Decision and Reasons for the Decision

Background

I have decided to implement the proposed action with minor modifications as described in the Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface Fuels Reduction Project Environmental Assessment (LibertyProject). The Environmental Assessment was prepared under the authorities contained in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA, 2003). This project is designed to reduce hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) in the vicinity of the Town of Liberty, the subdivision of Liberty Mountain Home and Harkness Gulch in the Swauk Watershed of the Cle Elum Ranger District, Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests.

This action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the direction and guidance of the 1990 Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended by the 1994 Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (hereafter referred to jointly as the Forest Plan). The action is also responsive the findings of the Swauk Watershed Analysis (1997), the Swauk Late Successional Reserve Assessment in the Assessments for Late Successional Reserves and Managed Late Successional Areas, Eastern Washington Cascades Province (1997), and the Okanogan-Wenatchee Dry-Site Strategy (2000).

The project is located in Township 21 North, Range 17 East, Sections 23 - 26, and 34 – 36 and Township 20 North, Range 17 East, Sections 1 – 3, 11 and 12 and Township 21 North, Range 18 East, Sections 17 - 20, 30 and 31, and Township 20 North, Range 18 East, Sections 6 and 7, Willamette Meridian.

This action is needed, because the area is threatened by the potential for catastrophic fires and environmental degradation. The unnaturally extreme fire conditions are the result of a century of well-intended fire suppression practices that have allowed fuels to build to unacceptable levels and other land management activates. This proposal is a step towards returning the public land to a healthy condition.

The objective of this project is to provide safe escape routes throughout the area, reduce risk to homes and structures in the area, reduce the risk of uncharacteristic wildfire on forest ecosystem
components, improve sustainability of stands to withstand frequent fire, and increase firefighter safety.

The Swauk Basin Wildfire Protection Plan, A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) identified the area as being within the wildland urban interface (EA, pg. 16). This plan was developed by the community with the assistance and support from the local and other government agencies because this area qualifies as “at risk communities” under HFRA. The CWPP was developed to address the risk of wildfire threatening communities, critical infrastructure and safety. The Swauk Basin CWPP was approved by both the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Kittitas County Commissioners in 2005.

The risk of wildland fire is based on the fact that most of the fuels in the project area are Condition Class 3 (EA, pg. 233, App. 1). Through all treatments of this action approximately 1,500 acres (EA, pg. 54) of 2,021 project area acres of forested land will be converted from Condition Classes 2 and 3 to a Condition Class 1

**Decision**

The proposed action will commercially thin approximately 1,234 acres to open crown closure and reduce fuel loading. Ladder fuels will be reduced on 1,414 acres with pruning on an additional 928 acres. Pre-commercial thinning will treat 137 acres. It was determined that the desired conditions were already met on 402 acres within the project area. Some acres will receive multiple treatments to achieve objectives explaining the apparent discrepancy in acreages.

Fuel loading will be reduced through machine piling 193 acres and hand piling 1,426 acres. Tops will be yarded to landings in all commercial components of the action, tractor, helicopter and skyline.

The focus of thinning will be on smaller diameter trees. Removal of trees 20-30” in diameter may occur where needed achieve target overstory canopy closure, but only where residual trees are as large as or larger than the trees to be removed (EA, pg. 197).

In order to carry out the proposed activities, existing closed system roads will be temporarily opened to provide access. These roads will be returned to their closed status after the project is completed. In addition, 1.9 miles of temporary road will be constructed, but will be obliterated after the project. A total of 4.3 miles of existing unauthorized road will be used as project access and obliterated upon project completion. As required by law (General Mining Law of 1872) the Forest Service is required to approve access for claimants to their mining claims as described in 36 CFR 228.12. For this reason, I am adding 0.9 miles of currently existing unauthorized road (non-system road) to the Forest Service road system. These are roads that were user-built or old skid roads that were never obliterated and are identified in a valid Plan of Operations. Of this, 0.29 miles of unauthorized road would be added to the system to provide legal access to the Harkness Gulch community (EA, pg. 36).
Changes from/to the EA

The title page of the EA was changed; the word “draft” was removed. In HFRA projects there is no draft EA.

A pagination error occurred on page 9 of the EA. Page 9 reset to page 1, therefore all pages after page 8 are renumbered by adding 8 to the original page number.

Layout of the Liberty Project has been completed. During layout the following changes were suggested and I have agreed to implement these changes as they not add impacts that were not within the scope of the completed analysis. These changes include:

Change Stand 41 from helicopter to skyline logging system.
Rationale: Stand 41 was proposed for a helicopter logging system in the analysis (EA, pg. 239, App. 2). A helicopter logging system was suggested for visual concerns. Stand 41 was successfully downhill skyline logged previously. The unit is open and corridors would not be visible. Based on the memo from Barbara Jackson, Landscape Architect dated 06/12/2006 stating that the change would be acceptable for the Retention visual quality objective; I am making this change to the proposed action.

Change Stand 81 from helicopter to ground-based, winter logging harvest system. Rationale: Stand 81 was proposed for a helicopter logging system in the analysis (EA, pg. 240, App. 2). This proposal was made because of the proximity to an adjacent stand that will be harvested using a helicopter logging system (Stand 82). This proposal was not put forth because of hydraulic or aquatic resource concerns. The disclosure of environmental effects on water quality and Riparian Reserves considered the risks of soil erosion and sediment delivery associated with a ground based logging system. Based on the memo from William Ehinger, Hydrologist dated 06/20/2006 stating that “changing the prescribed logging system to ground-based, winter logging would be expected to adequately protect ground cover…” I am making this change to the proposed action.

Change Stand 85b from helicopter to skyline logging system.
Rationale: Stand 85b was proposed for a helicopter logging system in the analysis (EA, pg. 240, App. 2). This system was suggested for visual concerns. The area was thought to be visible from the Town of Liberty. Lay-out confirmed that it actually faces a meadow on Boulder Creek and that this stand cannot be seen from Town of Liberty. Because of the openness and the availability of mining roads to use as corridors a skyline operation would not be seen. Based on a memo from Barbara Jackson, Landscape Architect dated 06/12/2006 stating that the change would be acceptable for the Retention visual quality objective; I am making this change to the proposed action.
**Reasons for the Decision**

I have decided to implement the proposed action alternative, as modified, because this action will treat hazardous fuels directly adjacent to the communities of historic Liberty, Liberty Mountain Home and Harkness Gulch, and along the north and south ridges near these communities, in order to reduce the likelihood of an uncharacteristically intense wildfire in these areas. By treating roadsides access and safety for firefighters will be improved and adequate escape routes from the area will be available should they be needed.

This action will provide a reduction in fire behavior within the Liberty Project by reducing the size and intensity of future fires through the reduction of fuels while maintaining vegetative conditions that support desirable fire behavior. Vertical and horizontal continuity of the fuels within the project area will be reduced thereby reducing wildfire risk to homes, structures and infrastructure in the area. This project will strategically place fuel reduction treatments to avoid adverse effects from wildfire to the northern spotted owl and the Swauk Late Successional Reserve (EA, pg. 14).

I realize that commercial fuel reduction treatments in the project area are designed to thin stands from below focusing on small to medium sized trees. Thinning treatments would favor large fire-adaptive tree species such as ponderosa pine, western larch and Douglas-fir. Removal of larger trees (>21” dbh) may occur where needed to reduce canopy bulk density but only where residual trees are as large as or larger than the trees to be removed.

**Other Alternatives Considered**

Only the proposed action was considered as part of this project because this project meets the criteria for wildland-urban interface, and all treatment is within 1 ½ miles of an at risk communities (EA, page 24). The proposed action is compared to taking no action in Chapter 2 in the comparison of alternatives and in Table 2, pg. 54-56, Annotated Comparison of Alternatives.

**Public Involvement**

**Collaboration**

The following collaborative efforts were undertaken on this project:

June 9, 2004, a meeting was convened by the Washington Department of Natural Resources to discuss the development of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for the Swauk Basin. The meeting was attended by the U.S. Forest Service, (Cle Elum Ranger District), Kittitas County Fire Marshall, Fire District No.7, Bureau of Land Management, and three home owners representing their community.

June 22, 2004, the Bureau of Land Management organized a meeting with the community to discuss ways to build better relationships between communities and government and local agencies.
January 2005, the Swauk Basin Wildfire Protection Plan was completed and was signed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources and the Kittitas County Commissioners. Other signatures included, Kittitas County Fire Marshall, Kittitas County Sheriff’s Office, Kittitas County Fire District No. 7 and the community representatives.

**Scoping**

Fall 2003, the initial scoping period began with the fall of the 2003 issue of Schedule of Proposed Projects for the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests.

August 12, 2004, letters were sent to residents of Historic Liberty, Liberty Mountain Home and Harkness Gulch and to other interested parties and agencies to inform them of the proposed project.

March 15, 2005, additional letters were sent to mining claimants.

May 29, 2005, a meeting was organized with the community to discuss the project in detail and to address any concerns or issues.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Conservation Northwest (formerly know as Northwest Ecosystem Alliance), and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration all participated in trips to the field to view the project area.

May 12, 2006, Legal Notice of Opportunity to Object was published in the Wenatchee World.

**Consultation**

July 5, 2004, an offer for government-to-government consultation was made by letters to Mr. Ross Sockzehigh of the Yakama Nation and Mr. Joe Pakootas of the Confederated Tribe of the Colville Reservation.

May 12, 2005, a Level 1 consultation meeting was held with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration.

August 8, 2005, concurrence was issued by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration.

October 7, 2005, concurrence was received from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO)

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

After review of the *Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface Fuels Reduction Environmental Assessment*, I have concluded that this is not a major federal action that individually or cumulatively will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared (40 CFR 1508.13).
Significantly as used in NEPA requires considerations of both context and intensity (40 CFR 1508.27) Context means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several settings such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. For this site-specific action, significance will be dependant upon the effects in the locale. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant. Intensity refers to the severity of impact.

The following factors were considered in my finding:

1. Beneficial and Adverse Impacts (see Chapter 3 for complete effects write-up).  
   a. Aquatics - Aquatic habitat indicators at risk from this project are water temperature, in-channel fine sediment, riparian reserve function and streambank stability. The proposed project with the implementation of Aquatic, Hydrology and Water Quality mitigation measures and the Riparian Reserve and Fuel Reduction Design Criteria is consistent with Forest Plan goals and standards and guidelines included Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives. Measures would be in place to maintain at least 60% crown closure over fishbearing streams. Crown closure over non-fishbearing streams would range from 40 to 60% depending on sensitive of the stream to heating. No harvest treatments in stands would occur along streams that were determined to be sensitive to increases in water temperature, increases in sediment delivery and/or impact riparian function. Equipment would be excluded from streambanks ranging from 50 feet to 300 feet.  
   
   Informal consultation with NOAA Fisheries determined that effects from this project with implemented mitigation measures and design criteria will have neutral or insignificant/discountable effects over the long term on all habitat elements and is a Not Likely to Adversely Affect to steelhead trout in the Swauk Watershed (EA, pg. 90).  
   
   Essential Fish Habitat for Chinook and coho salmon exists within the project area. The proposed project with implemented mitigation measures and design criteria will not result in an adverse effect to Essential Fish Habitat in the watershed (EA, pg. 90).  
   
   b. Forest Vegetation and Fuels - All thinning treatments would thin from below; the only exception to this is where prescriptions call for limiting persistence of flammable mistletoe infected trees. Thinning treatments would favor retaining larger platy barked ponderosa pine, Western larch and Douglas–fir. Grand fir, lodgepole pine and mistletoe infected trees would be thinned from treated acres to reduce crown fire flammability. Thinning prescriptions are designed to favor retention of species that are fire tolerant.  
   
   Snags and downed woody debris are key components of late-successional forest structure. Snag densities may be reduced in treatment areas over the short run as some snags may need to be cut for safety concerns to protect forest workers. In the long run, the density and quality of snags would be increased in treatment area as species that produce decay resistant heart wood are selected for retention in the thinning; and grow to larger size classes. Future sources of downed wood would also increase as thinned stands mature into larger diameter classes.
Thinning from below would release overstocked forest for free growth and fuels reduction. Treatment stands in the urban interface area would have increased resistance to crown fires; that is minimum wind speeds needed to generate a crown fire would be increased.

Thinning would reduce fuels and release residual trees to become resistant to bark beetles and defoliators, making treated stands functional as shaded fuel breaks for a period of at least 15 years. These treated stands would be stable green forest cover on the landscape, resistant to insect epidemics.

Reduced stand density would increase individual tree diameter growth and the time needed to achieve diameters common in late or old structure ≥21 in. dbh). Because of reduced stand density, thinned stands would have reduced potential for bark beetles and defoliators for a period of forty years.

While all thinning would reduce the amount of mistletoe, wide thinning would be more effective in reducing the spread of mistletoe between trees. Thinning to wide spacing, approximately 30 to 40 feet (30 to 50 residual trees per acre), would substantially reduce stand density and increase the average individual tree and stand diameter.

Thinning would improve tree vigor, which could reduce mortality caused by Armillaria root rot. Thinning would reduce the root to root contact of residual trees in the stand, making root rot infection less likely to spread in the future. For laminated root Phillinus weirii, the root rot disease would likely persist in the stands treated; but because thinning would favor dry site species like pine and larch, the disease would likely spread at a lesser rate as host roots are less abundant and a shift to species resistant to root rot would occur. (Philip, G, 1985)

Thinning out thick under stories would reduce the tree canopy density and food source for insects such as the western spruce budworm, Choristoneura occidentalis. The overall habitat for western spruce budworm would be reduced in the treatment areas within the watershed.

c. Hydrology and Water Quality - The proposed action has been designed with a goal of achieving consistency with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) Objectives (USDA, 1994) for the Swauk Watershed; representing the fifth field Hydrologic Unit Code 1703000116. These objectives, as well as the Standards and Guidelines contained in both the 1994 NWFP and the 1990 Forest Plan were the basis for formulating design criteria and mitigation measures to achieve the ACS objectives. All management activities contained within the proposed action will either meet, or not prevent the attainment of the ACS objectives at the watershed scale.

d. Soils - The cumulative beneficial effects of moving treatment areas to be more in line with Fire Regime Condition Class is expected to have a more lasting effect than the relatively slight increase in detrimental soil impacts. Active restoration measures such as excavator decompacting skid/forwarder trails would meet the 15% detrimental soil
threshold in the Proposed Action. Passive restoration as seeding and natural revegetation would be effective at moving these disturbed areas toward more desirable conditions.

e. Visual Quality - The Liberty project area has been altered by past vegetation management, mining, and grazing activities. This and future actions will promote a sustainable forest in the long term, the larger diameter trees (>20”) will be retained and become more healthy as competition from other vegetation species will be reduced. The landscape will appear more open with more large trees evident for viewing and dense texture changes reduced.

f. Wildlife - The following species and habitats are addressed:

Management indicator species
Elk (indicator species for “edge” conditions between dense forest and meadows and/or early successional habitats): The proposed action is consistent with a Forest Plan standard to provide cover for elk on 40% of affected subbasins. Thinning of trees and removal of understory vegetation may reduce or curtail use of individual stands by a few elk, and would increase production of herbaceous forage—a potential benefit to elk. Due to the proximity of open roads and residential areas, however, the actual benefits to elk may be reduced or eliminated. Elk may be temporarily displaced from habitats in the vicinity of units and roads during the period of operation, but their overall numbers and distribution will not be affected long-term. This project will not affect viability of elk.

Ruffed Grouse (indicator species for riparian forest habitat): Due to planned retention of overstory trees, snags, logs, untreated patches of denser cover, streamside buffers for shading, planned obliteration of temporary roads and some existing roads within riparian reserve areas if used by for the treatments, effects of this project on ruffed grouse and other riparian dependent wildlife would be small and inconsequential. Any negative impacts would be outweighed by the reduced risk of large severe fire, resulting from creation of a fuelbreak between a high use residential area and dense forest in the rest of the watershed.

Primarily cavity excavators (i.e., woodpeckers, indicators species associated with dead and down wood habitat structure): Due to planned retention of green trees, snags and logs within fuel breaks and the high densities of snags that will remain around these fuel breaks, the proposed project is unlikely to affect mean snag and log densities, or wildlife populations, at a watershed level. These densities would continue to meet desired levels for late successional habitat in LSR.

American marten (indicator species for dense late successional forest habitat: Based on expected loss of predaceous foraging opportunity resulting from noise disturbance during thinning and fuel reduction operations, habitat removal resulting from commercial thinning, and habitat degradation resulting from ladder fuel reductions, proposed treatments may impact but would not likely adversely impact Pacific fisher and American marten. Viability of marten and other species associated with late successional forest habitat is provided by the region wide network of late successional reserves established under the Northwest Forest Plan.
Federally Proposed, Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive (“PETS”) species

Northern Spotted owl (T) - Based on expected removal, downgrade, and degradation of occupied NRF habitat within the home range radii of five known spotted owl sites in the Swauk LSR, the proposed action *may adversely affect spotted owls*. It would not, however, result in incidental take of spotted owls due to habitat removal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination of effect on spotted owls, and rendered a “no jeopardy” opinion for this project. The fact that the project would result in protection of far more habitat (from a large and severe fire) than it removes was also given consideration (EA, pg.204).

Grizzly Bear (T), California wolverine (S) - Based on expected loss of predaceous foraging opportunity resulting from noise disturbance during thinning and fuel reduction operations, and also from expected displacement of prey from some high use areas due to removal of protective cover and screening vegetation, proposed treatments may affect but would not likely adversely affect grizzly bear and gray wolf, and may impact but would not likely adversely impact California wolverine.

Gray wolf (E) - All of the planned activities will take place near open roads, motorized trails, and/or private residences—i.e., areas where there is already reduced habitat effectiveness for prey, and also for wide-ranging carnivores. Therefore cumulative effects on wide-ranging carnivores are insignificant and inconsequential.

Pacific fisher (S) - Based on expected loss of predaceous foraging opportunity resulting from noise disturbance during thinning and fuel reduction operations, habitat removal resulting from commercial thinning, and habitat degradation resulting from ladder fuel reductions, proposed treatments may impact but would not likely adversely impact Pacific fisher.

Peregrine falcon (S) - Due to the reduction of understory vegetation that provides nesting, hiding, foraging, and resting cover for avian prey, and to brief and inconsequential decline in predaceous foraging opportunities during periods of operation, proposed treatment may impact but would not likely adversely impact peregrine falcon. They would not result in downward trends toward re-listing peregrine falcon as threatened or endangered species.

Designated critical habitat for the northern spotted owl critical habitat unit WA-12 - Based on expected removal and degradation of both NRF and dispersal habitats, the proposed Liberty Fuel project may adversely affect critical habitat for spotted owl. The project would help protect the CHU from wildfires that may start on private land (EA, pg. 211).

Species of Concern

Migratory landbirds - Due to the limited extent of proposed treatments and planned conservation measures that reduce impacts to key habitat features for landbirds, and also to the reduced likelihood that a wildfire originating on private lands could spread into
extensive areas of dense late successional forest, the proposed action would not adversely impact landbirds. Therefore, the proposed action is also consistent with provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (EA, pg. 213).

g. Air Quality - While increased levels of prescribed fire can have temporary negative impacts on air quality, in the long term, acute impacts to air quality from wildfires are expected to be reduced. By taking no-action, fuels would continue to accumulate, potentially resulting in a high intensity wildfire with subsequent high particulate output. By implementing fuel management activities, especially by modifying Condition Class 3 and 2 areas into Condition Class 1, the potential release of emissions in the event of a wildland fire would be substantially reduced.

h. Heritage Resources - All the sites identified can be protected through logging by directional felling, avoidance or full suspension yarding. The greatest risk to cultural sites is burning but this can be mitigated through avoidance.

(2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

There is a degree of health and safety hazards associated with all projects. All who make use of the forest are exposed to hazards whether they are Forest Service employees, permittees or the general public. This project does not present any unusual or unique hazards. Vehicular traffic will see a slight increase in volume during project activities. Signs will warn recreational and residential drivers of the operation. Machine and hand-pile burning will be confined to the fall or spring when recreations and summer home residents are most likely to be absent from the area. Smoke management is also controlled by the State of Washington. If areas appear hazardous at any time during the operation, roads and trails will be closed to the general public. This may be necessary during helicopter operations. The Industrial Fire Precaution Class system (IFPL) will be followed to minimize the chance of fire and OSHA standards will be met by all forest workers on the project. The overall net result of the project will be a safer area after the fuels are reduced to a normal level by reducing the chance of a crown fire, reducing the fire intensity and by providing safer access and egress routes for all who utilize and protect the forest and adjacent communities.

(3) Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas.

No prime farmlands, parklands, wild and scenic rivers are found within the project area.

Ecologically critical areas consist of CHU WA-12. The expected downgrade of NRF habitat in CHU is the tradeoff for creating a fuelbreak between residential lands and dense forest comprising the rest of the CHU (EA Chapter 3, pg. 211, Issue 6). This fuelbreak would help protect the CHU from wildfires that may start on private land, and meets the objectives of the Swauk LSR Plan. Based on expected removal and degradation of both NRF and dispersal habitats, the proposed Liberty Fuel project may
adversely affect critical habitat for spotted owl. It would not, however, result in incidental take of spotted owls due to habitat removal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination of effect on spotted owls, and rendered a “no jeopardy” opinion for this project based on the relatively small number of acres that would be affected, the relatively small amount of acreage that has been removed previously in this LSR, consistency with the LSR Plan, and the fact that the project would result in protection of far more habitat (from a large and severe fire) than it removes.

No effects are expected to cultural resources or historic properties (EA Chapter 3, pg. 220, Issue 10).

Riparian areas are either protected by no harvest buffers, or harvest is designed and mitigated to eliminate negative effects.

Informal consultation with NOAA Fisheries determined that effects from this project with implemented mitigation measures and design criteria will have neutral or insignificant/discountable effects over the long term on all habitat elements and is a Not Likely to Adversely Affect to steelhead trout in the Swauk Watershed. Essential Fish Habitat for Chinook and coho salmon exists within the project area. The proposed project with implemented mitigation measures and design criteria will not result in an adverse effect to Essential Fish Habitat in the watershed (EA Chapter 3, pg. 90, Issue 1).

(4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

There has been no scientifically backed information presented that indicates substantial controversy about the effects disclosed in the Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface Fuels Reduction EA.

(5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There were no highly uncertain, unique or unknown risks identified for the Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface Fuels Reduction EA (EA Chapter 3). Activities approved in this decision notice are routine projects similar to those that have been implemented multiple times under the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. None are unique or involve unknown risks.

(6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Activities approved in this decision notice are routine projects similar to those that have been implemented under the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. None are new or precedent setting (EA, Chapter 3).
(7) Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

Each resource effects analysis contained in the Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface EA discusses cumulative effects (EA, Chapter 3, Issues 1 through 13); none were found to be significant.

(8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historical resources.

There were no scientific resources identified in the Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface Project Area. No objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected (EA, pg. 218-221). Should any undiscovered sites be located during project activities, work will stop until the Forest Archaeologist could review the site (EA, Pg. 219-220). The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation and the Yakama Nation were offered Government-to-Government communication. No concerns were raised by either Tribal government. In accordance with 36 CFR 800 regulation the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the Forest’s finding of “no historic properties affected/no effect” by virtue of site avoidance on October 7, 2005.

(9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

The effects on endangered or threatened species and their habitats are discussed in the Biological Assessments that are located in the project analysis file. The results are summarized in the EA on page 90 for (aquatics) fisheries, page 204 for wildlife and page 21 for botany. Endangered or threatened species that may inhabit the area will not be significantly affected. Cumulative effects on wide-ranging carnivores are insignificant and inconsequential (EA, pg. 200).

(10) The action will not violate Federal, State and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in the EA (pg 11, 15). The action is consistent with the Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.

Findings Required by other Laws and Regulations

The decision to implement the action alternative for the Liberty Wildland Urban-Interface Project is consistent with the intent of the forest plan’s long term goals and objectives for the land allocations (EA, pg 12) General Forest (Forest Plan IV 135-139), Scenic Travel-Retention and Scenic Travel-Partial Retention (Forest Plan IV 205-222). The project was designed in conformance with the Healthy Forests Initiative (EA, pg. 11). The project will open tree crowns
reducing the risk of crown fire and reduce fuel loading while retaining a late-old-successional tree stand that is desirable in the Swauk Late Successional Reserve. This project was prepared consistent with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

**Administrative Review Opportunity**

A pre-decisional objection opportunity was offered on this project under 36 CFR 218. No objections were received. This project is not subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215.12(i).

**Implementation Date**

Because no objections were filed on this project, implementation may occur immediately. The Forests intends to offer project contracts for bid prior to September 30, 2006.

**Contact Person**

For further information regarding this project, contact Floyd Rogalski, Natural Resource Planner, Cle Elum Ranger District, 803 W Second Street, Cle Elum, WA 98922 or 509-852-1074.