Archeologist, BAER Team Lead, District Ranger-Stephaney Kerley, South Pioneer Project Ranger-Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger Lead-John Kidd</td>
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### Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the South Pioneer Project

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<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>03/08/17</td>
<td>Pioneer Fire Recovery &amp; Restoration External Update released</td>
<td>- Used govdelivery platform to distribute</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 684 diverse subscribers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/09/17</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>- Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Representatives, including Chairman's consultation designee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Archeologist, BAER Team Lead, District Ranger-Stephaney Kerley, South Pioneer Project Ranger-Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger Lead-John Kidd</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Archeologist, BAER Team Lead, District Ranger-Stephaney Kerley, South Pioneer Project Ranger-Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger Lead-John Kidd</td>
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<td>- Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, Archeologist, BAER Team Lead, District Ranger-Stephaney Kerley, South Pioneer Project Ranger-Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger Lead-John Kidd</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/09/17</td>
<td>Meeting with Woodgrain Millwork, Inc.</td>
<td>- Forest Timber Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Woodgrain Millwork Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/17/17</td>
<td>Congressional Meeting</td>
<td>- Forest Supervisor and Forest Public Affairs Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/21/17</td>
<td>Idaho Environmental Forum (IEF) Session</td>
<td>- Forest Service Personnel</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Collaborative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Retirees</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>- Industry</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>03/28/17</td>
<td>The Andrus Center for Public Policy at Boise State University</td>
<td>Collaborative, Industry, Congressional Staffers, Forest Service Personnel, Retirees, Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/03/17</td>
<td>SHPO Consultation BS-17-3260: Pioneer Fire &amp; BAER</td>
<td>SHPO, Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/05/17</td>
<td>SHPO Consultation BS-17-3276: Pioneer North BS-17-3265: Pioneer South</td>
<td>SHPO, Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/06/17</td>
<td>BFC Monthly Meeting</td>
<td>Collaborative, Industry, Congressional Staffers, Forest Service Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/12/17</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
<td>Forest Service Personnel, USFWS, NOAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/13/17</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation Meeting</td>
<td>Shoshone-Paiute Tribal Representatives, including Chairman's consultation designee, Boise National Forest Supervisor, Tribal Liaison, South Pioneer Project Ranger Lead Brant Petersen and North Pioneer Ranger lead (acting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/18/17</td>
<td>Meeting with Idaho Department of Transportation (ITD) District 3</td>
<td>ITD personnel, Forest Service Personnel from Engineering and Timber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/19/17</td>
<td>Chronicle of Pioneer Fire: progression, soil burn severity, vegetation burn severity, post-fire restoration and rehabilitation objective (fire suppression repair, BAER, hazard tree categorical exclusions, salvage harvest and reforestation and LaSER)</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/20/17</td>
<td>EA Public Involvement Web Posting of Letter, EA, and Supporting Documents Hard copy mailing of Letter and/or EA Tribal letter and email of Scoping Letters and Attachments GovDelivery Bulletin to Project subscribers Legal Notice</td>
<td>North Project web page: <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50789">https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50789</a> Hard Copy mailing list included 18 agencies, groups, and Individuals Tribal scoping letters and emails were sent to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes Govdelivery bulletin sent to 707 subscribers Legal notice published in the <em>Idaho Statesman</em> (newspaper of record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/26/17</td>
<td>Idaho Statesman Interview Discussion with Rocky Barker on overarching status of Pioneer Fire; recovery and restoration</td>
<td>FS personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/27/17</td>
<td>EA Public Involvement Web Posting of Letter, EA, and Supporting Documents Hard copy mailing of Letter and/or EA Tribal letter and email of Scoping Letters and Attachments GovDelivery Bulletin to Project subscribers Legal Notice</td>
<td>South Project web page <a href="https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694">https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=50694</a> Hard Copy mailing 21 agencies, groups, and individuals Tribal scoping letters and emails were sent to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (North and South) and the Nez Perce Tribe (North Only) Govdelivery bulletin sent to 697 subscribers Legal notice published in the <em>Idaho Statesman</em> (newspaper of record)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/02/17</td>
<td>Idaho Statesman Interview Pioneer Fire salvage, implementation, recreation and forest health interview and on sight video piece</td>
<td>FS personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/04/17</td>
<td>Boise Forest Coalition (BFC) Monthly Meeting Discuss summer field trip schedule; Overview of the North and South Pioneer Fire Restoration Project EAs; Develop comments for the South Pioneer Fire EA</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/04/17</td>
<td>Lt. Governor Briefing Brief Lt. Governor on status of Pioneer Fire efforts</td>
<td>Governor’s staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Meeting Type</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/09/17</td>
<td>Idaho Roadless Commission</td>
<td>Idaho Roadless Commission Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/10/17</td>
<td>Idaho City Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Idaho City Chamber of Commerce meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/10/17</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/11/17</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>05/24/17</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
<td>Level 1 Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/1/17</td>
<td>Channel 6 Interview</td>
<td>Channel 6 Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/8/17</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal</td>
<td>Wings and Roots Tribal Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/13/17</td>
<td>Boise Forest Coalition</td>
<td>Boise Forest Coalition (BFC) Monthly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the South Pioneer Project

### 06/14/17

**Level 1 Meeting**

- Ongoing actions update
- Emergency actions update for NFS road 312
- Transmitted final BA for Pioneer Fire discussion

**FS Personnel**
- United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- National Marine Fisheries Service/National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

### 06/16/17

**Pioneer Fire Recovery & Restoration External Update released**

**Topics discussed in Update:**

- Approval of Emergency Situation Determination (ESD) for both the North and South Pioneer Projects.
- Stewardship vs. Conventional Timber Sales
- Comments received on the North and South Pioneer Fire Salvage and Reforestation Projects in April and May 2017 and next steps to complete the NEPA planning side of these projects.
- Update on the 2017 Mushroom Season largely occurring within the Pioneer Fire area

**701 diverse subscribers**
- Used govdelivery platform to distribute