



# MISSION RESTORATION PROJECT

Final Environmental Assessment

**Responsible Official:**

Michael Williams  
Forest Supervisor  
215 Melody Lane  
Wenatchee, Washington 98801

**For Information Contact:**

Michael Liu  
District Ranger  
24 West Chewuch Road  
Winthrop, Washington 98862  
509-996-4000

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# Chapter 1: Purpose and Need

## 1.1 Introduction

This final Environmental Assessment (EA) describes a USDA Forest Service proposal to authorize landscape restoration, wildfire hazard reduction, and transportation system management activities in the Mission Restoration Project area on the Methow Valley Ranger District of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Forest Service has prepared this final Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. Supporting documentation, including more detailed analysis of project resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Methow Valley Ranger District Office in Winthrop, Washington.

### Final Environmental Assessment

The first document sent out for review was the “Preliminary EA for Mission Restoration Project”, which was made available for review in January, 2017. This document proposed an amendment to the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; USDA Forest Service 1989), and the 2012 Planning Rule requires an assessment of how amendments relate to the substantive provisions identified in the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.8 – 219.11). It was determined that the preliminary EA was not adequate because the analyses for the Forest Plan amendments were not performed according to the new protocol. A Revised Preliminary EA was sent out in June, 2017 that provided the required analysis, but made no other substantive changes to the proposed action.

This final EA addresses the Planning Rule substantive provisions as well as some minor boundary and vegetation management prescription changes. Edits were made to address some of the comments on the Preliminary and Revised Preliminary EAs. This EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects that would result from the Proposed Action, No Action, and an Alternative that includes increased Aquatics Restoration measures. Federal actions such as the authorization to manage vegetation must be analyzed to determine potential environmental consequences pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). The Council on Environmental Quality regulations define an environmental assessment as a concise public document that includes brief discussions of the need for the proposal, of alternatives to the proposal, of environmental impacts of the proposed action, and a listing of agencies and persons consulted (40 CFR 1508.9).

## 1.2 Project Area Location

The Mission Restoration assessment area is found west and south of Twisp and includes portions of Township 32 North, Ranges 19, 20, 21, and 22 East and Township 33 North, Range 20 East, Willamette Meridian. The Mission Restoration assessment area is principally the Libby Creek and Buttermilk Creek drainages including Smith Canyon, Elderberry Canyon, Ben Canyon, Chicamun Canyon, Mission Creek, Black Pine Creek, Nickel Canyon, and Hornet Draw. The project area also includes a small portion of the Twisp River watershed that was added at the request of adjacent private land owners to reduce wildfire hazards on National Forest lands adjacent to

private lands, bringing the project size to approximately 50,200 acres. See Figure 1, Mission Restoration Project Area Vicinity and Sub-Watersheds Map.

### **1.2.1 Maps and Acres Precision**

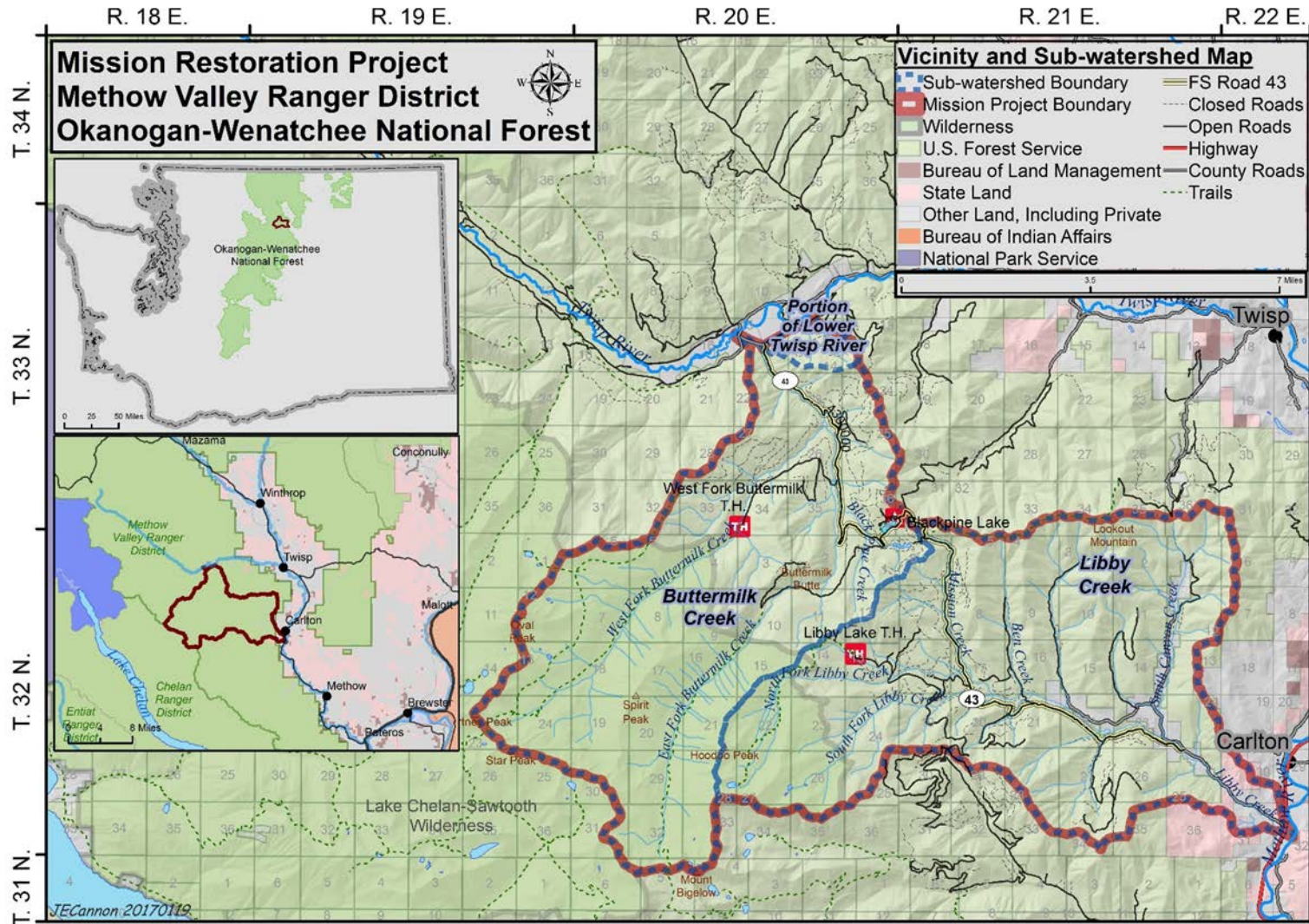
All map boundaries and acreage figures are approximations based on best available information at the time (gross acres). Actual implementation may differ slightly to better reflect on the ground conditions (net acres). Actual implementation is likely to include fewer acres of treatments.

### **1.2.2 Analysis Process**

The intent of this project is to evaluate the analysis area and prescribe and implement a set of treatments that rely on the principles of landscape and stand-level restoration ecology, wildfire hazard reduction, and transportation system management while meeting the direction of the amended Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and the forest Restoration Strategy, to the extent feasible. Field review, professional expertise, public input, and several analysis methods were used by interdisciplinary team (IDT) members to assess current conditions, determine needed changes, and evaluate effects of proposed treatments. IDT members compared the existing condition to desired conditions that are consistent with the amended Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and other guidance. The IDT also considered changing climates by emphasizing the restoration of natural processes, functions, and patterns across the landscape to build more resilient ecosystems that would be responsive to projected changes in climate. One analysis tool used by interdisciplinary team members in this project was the Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS) modeling tool (EMDS; Hessburg 2013). This tool used photo-interpreted data supported by field verification and professional expertise to compare existing vegetation conditions to both historic reference conditions and to likely future conditions (given conservatively-estimated changes in climate). The EMDS tool evaluated the Libby and Buttermilk Creek sub-watersheds separately, showing where vegetation characteristics and processes such as stand structure and crown fire risk were outside of the desired range of values, and helped set priorities for where vegetation-related restoration actions should occur. Wildlife habitat for selected focal wildlife species was analyzed based on field data because EMDS results predicted habitat characteristics that were inconsistent with what was observed in the project area. The need for aquatic and soil restoration treatments was based on field verification of impacts from past forest management practices. Proposed changes in the transportation network were developed during an interdisciplinary Minimum Roads Analysis.

Proposed treatments would re-establish ecological processes, patterns, and functions to restore the Libby and Buttermilk Creek landscapes to be more resilient to disturbances such as wildfire and changing climates, reduce wildfire hazards in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), and manage the existing transportation system. Specialists identified proposed treatment areas by isolating areas of contiguous departure, similar vegetation, forest type (dry, mesic, or wet), logical topographic boundaries, and areas of operational functionality (e.g. roads, ridges, or other barriers that could be used as prescribed fire containment boundaries). The methods above and other analysis processes used in this assessment are described further in Chapter 3 and in resource specialist reports.

Figure 1. Mission Restoration Project Vicinity and Sub-Watersheds Map



### **1.3 Purpose and Need for Action**

Based on the analysis process described above, the following needs (P&N) were discovered that in turn influenced the purposes of this project:

#### **1.3.1 P & N #1 – Hydrologic Function and Aquatic Habitat**

Several roads add sediment, increase the drainage network, block fish migration, and reduce woody debris recruitment in the project area. Large wood, spawning habitat, and/or pool habitat are currently below desired conditions for ESA listed fish species (USDA, USDC, and USDI 2004). Past fire suppression has altered riparian plant species composition and structure that would have occurred under the natural fire regime in dry forest conditions. Some drier drainages have stands of conifers that shade out hardwoods and reduce the amount of water available for stream flow. These conditions also make some riparian areas more susceptible to uncharacteristic harmful effects caused by wildfires. Road construction, conifer encroachment, and past vegetation management practices have reduced water flow and wetland habitat.

A purpose of this project is to restore and maintain aquatic, riparian and hydrologic processes impacted by past management, improve habitat for Threatened and Endangered aquatic species, and increase watershed resiliency to existing and anticipated disturbances.

#### **1.3.2 P & N #2 – Soil Productivity**

Soil compaction in the project area limits native plant growth, reduces soil biological activity and water infiltration, limits soil productivity, and reduces the resiliency of plant communities to climactic and biological changes over time.

A purpose of this project is to restore soil-related processes and functions where past management practices have created detrimental effects.

#### **1.3.3 P & N #3 – Vegetation Composition and Structure**

Past management practices, including fire suppression, changed forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns in comparison to historical conditions. These changes include a large increase of densely-stocked stands with multiple canopy layers or closed canopies with a high proportion of young shade-tolerant tree species (including Douglas-fir and subalpine fir in the dry forest type and subalpine fir in the moist forest type). These densely stocked stands tend to be arranged in a more continuous or unbroken pattern across the project area compared to historical conditions. Dry and moist forest stands with lower tree stocking levels and open canopy closure have decreased in total area and patch (stand) size compared to historic levels. Dry and moist forest stands comprised primarily of large trees also have decreased in total area and patch size compared to historic levels. Portions of the project area are susceptible to dwarf mistletoe infection, defoliating insects, and bark beetle attacks due to vegetation composition and structure changes from historical conditions. The risk of crown fire initiation and spread and associated fire effects are greater than historical conditions, particularly in the Buttermilk watershed, due to increased tree density and development of forest stands with multiple and closed canopy layers across the landscape. Dry and moist forest vegetation in the project area is susceptible to increased frequency and severity of natural disturbances (including insects, disease, and fire) associated with warmer, drier climate.

A purpose of this project is to maintain and restore forest vegetation characteristics to within estimated historical and future ranges of variability to improve forest resiliency to insect, disease, and wildfire events.

#### **1.3.4 P & N #4 – Wildlife Habitat**

Northern spotted owl habitat is limited and scattered in the project area compared to historical conditions, and habitat connectivity to suitable habitat outside of the project area is fragmented from past management actions. Meadow habitat around Mission Pond and Black Pine Meadows is shrinking due to conifer encroachment. The amount of large-tree habitat that provides nesting and foraging opportunities for northern goshawk, white-headed woodpeckers, western gray squirrels, and other species in the project area is below desirable levels. Existing early-successional conifer and deciduous stands is under-represented based on historical conditions, providing less quality habitat for lynx and their prey.

A purpose of this project is to develop, maintain, and/or enhance habitat for federally listed and other wildlife species and reduce the risk of large-scale habitat loss to fires by increasing resilience of habitats to wildfire.

#### **1.3.5 P & N #5 – Sensitive Plants and Unique Habitats**

Conifer encroachment in the project area has decreased nutrient, water, and sunlight availability to moonworts, bladderworts, and aspen.

A purpose of this project is to maintain and enhance existing and potential Region 6 Sensitive Survey and Manage plant populations and unique plant habitats within meadows and aspen stands.

#### **1.3.6 P & N #6 – Wildfire Hazard in the Wildland Urban Interface**

Current fuel conditions near and adjacent to private lands support flame lengths that increase the likelihood of crown fire initiation, placing life and property at risk and limiting direct suppression opportunities. Current fuel loading and stand structure along portions of Forest Roads 4300 and 4340 may create high-intensity fire conditions that limit the usefulness of these roads as firelines or evacuation/access routes during wildfires.

A purpose of this project is to modify the structure, composition, and patterns of forest stands within and adjacent to the wildland/urban interface (WUI) as defined by the 2013 Okanogan Community Wildfire Protection Plan (Bloch et al. 2013a, 2013b), enabling the use of more direct firefighting strategies to protect life and personal property.

#### **1.3.7 P & N #7 – Transportation System**

Existing undersized culverts present risk for road failure and sediment delivery to streams. Road surfaces have poor drainage and have lost durable road surface which contributes to the potential for road failure and increased maintenance needs. Several roads do not meet current safety or design standards or are now surplus to management needs because of changes in logging system practices or management objectives. The existing road network costs more to maintain than is available in road maintenance funding.

A purpose of this project is to provide the road system needed for safe and efficient travel, administration, public use, and protection of natural resources on National Forest System (NFS) lands, now and in the future.

## 1.4 Management Direction and Guidance Pertinent to the Mission Assessment Area

### 1.4.1 Management Direction

The project is tiered to the Record of Decision for the Final EIS for the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (ONFLRMP or Forest Plan) (USDA Forest Service 1989) as amended by the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact State on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl Record of Decision (USDA and USDI 1994) and the Pacific Northwest Regional Invasive Plant Program Record of Decision (USDA 2005). Figure 4 displays the Forest Plan, NWFP, and IRA designations in the project area.

### Forest Plan

The Forest Plan allocates the analysis area to several zones called Management Areas (MAs) with specific emphases, including Management Areas 5, 14, 15B, 17, 25, and 26 (see Figure 2 and Figure 4). Approximately 4% of the project area lies outside of NFS lands and therefore has no MA designation. Specific Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines that apply to this project are in the Regulatory Framework listed in Appendix G and identified in resource specialists reports located in the project record.

**Figure 2. Forest Plan Management Area Allocations in Project Area**

Management Area	Goal	Percent of Project Area
MA5	Provide opportunities for recreation and viewing scenery in a roaded natural setting with a visual quality objective of retention or partial retention.	11%
MA14	Provide a diversity of wildlife habitat, including deer winter range, while growing and producing merchantable timber.	22%
MA15B	Maintain an extensive unmodified pristine environment within designated wilderness with a variety of trail opportunities	31%
MA17	Provide a variety of developed recreation opportunities in a roaded setting.	<1%
MA25	Intensively manage the timber and range resources using both even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural practices. Manage to achieve a high present net value and a high level of timber and range outputs while protecting the basic productivity of the land and providing for the production of wildlife, recreation opportunities and other resources.	30%

MA26	Manage deer winter range and fawning habitats to provide conditions which can sustain optimal numbers of deer indefinitely, without degrading habitat characteristics such as forage, cover, and soil.	2%
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### Northwest Forest Plan

The Forest Plan was amended in 1994 by the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl, hereafter referred to as the Northwest Forest Plan or NWFP (USDA and USDI 1994). The NWFP created additional management designations and goals that overlie the Forest Plan management areas described above, including the Aquatic Conservation Strategy with objectives for managing riparian features. The NWFP created additional management designations and goals that overlie the Forest Plan management areas described above, including the Aquatic Conservation Strategy with objectives for managing riparian features. Riparian Reserves overlap all NWFP designations to some extent, therefore the total percentage of lands with the NWFP designations in Figure 3 exceeds 100%. The standards and guidelines from the Okanogan LRMP apply where they are more restrictive or provide greater benefits to late successional forest-related species than other provisions of NWFP standards and guidelines. Figure 3 and Figure 4 describe the NWFP management areas, goals, and their overlap with the Forest Plan in the project area.

**Figure 3. NWFP Management Area Allocations within the Project Area**

Management Area	Goal	Overlap with Forest Plan	Percent of Project Area
Congressionally Reserved	In this project, manage this NWFP MA as wilderness.	Same as MA15B (Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness)	31%
Late-Successional Reserves	Manage to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for the late-successional and old-growth related species including the northern spotted owl.	Overlaps Forest Plan MAs as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA 5: contains 106 acres of the Twisp River LSR.</li> <li>• MA 25: contains 2338 acres of the Sawtooth LSR.</li> </ul>	5%
Matrix	Allow for timber harvest and other silvicultural activities in suitable forest lands with emphasis on green tree and snag retention.	Overlaps all Forest Plan MAs outside of Wilderness as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MA 5: 5250 ac</li> <li>• MA14: 10,979 ac</li> <li>• MA 17: 38 ac</li> <li>• MA25: 12,486 ac</li> <li>• MA26: 1163 ac</li> </ul>	60%
Riparian Reserves:	Riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis in areas adjacent	Overlaps portions of all Forest Plan and	10%

Management Area	Goal	Overlap with Forest Plan	Percent of Project Area
	to all streams with intermittent or perennial water flow, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and adjacent unstable and potentially unstable areas.	NWFP Management Areas	

### Special Area Designations

**Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area:** The project area contains approximately 3300 acres of the Sawtooth Inventories Roadless Area (IRA – see Figure 121). Management direction for IRAs is based on the underlying Forest Plan/NWFP management area designation and the 2001 Roadless Rule (36 CFR 294), which established prohibitions on road construction, road reconstruction, and timber harvesting on 58.5 million acres of inventoried roadless areas on NFS lands. The intent of the 2001 Roadless Rule is to provide lasting protection for inventoried roadless areas within the National Forest System in the context of multiple-use management.

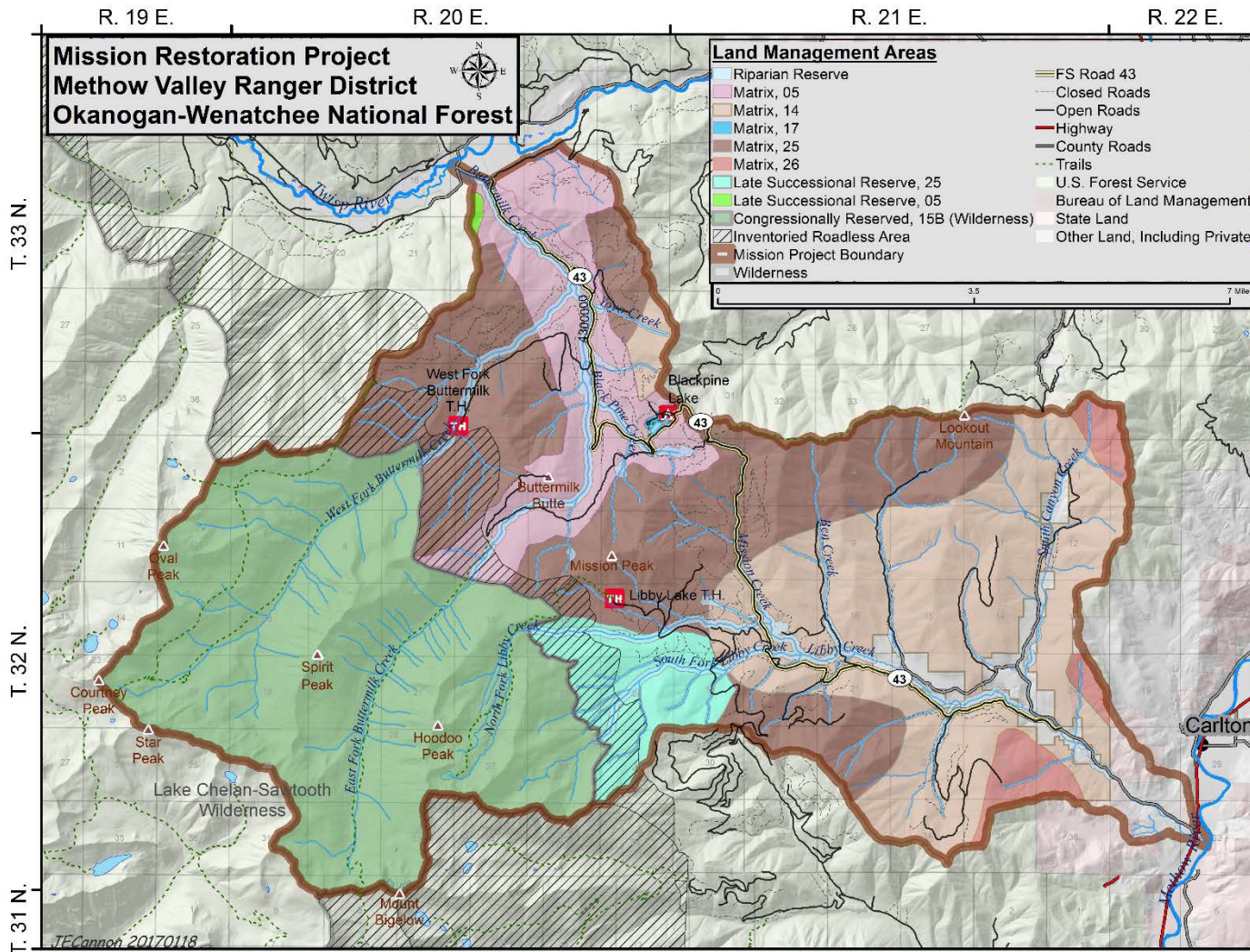
#### 1.4.2 Laws, Policies, and Guidance

Several additional laws, policies, agency manual and handbook direction, and assessments informed the assessment of this project area and the development of proposed treatments. This analysis incorporates by reference the policies, recommendations, and analysis provided by these sources (detailed further in Appendix G Regulatory Framework). Some of the key sources of policy and guidance include:

- Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, National Forest Management Act
- Executive Orders 11990 and 11988 (protection of wetlands and floodplains)
- The 1995 Twisp River Watershed Analysis, the 1995 Libby Creek Watershed Analysis, and the 1999 Lower Methow Watershed Analysis, which evaluated historical and current conditions and listed recommendations for further management actions.
- The Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Restoration Strategy: adaptive ecosystem management to restore landscape resiliency (Restoration Strategy) (USDA Forest Service 2010c and 2012a), which provides interim guidance for the management of large and old trees in dry and mesic forest restoration projects on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.
- The transportation network was analyzed using Travel Analysis Process guidance provided in Chapter 20 of the Travel Planning Handbook (FSH 7709.55, USDA Forest Service 2009; 36 CFR Part 212.5, Subpart A). A Travel Analysis for all roads in the project area was completed as part of Mission Restoration project analysis. The Mission Travel Analysis Report is available in the project record.
- This analysis incorporates by reference the Project Record (40 CFR 1502.21), available for review at the Methow Valley Ranger District Office, 24 West Chewuch Road, Winthrop, WA 98862.



Figure 4. Project Forest Plan and NWFP Management Areas and Sawtooth IRA



### 1.4.3 Relationship to Other Plans and Policies

The IDT compared the existing condition information to desired conditions that are consistent with the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) (USDA-Forest Service, 1989) as amended, and other guidance including the Restoration Strategy (USDA-Forest Service 2012a). The relationship of this project to other laws, plans, and policies is identified in Appendix G (Regulatory Framework).

### 1.4.4 The Desired Condition

Based on management direction and guidance above and the EMDS tool, the desired condition for the Mission Restoration project is one in which:

- Key components of the composition, structure, and pattern of forest vegetation are within either the Historic Range of Variability (HRV), the Future Range of Variability (FRV), or moving towards them. Resiliency of mixed conifer forests is improved or maintained to disturbances including insects, diseases, and wildfire.
- Protection of life, property, critical infrastructure, and resources can be achieved within the normal risk inherent to wildland fire fighting in a light fuel loading, dry forest type. Fire hazard on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the wildland/urban interface is reduced.
- NFS roads and trails have minimal impact on water quality, water quantity, flow regimes, and on wildlife.
- Forest vegetation is resilient to a climate likely changing to a warmer condition with different moisture patterns.
- Species composition (including large-diameter broadleaf trees such as aspen), structural diversity, and natural disturbance patterns of plant communities found in Riparian Reserves are maintained or restored to provide large conifers and maintain and attain riparian management objectives such as stream shading.
- Forest composition, structure, function, and pattern are appropriate to the forest type and within the inherent range of variability. Maintain and develop sustainable vegetation and fuels conditions that limit the likelihood of losing these forest stands during wildfires and other natural disturbances.
- The current transportation system is modified to provide for long-term sustainable resource management, safe recreation use, reduced maintenance costs, and reduced impacts on aquatic habitat, wildlife habitat, and hydrological function.
- Fuel loadings are such that fire can function as a natural process on the landscape at intensities that are within the historic range of variability.
- The Forest provides:
  - Clean water;
  - Clean air;
  - Adequate and sufficient wildlife habitat;
  - Recreation opportunities and visual quality in sensitive corridors; and

- Provides commercially valuable timber and other forest products that are economically viable and sustainable.

#### **1.4.5 Decisions to be Made Based on this Analysis**

Based on the information contained in this environmental assessment, the Forest Supervisor for the Okanogan – Wenatchee National Forest would make the following decisions:

- Does uncharacteristic wildfire pose a mitigatable threat to human life and property adjacent to and within the project area?
  - If so, what treatments would effectively reduce this threat? Are these treatments compatible with forest restoration objectives?
- Should the Methow Valley Ranger District implement vegetation management activities to restore the pattern and structure inherent to the forest type, that promotes low severity wildland fire in the dry forest type, and that improves overall forest health and sustainability in the project area through the Mission Restoration Project?
  - If so, what type of treatments would be most successful? Are treatments such as timber harvest, ladder fuels reduction, precommercial thinning, and prescribed fire the appropriate tools to move the vegetation toward a desired condition?
- Should the Methow Valley Ranger District implement mechanical vegetation treatments conducive to maintaining and promoting Threatened and Endangered species habitat?
  - If so, what type of treatments would be the most successful and how much treatment is appropriate?
- Is the road network within the Mission Restoration project area appropriate to protect the habitat needs of big game, for protection and enhancement of resources such as riparian habitat, visual quality, recreation and commercial use, and various other resource needs, objectives, and desired future conditions within the project area?
- Whether the proposed action will proceed as proposed, as modified by Alternative 3, or not at all? If it proceeds:
  - What mitigation measures, design criteria, and monitoring requirements will the Forest Service apply to the project, the effectiveness of these measures, and who/how will these measures be implemented or monitored?
  - Whether the project requires a Forest Plan amendment and if so, how will that amendment be completed?
  - Whether there is a significant effect on the human environment that would require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement?

## **1.5 Consultation and Public Involvement**

### **1.5.1 Tribal Involvement**

Tribal governments have a special and unique legal and political relationship with the United States government as reflected in the United States Constitution, treaties, statutes, court decisions, executive orders, and memoranda. This relationship imparts a duty on all federal agencies to consult, coordinate, and communicate with American Indian Tribes on a government-to-government basis. Because Indian Tribes can be affected by the policies and actions of the Forest Service in managing the lands and resources under its jurisdiction, the Forest Service has a duty to consult with them on matters affecting their interests. Because of this government to government relationship, efforts were made to involve local tribal governments and to solicit their input regarding the proposed action.

A government-to-government consultation letter was mailed to the Business Council Chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Chairman of the Yakama Nation, and their staff on April 20, 2016. No comments or concerns were expressed by either tribe with respect to this project.

### **1.5.2 North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative Involvement (NCWFHC)**

Prior to initiation of the Mission Restoration NEPA analysis, the NCWFHC partnered with the Methow Valley Ranger District during its early assessment phase. During this period, discussions were held with Collaborative members regarding how they could help support the mutual goal of increasing the pace of forest restoration across the landscape. The district identified needs related to field data collection, synthesis of EMDS data outputs, and providing public forums to discuss the science behind landscape analysis and restoration. The Collaborative funded an external consultant to develop and present draft landscape prescriptions and treatment areas from initial EMDS modeling results. In addition, the Collaborative provided funding and personnel for stand data verification (completed under the supervision of the district silviculturist) and for a report on aquatic conditions (completed by a biologist working for a member organization of the Collaborative). Volunteers from the Collaborative also helped gather data on existing roads, such as location of culverts and user-created roads. The draft landscape prescriptions and treatment proposals, aquatic assessment, field verification data, and road data provided through the Collaborative's efforts were reviewed by the IDT during the initial assessment of the project area and combined with district data and expertise to develop the Purpose and Need and Proposed Action for the Mission Restoration Project.

NEPA analysis for the project began with the start of scoping in April 2016; at that time, the IDT discussed the Proposed Action with the Collaborative's Project Workgroup at their request to describe how the roads, vegetation, aquatics data, and initial treatment proposals provided by them during the pre-NEPA phase were used in the development of the Proposed Action. Once the formal NEPA process began, the Collaborative and its individual members participated in the same way as the general public. Comments received from the Collaborative were given the same weight as those received from others providing input during the scoping period.

### **1.5.3 Public Involvement**

The Methow Valley Ranger District sent a scoping letter to the public, interested agencies, and adjacent landowners on April 28, 2016, detailing proposed management activities on 50,200 acres of National Forest System lands in the Mission Restoration Project area. As described in the scoping letter, the proposed action for consideration included vegetation management in the form of commercial timber harvest, ladder fuel reduction, pre-commercial thinning, and prescribed burning. Also included in the scoping letter were road management activities that included: road reconstruction (including culvert replacement) road maintenance, road management during harvest and post-harvest activities; closing and decommissioning roads. Several forest plan amendments associated with vegetation management and road management were also disclosed. The letter included a request for comments and an invitation to participate in a public information meeting about the project. A public information meeting was held on May 23, 2016.

A news release seeking comments on the Mission Restoration Project proposal was sent to the Forest's mailing list for public information contacts (newspapers and radio stations) on May 2, 2016. A news release inviting the public to the open house on May 23<sup>rd</sup> and extending the Comment Period until June 10<sup>th</sup> was released in May 2016.

A meeting was held on July 11, 2016 with the Pacific Biodiversity Institute (PBI) staff to discuss their proposed alternative. Much of the meeting provided clarification on the Proposed Action and resulted in modifying the project to increase treatments in the Wildland/Urban Interface. PBI's proposed alternative is more fully discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1, Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study. Comments from Methow Valley Citizens Council (MVCC), NCWFHC, and others were used to develop a second action alternative that placed more emphasis on aquatic restoration, particularly the road condition and density. These changes were also communicated to MVCC who also supported the need to analyze the impacts of road conditions and density on aquatic ecosystems.

The preliminary EA was available for a 30-day public comment period starting on January 31, 2017. Concerns regarding the publication of the legal notice for this comment period led to the decision to provide a second 30-day comment period, which began on March 2, 2017. Subsequent to this comment period, the revised preliminary EA was released with the analysis to determine how the one remaining proposed amendment relates to the substantive provisions identified in the 2012 Planning Rule. A third 30-day comment period was provided for the public to comment on this analysis starting on June 30, 2017. All of the comments received during these three comment periods were considered and addressed by IDT members. Responses are included in the project record, and are available on the project website at [https://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa\\_project\\_exp.php?project=49201](https://data.ecosystem-management.org/nepaweb/nepa_project_exp.php?project=49201).

### **1.5.4 Consultation with Other Agencies**

A scoping letter was mailed to the Okanogan County Commissioners on April 20, 2016, and a briefing with the County Commissioners took place on July 13, 2016. The Commissioners raised concerns related to maintaining road access, continuing range management, promoting resilience to fire and more options for direct attack during suppression, and increasing timber management.

Informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service was initiated on February 22, 2018, with an expected concurrence in April 2018.

Via Summary Sheets dated September 29, 2016, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) concurred with the Forest Heritage Program Manager that the project had “No Historic Properties Present/No Effect”.

A field trip to the project area was held in May 2016 with Dr. Amy Snover, director of University of Washington’s Climate Impacts Group. Dr. Snover’s input included support for considering forecasted climate impacts when considering the desired future condition of the project area and recognition that proposed treatments are consistent with those recommended for improving forest resilience to a changing climate.

Dr. Churchill from the University of Washington ran the EMDS model to help determine effects of proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments.

## 1.6 Issues

Issues serve to identify the environmental effects or consequences that may occur from a proposed action and alternatives to that action. They provide opportunities during the analysis to reduce adverse effects and compare trade-offs for the decision-maker and public to understand. The concerns raised during scoping were evaluated against the following criteria:

- Was the concern beyond the scope of the project or not relevant to the action proposed? (Would a cause-and-effect relationship exist as a direct result of the Proposed Action?)
- Was the concern addressed and resolved through application of Forest Plan standards and guidelines, or applicable and appropriate best management practices?
- Can the concern be addressed and resolved through implementation of project-specific design criteria, mitigation measure associated with the Proposed Action?
- Could the concern be addressed in the effects analysis or in a specialist’s report?

Issues were addressed using these methods:

- Developing, or modifying an alternative that best balances and/or resolves potential effects of the proposed action on various resources, including specific actions and design criteria; and/or
- Disclosing and comparing the relative difference in resource effects between alternatives to acceptable thresholds.

Based on comments received and internal review, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) identified preliminary issues for consideration in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Issues are of three types:

- Issues were used to develop, or modify alternatives, design criteria, or mitigation measures to address the effects of proposed activities.

- Issues were analyzed in terms of environmental consequences but did not lead to a new, or modified alternative; or
- Issues were not analyzed in detail because generally they were addressed through project design; were outside the scope of the analysis; were already decided by law, regulation, the Forest Plan, policy, or program; or were mitigated by standard operating procedures for the proposed actions and activities.

**Figure 5. Mission Restoration Project Issues**

Issue	Approach
Pacific Biodiversity Institute proposed new alternative.	Alternatives 2 and 3 were modified to include more hazard fuels reduction treatments adjacent to private lands in Libby Creek. The remainder of the proposed alternative was Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study, section 2.1.
Increase scale of aquatic/hydrologic restoration.	The IDT developed Alternative 3 In response this issue, which proposes further aquatic/hydrologic restoration through more road closure/decommissioning than those proposed in Alternative 2 as a result of the Travel Analysis Process (TAP), along with rock armoring and constructing rocked, open stream fords on some road crossings.
Increase the scale of commercial thinning to broaden restoration benefits.	The IDT found limitations on increasing the scale of commercial thinning due to slope, access, economics, and impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitat.
Create fire breaks on the landscape, either without other forest thinning or as part of proposed thinning activities.	Some fuel breaks would be created by proposed thinning along FS Roads 43 and 4340 and in other areas in the project. In other locations, creating fuel breaks alone would not meet many of the Purpose and Needs for this project. This project proposes to treat fuels on approximately 10,000 acres of the landscape to make potential future fires easier to contain/control.
Introduce beaver to aquatic areas.	Beaver introduction is already underway in the project area as part of an existing project. Proposed beaver habitat enhancement treatments would prepare an estimated 34.6 acres in 8 locations for beaver release in connection with a current beaver relocation program, with resulting increased water storage capacity.
Do not do commercial timber harvest; only consider prescribed fire treatments	This approach would not meet the Purpose and Needs (P&N) #3, #5, or #6, and is an Alternative Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study, section 2.1. Commercial harvest treatments move the existing stand structure towards desired conditions with more resiliency to fires than just prescribed fire treatments alone.
Only complete hand-thinning of small diameter trees.	This approach would not meet the P&N #3, #5, or #6, and is an Alternative Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study, section 2.1. Thinning only small-diameter trees would not move the existing stand structure towards desire conditions.

Issue	Approach
Do not treat in Forest Plan old growth stands since such treatments will negatively impact old growth/Forest Plan Old Growth.	Since scoping, photo analysis and field review have clarified that Forest Plan Old Growth does not exist in any proposed thinning or prescribed fire treatment unit. Therefore, this concern does not apply to the project.
Consider an alternative that requires no Forest Plan amendments.	This is an Alternative Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study, section 2.1 because it would not meet Purpose and Need statements #1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Note: since initial scoping and comment periods, several of the proposed Forest Plan amendments listed in the project scoping letter and preliminary EA have been determined unnecessary including: commercial harvest of and prescribed fire in Forest Plan Old Growth; exceeding Forest Plan sediment standards in fish spawning streams; and 3) allowing temporary increases in open road density in certain Management Areas during project implementation; plowing groomed snowmobile routes; and allowing motorized access into deer winter range. The remaining proposed amendment to reduce deer winter range cover is necessary to achieve goals of the purpose and needs listed above. The effects of the proposed amendment on deer winter range are described in section 3.7.5. Effects of this amendment on other resource areas are described in each resource section under the header "Consistency Statement".
Consider and implement a fire use program and stop suppression of all fires.	This is outside the scope of this project because it would require changing agency fire policy. Forest Plan amendments would have to undergo separate environmental analysis to consider this proposal. Consideration of this proposal would occur during a Forest Plan revision, not planning at the project level.
Do not create any new sediment and reduce sediment from the project area since it is harmful to aquatic species.	Alternative 1, No Action, would not create any new sediment from proposed project activities. Alternatives 2 and 3 are designed to decrease sediment to area streams over the long-term. Please see the description of Alternatives 2 and 3 contained in section 2.2.4. Decreasing sediment is part of P&N #1 for this project. The project contains six resource actions to address these concerns. See the Aquatic Resource section of Chapter 3 for disclosure of sediment related impacts from the project.
Eliminate and/or reduce grazing. Do not allow the project to create more grazing impacts.	The effects of livestock grazing in the project area were analyzed in the recent Libby, Little Bridge, Newby, and Poorman Allotment Management Plan (AMP) Revision (USDA 2011a). The AMP contains a comprehensive monitoring plan to ensure critical resource values are protected. Mechanisms in this plan provide for making changes to livestock management as needed. Eliminating or reducing grazing is outside of the scope of the project because current grazing activities and associated impacts are addressed in the AMP. Any impacts from treatments proposed by this project on current range management practices are discussed in the Range section (Chapter 3) and in Appendix D (Design Criteria). Some incidental transitory range (grasses and understory vegetation) would be created in the short-term from project actions, but there is no proposal to increase permitted numbers on the grazing allotment within the project area.
Create a Roadless Area around Lookout Mountain. There is a need to assess the	This is outside the scope of the project because actions of this nature are addressed at the Forest level during forest plan revision, not during



Issue	Approach
Lookout PWA and adjacent “roadless area” for qualification as wilderness or other designation.	smaller-scale planning projects. The effects on Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas, and Unroaded/Undeveloped Character is discussed in Chapter 3 in the Other Required Disclosures section of this document.
Let the project area recover naturally; eliminate new disturbance.	Alternative 1, No Action, addresses this issue. Under the No Action alternative, new disturbances would not be approved in this Environmental Assessment. Selection of this alternative would not meet the Purpose and Need statements for this project. The effects of selecting No Action are included in the effects analysis for each resource in Chapter 3.
Focus thinning treatments only around the wildland/urban interface (WUI).	Proposed treatments in Alternatives 2 and 3 are specifically focused to reduce fire hazards in the WUI, but focusing thinning treatments solely on the WUI would not meet P&N # 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.
Harvest in Riparian Reserves will degrade the Riparian Reserves.	Impacts to Riparian Reserves (RRs) are fully addressed in the effects analysis in Chapter 3 for the various resources and in the design criteria, mitigation measures, and monitoring for the project (in Appendix D) of the Environmental Assessment
Treatments in the Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) will degrade the IRA.	The only treatment proposed in the IRA involves about 900’ of hand fireline and underburning about 2 acres. This treatment is needed to establish a safe underburn containment line. The effects on the Inventoried Roadless Areas and Unroaded/Undeveloped Character are discussed in Chapter 3 of this document under Other Required Disclosures. No trees of any size would be felled within the IRA.
Treatments in Late Successional Reserve (LSR) will degrade the LSR.	This issue is addressed in the Wildlife Section of Chapter 3 and in the Wildlife Resource Report in project records.
Decommission all roads at risk that can’t be maintained by expected funding. Close most roads. Decommission more roads.	Alternative 3 was formed to address this issue. The effects of closing more roads than identified in the Travel Analysis Process (TAP) (which considered administration and resource needs for the present and the future) is displayed in Chapter 3. Appendix B summarizes the proposed transportation changes for this project. More specific information about road management is include in the Engineering Resource Report in project files.
Do not cut trees greater than 19” diameter at breast height (DBH).	Excluding the harvest of trees 18 inches DBH or greater would not meet P&N #3 (Vegetation Composition and Structure) and #5 (Sensitive Plants and Unique Habitats) in some instances. Limiting harvest to trees less than 18 inches DBH would not provide a cost-effective method to accomplish proposed vegetation management treatment objectives including: maintenance and restoration of large trees, reduction of conifer encroachment to promote aspen, dwarf mistletoe reduction, and promotion of preferred conifer species in treated areas. Girdling conifers ≥ 18 inches DBH to achieve vegetation management treatment objectives would not be cost-effective compared to harvesting the same trees because girdling would require an additional treatment that would be more expensive to implement than harvest and would provide no economic value to fund additional restoration treatments in the project area.

Issue	Approach
<p>Do not implement the project until funding for road decommissioning and maintenance has been secured or develop a plan to prioritize/phase project implementation and road decommissioning (i.e. no commercial activities in Phase 2 would take place until high-priority road decommissioning in Phase 1 had taken place).</p>	<p>In general, road reconstruction and maintenance would be implemented at the beginning of the project as needed on all roads that would be used for timber haul. Temporary roads constructed for the project would be decommissioned soon after timber harvest on the unit has been completed. Road closure and decommissioning would be spread out over the period of the project or after completion of the project depending on where and when funding is available. The IDT Fish Biologist and Hydrologist would determine which roads are the highest priority for closure first, which may depend on the type of funding available.</p>
<p>The project will negatively affect air quality which can have adverse health effects and be a nuisance.</p>	<p>Effects to air quality are addressed in the Air Quality section of Chapter 3. Burns would not be conducted unless smoke approval is received from the Washington State Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR) for burning. Smoke would be monitored during burning activities and a burn project may be stopped if ventilation conditions deteriorate, if it is safe to do so. Some smoke impacts can be expected, especially within the first 24 hours of ignition, but these are not expected to violate National Ambient Air Quality Standards.</p>
<p>Public safety is at risk from logging traffic on Okanogan County and National Forest System roads.</p>	<p>Roads in the project area maintained by Okanogan County are outside of the scope of the project because they are not within the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. Public safety risk from logging traffic is discussed under Other Required Disclosures near the end of Chapter 3. Hauling on NFS roads on weekends or holidays would not be allowed unless approved by the recreation program manager and the sale administrator (Appendix D). Contractors and Forest Service drivers are responsible to follow agency Road Use Rules and State Laws. Some of the lower standard roads in the project area would be open only to project-related activities and not open to the public use. Most National Forest Service system roads proposed for commercial timber haul would either be reconstructed by the project or have pre-haul maintenance making use of these roads more safe.</p>
<p>Thinning would increase the carbon footprint.</p>	<p>This issue is discussed in the Climate Change, Greenhouse Gases, and Carbon Sequestration section, section 3.15.4, in Chapter 3 under Other Required Disclosures.</p>

## Chapter 2: Alternative Description

Chapter 2 describes the alternatives analyzed for the Mission Restoration Project and also provides readers and the deciding official with a summary of design criteria, mitigation, and monitoring (shown fully in Appendix D) and a comparison of effects of the alternatives. A description of Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study is also included.

### 2.1 Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

#### 2.1.1 Pacific Biodiversity Institute Alternative

In response to scoping, Pacific Biodiversity Institute (PBI) staff proposed an alternative calling for limiting the amount and pace of restoration treatments; increasing the amount of thinning and/or prescribed fire in the WUI and in the shrub-steppe environment in Libby Creek; thinning plantations to wide spacing; limiting thinning to hand-thinning and only up to 6" DBH; and fully developing and funding a monitoring program prior to project implementation. IDT members met with PBI staff (July 11, 2016) to discuss the intent and specifics of this alternative, and reviewed the outcome of this discussion at a full IDT meeting. The IDT modified the thinning and prescribed fire proposed in Alternatives 2 and 3 by adding 125 acres of additional treatments in the WUI where feasible. Other elements of their alternative were considered but eliminated from further study in part because of IDT concerns that:

- Increased potential for spread of invasive plants would occur with widespread burning in shrub-steppe;
- Further loss of upland deer winter range would occur through more extensive prescribed burning;
- Thinning plantations to suggested spacing would leave too few trees to develop into the desired future stand structure;
- Securing funding sources for future monitoring occurs during implementation and yearly appropriations budgeting processes and is outside of the scope of this analysis;

Hand-thinning only to 6" DBH would not achieve restoration objectives to achieve the desired amount and distribution of dry and moist forest stand structures, would have minimal effect in maintaining existing large trees in both watersheds, and would not promote development of additional large trees in Libby Creek watershed. Restricting thinning to 6" DBH or less, would not achieve silvicultural treatment objectives to reduce conifer encroachment in proposed aspen thinning units, and would not promote disease reduction treatment objectives in proposed thinning units with a "dry forest Douglas-fir mistletoe thin" prescription.

#### 2.1.2 Do Not Close Additional Roads; Adopt all Unauthorized Roads into the National Forest System

This alternative was dropped from further consideration because it does not meet Purpose and Need #1 or #7. The ability to meet the need to reduce maintenance costs and impacts of roads on water quality, water quantity, flow regime, noxious weed spread, and wildlife habitat is predicated on considering and prioritizing each road separately for its inclusion in or removal

from the National Forest System road network. An interdisciplinary Travel Analysis Process (TAP) was used to recommend which roads to add to the system, which roads to close to most public and administrative use during and after the project, and which roads to propose for decommissioning.

### **2.1.3. No Commercial Timber Harvest; Non-commercial Thinning and Prescribed Fire Only**

An alternative was considered that would exclude commercial thinning treatments, but still retain most non-commercial thinning treatments such as Ladder Fuel Reduction (LFR) thinning, as well as prescribed fire treatments as proposed in either Alternatives 2 or 3. This alternative would not meet the Purpose and Needs for Vegetation Composition and Structure (P&N #3) for changing vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns in comparison to historical conditions and to improve forest resiliency to insect, disease, and wildfire events. It would not meet the Purpose and Need for Wildlife Habitat (P&N #4) for developing, maintaining, and /or enhancing habitat for federally listed and other wildlife species, increasing meadow habitat, increasing large tree habitat, and reducing the risk of large-scale habitat loss to fires by increasing resilience of habitats to wildfire. It would not meet the Purpose and Need for Sensitive Plants and Unique Habitats (P&N #5) since it would not decrease conifer encroachment in hardwood stands in the project area causing decreased nutrient, water, and sunlight availability to moonworts, bladderworts, and aspen.

### **2.1.4 No Forest Plan Amendments Required**

Public comments received during the scoping period requested that the team provide an action alternative that did not require any temporary Forest Plan amendments for implementation. The IDT considered this alternative but decided to not fully develop it because many of the objectives of the project would be compromised to the point of being not implementable or ineffective in order to attain complete compliance with the Forest Plan. Since the scoping period, four proposed Forest Plan amendments have been deemed unnecessary as determined by further field reconnaissance and modeling. Since the release of the initial preliminary EA, another three amendments were determined to be unnecessary because the mitigations needed to protect sensitive soils by requiring winter operations could still be implemented without the amendments. The remaining proposed temporary Forest Plan amendment and its rationale is explained in section 2.3. This amendment, along with reasonable design criteria, best management practices, mitigation, and monitoring, allow for implementing the action alternatives with no significant impacts to wildlife resources. Without this amendment, the Purpose and Need for Hydrologic Function and Aquatic Habitat (P&N #1), Vegetation Composition and Structure (P&N #3), Wildlife Habitat (P&N #4), Sensitive Plants and Unique Habitats (P&N #5), and Wildfire Hazard in the Wildland Urban Interface (P&N #6) would only be partially met under this alternative.

### **2.1.5 Harvest on Steeper Slopes**

Public comments received during the scoping period requested that the team provide an action alternative that included more acres of restoration using timber harvest. This alternative was thoroughly explored to the point that flagging marked the boundaries where harvest units could

take place if the Best Management Practices for timber harvest could be adjusted to include ground based harvesting on slopes over 35 percent slope. However, recent monitoring results of skidding operations on steeper slopes on the Methow Ranger District have shown that soil protection objectives could not be met consistently with existing ground based equipment and/or yarding methods. This alternative would have included 680 additional acres of overstory treatments.

## **2.2 Alternatives Developed**

### **2.2.1 Alternative 1, No Action – Current Management Practices**

Under Alternative 1, no thinning, prescribed fire, road decommissioning, road closures, culvert replacement, or road reconstruction or road maintenance by a timber sale purchaser would take place. No treatments to maintain or restore large and old trees or Riparian Reserves would occur. No treatments would occur to restore dry forest resiliency to disturbances such as wildfire and no reduction of risk through treatments would occur in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). Habitat in dry forested areas would continue to be at risk for uncharacteristic wildfire behavior and effects. Beaver habitat and large woody debris habitats would not be enhanced. Existing culverts would continue to block habitat continuity for listed fish species and create risks of road failure during projected storm events. The bridge across West Fork Buttermilk Creek would continue to be blocked for motorized travel and degrade further. Sediment production from the current road system would remain at high levels or increase as road conditions continue to degrade. Soil restoration activities would not occur in areas affected by past management activities. No project-related ground disturbing activities would take place and no timber would be offered for sale. Ground cover would remain at existing levels in Riparian Reserves, effectively trapping and filtering sediment in most places. Current activities permitted by previous Forest project decisions would be on-going and future activities such as routine road maintenance, firewood gathering, cattle grazing, noxious weed control, and recreation uses such as camping, horseback riding, snowmobile, and ATV use would be expected to occur.

### **2.2.2 Alternative 2, Proposed Action**

Alternative 2 was developed from internal and external input to address the project's Purpose and Need statements. It includes commercial and non-commercial thinning; prescribed fire; closing, opening, and decommissioning roads; temporary road construction; replacing culverts; bridge replacement; enhancing beaver and coarse woody debris habitat; limited rock armoring, and soil restoration treatments. These proposed treatments are identical in Alternative 3 except for the bridge replacement across West Fork Buttermilk Creek.

### **2.2.3 Alternative 3, Increase Scale of Aquatic Restoration**

Alternative 3 was developed in response to comments received during the scoping period that called for increasing the scale of aquatic restoration in the project area. In addition to the treatments proposed in Alternative 2, this alternative proposes further road closures and decommissioning, hardened fords, and additional rock armoring.

## 2.2.4 Action Alternative Treatment Summaries

Figure 6 describes the type, amount of treatments proposed in Alternatives 2 and 3 to address P&N #1-#6, except for changes in the transportation system that are described following this figure. Some treatments could begin immediately after a decision is signed, including beaver habitat restoration and road closures/decommissioning, and continuing until the work is completed as funding becomes available. Other treatments would require further layout, contract preparation, and contract award, such as commercial and non-commercial thinning, which would defer implementation until these tasks have been completed. Once awarded, commercial harvest would occur over a 3-5 year period, while noncommercial thinning would occur over 10-15 years as layout was completed and funding became available. Prescribed burning would occur approximately one year or more after thinning occurred to provide for time for firewood utilization, debris to cure, and preparation of the burn unit and burn plan. Noncommercial thinning treatments would generally prioritize areas within the WUI, including those areas closest to private lands. Soil restoration treatments would occur after thinning and associated prescribed fire projects in soil treatment units where completed. The footprint of acres that would be treated by prescribed fire overlaps the footprint of acres that would be treated by thinning. Detailed descriptions of treatment types, purposes, and methods, and units are provided in Appendices A-C. Maps showing locations of the proposed treatments are in Appendix F. Effects of proposed treatments are discussed in Chapter 3.

**Figure 6. Alternatives 2 and 3 Proposed Treatments**

Treatment Type	Description	Amount	Alternative
Non-Commercial Thinning	Plantation Thin	1,738 acres	2, 3
	Wetland Thin	22 acres	2, 3
	Ladder Fuel Reduction Thin (outside of commercial thinning units)	6,500 acres	2, 3
	Post and Pole Thin	36 acres	2, 3
	Conifer Girdling & Thin for Aspen Restoration	71 acres	2, 3
	<i>Subtotal Non-Commercial Thinning</i>	<i>8,367 acres</i>	
Commercial Thinning	Aspen Release Thin	160 acres	2, 3
	Moist Forest Thin	70 acres	2, 3
	Dry Forest Restoration Thin	1,280 acres	2, 3
	Dry Forest Restoration – Dwarf Mistletoe Thin	284 acres	2, 3
	Variable Retention Regeneration (VRR) Thin and post-harvest tree planting	59 acres	2, 3
	<i>Subtotal Commercial Thinning</i>	<i>1,853 acres</i>	
Prescribed Fire	Hand-piling and pile burning	2,900 acres	2, 3
	Machine-piling and pile burning	702 acres	2, 3
	Underburning	6,617 acres	2, 3

Treatment Type	Description	Amount	Alternative
	Landing pile burning	179 landings	2, 3
	<i>Subtotal Prescribed Fire</i>	<i>10,219 acres + 179 landings</i>	
Soil Restoration	Sub-soil areas of previously-compacted soil	468 acres	2, 3
Culvert Replacement	Replace culverts where fish barriers exist on fish-bearing streams	8 culverts	2, 3
	Replace culverts where existing culverts are undersized on non-fish-bearing streams	15 culverts	2, 3
Beaver Habitat Enhancement	Enhance and protect areas viable for future beaver utilization.	8 sites	2, 3
West Fork Buttermilk Bridge Replacement	Replace bridge across West Fork Buttermilk Creek to restore motorized access	1 bridge	2
Coarse Woody Debris (CWD) Enhancement	Restore deficient levels of CWD in fish-bearing stream channels.	8.2 miles	2, 3
Rock Armoring	Apply rock to road surface at stream crossings.	Alt 2: 6 stream crossings Alt 3: 33 stream crossings (6 crossings will be funded through the timber sale, and 27 with outside funds)	2, 3
Hardened Fords	Construct rocked open fords on stream crossings	4 stream crossings	3

Proposed Changes in Transportation System described in Figure 7 and Figure 8 describe the current and post-project status of roads in the project area as proposed by Alternatives 2 and 3 to address P&N #1 and #7. See Appendix B for road-specific information of each alternative and Appendix F for maps of proposed transportation changes. The bridge across West Fork Buttermilk Creek would be replaced in Alternative 2, restoring motorized access to roads west of the bridge, and remain closed to motorized travel in Alternative 3. Both Alternatives 2 and 3 propose to construct 1.2 miles of temporary roads (9 segments of road) that would be decommissioned after use, described further in the Transportation section of Chapter 3 and on the proposed transportation changes map in Appendix F. Appendix B summarizes the transportation definitions and proposed changes for this project.

**Figure 7. Alternative 2 Proposed Transportation Changes**

Road Type	Existing (miles)	During Project	Post-Project Status			
			Open NFS Roads	Closed NFS Roads	Closed NFS Roads with Administrative Access	Decommissioned
Open NFS Roads	56.1	80.6	45.7	2.6	5.5	2.2
Closed NFS Roads	62.8	36.7	4.4	29.5	9.7	19.2
Unauthorized Roads	15.8	15.8	0.61	2.7	0.2	12.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>134.7</b>	<b>133.1</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>34.8</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>33.6</b>

**Figure 8. Alternative 3 Proposed Transportation Changes**

Road Type	Existing (miles)	During Project	Post-Project Status			
			Open NFS Roads	Closed NFS Roads	Closed NFS Roads with Administrative Access	Decommissioned
Open NFS Roads	56.1	81.4	39.3	10.7	0	6.1
Closed NFS Roads	62.8	42.4	0.1	21.1	4.5	37.1
Unauthorized Roads	15.8	15.8	0.4	2	0.3	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>134.7</b>	<b>139.6</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>56.1</b>

## 2.3 Forest Plan Amendment

### 2.3.1 Amendments and 2012 Planning Rule

Forest Plan amendments are intended to be an adaptive management tool to keep forest plans current, effective, and relevant between forest plan revisions. The 2012 Planning Rule (Title 36, CFR, Part 219–Planning) states:

36 CFR 219.13(a) Plan amendment. A plan may be amended at any time. Plan amendments may be broad or narrow, depending on the need for change, and should be used to keep plans current and help units adapt to new information or changing conditions. The responsible official has the discretion to determine whether and how to amend the plan. Except as provided by paragraph (c) of this section, a plan amendment is required to add, modify, or remove one or more plan components, or to change how or where one or more plan components apply to all or part of the plan area (including management areas or geographic areas).



The 2012 Planning Rule further describes the amendment process as follows (CFR 219.13(b)(1)):

Base an amendment on a preliminary identification of the need to change the plan. The preliminary identification of the need to change the plan may be based on a new assessment; a monitoring report; or other documentation of new information, changed conditions, or changed circumstances. When a plan amendment is made together with, and only applies to, a project or activity decision, the analysis prepared for the project or activity may serve as the documentation for the preliminary identification of the need to change the plan.

### 2.3.2 Proposed Forest Plan Amendment

The project scoping letter and initial preliminary EA listed several proposed amendments for this project; since that time, IDT members determined through field reconnaissance, aerial photos, modeling results, and clarification of Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines that several proposed amendments were unnecessary because proposed treatments would be consistent with the Standards and Guidelines those amendments would have temporarily altered, or the project could be implemented with reduced flexibility without those amendments.

In this final EA, both action alternatives include one project-specific, non-significant, temporary amendment that would allow proposed thinning treatments on 388 acres to reduce deer winter range cover to levels below Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (S&G) to meet restoration, sustainability, forest health, and wildfire hazard reduction objectives (See [Figure 10](#)). The amendment applies to this prescription that applies to Management Areas (MA) 14 and 26:

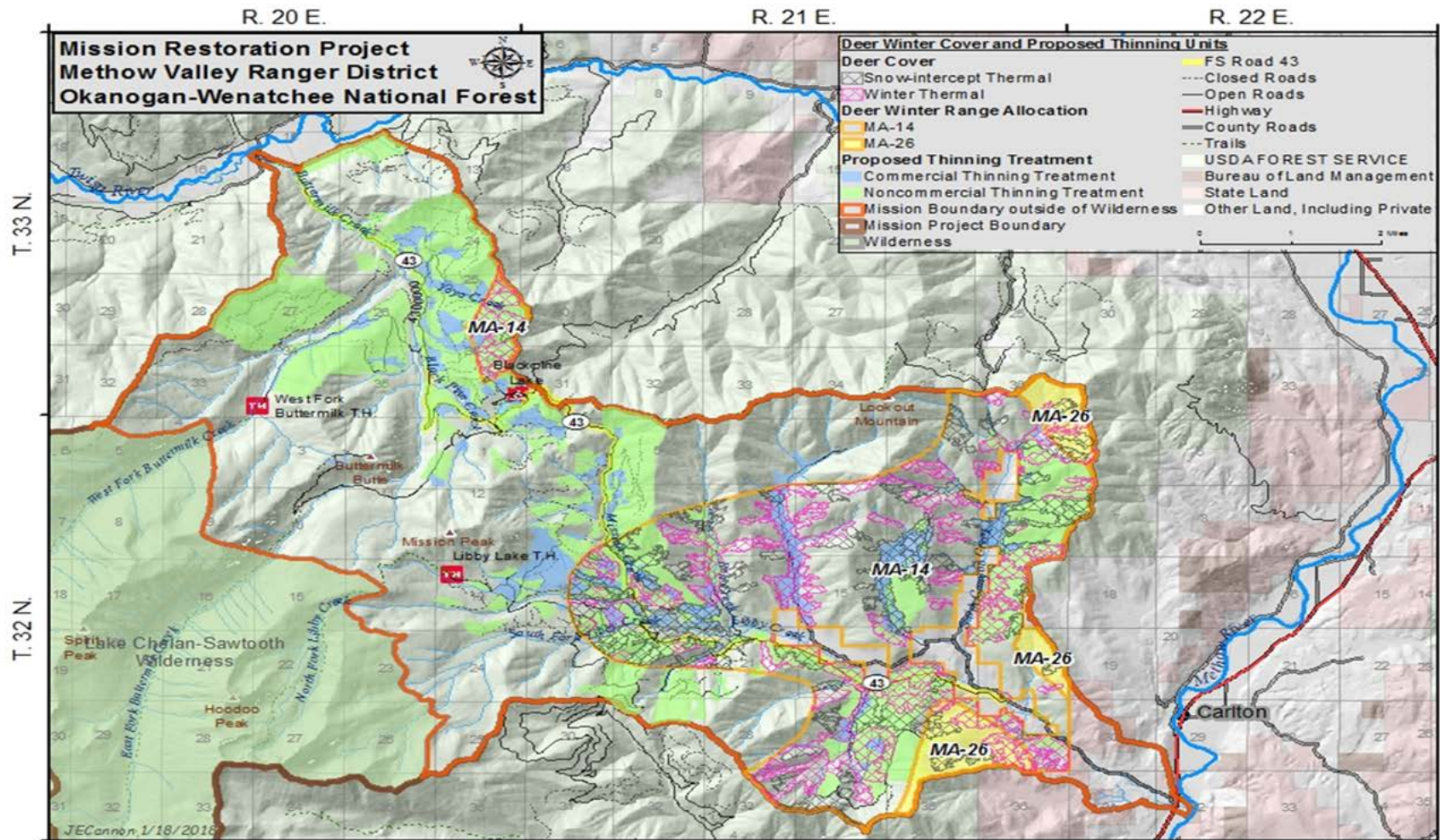
#### Management Area Prescription Wildlife MA14-6A and MA26-6A

Manage all identified deer winter range for the following well distributed cover:

Figure 9. Deer Winter Range Cover Guidance

Winter Range Cover	MA14 & MA26
Snow intercept Thermal	$\geq 15\%$
Winter Thermal	$> 25\%$
Hiding	$\geq 0\%$
<b>Total:</b>	<b><math>\geq 40\%</math></b>

Figure 10. Proposed thinning treatments in deer winter range cover



**Rationale:** Since treatments covered by the proposed amendment would provide the amount of hiding cover required by the standard and guideline, the discussion about the effects of the amendment are focused on the effects on the combination of snow intercept thermal and winter thermal cover.

Areas of winter range cover that would be reduced below current S&Gs contain higher tree stocking levels with more canopy closure than existed historically, with the accompanying higher risk of uncharacteristic crown fire behavior and increased vulnerability to insect outbreaks. Forested stand composition in deer thermal cover consist of a higher proportion of shade-tolerant conifers than existed historically or is predicted to exist in the future. In some aspen stands within deer thermal cover, conifers are out-competing desired aspen, resulting in the decline of this native tree species. Both action alternatives include thinning on 388 acres of deer winter range cover as provided by this amendment, which would create a more open forested landscape with a less continuous layer of shade-tolerant understory trees in conifer stands, and would begin restoration toward historical and predicted future conditions with a corresponding reduction in the risk of uncharacteristic insect outbreaks and crown fire behavior and effects. Reducing winter range cover is also needed to lessen wildfire risks in the Wildland Urban Interface, decrease conifer encroachment in aspen stands to maintain plant diversity of this native tree species, and to increase the ability of vegetation to withstand impacts of a projected warmer, drier future climate. Temporarily amending this S&G would provide for commercial and noncommercial (ladder fuel reduction) thinning that would cause some adverse, mostly short-term impacts, as well as several beneficial long-term impacts that would make the ecosystem more resilient to disturbances such as insects, wildfire, and climate.

The project area contains 12,142 acres of deer winter range in MA14 and MA26, of which 50% (6,125 acres) is in deer winter range cover (including deer winter thermal cover and snow intercept thermal cover – see [Figure 10](#)). The Mission project includes one Forest Plan amendment, which would allow reduction of cover in deer winter range to fall below 40% (25% winter thermal cover and 15% snow-intercept thermal cover), to a minimum of 36% of the winter range area in the two management areas. Mitigation measures would actually result in more of the area remaining as cover. These measures include riparian no-treatment buffers, retaining 20% of the area in unthinned patches of trees ranging from 0.1 to multiple acres in fuels units and some unthinned areas in pre-commercial thinning units, and retaining complex patches, clumps and gaps in harvest units.

Since the time that the Forest Plan was written in 1989, studies have found that thermal cover is not as critical as forage quality and quantity for winter survival of ungulates (Forest Restoration Strategy, 2012). Specific proportions such as the 40% cover level required by the Forest Plan are not supported by more recent research, which has generally found that while cover is needed where security is low and where snow levels are high, deer use appears to be more strongly influenced by forage availability than a trade-off between forage and cover (Cook et al. 2005, Coulombe et al. 2011, Masse and Cote, 2009). The amendment would allow a reduction of thermal cover by 7% below the Forest Plan requirement of 40% while increasing forage

availability in forested stands. At least 36% of the area would remain in well-distributed thermal cover.

The winter range is 24% of the total project area and contains 52% of the commercial treatments and 39% of the non-commercial thinning. Of the non-commercial treatments, 59% are LFR treatments. The amendment, which would relax cover standards (which are considered outdated science), concerns winter cover only. In winter range cover, 942 acres of commercial treatments (48% of total commercial treatments), 2,238 acres (27%) of non-commercial treatments (including 2,105 acres (33%) of LFR treatments) would occur.

The amendment to deer cover standards would allow standards to fall below 25% winter thermal cover and 15% snow-intercept thermal cover. Without the amendment, the ladder-fuel reduction treatment in MA 26, which would affect approximately 19 20 acres of winter thermal cover by reducing the overall canopy closure would not be possible because the MA 26 block has only 35% in cover currently, thus does not meet the standards, which is 40%.

In MA 14, up to 516 acres of winter thermal and 813 acres of snow-intercept thermal cover could be changed to a non-cover condition before the amount of cover would fall below forest plan standards. So, this amendment would allow treatment of an additional 134 169 acres of winter thermal and 593 199 acres of snow-intercept thermal cover in MA 14, for a total of 746 368 acres of thinning in winter range MA 14 that would reduce cover below Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines.

The amendment would result in:

- a minor short- to medium-term negative effect on reduction of deer cover on an additional MAXIMUM of 19 20 acres of MA 26 and 727 368 acres in MA 14 because these acres would not provide cover for the short-term, until canopies close again.
- a minor short-term positive effect because the stands would provide additional forage, and be more sustainable to loss from wildfire, insects and disease, and
- a minor, medium to long-term benefit because reduced tree competition allows for development of larger trees that are able to provide snow interception and thermal cover.
- Temporary, short-term, minor disturbance to deer on winter range. A review of the best available science information (BASIS) on deer thermal cover is provided in Section 3.7.5.

### **2.3.3 Substantive Provisions Related to the Purpose of the Amendment**

The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires that proposed amendments to the Forest Plan consider specific substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. The substantive provisions related to the purpose of the amendment to provide for a reduction of deer winter range cover on 388 acres are listed below, while those affected by the amendment are listed in section 3.16 of this document:

219.8 (a)(1)(iv) System drivers such as wildland fire, and climate change, and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area to adapt to change is related to the purpose

of the amendment because reducing deer winter range cover on 388 acres is intended to affect how the project area responds to system drivers such as insects and wildland fire, as well as the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to adapt to change;

219.8 (a)(1)(v) Wildland fires and opportunities to restore fire-adapted ecosystems is related to the purpose of the amendment because reducing deer winter range cover on 388 acres is intended to promote restoration of more historical fire behavior in dry forested areas that are primarily adapted to frequent, low-intensity fire. Thinning would also contribute to altering fire behavior in the Wildland Urban Interface.

219.8(a)(1)(vi) Opportunities for landscape scale restoration is related to the purpose of the amendment because reducing deer winter range cover on 388 acres would promote establishment of vegetation structure, species, and composition similar to historic and predicted future conditions.

219.9(a)(1) Ecosystem integrity is related to the purpose of the amendment because reducing deer winter range cover on 388 acres is intended to promote maintenance and/or restoration of historic and predicted future ecosystem structure, function, and composition;

219.9(a)(2) Ecosystem diversity is related to the purpose of the amendment because reducing deer winter range cover on 388 acres is intended to promote maintenance and/or restoration of a diversity of ecosystem and habitat types in the project area; and

219.11(c) Timber harvest for purposes other than timber production is related to the purpose of the amendment because commercial thinning is proposed to create forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more similar to historic and predicted future conditions, and more likely to experience disturbances (including wildfire and insects) in a manner similar to historical and future predicted disturbance patterns. Timber harvest as allowed by this amendment would contribute toward habitat diversity for terrestrial wildlife and tree species. Some timber harvest would remove conifers that are out-competing aspen in existing aspen stands. Some timber harvest would remove trees in riparian zones to promote production of hardwood vegetation to increase beaver forage, which in turn increases successful re-establishment of beaver through current beaver reintroduction program conducted by Washington state Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Forest Plan components that allow thinning for purposes other than timber production include:

- MA14-19B and MA26-19B: Limit acres burned by habitat-damaging wildfires;
- MA14-19C: Treat fuels to reduce the risk of wildfire to acceptable levels. Prescribe a level of fuel treatment to protect timber stands, wildlife values, and other resources from unacceptable losses cause by wildfire;
- MA14-20A: Scheduled and non-scheduled timber harvest shall be designed to perpetuate wildlife habitat and to address current habitat needs;
- MA26-19C: Fuels treatments, including the use of prescribed fire, shall provide, where practicable, for the retention and/or enhancement of key wildlife.

Timber harvest as provided by this amendment would provide the level of treatment to help maintain and/or restore vegetation structure, arrangement, and species composition that builds a more sustainable environment by reducing the risk of high-severity wildfire; protecting timber stands, wildlife values, and other resources; perpetuating wildlife habitat; and providing for retention and/or enhancement of key wildlife. Timber harvest, as provided by this amendment, would promote a vegetation structure and arrangement that has a reduced risk of high-severity wildfire behavior, including a greater risk of crown fire initiation and spread. These vegetation conditions are also more sustainable with the predicted wetter winter and hotter, drier summer climate and more widespread wildfire, insect, and drought disturbance regimes expected under projected climate change scenarios.

## **2.4 Design Criterion, Mitigation Measures, and Monitoring**

Specific features, including Best Management Practices, are incorporated into the design of the Action Alternatives to prevent potential resource impacts. These criteria are an integral part of the proposed actions and the effects analyses presented in Chapter 3 are based on these measures being implemented. Monitoring would occur during implementation and to assess potential impacts caused by project activities. Depending on the impacts observed, specific mitigation measures would be implemented to reduce negative effects. Design criteria, monitoring plans, and mitigation measures are detailed in Appendix D.

## **2.5 Comparison of Alternatives**

Figure 11 displays the resource indicators used by the IDT to analyze the effects of No Action, the Proposed Action (Alternative 2), and Alternative 3. The resource indicators are grouped by the resource analyses provided in Chapter 3.

**Figure 11. Comparison of Alternatives by Resource Indicator**

Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
<b>Water Resources</b>			
Catchment Road Density Reductions (number of catchment rankings lowered)	0	5 (3 High to Moderate, 2 Moderate to Low)	8 (5 High to Moderate, 3 Moderate to Low)
Road Drainage Network Increases (number of catchment rankings lowered)	0	5 (2 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)	10 (2 High to Low, 2 High to Moderate, 6 Moderate to Low)
Riparian Road Density Reductions (number of catchment rankings lowered)	0	8 (4 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)	11 (2 High to Low, 5 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)
Road-stream Crossing Density Reductions (number of catchment rankings lowered)	0	6 (1 High to Low, 1 High to Moderate, and 4 Moderate to Low)	9 (1 High to Low, 5 High to Moderate, 1 Moderate to Low)
Ground Cover (amount of bare soil)	Same as existing	+ 100 acres	+ 100 acres
Beaver Habitat Enhancement Sites	0	8 sites	8 sites
Stream Channel Complexity (CWD) Improvements (miles of restored stream)	0	8.3 miles	8.3 miles
Fish Distribution: Increased Access to Potential Habitat (miles)	0	5.6 miles	5.6 miles
Fish Distribution: number of Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) pipes installed	0	8 AOPs	8 AOPs

Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
<b>Soils</b>			
Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting (percent of total unit)	2% (no recent mass wasting observed)	5%	5%
Compaction, Rutting, Puddling (percent of total unit)	4 – 7% average in each unit.	7 – 10%	7 – 10%
Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material & Ground Cover (tons/acre)	Average 2 – 8 tons/acre in each unit.	5 – 20 tons/acre	5 – 20 tons/acre
<b>Vegetation</b>			
The amount (%) of dry and moist forest structures compared to desired range of variability (DRV)	17 of 28 forest structure categories within DRV	25 of 28 forest structure categories within or moved closer to DRV	25 of 28 forest structure categories within or moved closer to DRV
The arrangement (average patch size) of dry and moist forest structures compared to desired range of variability (DRV)	18 of 28 forest structure categories within DRV	24 of 28 forest structure categories within or moved closer to DRV	24 of 28 forest structure categories within or moved closer to DRV
Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes to maintain and restore large trees in patches with medium, large, or large and medium size trees.	0 acres treated	6433 acres treated	6433 acres treated
Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to desired range of variability (DRV)	3 of 6 categories within DRV	6 of 6 categories within or moved closer to DRV	6 of 6 categories within or moved closer to DRV



Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
Acres of treatment in forest vegetation vulnerable to Douglas-fir bark beetles	0 acres treated	8313 acres treated	8313 acres treated
Acres of treatment in forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection	0 acres treated	7815 acres treated	7815 acres treated
<b>Fire/Fuels</b>			
Percentage of Libby and Buttermilk landscapes in Low, Moderate, & High risk of crown fire compared to desired range of variability (DRV)	<p>4 of 6 categories within DRV</p> <p><i>Low Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 32% (desired range 45 – 67%) Libby = 53% (desired range 41 – 67%)</p> <p><i>Moderate Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 27% (desired range 20 – 36%) Libby = 32% (desired range 20 – 36%)</p> <p><i>High Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 41% (desired range 12 – 28%) Libby = 16% (desired range of 5 – 24%)</p>	<p>5 of 6 categories within or moving toward DRV</p> <p><i>Low Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 39% (increased 7%) Libby = 65% (increased 12%)</p> <p><i>Moderate Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 23% (decreased 4%) Libby = 21% (decreased 11%)</p> <p><i>High Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 38% (decreased 3%) Libby = 14% (decreased 2%)</p>	<p>5 of 6 categories within or moving toward DRV</p> <p><i>Low Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 39% (increased 7%) Libby = 65% (increased 12%)</p> <p><i>Moderate Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 23% (decreased 4%) Libby = 21% (decreased 11%)</p> <p><i>High Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 38% (decreased 3%) Libby = 14% (decreased 2%)</p>
Average patch size (in acres) of Libby and Buttermilk landscapes in Low, Moderate and High risk of crown fire.	<p>2 of 6 categories within DRV</p> <p><i>Low Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 207 acres (range of 1651 – 3714) Libby = 400 acres (range of 713 – 3714 ac)</p>	<p>3 of 6 categories within or moving toward DRV</p> <p><i>Low Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 299 acres (Increased 92) Libby = 825 acres (Increased 425 ac.)</p>	<p>3 of 6 categories within or moving toward DRV</p> <p><i>Low Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 299 acres (Increased 92) Libby = 825 acres (Increased 425 ac.)</p>

Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
	<p><i>Moderate Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 305 acres (range of 460 – 2073 ac) Libby = 268 acres (range of 460 – 1776 ac)</p> <p><i>High Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 1504 acres (range of 523 – 2125 ) Libby = 248 acres (range of 242 – 934 ac)</p>	<p><i>Moderate Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 237 acres (Decreased 68) Libby = 170 acres (Decreased 98 ac)</p> <p><i>High Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 1734 acres (Increased 230) Libby = 264 acres (Increased 16 ac)</p>	<p><i>Moderate Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 237 acres (Decreased 68) Libby = 170 acres (Decreased 98 ac)</p> <p><i>High Crown Fire Risk</i> Buttermilk = 1734 acres (Increased 230) Libby = 264 acres (Increased 16 ac)</p>
Percent of flame length by size class (in feet) in WUI.	<p>Low = 52%</p> <p>Moderate = 35%</p> <p>High = 4%</p> <p>Extreme = 9%</p>	<p>Low = 57%</p> <p>Moderate = 32%</p> <p>High = 3%</p> <p>Extreme = 8%</p>	<p>Low = 57%</p> <p>Moderate = 32%</p> <p>High = 3%</p> <p>Extreme = 8%</p>
Percent of fire behavior by type (none, surface, crown) in WUI.	<p>None = 3%</p> <p>Surface = 82%</p> <p>Crown = 15%</p>	<p>None = 3%</p> <p>Surface = 88%</p> <p>Crown = 9%</p>	<p>None = 3%</p> <p>Surface = 88%</p> <p>Crown = 9%</p>
Percent of flame length by size class (in feet) along Forest Road 43 and 4340.	<p>Low = 85%</p> <p>Moderate = 9%</p> <p>High = 2%</p> <p>Extreme = 4%</p>	<p>Low = 92%</p> <p>Moderate = 6%</p> <p>High = 1%</p> <p>Extreme = 1%</p>	<p>Low = 92%</p> <p>Moderate = 6%</p> <p>High = 1%</p> <p>Extreme = 1%</p>
Percentage of fire behavior by type (none, surface, crown) along Forest Road 43 and 4340.	<p>None = 28%</p> <p>Surface = 61%</p> <p>Crown = 11%</p>	<p>None = 28%</p> <p>Surface = 69%</p> <p>Crown = 3%</p>	<p>None = 28%</p> <p>Surface = 69%</p> <p>Crown = 3%</p>
Percent of Forest service roads greater than ½ mile in length providing access for veg/fire	<p>Remain = 100%</p> <p>Decommissioned = 0%</p>	<p>Remain = 89%</p> <p>Decommissioned = 11%</p>	<p>Remain = 69%</p> <p>Decommissioned = 30%</p>

Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action	Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
management would remain or be decommissioned			
<b>Wildlife</b>			
Spotted Owl nesting, roosting, foraging (NRF) habitat	1,054 acres	1,054 acres (-3%)	1,054 acres (-3%)
Open road miles in spotted owl habitat (NRF plus dispersal)	15.7 miles	17.2 miles post project	12.7 miles post project
Treatments in lynx habitat (early successional habitat in the subalpine fir zone) in LAUs	Spirit Mountain – 0 acres Methow Gold – 0 acres	Spirit Mountain – 5 ac. (2% treated) Methow Gold – 53 ac. (43% treated)	Spirit Mountain – 5 acres (2% treated) Methow Gold – 53 acres (43% treated)
Open roads in lynx habitat in LAUs	2.6 miles	2.6 miles post-project	2.6 miles post-project
Acres of treatments in designated critical habitat for lynx	0 acres	2,132 acres treated (17%)	2,132 acres treated (17%)
Open roads in critical habitat for lynx	9.9 miles	15.7 miles post-project	9.8 miles post-project
Goshawk suitable habitat (dense stands with large trees).	13,022 acres (38% of non-Wilderness project area)	11,636 acres (34% of non-Wilderness project area)	11,636 acres (34% of non-Wilderness project area)
Goshawk changes to suitable habitat (open road miles)	34.8 miles	40.2 miles post-project	28.0 miles post-project
Improvements to habitat for sensitive species-gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker, and western gray squirrel changes to suitable habitat mid-successional	0 acres	1,795 acres of potential habitat improved (8% of the habitat)	1,795 acres of potential habitat improved (9% of the habitat)

Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action		Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
ponderosa pine and shrub-steppe (acres).				
Open roads in habitat for sensitive species-gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker, and western gray squirrel.	45.3 miles total		51.4 miles post-project	34.5 miles post-project
MA 14 winter range cover: forage ratios.	52% cover (SIT = 22%, WT = 30%)		36% cover (SIT = 13%, WT = 23%)	36% cover (SIT = 13%, WT = 23%)
MA 26 winter range cover: forage ratios.	35% cover (SIT = 16%, WT = 19%)		33% cover (SIT = 16%, WT = 17%)	33% cover (SIT = 16%, WT = 17%)
Open roads in MIS habitat for mature/old growth forest (spotted owls), winter ranger (mule deer) and lodgepole pine (lynx)	23.5 miles		21.0 miles post-project	12.2 miles post-project
Treatments in habitat for landbirds (pine, mixed conifer and deciduous/riparian habitats)	Ponderosa Pine = 0 acres		8,395 acres treated (39%)	8,395 acres treated (39%)
	Mixed conifer = 0 acres		1,813 acres treated (14%)	1,813 acres treated (14%)
	Riparian = 0 acres		668 acres treated (13%)	668 acres treated (13%)
	Deciduous (aspen)= 0 acres		231 acres	231 acres
<b>Transportation</b>				
Provide the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for	MA5-03	1.64	1.74	1.70
	MA14-10	1.25	1.17	0.91

Resource Indicator	Alternative 1, No Action		Alternative 2, Proposed Action	Alternative 3
administration, public use, and protection of NFS lands. (Open NFS road density in discrete management areas post project)	MA17-135	N/A	N/A	N/A
	MA25-13	0.55	1.28	0.31
	MA25-14	0.53	2.41	1.45
	MA25-15	1.17	1.21	1.09
	MA26-06	0.29	0.29	0.29
	MA26-07	0.19	0.19	1.70
Miles of system road in project area by maintenance area	ML 1	62.81	34.82	33.80
	ML 2	27.63	37.45	16.02
	ML 3	25.02	25.29	25.29
	ML 4	3.41	3.41	3.41
<b>Botany</b>				
Viability of occupied <i>B. crenulatum</i> habitat	Fair viability		Good viability	Good viability
Numbers of populations or individual plants	5 populations totaling 40 individuals		2 populations totaling 9 individuals	2 populations totaling 9 individuals
Acres of unique and sensitive habitat treated (aspen stands)	0 acres		231 acres	231 acres
Acres of forest canopy opened (change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation)	0 acres of forest canopy opened. Sparse or no understory in areas with closed canopy.		10,220 acres of forest canopy opened.	10,220 acres of forest canopy opened.
<b>Range</b>				

<b>Resource Indicator</b>	<b>Alternative 1, No Action</b>	<b>Alternative 2, Proposed Action</b>	<b>Alternative 3</b>
Acres of forest canopy opened for forage production.	0	9,941 acres	9,941 acres
Acres of soil treatments in grazing allotments.	0	208	208
Miles of road changes that limit access to riparian areas.	0	4.4	6.8
Acres of commercial harvest within or adjacent to riparian reserves.	0	52	52
Miles of NFS road changes that reduce cattle access to transitory range.	0	29.02 miles	51.82 miles
Miles of NFS open road changes that reduce range management access within the grazing allotment.	0 miles	4.86 miles	21.58 miles
Miles of all NFS road changes that reduce both cattle and range management access within the grazing allotment.	0 miles	33.88 miles	73.4 miles
<b><i>Invasive Species</i></b>			
Acres of Invasive Plants within Treatment Units.	243.1	243.1 existing plus 8.49 new	243.1 existing plus 8.49 new
Miles of road infested with Invasive Plants affected by proposed road changes.	62.4	62.4	62.4

<b>Resource Indicator</b>	<b>Alternative 1, No Action</b>	<b>Alternative 2, Proposed Action</b>	<b>Alternative 3</b>
Acres of soil disturbance for potential invasive species colonization	0	61 acres decommissioning (33.6 miles) Up to 200 acres – commercial thinning	102 acres decommissioning (56.2 miles) Up to 200 acres commercial thinning.
Miles of road closures/road decommissioning.	0/0	34.8/33.6	33.8/56.2
<b>Recreation and Scenic Resources</b>			
Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Level	Existing scenic integrity levels meet the Forest Plan Standards & Guidelines	49 Units and 16 partial units in High. 50 units and 29 partial units in Moderate. 28 units and 10 partial units in Low.	49 Units and 16 partial units in High. 50 units and 29 partial units in Moderate. 28 units and 10 partial units in Low.
Trail access	Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail: Non-motorized access only on existing closed roads. Motorized access closed because of bridge damage; trail maintenance would not occur due to lack of motorized access.  Snowmobiles would still have access on ML1 Rd. 4300-200.	Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail: Open for motorized and non-motorized recreational access pending bridge repair. Trail maintained after motorized access is restored.  Winter Trail access on decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.	Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail: Unmaintained route open for stock access. No further trail maintenance would occur.  Winter Trail access on decommissioned portion of the 4300-200
<b>Air Quality</b>			
Tons of particulate matter at 2.5 microns (PM2.5)	0 tons	1877 tons	1877 tons
Tons of particulate matter at 10 microns (PM10)	0 tons	2025 tons	2025 tons
<b>Economics</b>			
Funds remaining that could be used to supplement or support	0	\$624,000	\$624,000

<b>Resource Indicator</b>	<b>Alternative 1, No Action</b>	<b>Alternative 2, Proposed Action</b>	<b>Alternative 3</b>
other planned restoration projects			



# Chapter 3: Existing Condition and Environmental Consequences

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents information about current resource conditions, and the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of implementing the proposed action. The information presented in this chapter summarizes and cites the specialists' reports that are found in the project record. Full versions of these specialists' reports are available at the Methow Valley Ranger District office in Winthrop, Washington.

Each resource area discloses the direct, indirect and cumulative effects for that resource area. Direct effects are those caused by the action, occurring at the same time and place. Indirect effects are caused by the action with subsequent effects later in time or further removed in distance, but are still reasonably predicted. Cumulative effects are the incremental effects of the Mission Restoration proposed action, when considered with the overall effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

### 3.1.1. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions

The interdisciplinary team (IDT) identified past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions that might have cumulative impacts with the proposed actions early in the analysis process. Those actions are described below. Each resource area considered different mixes of these actions, depending on the cumulative effects boundary for the resource area and the resource affected. Only those past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions that overlap the geographic analysis area boundary for each particular resource are considered, and only if those other actions have or are expected to have overlapping effects with the Mission Restoration Project. Some past projects may still be having effects on one resource, but not another.

#### 3.1.1.1 Past Actions

In order to understand the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action, this analysis relies on current environmental conditions as a proxy for the impacts of past action. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior human actions on natural events that have affected the environment and might contribute to cumulative effects.

The cumulative effects analyses do not attempt to quantify the effects of past human actions by adding up all prior actions on an action-by-action basis. There are several reasons for not taking this approach. First, a catalog and analysis of all past actions would be impractical to compile and unduly costly to obtain. Current conditions have been impacted by innumerable actions over the last century and beyond, and trying to isolate the individual actions that continue to have residual impacts would be nearly impossible. Second, providing the details of past actions on an individual basis would not be useful to predict the cumulative effects of the proposed action. In fact, focusing on individual actions would be less accurate than looking at

existing conditions, because there is limited information on the environmental impacts of individual past actions, and one cannot reasonably identify each and every action over the last century that has contributed to current conditions. Additionally, focusing on the impacts of past human actions risks ignoring the important residual effects of past natural events that may contribute to cumulative effects as much as human actions. By looking at current conditions, residual effects of past human actions and natural events are captured, regardless of which particular action or event contributed those effects. Thirdly, public scoping for this project did not identify any public interest of need for detailed information on individual past actions. Finally, the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued an interpretive memorandum on June 24, 2005 regarding analysis of past actions, which states, “ agencies can conduct an adequate cumulative effects analysis by focusing on the current aggregate effects of past actions without delving into the historical details of individual past actions.”

The cumulative effects analysis in this EA is also consistent with Forest Service National Environmental Policy Act Regulations (36 CFS 220.4(f)) July 24, 2008, which state in part: "CEQ regulations do not require the consideration of the individual effects of all past actions to determine the present effects of past actions."

For these reasons, the analysis of past actions in the cumulative effects analysis is based on current environmental conditions.

Past and on-going actions affecting resources may be described as part of the existing condition information for specific resources later in this chapter. A summary of certain types of past actions known to have occurred in the project area is available in the project record.

### **3.1.1.2 Present and On-going Actions**

Transportation System: Maintenance of system roads continues and includes danger tree removal along roads when needed.

Livestock Grazing: A portion of the Lookout Mountain grazing allotment is located within the project area. An Environmental Assessment and decision for the revision of the Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for this allotment was completed in 2011. Livestock movement and grazing management is facilitated by utilizing fences, water developments, corrals, and stock driveways. Range management practices such as riding; adjusting intensity, timing and duration of use; proper salting, and maintaining water developments and fences would continue to be implemented through annual coordination between the District Rangeland Management Specialists and the permittee (rancher) to meet riparian objectives and to obtain a more uniform distribution of use on the allotment.

Invasive Plant Treatments: Weed populations continue to be treated annually by spot-spraying with herbicide, hand-pulling, or bio-control agents. The analysis area is covered under the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Forest-wide Site-Specific Invasive Plant Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA-FS 2017).

Recreation: Activities include: campground management, including hazard tree removal, road and other infrastructure maintenance, snowmobiling and snowmobile trail grooming, hunting,

fishing, camping in dispersed sites and campgrounds, firewood gathering, Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) use, pleasure driving, mountain and road biking, hiking, and horseback riding.

### **3.1.1.3 Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions**

Reasonably foreseeable future actions are those proposed and scheduled for planning and/or implementation. Future projects not covered by a decision at this time will be thoroughly analyzed and documented in separate environmental documents. The interdisciplinary team made assumptions about the environmental effects of the future projects, because the effects of many of the projects are unknown at this time. The basic assumption for every project is that it will meet amended Forest Plan standards and guidelines. These assumed effects were used in the cumulative effects analyses at the end of each resource section. The reasonably foreseeable future actions used in this analysis are listed below:

Transportation System and Travel Management: Maintenance of system roads will continue and will include danger tree removal when needed along roads. The Forest is conducting an environmental analysis for travel management planning that will designate motorized public access routes in the project area; a decision on this analysis is expected in 2018. Within the Mission Restoration project area, the proposed alternative would not include new motorized travel routes, motorized trails, or authorization of unlicensed vehicles on open roads.

Livestock Grazing: Grazing will continue on the Lookout Mountain allotment. Active rangeland management would continue to be implemented through annual coordination between the District Rangeland Management Specialists and the permittee (rancher).

Invasive Plant Treatments: Integrated weed management (IWM) would continue to reduce or eliminate new invader weed infestations with emphasis on early detection of new infestations, rapid treatment response, and prompt revegetation. The combination of herbicide, biological, and manual treatments would be conducted by the District Weed program with herbicide treatments authorized under the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Forest-wide Site-Specific Invasive Plant Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA-FS 2017). This document provides site specific analysis, guidance and direction for noxious weed control including herbicide applications to infested lands for all of the analysis area.

Recreation: Recreational activities are expected to occur as described in Present actions with the exception of OHV use, which would be altered according to the outcome of the travel management planning project decision.

## **3.2 Impact Terms Defined**

Effects were evaluated for each retained impact topic in terms of type, context, duration, and intensity. Type describes whether impacts are beneficial or adverse:

*Beneficial*: A positive change in the condition or appearance of the resource or a change that moves the resource toward a desired condition.

*Adverse:* A change that moves the resource away from a desired condition or detracts from its appearance or condition.

Context describes the area or location in which the impact will occur, such as site-specific, local, regional, or even broader.

Duration describes the length of time an effect will occur, either short-term or long-term:

*Short-term* impacts generally last only during construction, and the resources resume their pre-construction conditions following construction.

*Long-term* impacts last beyond the construction period and resources may not return to pre-construction conditions for a longer period of time.

Intensity describes the degree, level, or strength of an impact. For this analysis, intensity is categorized into negligible, minor, moderate, and major. Intensity definitions are provided for each impact topic analyzed in this environmental assessment.

### 3.3 Water Resources

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Water Resources Report by G. Shull and R. L. George (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

#### 3.3.1 Methodology

The resource elements, indicators, and measures used to analyze and compare potential effects of the Mission Restoration on hydrologic and aquatic resources are shown in Figure 12. Indicators and measures address the purpose and need and key internal issues raised during project planning.

**Figure 12. Water resource elements, indicators, and measures.**

Resource Element	Indicator	Measure	Purpose & Need or Key Issue	Source
Water Quality (Sediment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road density</li> <li>• Road drainage network increase</li> <li>• Riparian road density</li> <li>• Road-stream crossing density</li> <li>• Groundcover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Catchment Rankings Lowered</li> <li>• Acres of bare soil</li> </ul>	P&N #1	NWFP S&G 1994; UCSRP 2007; WCF 2010

Resource Element	Indicator	Measure	Purpose & Need or Key Issue	Source
Water Quantity (base flow)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beaver habitat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of beaver habitat enhancement sites</li> </ul>	P&N #1	NWFP S&G 1994; UCSRP 2007; WCF 2010
Aquatic Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stream channel complexity</li> <li>Fish distribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Miles of stream restored with coarse woody debris</li> <li>Miles of stream accessible to fish</li> <li>Number of aquatic organism passage pipes installed</li> </ul>	P&N #1	NWFP S&G 1994; UCSRP 2007; WCF 2010

*Scale of Analysis and Watershed Hierarchy:* The 25,500-acre Buttermilk and 23,500-acre Libby Creek sub-watersheds are within the Twisp River and Lower Methow River watersheds in the Methow River sub-basin. The watershed hierarchy of the project area sub-watersheds are shown in Figure 13. The hydrologic and aquatic analysis area for the Mission Restoration Project is the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watersheds. Direct, indirect, and cumulative effects are analyzed at the scale of all lands in these sub-watersheds. The temporal scale for effects analysis is 30 years--the time it is estimated to take for morphological improvements in stream channel variables from upland treatments to be measurable.

**Figure 13. Watershed hierarchy of the Mission Project area.**

Basin	Sub-basin	Watershed	Sub-watershed
Upper Columbia 170200	Methow River 17020008	Twisp River 1702000805 Lower Methow River 1702000807	Buttermilk Creek 170200080506 Libby Creek 170200080701

*Roads/Watershed Assessment Method:* The extensive road network is one of the primary drivers impairing current watershed and aquatic ecosystem function. To assess current road conditions and their potential impacts on watershed and aquatic habitat conditions, a GIS-based model called NetMap (Benda et al. 2007) was used with a digital terrain database and landscape attributes relating to erosion hazards to evaluate and prioritize roads that pose varying levels of risk to hydrologic and aquatic resources. NetMap identified each road segments as being at low, moderate, or high risk for erosion or other effects to aquatic resources based on these four primary factors:

- Shallow landslide potential associated with roads

- Roads that intersect channel floodplains and Endangered Species Act (ESA) critical habitat floodplains
- Erosion risk related to road density upslope from stream reaches
- The potential for roads to divert streams

In addition to this process, a road assessment procedure developed for the Draft Okanogan-Wenatchee Whole Watershed Restoration Procedures (USDA Forest Service 2015) was used to identify potential road-stream impacts and roads or groups of roads to remove or hydrologically close to benefit hydrologic processes.

Since land management activities affecting watershed function are generally not distributed evenly across watersheds, the roads analysis looked at road-stream interactions at a smaller catchment scale to identify where road-stream impacts are likely to be high. Development of 300-1,500 acre smaller catchments (hereafter referred to as catchments) allowed for greater focus in areas that have the highest degree of road impairment. The ArcHydro tool was used to delineate catchments in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watersheds. Treatments were determined based on analysis of limiting factors to watershed function. Eighteen catchments were delineated in the Buttermilk and twenty six in the Libby Creek sub-watersheds.

This procedure incorporates geomorphic and ecological principles associated with road impacts in existing watershed and aquatic resource restoration planning mechanisms at varying spatial scales (i.e. Robinson et al 2010; Rosgen 2006). The physical road indicators assessed include road density, increase in drainage network (artificial streams) from the road system, riparian road density (density of roads within 300 feet of streams), and the number of road crossings per stream mile. These indicators are used to identify where potential road impacts are high and as a proxy to measure the degree of impacts or impairment roads pose to watershed and aquatic resources. High, moderate, and low rankings were assigned to differentiate the indicators based on scientific literature related to road-watershed and aquatic habitat impacts. A rating for each catchment was calculated and assigned a color value based on potential road-stream interaction magnitude and to some degree, a level of departure from historic conditions. Figure 14 displays the metrics, catchment ranking thresholds, catchment rating, and associated color code that affect the watersheds in the project area at the catchment scale.

**Figure 14. Ranking of physical variables**

Metric	Catchment Ranking Criteria	Catchment Road-Stream Interaction	Catchment Color Assignment
Catchment Road density	0-1 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	Low	Green
	1-2.4 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	Moderate	Yellow
	>2.4 mi <sup>2</sup>	High	Red
	0-0.10	Low	Green
	0.11-0.30	Moderate	Yellow

Metric	Catchment Ranking Criteria	Catchment Road-Stream Interaction	Catchment Color Assignment
Increase in drainage network from the road system	>0.30	High	Red
Riparian Road Density	0-1 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	Low	Green
	1-2.4 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	Moderate	Yellow
	>2.4 mi <sup>2</sup>	High	Red
Road crossings per stream mile	0-1	Low	Green
	1-3	Moderate	Yellow
	>3	High	Red

The following indicators were analyzed using the methods explained above:

*Resource Indicator: Road Density*

Road density can be a measure of hydrologic and aquatic impacts at a watershed or sub-watershed scale (Lee et al. 1997; McCaffery et al. 2007). Road densities of <1 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> are considered low enough to support proper watershed and aquatic function (USDI 1998). Road densities of 1 to 2.4 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> are considered functional at risk, and road densities >2.4 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> are considered not functional (Lee et al. 1997). This analysis acknowledges road densities that are aptly used at assessing hydrologic processes and aquatic habitat conditions at the watershed or sub-watershed scale and not at the smaller, catchment scale. As such, the road density was used for identifying where potential road-stream interactions are high and not to assess catchment condition.

Using GIS, road density was calculated at the catchment scale using all road miles (Maintenance Level 1-5 and unauthorized roads) divided by square miles of land within each catchment. For this analysis, changes in road density was compared between the existing condition and the proposed action alternatives. Changes in road density were discussed with the assumption that reduced road densities would be a beneficial effect to hydrologic and aquatic resources at the sub-watershed scale.

*Resource Indicator: Increase in road drainage network*

Roads can increase the stream network by intercepting subsurface flow and transporting surface water on the road surface, ditch lines, and down cross-drain culverts (artificial streams). Hydrologically connected roads increase the rate watersheds drain and increase the magnitude and frequency of peak flows, particularly for small floods (Wemple et al. 1996). Potential effects can range from localized sites (plugged culverts, localized landslides, etc.) to broad watershed scale effects, such altering timing of peak flows.

Increases in drainage network from the road system was calculated using miles of road that are hydrologically connected to the stream network. Specifically, this indicator is the ratio of the

length of all the road segments that drain within 300' of the streams to the total length of streams in the catchment. This metric provides a useful proxy for degree of hydrologic impact from the road system.

For this analysis, changes in the road drainage network was compared between the existing condition and the proposed action alternatives. Changes in road drainage network caused by the proposed road treatments are discussed in context of how they changed indicators at the catchment scale and would affect hydrologic and aquatic habitat resources at the sub-watershed scale.

*Resource Indicator: Riparian Road Density*

Though roads typically provide a range of public benefits, their construction and presence can alter watershed-scale hydrologic and ecological processes as previously described. The WWRP calculates the density of road segments within 300 feet of streams (called “riparian roads” in this analysis) as proxy for road-stream impacts such as sediment sources, loss of instream wood recruitment, and channel constriction. Riparian road density was calculated by the ratio of miles of roads within 300 feet of streams to the square miles of area within 300 feet of streams, by catchment. For this analysis, riparian road density was compared between the existing condition and the proposed action alternatives. A limitation in this indicator is that while it estimates the density of roads within Riparian Reserves (RRs), it does not account for amount of roads in the catchment; a catchment with a low overall road density could still have a high riparian road density, which would inaccurately assign the risk factors. To compensate for this limitation, this analysis averages catchment road density and riparian road density together to identify where both catchment road density and riparian road density are moderate or high. Changes in road density caused by proposed road treatments are discussed in context of how treatments would change indicators at the catchment scale and subsequent effects to hydrologic and aquatic resources at the sub-watershed scale.

*Resource Indicator: Stream Crossings per Mile*

The stream crossings per mile metric was calculated as the total stream crossings (fords, culverts, bridges) within each catchment by the total miles of streams. For the project effects analysis, stream crossing density was compared between the existing condition and the proposed action alternatives. Changes in stream crossing density from the proposed road treatments were discussed in context of how it changed the indicator at the catchment scale and would change hydrologic and aquatic resource conditions at the sub-watershed scale.

*Aquatic Habitat and Species Assessment:* In 2010, all National Forests implemented the Watershed Condition Framework (WCF) process, which is a rapid evaluation process that assess sub-watershed (Libby Creek and Buttermilk Creek) conditions based on land use and roads, which is similar in intent to that of Watershed Analysis (NWFP - USDA and USDI 1994). WCF uses an interdisciplinary approach to characterize the health and condition of sub-watersheds on NFS lands. Watershed condition is determined based on the health of hydrologic and soil function in the watershed indicated by physical (water quality and quantity, in-stream



habitat, soil productivity, roads and trails, etc.) and biological characteristics (populations and conditions of desired fisheries and impacts of non-native species).

In addition to the WCF process, project biologists and hydrologists compiled information on aquatic habitat, riparian condition, and aquatic species distribution from a variety of sources including GIS data and previous Forest Service and WA DFW studies. Forest Service Level II stream surveys were conducted on the project area between 2010 and 2011 (USDA Forest Service 2010a; 2011a).

The following indicators were analyzed using data from the aquatic habitat and species assessment data:

*Resource Indicator: Ground Cover*

Effective groundcover describes rock, living and dead herbaceous and woody materials in contact with the ground >3/4" in diameter that would protect the soil surface from erosion (Soil Management Handbook, USDA Forest Service, 1992).

Changes in ground cover are analyzed by using Forest corporate and project spatial (GIS) data to estimate how much bare soil would be created (in acres) by management activities such as prescribed burning, temporary road construction (including unauthorized roads), and landing construction. Changes in bare soil acres are described in terms of effects on surface erosion and sediment delivery to the stream network.

*Resource Indicator: Beaver Habitat*

Anecdotal evidence indicates that beavers historically lived in the project area in both sub-watersheds (USDA Forest Service 1995a and USDA Forest Service 1995b). Studies of similar habitats indicate that beavers create stream systems with slow, deep water and floodplain wetlands that play an important role diversifying stream and riparian habitat and providing water storage to supplement summer base flows. Beaver habitat enhancement sites have been identified in the project area in coordination with the ongoing beaver release program conducted by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WA DFW). Sites were selected based on exhibiting suitable gradient, presence of surface water and an identifiable stream channel, availability of forage and dam building materials, and potential for long-term success and restoration. For this analysis, each beaver habitat enhancement site would be a measure for assessing changes in natural water storage and water quantity at the sub-watershed scale.

*Resource Indicator: Stream Channel Complexity*

Large wood is important for reducing river energy, forming pools, and adding overall habitat complexity. The desired density of wood present in a stream is 105 to 270 pieces/mile of wood greater than 6 inches diameter along with 2-5 pieces/mile of larger wood greater than 18 inches and 35 feet long. To identify the existing instream wood quantities, aquatic habitat inventory data collected during Level 2 stream surveys in 2010 and 2011 were used to identify existing instream wood quantities (USDA Forest Service 2010a and 2011a).

### *Resource Indicator: Fish Distribution*

Fish in the project area include resident, anadromous, and Columbia Basin migratory species. Restoring and maintaining habitat connectivity is a high priority, cost-effective approach to protecting and restoring fish populations because it can increase habitat diversity and population resilience and reduce effects of climate change-induced reductions in stream flow and increases in temperature.

Proposed treatments would improve habitat connectivity by replacing road culverts that partially or fully block fish passage with aquatic organism passage pipes (AOPs) to provide full passage to all fish life stages as well as to all other riparian dependent species. The unit of measure for assessing the changes to fish distribution will be the number of blocking culverts replaced with AOPs and miles of habitat with new or improved access.

### **3.3.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

Type of Effect for Water Resources:

- Beneficial—Moves the system to or towards desired conditions and fish abundance improves or maintains robust local populations.
- Adverse—Moves the system outside of or away from the desired conditions and fish abundance improves or fish abundance improves or maintains robust local populations.

Duration of Effect for Water Resources:

- Short-term—an effect that would not be detectable within a short amount of time, generally within hours to a few weeks after the proposed activity has been carried out.
- Long-term—a change in a resource that will not return to its condition prior to the activity for the foreseeable future.

Intensity of Effect for Water Resources:

- Negligible: A change that would be so small as to be undetectable and without measurable or perceptible consequences to aquatic or hydrologic resources.
- Minor: A noticeable change that would cause detectable effects on aquatic or hydrologic resources, but would be small, localized, and inconsequential.
- Moderate: A noticeable change that would cause readily apparent, measurable, and localized effects to aquatic or hydrologic resources. Measurable effects could include substantial sediment delivery, the removal of large amounts of riparian trees, or the reduction of multiple stream crossings in drainage area. Mitigation measures would help off-set adverse effects.
- Major: A noticeable change to a physical resource that would be measurable and result in a highly adverse or beneficial impact that was readily apparent, measurable, intense, and felt on a regional scale. Substantial watershed features would be removed or the physical properties considerably altered. Mitigation measures proposed to offset adverse effects would be extensive and success would not be assured.

### 3.3.3 Affected Environment

The Mission Project area encompasses approximately 50,200 acres combined within the Twisp River and Lower Methow River watersheds. The project area includes the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek sub-watersheds, which are approximately 23,500 and 25,500 acres in size, respectively (see Figure 15). Additionally, the project area includes the 1,200 acre annex area above the Twisp River. The project boundaries correspond to watershed boundaries except for a small piece near the bottom of Buttermilk Creek that lies within the Mainstem Lower Twisp River sub-watershed. Activities in this area are minor with no effects to hydrologic or aquatic resources and will not be discussed further. There are about 30 miles of perennial streams and approximately 14 miles of intermittent streams within the project area boundary.

Past management practices, including fire suppression, changed forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns in comparison to historical conditions in riparian areas within the project area. These conditions also make riparian areas more susceptible to uncharacteristic harmful effects caused by wildfire. Ladder fuel reduction (LFR) and prescribed burning are treatments proposed to help restore plant species composition and structure that occurs naturally in dry forest types and to make stands in riparian areas more resilient to the impacts of uncharacteristic wildfire. They will be discussed in detail within the fuels section of the EA.

**Figure 15. Project watersheds by 10th and 12th Field HUC**

HUC	HUC name	Acres	% of HUC5 area	Project planning area acres	% of HUC5/6 area
170200080507	Buttermilk Creek	23,500	99	10,900	~46
170200080701	Libby Creek	25,500	92	22,670	~89

*Buttermilk Creek Sub-watershed Description:* The headwaters originate within alpine cirques in the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness at elevations of 7,000'-8,600'. Both the West and East forks of Buttermilk Creek flow for approximately nine miles before joining at river mile (RM) 2.6 and provide the majority of stream flow in the watershed. Downstream from this confluence, Buttermilk Creek flows through a steep canyon to join the Twisp River at RM 12. Perennial tributaries in the watershed include Black Pine Creek, which flows into the East Fork approximately 0.5 miles upstream of the forks' confluence. Several other intermittent streams enter into the West and East Forks and mainstem of Buttermilk Creek.

Almost all of the land in this drainage (99%) is managed by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. Much of the Twisp Watershed, including Buttermilk, is a Tier 1 key watershed identified under the NWFP as important in contributing to the conservation of anadromous salmonids, bull trout, and other resident fish species. About 12,200 acres of Buttermilk (about 52%) is within the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness. The remaining ~11,300 acres lie within multiple-use management designations. A watershed analysis was completed in 1995 (USDA Forest Service 1995a).

*Libby Creek Sub-watershed Description:* The headwaters of Libby Creek originate in alpine cirques and several lakes within the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness at elevations of 6,800'-8,400'. Libby Creek mainstem is formed by the confluence of its two primary forks, the North Fork and South Fork, at RM 7.2, and these two tributaries contribute approximately 60% of stream flow to the mainstem (USDA Forest Service 1999). Libby Creek flows in an easterly direction for approximately 14 miles to its confluence with the Methow River at RM 26, just downstream from the town of Carlton, at an elevation of 1,360'. Other tributaries to Libby Creek include Smith Canyon, Chicamun Canyon, Ben Canyon, Mission Creek, and Hornet Draw. These streams are mostly perennial but may flow intermittently in low water years and when water diversion volumes exceed instream flow. Several other intermittent creeks and draws also contribute to the instream flow especially during spring runoff.

Most of the land (92%) in this drainage is managed by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. About 3,000 acres of Libby (about 11%) is within the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness. The remaining ~22,400 acres lie within multiple-use management designations. A watershed analysis was completed in 1995 (USDA Forest Service 1995b).

Both the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watersheds experienced decades of timber harvest, fire suppression, livestock grazing, firewood cutting, dispersed recreation impacts, and road construction with varying effects to aquatic and riparian resources. Implementation of the NWFP and listing fish species as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act have substantially reduced activities and impacts within RRs.

*Water Quality:* The Forest Plan directs that the assessment of cumulative watershed effects to water quality be discussed in terms of the 10th field HUC watershed boundary. The Washington Department of Ecology Water Quality Assessment for Washington has sampling locations downstream from the proposed project area on the lower Twisp River and lower Methow River. There are no locations within the Twisp River Watershed (HUC 10) with a 303(d) Category 5 listing indicating impaired water quality. One 303(d) listed site exists in the Lower Methow River Watershed downstream of the project area. The Methow River near the confluence with the Columbia River is listed as impaired for pH and water temperature.

Washington State Water quality parameters specific to aquatic habitat that are most susceptible to change by thinning and prescribed fire treatments are turbidity, fine sediment, and temperature. This project would not impact these parameters where the sampling locations exist.

*Fish Species and Habitat:* The project analysis area contains habitat for fish species listed under the ESA, Regional Forester's Sensitive Species, Management Indicator Species (MIS), and species for which Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) has been designated under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Figure 16).

**Figure 16. Project area fish species by listing designation**

Designation	Species
ESA	Spring Chinook (Endangered), Summer Steelhead (Threatened), Bull Trout (Threatened)
R6 Sensitive	Westslope Cutthroat, Interior Redband Rainbow
MIS	Spring Chinook, Westslope Cutthroat, Interior Redband Rainbow, Steelhead, Bull Trout, Eastern Brook Trout
EFH	Chinook, Coho

Both the Buttermilk and Libby Creek drainages contain federally endangered Upper Columbia River Spring-run Chinook, threatened Upper Columbia River steelhead, and Columbia River bull trout. Buttermilk Creek is designated critical habitat for Spring Chinook, summer steelhead, and bull trout. Libby Creek is designated critical habitat for steelhead only. Figure 17 displays the fish distribution and where critical habitat is designated.

**Figure 17. Fish distribution in project area streams and designated critical habitat (CH)**

Species	Spring Chinook		<i>O. mykiss</i> <sup>1</sup>		Bull trout		WSCT <sup>1</sup>	EBT <sup>1</sup>
	Distrib- ution <sup>2</sup>	Critical habitat	Distrib- ution <sup>2</sup>	Critical habitat	Distrib- ution <sup>2</sup>	Critical habitat	Distrib- ution <sup>2</sup>	Distrib- ution <sup>2</sup>
Buttermilk Cr.	1.1	1.1	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	--
WF Buttermilk Cr.	--	--	2.9	--	2.9	2.9	--	--
EF Buttermilk Cr.	--	--	5.5	--	5.5	5.5	2.2	--
Libby Creek	2.5.	--	6.0	3.4	6.0 <sup>3</sup>	--	3.0	1.0 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> **O.m.** – *O. mykiss*, includes interior redband rainbow trout, steelhead and resident rainbow trout of unknown genetics; **WSCT** - westslope cutthroat; **EBT** – eastern brook trout

<sup>2</sup> Known distribution in miles.

<sup>3</sup> Based on limited data

Bull trout use West Fork and East Fork Buttermilk Creeks for spawning and rearing. The mainstem of Buttermilk Creek is used for foraging and migrating to and from spawning habitat. Limited bull trout use occurs in Libby Creek and there is no known spawning activity in this drainage. Steelhead salmon spawn and rear in Buttermilk and Libby Creeks. Juvenile spring chinook salmon use the lower portions of Buttermilk and Libby Creek for rearing.

Genetically pure interior redband rainbow trout (IRRT) are found in the Buttermilk Creek sub-watershed, with particularly good examples in West Fork Buttermilk Creek. The rainbow trout in Libby Creek has shown mixing with coastal rainbow trout strains as well as with cutthroat trout, suggesting they are not pure IRRT.

Westslope cutthroat trout (WSCT) are found within Buttermilk and North Fork Libby creeks (Proebstel et al. 1998). WDFW continues to stock many mountain lakes in the sub-basin with WSCT, which has artificially increased WSCT's range in the sub-basin. Cutthroat trout likely occur elsewhere in the analysis area, though genetic data are not available for all streams.

Eastern brook trout are present Libby Creek and the lower mile of North Fork Libby Creek. They are not native to the Columbia River Basin; however, as they are resident fish, they are considered a MIS species.

River Lamprey, Umatilla Dace, and Pygmy Whitefish are each Forest Service Regionally Sensitive Species located on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. None are known to occur in the Methow Sub-basin.

Aquatic habitat conditions within the project area are generally in fair condition with some properly functioning elements. Fish population levels in the analysis area are largely driven by actions that occur outside of the Methow Valley such as dams, commercial harvest, and hatcheries. Within the project area, habitat deficiencies include low base flows, low instream wood levels, excessive summer water temperatures (Libby Creek), elevated fine sediment in fish bearing tributaries, and habitat loss on some private lands in the lower Buttermilk Creek, and Libby Creek drainages.

Salmon and trout are sensitive to accumulations of fine sediment in spawning grounds and juvenile rearing habitat. Excessive fine sediments in spawning gravels prevent flow of clean, oxygenated water through redds, which is important for providing sufficient oxygen to embryos and removing feces wastes (Meehan 1991; Goetz 1989). Excessive sedimentation rates can widen channels, while sediment deposition can disconnect side-channel habitat and reduce depth and quality of pool habitat, which reduces the availability of off-channel rearing habitat for juveniles during spring peak flows.

Forest Plan Forest-wide Standard 3-3 states that fine sediment levels in spawning areas should not exceed 20% for the <1mm size class (USDA Forest Service 1989). The Fisheries Matrix of Pathway Indicators, or MPI, defines fine sediment levels of spawning habitat as Properly Functioning (PF) when particles <0.85 mm are less than 12%; Functioning At Risk (FAR) when these levels are 12-17%; and Not Functioning (NF) when these levels are greater than 17% (USDA et al. 2004). Additionally, the MPI defines surface fine sediment levels as PF when particles less than 6mm are less than 12%; FAR when these levels are 12-20%; and NF when these levels are greater than >20%. Therefore, sub-surface fines <0.85mm less than 12% and surface fines <6mm less 12% are the desired condition for fish habitat (USDA et al. 2004).

Fine sediment levels in the project area streams were assessed using 2010-11 pebble count data collected in the project area (USDA 2011a) using the Wolman Pebble Count method (Wolman 1954), which measures particle sizes less than 6mm. Twenty-three pebble counts were collected across the Buttermilk and Libby Creek drainages, focusing on the main fish streams. The sediment data is shown in the Figure 18.

**Figure 18. Pebble count data in project area**

Survey Location	Year	% fines <6mm	Sediment Rating
Buttermilk Creek Reach 1	2011	10	PF
East Fork Buttermilk Creek Reach 1	2011	8	PF

East Fork Buttermilk Creek Reach 2	2011	5	PF
West Fork Buttermilk Creek Reach 1	2011	1	PF
West Fork Buttermilk Creek Reach 2	2011	6	PF
West Fork Buttermilk Creek Reach 3	2011	11	PF
Libby Creek Reach 2	2010	19	FAR
Libby Creek Reach 3	2010	26	NF
Libby Creek Reach 4	2010	17	FAR
Libby Creek Main by HD 1	2010	14	FAR
Libby Creek Main by HD 2	2010	13	FAR
Libby Creek Main by HD 3	2010	16	FAR
Libby Creek Main by HD 4	2010	21	NF
North Fork Libby Reach 1	2010	14	FAR
South Fork Libby Reach 1	2010	23	NF

This data suggest the Buttermilk drainage is properly functioning for fine sediment levels. Riparian roads and hillslope failures from past logging activities contribute excess sediment to the stream system, but the data suggest sediment is not a problem in fish habitat. It is important to note that Buttermilk Creek, including the West Fork and East Fork Buttermilk Creek tributaries, has mostly steep gradient channels with high sediment transport capacity. Most fine sediment in the drainage is transported to the Twisp River, which is generally low in fine sediment levels (USDA 2011a; Lookout Mountain AMP Biological Assessment). Very little bank erosion exists in the fish bearing streams, further indicating the sediment regime is properly functioning.

Fine sediment levels are elevated within the Libby Creek drainage. Three out of the nine sites monitored had surface fines categorized as Not Functioning and the remaining six sites were Functioning At Risk. Fine sediment levels less than 1mm were below the Forest Plan standard. Bank stability in the main fish streams was greater than 95%, which is considered excellent. Some tributary streams are receiving bank damage from livestock, but it has been minor across the sub-watershed. The higher fine sediment levels is likely due to the high road density in several areas across the sub-watershed. Fine sediment within the Libby Creek drainage is Functioning At Risk and below desired levels for fish production.

### Resource Indicator Summaries

The existing condition of resource indicators and measures at the sub-watershed scale are summarized in Figure 19 below.

**Figure 19. Water resource indicators for project area.**

Resource Element	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1) Buttermilk Cr	Existing Condition (Alternative 1) Libby Cr
Water quality	Road Density	1.3 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	2.1 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>
	Road drainage network increase (artificial streams)	20%	40%
	Riparian road density	1.4 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>	4.0 mi/mi <sup>2</sup>
	Road-stream crossing density	0.5 crossings/mi	1.2 crossing/mi
	Ground cover (amount of bare soil)	Same as existing	Same as existing
Water quantity	Number of beaver habitat enhancement sites	0	0
Aquatic Habitat	Miles of stream channel restored with coarse woody debris	0	0
	Number of Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) pipes installed	0	0
	Increase in miles of stream accessible to fish	0	0

*Resource Indicator: Road Density*

Road densities in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek drainages are generally lower than other many other areas across the Methow Valley Ranger District and are within the Functioning At Risk category, as shown in Figure 20.

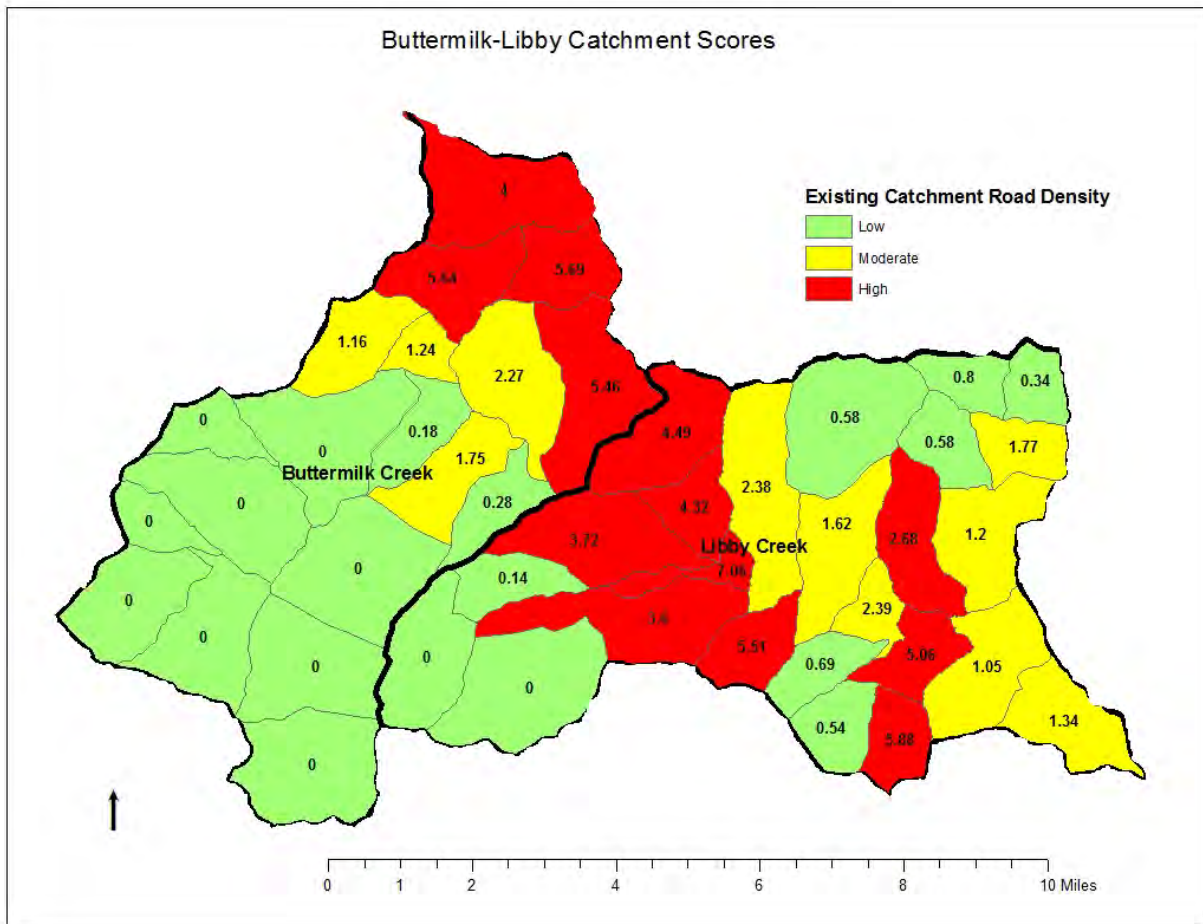
**Figure 20. Total road miles and road density at the sub-watershed scale.**

Sub-watershed	Total road miles	Sub-watershed Acres	Sub-watershed Road Density
Buttermilk Creek	53.8	23500	1.3
Libby Creek	75.7	25500	2.1

At the more localized scale of direct road-stream interactions, the WWRP analysis calculated road densities at the catchment level (Figure 21), categorizing road density as high across 36% (13 total) and moderate across about 20% (11 total) of the catchments. Most catchments with low road density are in Wilderness. This indicates negative road-stream interactions are likely occurring in the lower and eastern portion of the Buttermilk Creek drainage and in the upper and middle portion of the Libby Creek drainage.



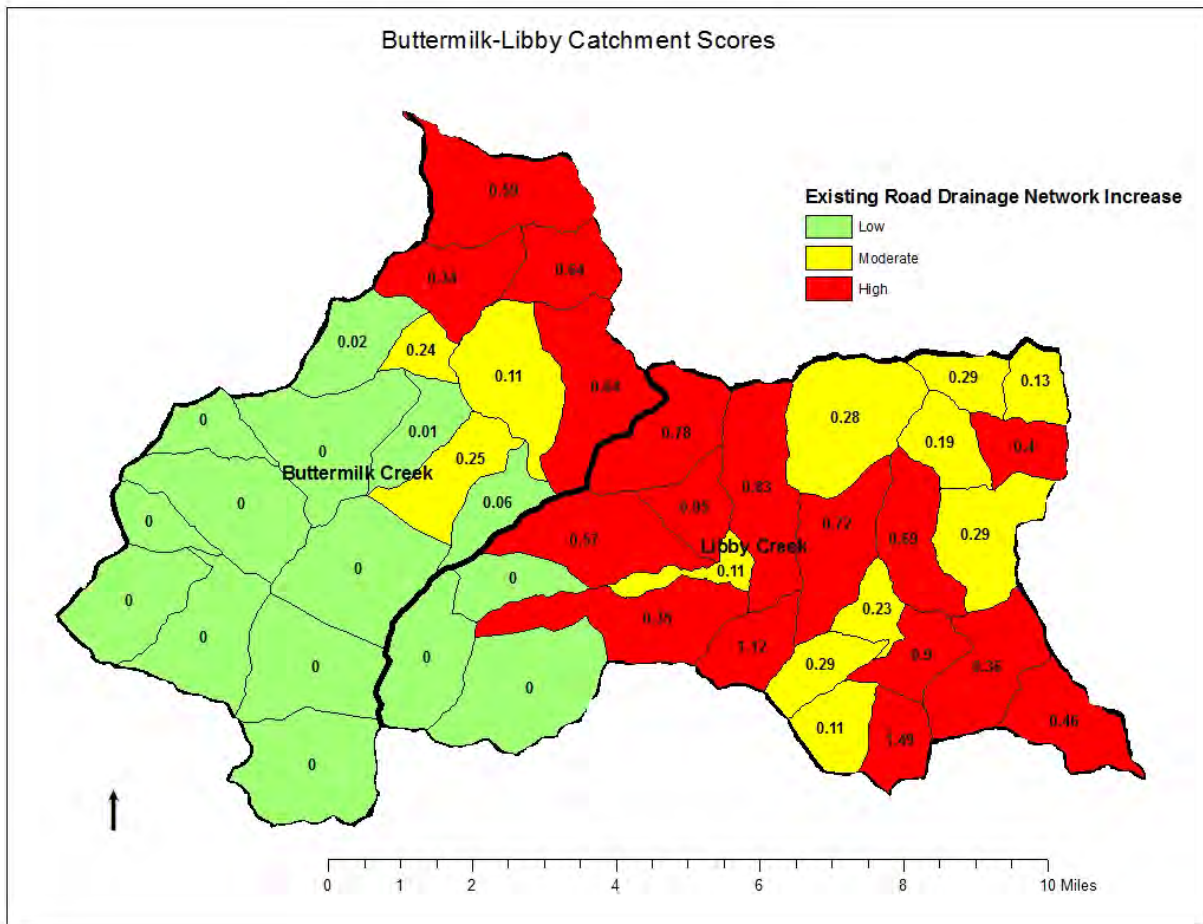
Figure 21. Road density by catchments.



*Resource Indicator: Road Drainage Network*

Increases in drainage network from the road system across the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watersheds are shown in Figure 22. Over 40% of catchments are within the high category and over 20% are in the moderate category for this metric indicating that hydrologically connected roads are one of the primary drivers of impaired function in the Mission Project area. The lower third of the Buttermilk Creek drainage has a substantial increase in artificial streams as does most of the Libby Creek drainage.

**Figure 22. Increase in drainage network from the road system by catchments.**



*Resource Indicator: Riparian Road Density*

Figure 23 shows the current riparian road density levels and rating by catchment across the project area. Fifty percent of the catchments are rated high and 13% are rated moderate for riparian road density, indicating where riparian roads are abundant with greater potential for negative road-stream interactions. This indicator can be misleading because it overestimates negative road-stream interactions. For example, the red catchment in top center of Libby Creek has a riparian road density of 2.6, but is less of a concern because the total road density is low at 0.6 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>. The catchment road density and riparian road density were averaged to identify where general road density is high within RRs, showing where the greatest potential for negative road-stream interactions exists (shown in Figure 24).

Figure 23. Existing riparian road density by catchments.

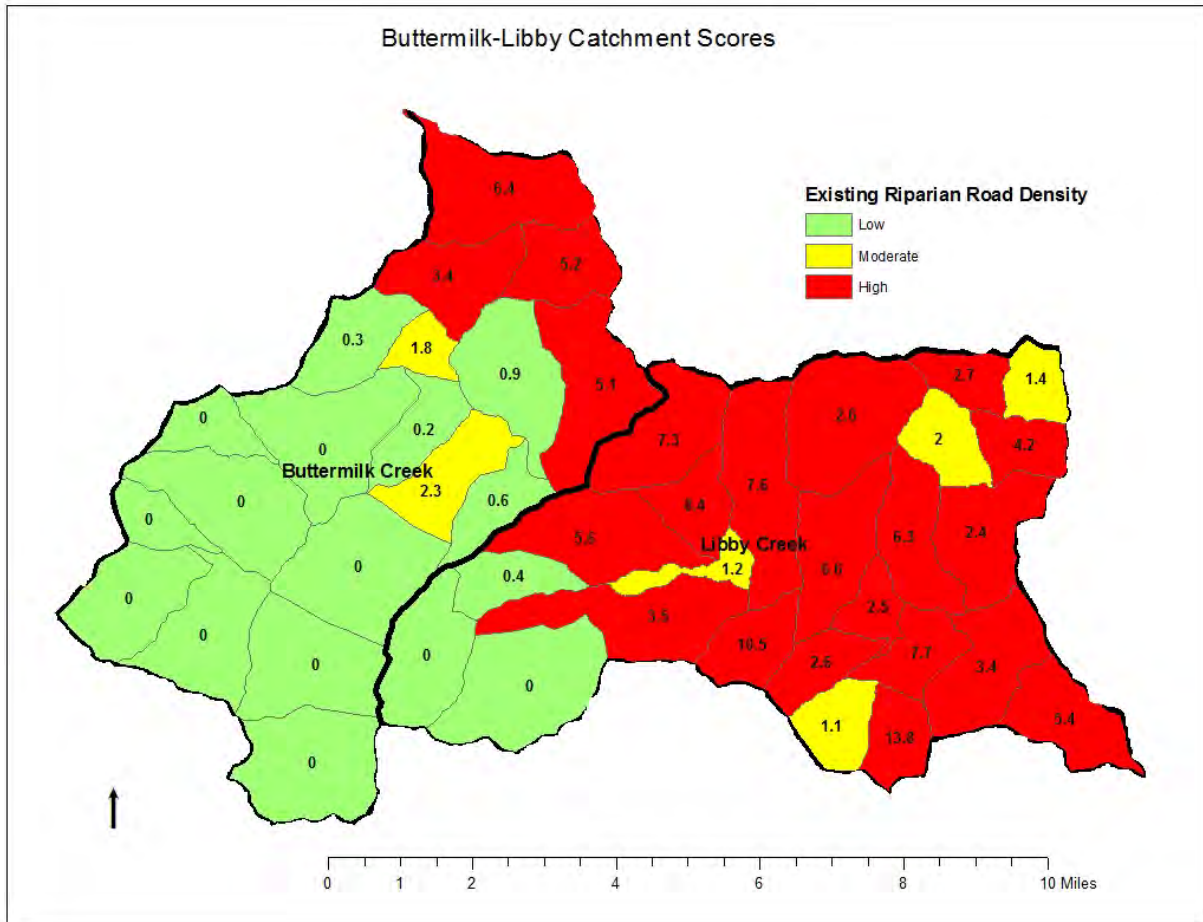
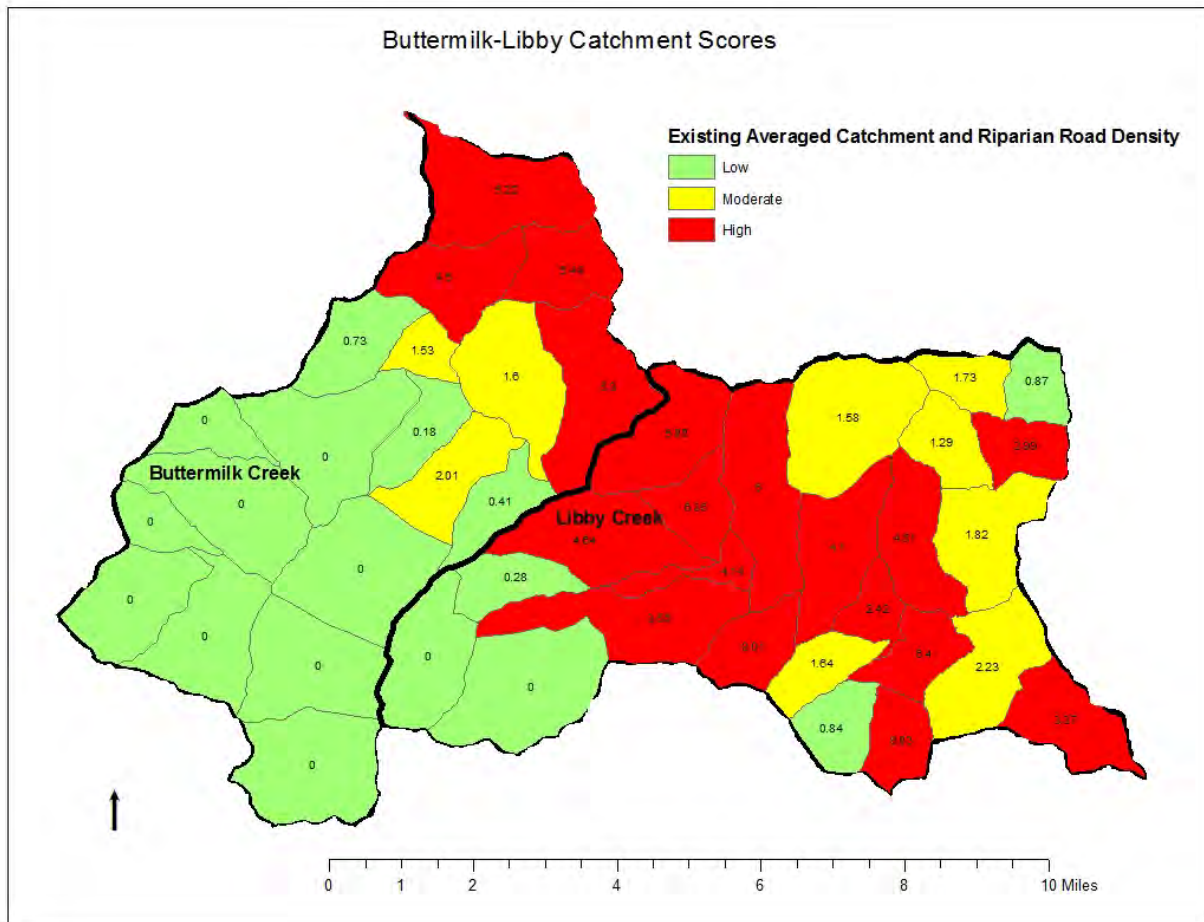


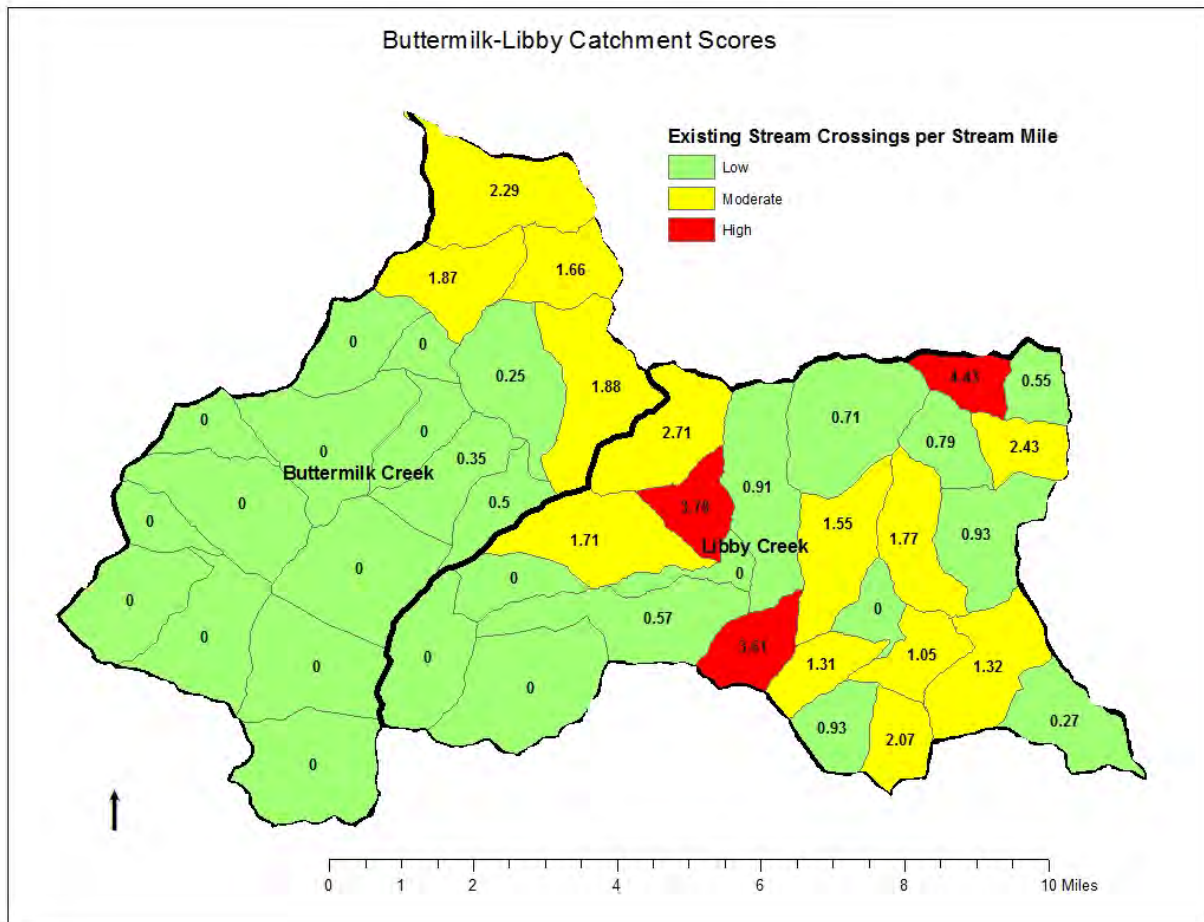
Figure 24. Existing averaged catchment and riparian road density by catchments.



*Resource Indicator: Stream Crossings per Mile*

The number of stream crossings per mile of stream within the project area are shown in Figure 25. Many catchments are rated low for this indicator because they lie within Wilderness in the sub-watersheds. Many catchments are “functioning at risk” for this metric. The northeastern red catchment in Libby Creek is inaccurately shown as “high” because field review found only one stream in the catchment with no road crossings; this catchment should be disregarded. There are an estimated 109 stream crossings in the project area; 47 crossings are open to vehicle traffic and have approaches greater than 3% slope, which increases the risk vehicle traffic delivering sediment into streams.

Figure 25. Existing number of stream crossings per mile of stream by catchments\*



\*Red catchment in the northeastern area of Libby Creek (labeled "4.43") should be disregarded as a GIS error.

*Resource Indicator: Ground Cover*

Observed levels of ground cover within the RRs are currently effective at trapping and filtering sediment. Areas of trailing, compaction, and bare soil are present where livestock have access to streams. Cover consisted primarily of grass, forb vegetation, shrubs, and needle cast/litter. The majority of bare soil within the project area is related to road surface area; historical harvest prescribed fire, and cattle grazing also created areas of bare soil. The current amount of bare ground is regarded as the baseline for comparison to Alternatives 2 and 3.

*Resource Indicator: Beaver Habitat*

Past hunting and trapping substantially reduced beaver populations in the project area. The number of beavers in the project area is unknown, but substantially below historic levels and below what is desired. Without adequate beaver populations to maintain historical habitats, conifer encroachment has helped reduce suitable areas for colonization. The ongoing WADFW

beaver reintroduction project has limited options for releasing beaver in the project area, where successful recolonization would improve riparian habitat and water storage capacity.

*Resource Indicator: Stream Channel Complexity*

The amount of large wood in stream channels ranges from 44.6 to 221.2 pieces per mile at 6 inches diameter and greater. Large log pieces greater than 12” in diameter and over 35 feet in length totaled from 0.7 to 9.7 pieces per mile. The main stem Buttermilk Creek, West Fork Buttermilk Creek, Black Pine Creek, Libby Creek, and North Fork Libby Creek have reaches with coarse wood levels below desired levels, resulting in limited channel complexity that creates desired aquatic habitat.

*Resource Indicator: Fish Distribution*

Fish inventory surveys identified current fish distribution in the project area and culvert inventories identified barriers to fish passage on fish-bearing streams and fishless streams that have suitable habitat conditions. Eight barrier culverts exist in the project area that are blocking or partially blocking fish passage to about 5.6 miles of potential fish habitat. Within drainages, migrations are important for juvenile and adult fish to find refugia from warmer temperatures and predators, find feeding areas and to have reproductive success. These barriers disrupt habitat connectivity that helps increase resilience to natural disturbances that will be increasingly important with anticipated changes in climate.

**3.3.4 Environmental Consequences**

**3.3.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail**

The following indicators or identified issues were considered, but were dropped from further analysis as listed in the rationale in Figure 26.

**Figure 26. Water Resources Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail**

Resource/Identified Issue	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Chemical contaminants	Use of equipment or fueling of equipment in proximity to stream can add toxins to waterways. This indicator is mitigated to negligible levels due to implementation of design criteria that keep chemical contaminants outside areas where they could be delivered to streams in measurable volumes or contained by Best Management Practices (BMPs).
Floodplain Habitat	There is little floodplain in the project area due the higher gradient channels. Stream channels are mostly Rosgen (1994) type A channels with a few type B reaches. These channel types typically have little or no floodplain. This project would not change watershed conditions that would alter the small amount of floodplain in the project area. Therefore, this resource indicator does not apply to this project.

Resource/Identified Issue	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Water Quantity (Peak flow)	This project will not impact water yield in any measurable way from vegetation cover removal. Research from 95 watershed experiments conducted in the United States forests show that on average, annual runoff increased only ~0.1 inches for each 1% of watershed area harvested (Stednick 2006). This issue will not be carried forward since there are no clear cut harvest areas proposed and regeneration harvests (selective seed tree) proposed are equivalent to ~1% of the watershed in this project. Project Design Criteria require that no more than 20% of any watershed area be treated annually (Stednick 2010), Beche et al. 2005). Riparian Harvest, beaver introduction and increases in drainage network from roads will be discussed as it pertains to water yield.
Water Quality (temperature)	This project will not have a measurable effect upon temperature at the reach or HUC scale. Direct solar radiation is the largest driver for temperature alteration and the removal of a few overstory trees along fish streams will not decrease shading or increase temperature. Thinning treatments would stay outside of the inner buffers of RRs and retain adequate vegetation to provide shade. Prescribed fire treatments in RRs would be designed to retain adequate vegetation to avoid impacting shade.
Livestock Grazing	See Figure 5 in Chapter 1.
Private Irrigation Withdrawals	This is discussed as it pertains to cumulative effects and existing condition. Water rights are a legal issue outside of the scope of this project, which will not change any existing rights or withdrawals.

### 3.3.4.2 Alternative 1 – No Action

#### 3.3.4.2.1 Effects

##### *Resource Indicator: Road Density*

Under this alternative, no changes to project area roads would occur, resulting in ongoing adverse, long-term, and moderate effects to water resources. Current road densities would continue to function at risk, and moderate to high road densities would remain unchanged, causing continuing adverse hydrologic and ecological effects as discussed previously. Roads in unstable condition would continue to deteriorate and sediment delivery will continue to occur. There would be no improvement in the condition of roads except as occurs through increasingly limited regular road maintenance that is constrained by decreases in funding.

##### *Resource Indicator: Road Drainage Network Increase*

Roads would continue to artificially increase the drainage network at the same level. The catchments with high and moderate drainage network increases would continue to move water out the system at an increased rate, with some increase in the magnitude and frequency of peak flows. Libby Creek has more catchments rated as high or moderate, suggesting substantial hydrologic connectivity between the roads and the stream network; therefore taking no action would likely cause adverse, long-term, moderate effects to water resources and departure from historical conditions would continue. Peak flows would increase compared to historic conditions, which can have negative consequences to spawning and redd incubation from sediment transport.

*Resource Indicator: Riparian Road Density*

This alternative would not improve water quality indicators by reducing high fine sediment levels from road impacts. Where riparian road densities are high, degraded stream conditions would remain. Low riparian road density in the Buttermilk sub-watershed would result in continued adverse, long-term, and minor effects to water quality. With higher levels of riparian road density, the Libby sub-watershed would continue to experience high road-stream interactions that would create ongoing elevated stream sediment levels in Libby Creek, causing adverse, long-term, moderate effects to spawning habitat and keep it in an “at risk” state.

*Resource Indicator: Stream crossings per mile*

The current number of stream crossing across the project area would remain. Catchments in lower Buttermilk and across Libby would have moderate to high density of stream crossings that would continue to be sources of chronic sediment delivery, and would likely cause adverse, long-term, and moderate effects to water resources. Fine sediment levels in Libby Creek would remain elevated, reducing habitat quality for ESA-listed fish and limiting fish production.

*Resource Indicator: Ground Cover*

Ground cover within the RRs and upper watersheds would remain at existing levels, effectively trapping and filtering sediment under existing conditions where vegetation and topography exclude livestock. Taking no action would have beneficial, long-term, negligible effects to riparian cover and water resources.

*Resource Indicator: Beaver Habitat*

The lack of enhancements that create suitable beaver habitat would have adverse, longer-term, minor effects on the potential for beaver reintroduction. Wetlands associated with beavers would not be created to form natural water storage features that would supplement summer and fall base flows, which would continue to diminish due to irrigation and domestic water withdrawals in Buttermilk and Libby Creek. At-risk aquatic species in the project area would continue to have reduced habitat, lower quality refugia from warm water and predators, and more competition for space during summer and fall months.

*Resource Indicator: Stream Channel Complexity*

Important spawning and rearing reaches in the project area would remain below desired conditions because, while natural wood accumulation would occur in stream channels, limited amounts of large wood would be available to contribute complexity to instream fish habitat, resulting in adverse, long-term, minor effects to this indicator. Instream wood levels in certain reaches that are well below desired wood loading for complex, high quality fish habitat would likely remain unchanged over the long term because the underlying processes that lead to natural wood recruitment (e.g. growth of large trees and more natural wood recruitment rates) take many decades or centuries (Shull and Butler 2014). Survival and population abundance for at-risk ESA species would continue to be limited in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek drainages.

*Resource Indicator: Fish Distribution*

About six miles of suitable fish habitat would remain fragmented with partial or no access, leading to adverse, long-term, moderate effects on fish populations due to the lack of habitat



connectivity and the vulnerability of isolated populations to natural disturbances, especially those anticipated with warmer, drier climates. Preventing full habitat access to suitable habitat would limit localized fish production and hinder recovery efforts for at-risk fish species.

### 3.3.4.2.3 Summary of Alternative 1 (No Action)

Alternative 1 would have no direct impacts to water quality, fish habitat, and individual fish species. However, the existing road network would continue to contribute excessive fine sediment levels that would maintain high fine sediment levels in Libby Creek. Fish habitat complexity would continue to improve naturally, but at a pace that would likely take decades to create suitable habitat conditions. Low base flows would continue to be a limiting factor that reduces fish production. Fish barriers would remain, preventing full habitat access and maximum fish production. In the long term, taking no action would maintain current at-risk hydrologic processes and aquatic habitat conditions that would impede recovery of ESA-listed fish species.

### 3.3.4.3 Alternative 2 and 3 – Proposed Action Effects Common to Both Action Alternatives or to Alternative 2 Only

#### 3.3.4.3.1 Effects

Alternatives 2 and 3 have the same proposed actions except that Alternative 3 increases the amount of road decommissioning, creates hardened fords, and applies additional rock armoring at stream crossings beyond the six identified in Alternative 2. This alternative does not entail replacing the bridge across West Fork Buttermilk Creek. For this section, the effects common to both action alternative or to Alternative 2 only will be analyzed. Ladder fuel reduction (LFR) and prescribed burning are treatments proposed to make stands in riparian areas more resilient to the impacts of uncharacteristic wildfire. The effects of these treatments will be discussed in detail within the fire/fuels section in this document.

**Figure 27: Water Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternatives 2 and 3**

Resource Element	Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Water Quality (Sediment)	Road density	Number of Catchment Rankings Lowered*	5 (3 High to Moderate, 2 Moderate to Low)
	Road drainage network increase		5 (2 High to Moderate, 3 Moderate to Low)
	Riparian road density		8 (4 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)*
	Road-stream crossing density		6 (1 High to Low, 1 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)
	Groundcover	Acres of bare soil	+100 acres
Water Quantity (base flow)	Beaver habitat	Number of beaver habitat enhancement sites	8 sites

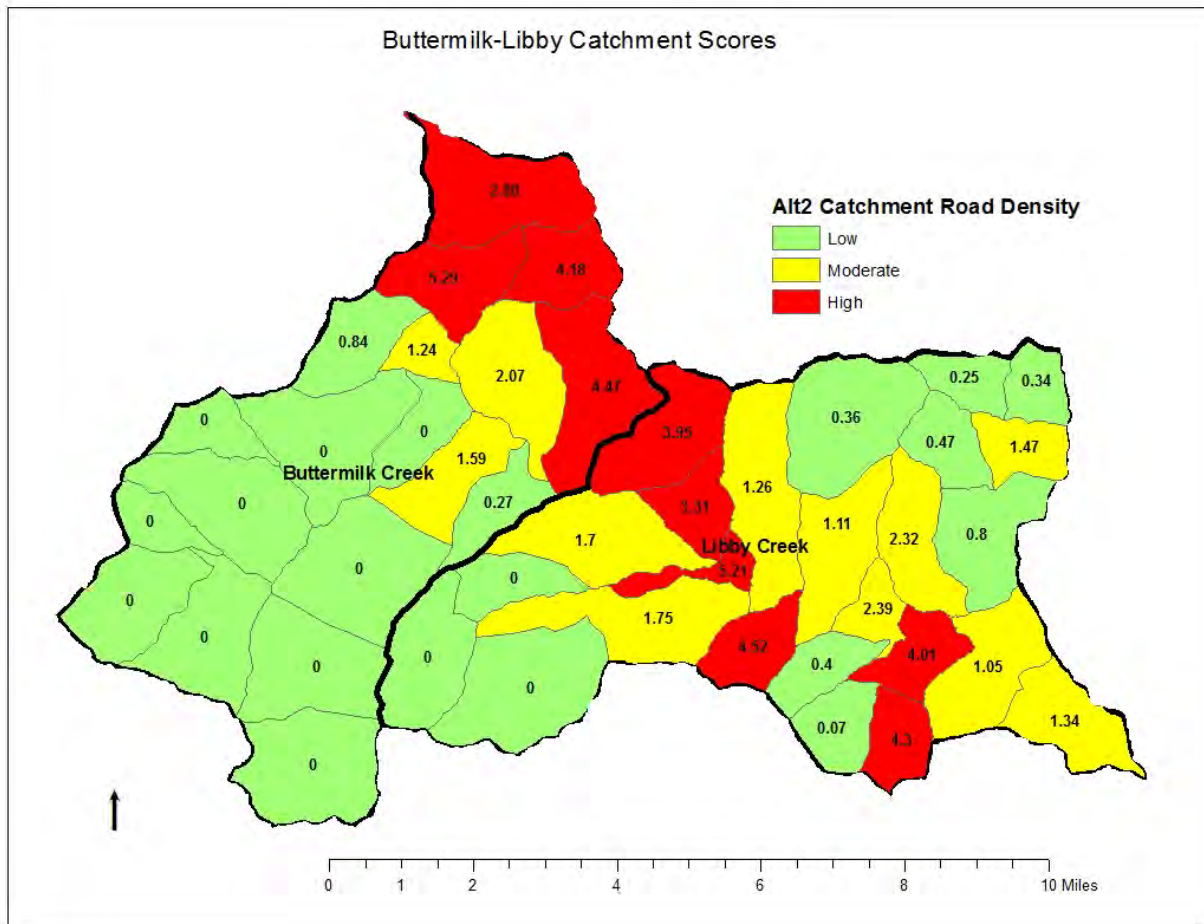
Resource Element	Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Aquatic Habitat	Stream channel complexity	Miles of stream restored with course woody debris	8.3 miles
	Fish distribution	Increase in miles of accessible fish stream habitat	5.6 miles
		Number of aquatic organism passage (AOP) pipes installed	8 AOPs

\* Changes in catchment rankings listed are for the averaged catchment road density and riparian road density, showing where riparian road density coordinated with catchment density, which is a more meaningful metric.

*Resource Indicator: Road Density*

About 34 miles of roads would be decommissioned, prioritizing riparian roads. At the sub-watershed scale, road density would decrease 18 % (from 1.3 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> to 1.1 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>) in Buttermilk Creek and by 28% (2.1 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> to 1.5 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>) in Libby Creek. About 35 miles of roads would be hydrologically closed across the project area by removing stream crossings, constructing water bars, and/or surface scarification. Road density would decrease at the sub-watershed scale and within some key areas in Libby Creek, as displayed in Figure 28. Chronic sediment delivery would decrease across the project area with the greatest reduction in Libby Creek. The amount of riparian roads removed would create a long-term, negligible, beneficial effect in Buttermilk Creek and a long-term, minor, beneficial effect in Libby Creek.

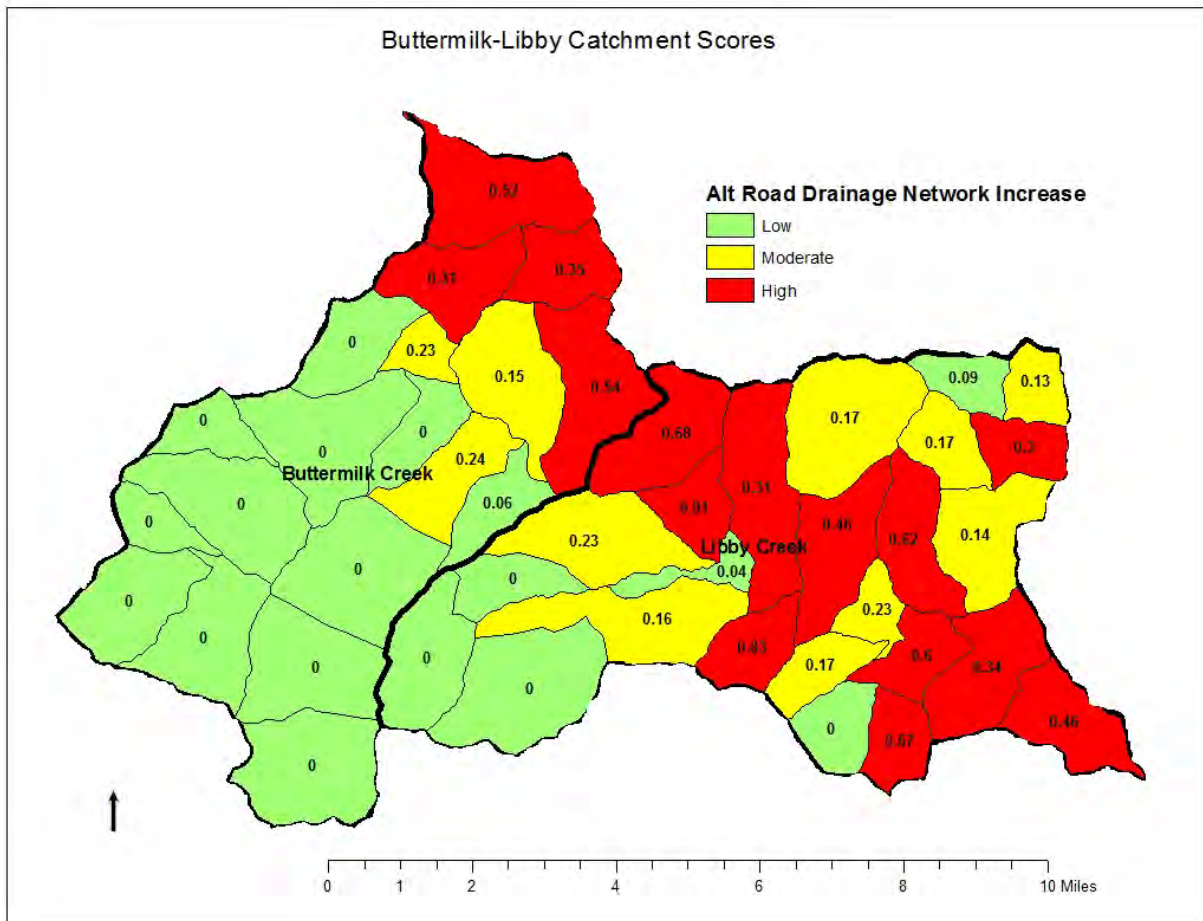
Figure 28. Alternative 2 road density by catchments.



*Resource Indicator: Increase in road drainage network*

The road drainage network would decrease by about 30% across the project area. At the sub-watershed scale, Buttermilk would decrease by 15% and Libby by 35%. A reduction in the road drainage network would improve watershed condition and move the system towards a more natural flow regime. Figure 29 displays catchment road drainage network under Alternative 2. No catchment rankings would change in the Buttermilk sub-watershed. The small improvement in Buttermilk is not expected to result in a measurable change in stream flow. In Libby, five catchments would be improved, causing a slight improvement to peak flow frequency and magnitude and a small improvement to base flow. Proposed actions would have long-term, negligible, beneficial effects on peak and base flows.

Figure 29. Increase in drainage network from the road system by catchments



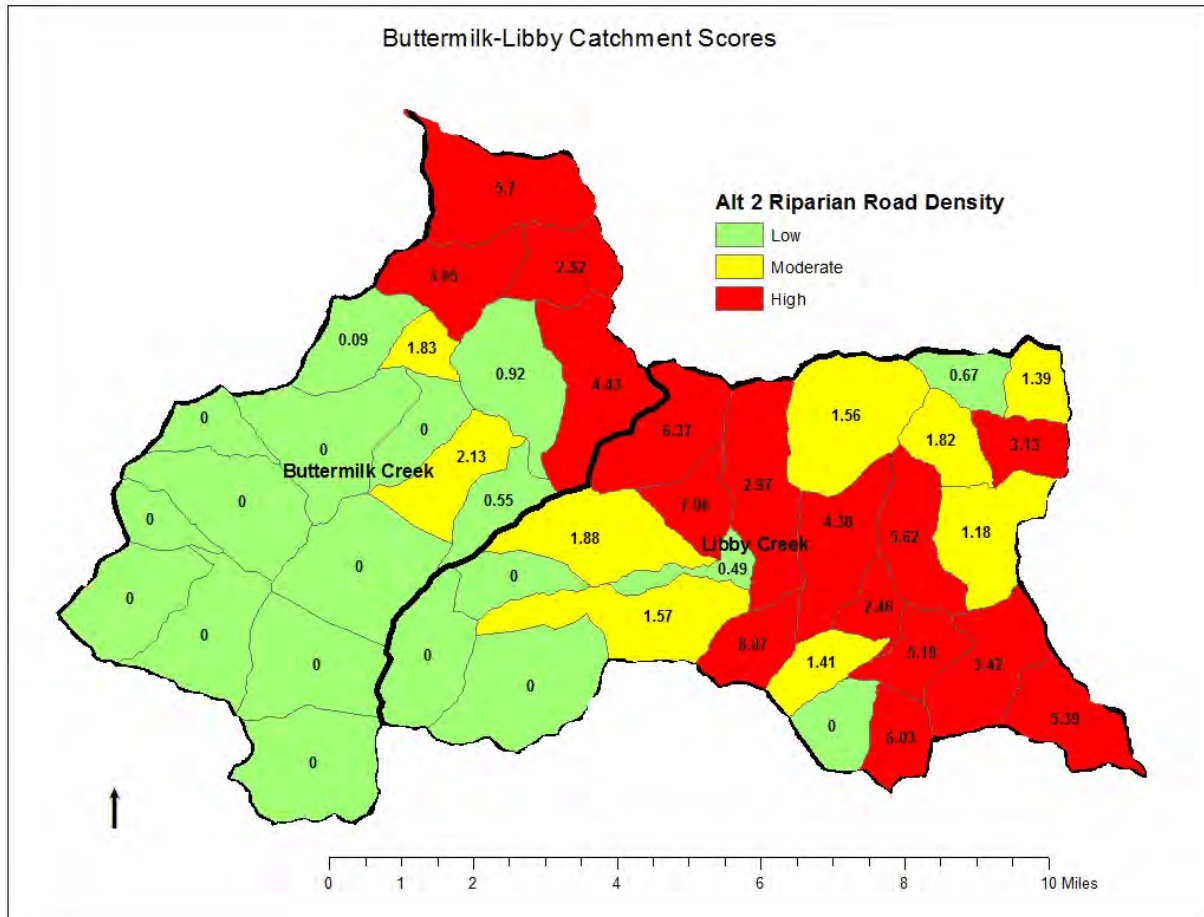
**Resource Indicator: Riparian Road Density**

Riparian road density would decrease by about 35% in the Libby sub-watershed and 17% in Buttermilk sub-watershed. At the catchment scale, riparian road density rankings in Buttermilk would not change while nine catchments in Libby would drop in density rankings, indicating an improvement for reducing road-stream interactions (Figure 30).

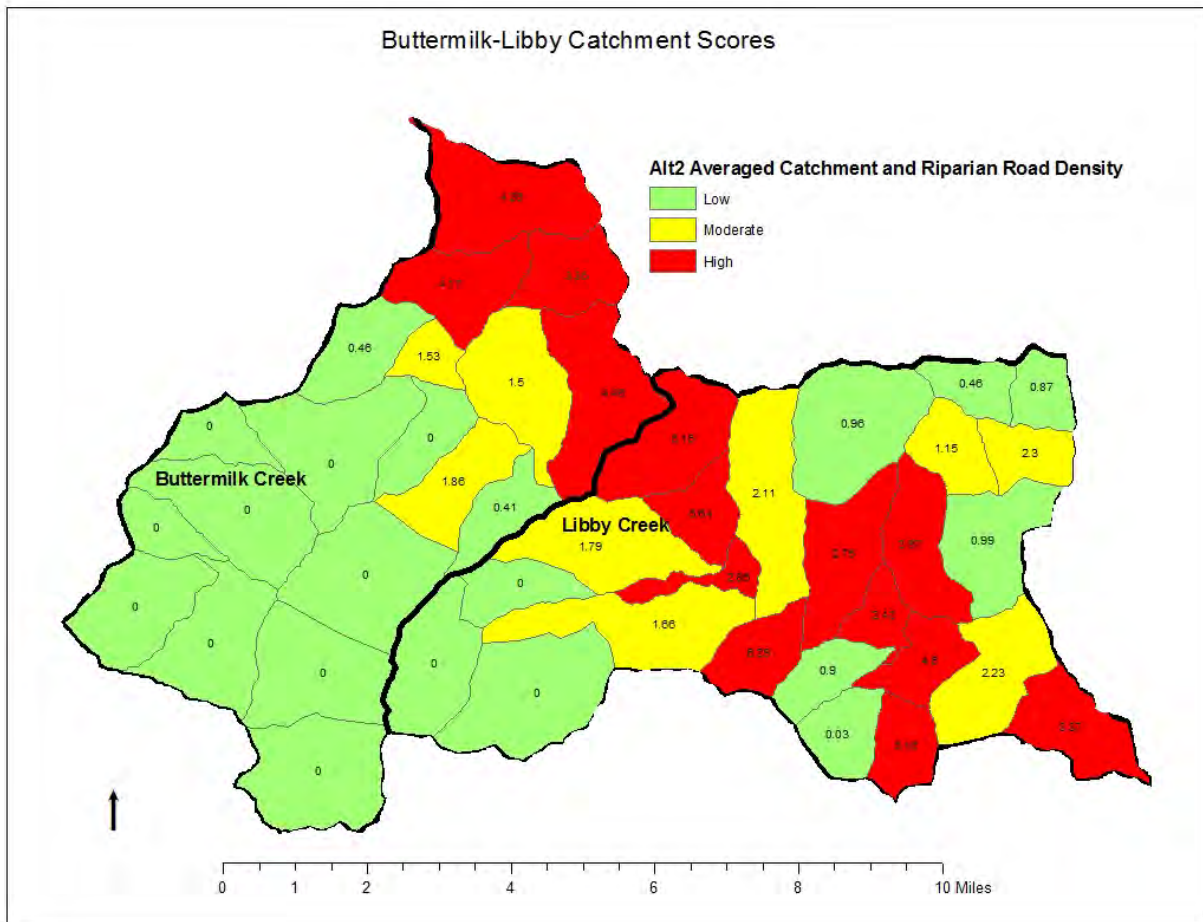
In the averaged catchment/riparian road density rankings, moderate to high riparian road density would decrease in key areas around North Fork and South Fork Libby, Ben Canyon, and Hornet Draw Creeks (Figure 31), resulting in fewer road-stream interactions. A reduction in riparian roads to lead to improved watershed condition because, as roads are rehabilitated, vegetation would re-establish and would prevent surface erosion. Since the current road mileage in Buttermilk sub-watershed is already low, the small reduction in roads proposed by

this alternative would have a long-term, negligible, beneficial effect. The Libby sub-watershed has more proposed road decommissioning, which would result in a long-term, minor, beneficial effect over existing road conditions because sediment from several remaining riparian roads would continue to contribute to altered hydrologic function.

Figure 30. Alternative 2 riparian road density by catchment



**Figure 31. Alternative 2 averaged catchment and riparian road density by catchments**

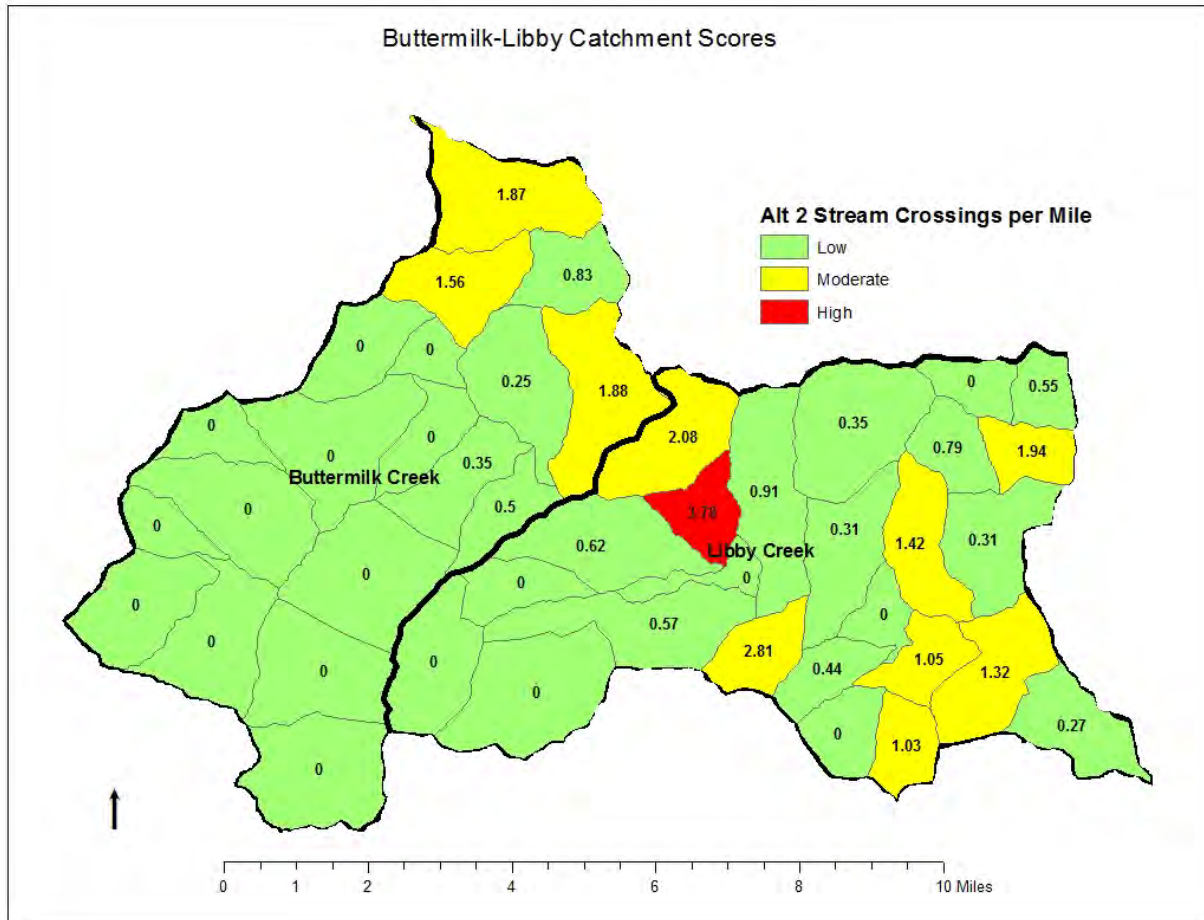


*Resource Indicator: Stream Crossings per Mile*

Alternative 2 would remove up to 40 stream/draw crossings across the project area that includes 6 perennial streams, 23 intermittent streams, and 11 ephemeral draws. Stream crossings per mile density would decrease by about 32% across the project area (about 13% in Buttermilk Creek and 38% in Libby Creek). Reductions in catchment ratings would occur in both sub-watersheds (Figure 32). Changes in the Buttermilk sub-watershed would be minor, affecting one catchment that would improve from moderate to low ranking. For Alternative 2 only, the bridge over West Fork Buttermilk Creek, on road 4300550, would be replaced with a similar open-bottom structure, allowing for fish passage. Construction actions would follow all applicable BMPs in order to reduce effects from sediment. The Libby sub-watershed would have improvements in five catchments, two moving from high to moderate ranking and three moving from moderate to low ranking. By eliminating sediment delivery sources at road crossings, Buttermilk would see a slight reduction in sediment sources while Libby would see a greater reduction in sediment sources. The change in stream crossing density would result in a

negligible, beneficial, long-term effect in the Buttermilk sub-watershed and a minor to moderate, beneficial, long-term effect in the Libby sub-watershed.

Figure 32. Alternative 2 number of stream crossings per mile of stream by catchment



*Resource Indicator: Ground Cover*

Proposed activities would cause a temporary increase in approximately 100 acres of bare soil over the life of this project. Not all of these bare acres would be created at the same time because treatments would be implemented at different timeframes (i.e. prescribed burning would occur approximately one to three years after thinning, and thinning would be spread over approximately 10-12 years as dictated by funding, unit layout, contractor availability and other factors). Temporary roads created to facilitate commercial thinning activities would create an additional ~3 acres of bare soil, with limited impacts to aquatic habitat due to Best Management Practices (BMPs) and temporary road locations that would minimize the delivery of sediment to any stream channels (including no new stream crossings and avoidance of RRs). Temporary roads would be decommissioned after treatments.

Proposed reductions in effective ground cover in RRs would be avoided, minimized, and mitigated by project design criterion to limit bare soil creation near surface water areas. Thinning and prescribed fire activities would be designed to maintain effective groundcover and utilize existing roads, skid trails, and landings to minimize the creation of more disturbed soil. About 272 acres (8 acres bare soil) of underburning would occur in RRs. Design criteria and objectives would provide for low to moderate fire behavior, resulting in low potential to generate short-term fine sediment that would not likely substantially impact riparian buffer efficacy. Sediment delivery to streams would likely be minimal from treatment units, with no likely measurable increase in fine sediment from the proposed treatments. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments would not likely generate measurable increases in sediment yield due to buffers and other design criterion that provide for retention of ground cover and vegetation in RRs during treatments (Appendix D). Prescribed fire treatments would occur over approximately 15 years because of limitations in funding, staffing, burn prescription windows, and smoke approval, which would result in spreading the minimal impacts described above over lengthy periods and allowing for recovery. Measures listed in Appendix D would provide for ongoing evaluation of effects of treatments on aquatic/hydrologic resources in RRs and provide for rapid changes and/or cessation of activities if undesirable effects.

The increase in bare soil would be temporary, taking approximately one to three years before vegetation re-established enough to effectively cover exposed soil and prevent surface erosion, but the duration would be long-term as defined. Areas with created bare soil would be dispersed across the project area and only a small proportion would occur within RRs (< 0.3%). The increase in bare soil would result in negligible, adverse, long-term impact to the indicator and stream sediment levels.

*Resource Indicator: Beaver Habitat*

Proposed beaver habitat enhancement treatments would occur at suitable sites (2 locations in the Buttermilk sub-watershed and 6 locations in the Libby sub-watershed) selected with input from WA DFW staff successfully working on beaver reintroduction in the local area. Treatments would be designed to encourage beaver use and improve successful colonization rates, and would include:

- Construction of eight beaver dam analogs (BDAs) by installing natural wood posts and brush to encourage establishment of colonies;
- Commercial harvest of conifers to promote hardwood vegetation and beaver forage production (~32 acres);
- Falling trees into the channel to create additional complexity and pool formation in habitat enhancement areas as needed;
- Riparian fencing to keep cattle out of wet meadows while beavers establish themselves.

Soil restoration treatments proposed in this project would entail sub-soiling compacted areas near beaver habitat enhancement areas and elsewhere; this treatment would increase the soil



water holding capacity and infiltration rate in riparian areas and help increase water yield (See Soils, Section 3.4).

These enhancements would cause short-term increases in turbidity where posts are installed. If colonies are successfully established, in the long-term beavers could increase natural water storage that would increase base flows during the summer and fall months, improving rearing habitat for juveniles and holding habitat for adult fish, potentially persisting for years (Pollock et al. 2003). At the site scale, the improvement in low flows below the release sites would be moderate while at the sub-watershed scale, benefits would be small with a minor magnitude effect over the long-term.

*Resource Indicator: Stream Channel Complexity*

In this alternative, small to large diameter trees would be hand felled on eight miles of fish streams the project area and left onsite, rapidly increasing coarse woody debris levels and thereby improving conditions in important spawning and rearing streams. Once historical levels of stream channel complexity were reached, natural recruitment rates would maintain the amount of coarse woody materials at appropriate levels. The increase in stream complexity would improve a substantial portion of spawning and rearing habitat in the project area and would lead to beneficial, long-term, moderate effects to habitat quality.

*Resource Indicator: Fish Distribution*

Restoring habitat connectivity by removing barriers to fish passage at eight sites would allow fish access to about six miles of quality spawning and rearing habitat while causing minor, adverse, short-term sediment impacts minimized by use of BMPs. The increase in fish access would have a moderate, beneficial, long-term effect on local fish distribution and fish production because more fish habitat would be available for spawning and rearing, resulting in an increase of fish production in these areas at the sub-watershed scale and directly contributing to the recovery of at-risk ESA-listed fish species. See the Aquatics Specialist Report or Biological Assessment for Mission Restoration Project for more details.

*3.3.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects*

*Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis:* The spatial boundary for analyzing the cumulative effects to hydrologic and aquatic resources is the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watershed boundaries (HUC12). Project effects are not expected to extend outside of these sub-watersheds. The temporal scale for cumulative effects on stream channel function is 30 years. The temporal scale for cumulative effects on water quality, riparian function, and watershed condition is 10 years. These time scales reflect the amount of time needed for watershed projects to improve stream channel function.

*Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis:* Analysis of watershed history is essential to help predict effects of future management activities on water quality and watershed condition. Ongoing reasonably foreseeable actions in the project area sub-watersheds include livestock grazing, road maintenance, snowmobile trail grooming, recreation, and invasive weed treatments. Additional projects and conditions that

contribute to potential cumulative effects are outlined in the “Cumulative Effects Considerations” document in the project file.

The project is not expected to create negative cumulative effects on water quality, riparian function, channel morphology, and watershed conditions because treatments in Alternative 2 would create improved overall conditions across the watershed (Figure 27). Localized increases of erosion and sedimentation would occur from the instream work and some riparian treatments, however this increase would be short in duration and is not expected to have a cumulative effect at the watershed scale.

The following resource indicator has potential cumulative effects:

*Resource Indicator: Ground Cover*

Proposed treatments would overlap with impacts from grazing, the road network, and recreation, creating a slight cumulative impact upon sediment with unmeasurable effects.

**3.3.4.3.3 Summary of Cumulative Effects**

Alternative 2 may affect, and would likely adversely affect, steelhead and bull trout species and their critical habitat. Adverse impacts would be temporary and negligible to minor in consequence. Habitat conditions for ESA-listed species would move towards desired habitat conditions. This project would contribute towards the recovery of these species across the Upper Columbia Basin.

**3.3.4.4 Alternative 3 – Effects Unique to Alternative 3**

This section analyzes effects of proposed treatments unique to Alternative 3, including additional road decommissioning and road closures, rock armoring, and conversion of some small stream crossings to hardened fords.

**3.3.4.4.1 Effects**

Figure 33 displays the changes to hydrologic and aquatic resource indicators in Alternative 3.

**Figure 33: Water Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 3**

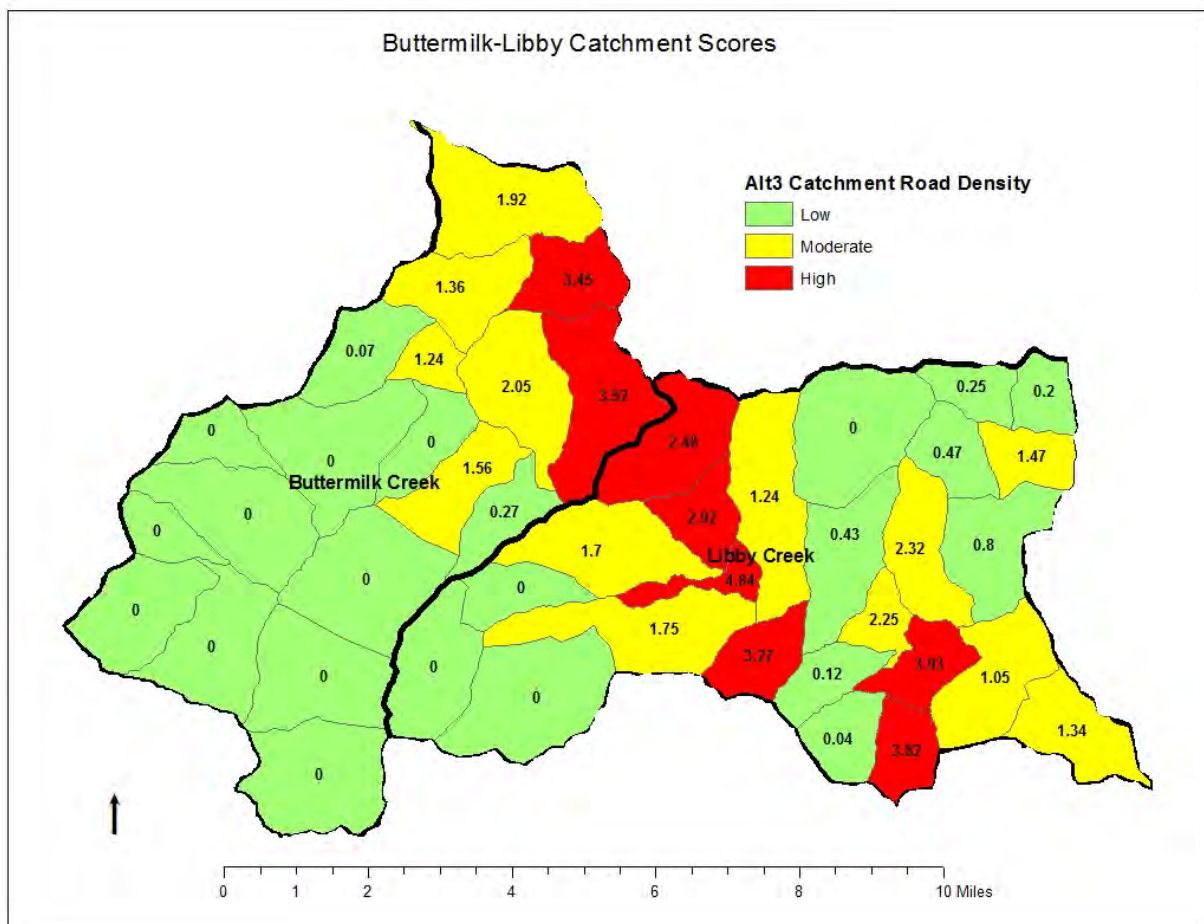
Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alt 3 (Change)
Water Quality (Sediment)	Catchment Road Density	Number of Catchment Rankings Lowered *	<b>8</b> (5 High to Moderate, 3 Moderate to Low)
	Road Drainage Network Increase		<b>10</b> (2 High to Low, 2 High to Moderate, 6 Moderate to Low)
	Riparian Road Density		<b>11</b> (2 High to Low, 5 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)
	Road-stream Crossing Density		<b>9</b> (1 High to Low, 7 High to Moderate, 1 Moderate to Low)

\* Changes in catchment rankings listed are for the averaged catchment road density and riparian road density, showing where riparian road density coordinated with catchment density, which is a more meaningful metric.

*Resource Indicator: Road Density*

Approximately 56 miles of road decommissioning would occur in this alternative, prioritizing the removal of riparian roads. At the sub-watershed scale, road density would decrease about 37% (from 1.3 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> to 0.82 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>) in Buttermilk and about 50% (from 2.1 mi/mi<sup>2</sup> to 1.05 mi/mi<sup>2</sup>) in Libby. Approximately 34 miles of roads would be hydrologically closed across the project area as described under Alternative 2. Road density would decrease in most catchments that currently have roads. Five catchments with high road density would drop to moderate, making a substantial reduction in road density in high concentration areas. Three moderate catchments would drop to a low ranking. Figure 34 displays road density by catchments under Alternative 3. Removing riparian roads at this level would result in moderate, long-term, beneficial effect to road density by reducing chronic sediment delivery sources across the project area.

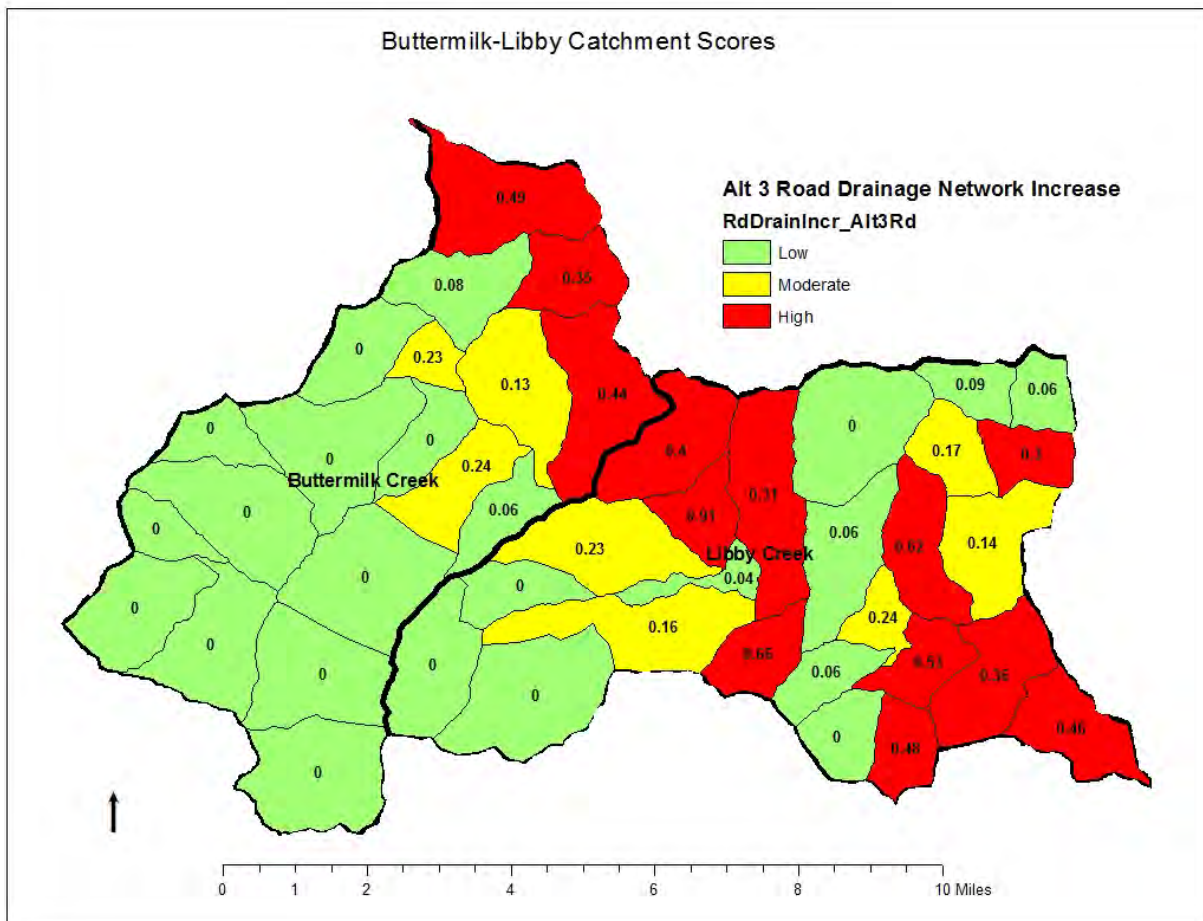
**Figure 34. Alternative 3 road density by catchments.**



*Resource Indicator: Increase in road drainage network*

Alternative 3 would reduce the road drainage network by ~41% across the project area. At the sub-watershed scale, Buttermilk would decrease by ~30% and Libby by ~48% (Figure 35). Decommissioning all roads on the west side of West Fork Buttermilk Creek would change one catchment from a high to low rating. In Libby, nine catchments would improve to lower drainage network rankings with the proposed road changes. The additional reduction in road drainage network would result in a minor, beneficial, long-term effect in the Buttermilk sub-watershed and a moderate, beneficial, long-term effect in the Libby sub-watershed.

**Figure 35. Alternative 3 increase in drainage network from road system by catchments.**



*Resource Indicator: Riparian Road Density*

Riparian road density would decrease by about 42% across the project area. In the Buttermilk sub-watershed, road density would decrease by ~32% and in Libby ~50% (Figure 36). In Buttermilk, one catchment would change from a high combined density ranking to a low. Libby

would have nine catchments drop in combined density rankings. The averaged catchment/riparian road density rankings would decrease in key areas around North Fork and South Fork Libby, Ben Canyon, and Hornet Draw Creeks (Figure 37). The reduction in riparian roads would lead to the greatest reduction in chronic sediment sources across the Libby sub-watershed. Streams within the Libby sub-watershed would realize a moderate long-term improvement to fine sediment levels. Buttermilk would have considerable improvement in the one catchment, but a minor long-term improvement across the sub-watershed.

**Figure 36. Alternative 3 riparian road density by catchments.**

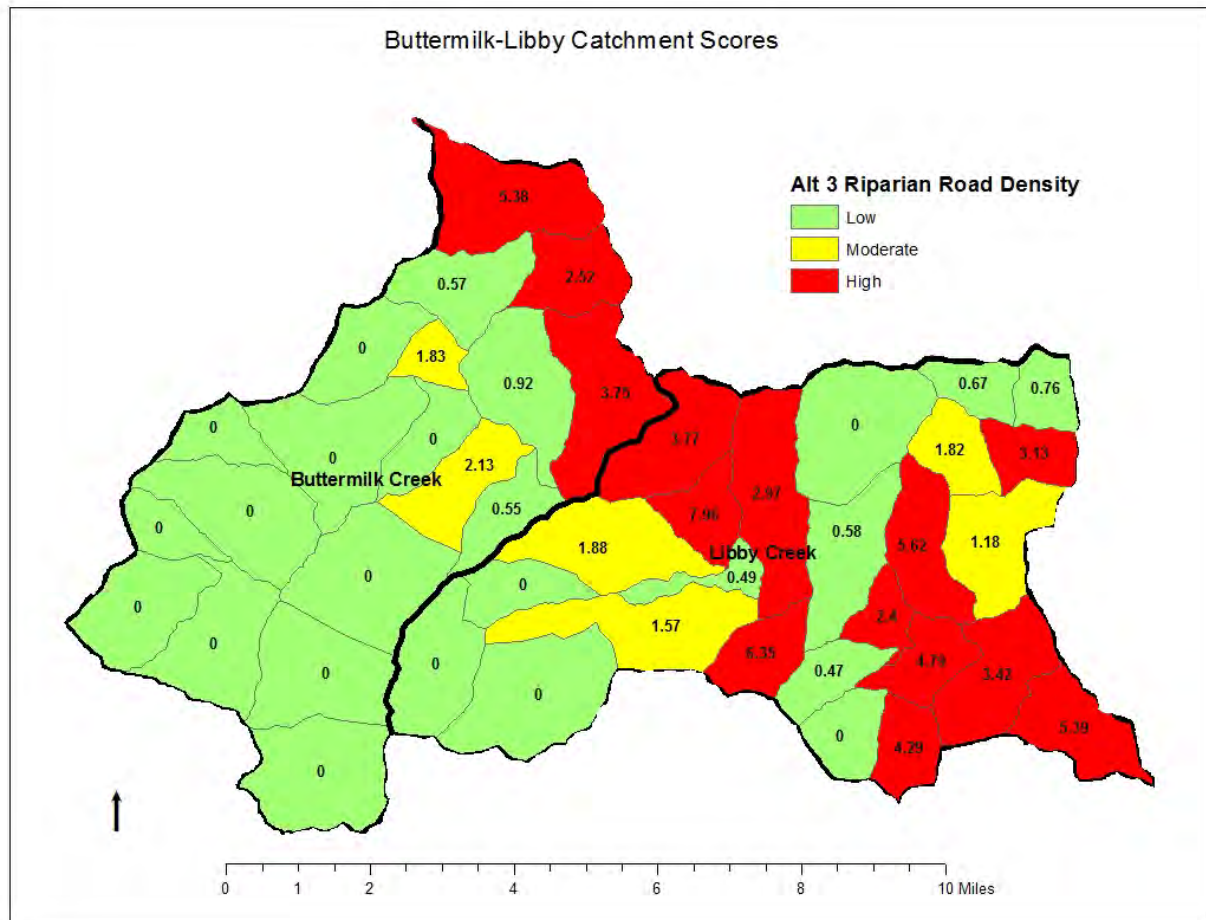
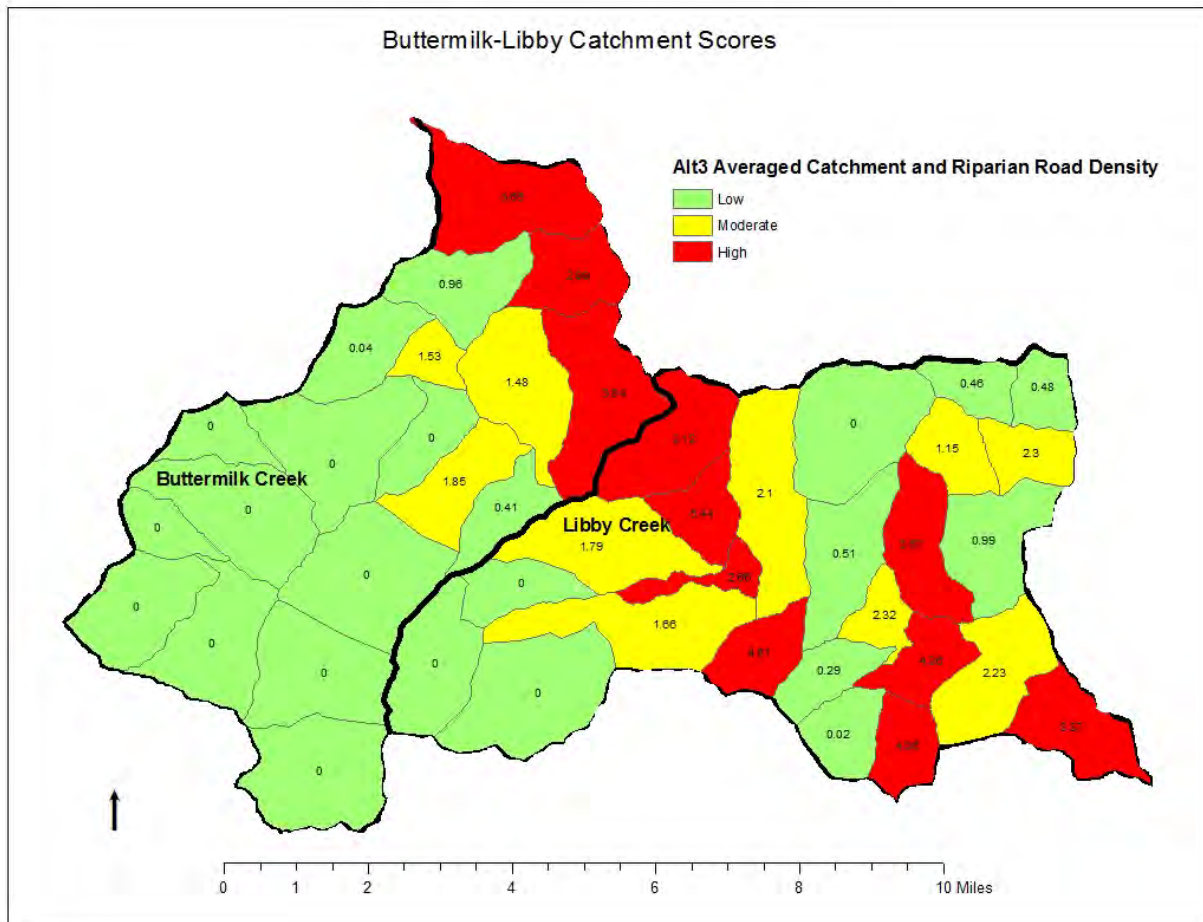


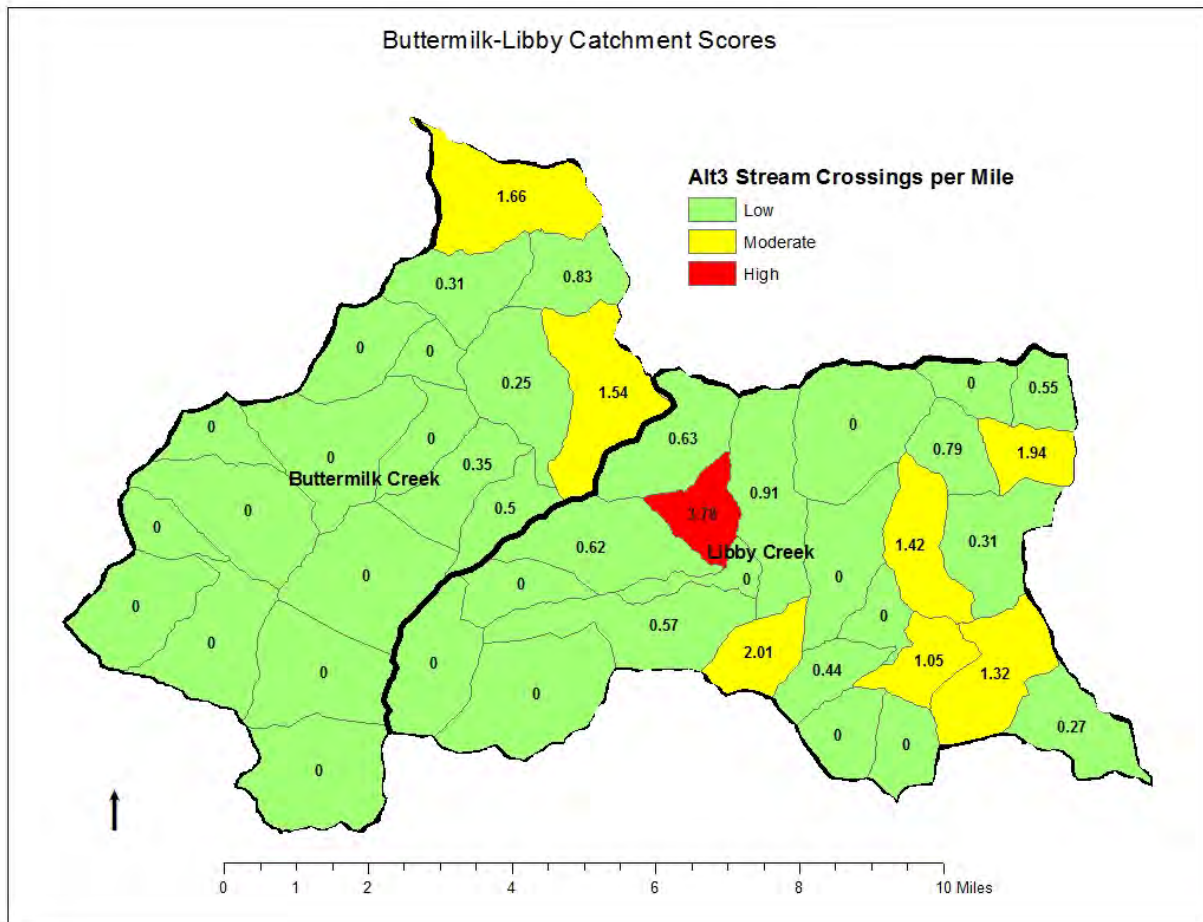
Figure 37. Alternative 3 averaged catchment and riparian road density by catchments.



*Resource Indicator: Stream Crossings per Mile*

Alternative 3 would remove ~ 52 stream/draw crossings across the project area that includes 8 perennial streams, 30 intermittent streams, and 14 ephemeral draws. Stream crossings per mile density would decrease by about 44% across the project area. Within the Buttermilk sub-watershed stream crossings would drop by 34% and in Libby by ~52% (Figure 38). Two catchments in Buttermilk would go from moderate to low ranking. A temporary crossing would be built over West Fork Buttermilk Creek, on road 4300550, to allow for equipment to access area for decommissioning activities. The temporary crossing would follow applicable BMPs and would be removed after use. Libby sub-watershed would have changes in seven catchments, one going from high to low, one from high to moderate, and five from moderate to low. Buttermilk would see a minor reduction in sediment sources, leading to beneficial, long-term, minor effects; Libby would see a moderate reduction in sediment sources that would create long-term, beneficial, moderate effects.

Figure 38. Alternative 3 number of stream crossings per mile of stream by catchments.



### 3.3.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects

*Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis:* The spatial and temporal boundaries for analyzing the cumulative effects to hydrologic and aquatic resources are identical as those used for Alternative 2.

*Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis:* The additional road decommissioning and other road treatments is expected to achieve greater aquatic habitat improvement of reduced sediment levels. Other effects would be the same as Alternative 2.

### 3.3.4.4.3 Summary of Cumulative Effects

Alternative 3 would have the same effects for vegetation and fuels treatments, harvest related road use, AOPs, stream culvert upsizing, coarse wood placement, and beaver release treatments. See Alternative 2 for details. When combined with past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions, the additional road decommissioning, road closure, rock armoring, and hardened ford construction under Alternative 3 would create short-term, negligible to minor,

adverse impacts to water quality and fish habitat and long-term, minor to moderate, beneficial improvements to water quality and at-risk fish habitat. See the Aquatics Specialist Report or Biological Assessment for Mission Restoration Project for more details.

### 3.3.4.5 Summary of Effects

Figure 39. Summary of Water Resource Effects for All Alternatives

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2 (% Change)	Alternative 3 (% Change)
Water Quality (Sediment)	Catchment Road Density	Number of Catchment Rankings Lowered	No Change	5 (3 High to Moderate, 2 Moderate to Low)	8 (5 High to Moderate, 3 Moderate to Low)
	Road Drainage Network Increase		No Change	5 (2 High to Moderate, 3 Moderate to Low)	10 (2 High to Low, 2 High to Moderate, 6 Moderate to Low)
	Riparian Road Density		No Change	8 (4 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)	11 (2 High to Low, 5 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)
	Road-stream Crossing Density		No Change	6 (1 High to Low, 1 High to Moderate, 4 Moderate to Low)	9 (1 High to Low, 7 High to Moderate, 1 Moderate to Low)
	Ground Cover	Amount of bare soil	No Change	+100 acres	+100 acres
Water Quantity (Base Flow)	Beaver Habitat	Number of beaver habitat enhancement sites	0 sites	8 sites	8 sites
Aquatic Habitat	Stream Channel Complexity	Miles of stream restored	0 miles	8.3 miles	8.3 miles
	Fish Distribution	Miles of accessible habitat increased	0 miles	5.6 miles	5.6 miles
		Number of aquatic passage pipes installed	0 AOPs	8 AOPs	8 AOPs

### 3.3.5 Consistency Statement

The Regulatory Framework applicable to this resource is detailed in Appendix G. This project is consistent with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines as follows:

*Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines:*

- 2-14: Mitigation measures such as rock armoring perennial stream crossings, maintaining no harvest stream buffers, following low intensity underburning intensities in RRs, and isolating the work sites for instream work would minimize short-term sediment impacts. Fine sediment levels would improve once the riparian road work is complete.
- 3-1: The project would protect instream habitat with no-treatment buffers. The restorative road treatments would reduce chronic fine sediment



delivery to streams. Aquatic habitat restoration treatments would improve degraded or at-risk habitat indicators.

- 3-2: The project meets this guidance via active and passive means of restoration.
- 3-3: Decommissioning riparian roads would reduce the fine sediment delivery to streams. Fine sediment levels in Libby Creek would be expected to have a net reduction in the long-term.
- 3-5: The project avoids removal of overstory trees within at least 100-foot of any stream. Adding wood to streams would increase wood loading in depleted areas.
- 3-6: See response to 3-5.
- 3-7: All instream treatments would occur during the designated instream work window, which falls during the low flow period and outside of spawning and redd timing.
- 3-8: All new permanent culverts proposed would be capable of passing the 100-year flow event and consistent to the Forest Service-WDFW MOU for hydraulic projects. Bridge replacement across W. Fk. Buttermilk Creek would comply with fish passage requirements.
- 13-2: BMPs and design features would prevent for chemical spills in surface water and minimize stream turbidity levels. See above for sediment reducing measures.
- 13-3: Forest Service National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands (USDA 2012c) would be used as required protective measures during the development and implementation of all projects

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to water resources, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8(a)(2)(iii) Water quality, and 219.9(a)(2)(i) Key characteristics associated with aquatic ecosystem types. Thinning, that is included in both action alternatives, as provided by this amendment would cause an adverse, short-term, negligible impact on water quality, a key characteristic of aquatic ecosystems, because commercial haul on forest roads would contribute sediment to streams at road crossings. This project proposes rock armoring at six perennial stream crossings used for summer haul routes in Libby Creek, an effective mitigation that would reduce the amount of sediment contributed to streams to an imperceptible amount; the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project Model (WEPP) predicts that rock armoring would result in an ~80% reduction in sediment production to streams. Prescribed burning may create some patches of bare soil that would have short-term susceptibility to erosion that may contribute

imperceptible amounts of sediment to streams until ground cover is re-established. BMPs and design criteria would be used to avoid or minimize impacts to water quality.

Thinning would have beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on water quality because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to water quality.

219.8(a)(3). Riparian Areas. Thinning and associated prescribed burning as provided by this amendment would occur in established riparian management zones (Riparian Reserves) and would have beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on streams because thinning in some areas would promote hardwoods, providing more suitable beaver food and habitat and increasing opportunities for successful beaver re-introduction as conducted by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WA DFW). Successful beaver re-introduction would promote water storage and longer stream flow. Thinning and associated prescribed burning proposed in established riparian management zones (Riparian Reserves) would use design criteria including buffers, retention objectives, and prescribed fire intensity objectives that would provide for maintenance or restoration of the ecological integrity of riparian areas.

219.9(b) Additional species-specific plan components. The federally-listed threatened or endangered species in the project area that would be affected by this amendment include spring Chinook, summer steelhead, and bull trout. Region 6 Regional Forester Sensitive Species that would be affected by thinning as allowed by the amendment include westslope cutthroat and interior redband rainbow trout. Thinning as allowed by the amendment would have an adverse, short-term, negligible effect on habitat for these species because log haul traffic associated with commercial thinning would cross streams on roads and contribute some sediment to streams. However, the amount of sediment would be imperceptible in volume and duration and would not impede recovery of T&E species or conservation of proposed and candidate species. This project proposes rock-armoring at six perennial stream crossings used for summer haul routes in Libby Creek, an effective mitigation that would reduce the amount of sediment contributed to streams to an imperceptible amount; the Watershed Erosion Prediction Project Model (WEPP) predicts that rock armoring would result in ~80% reduction in sediment production to streams. Prescribed burning may create some patches of bare soil that would have short-term susceptibility to erosion that may contribute imperceptible amounts of sediment to streams until ground cover is re-established. BMPs and design criteria would be used to avoid or minimize impacts to aquatic habitat.

Thinning would have beneficial, short to long-term, minor to moderate effects on habitat used by these species because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to aquatic habitat.

### *Northwest Forest Plan Standard and Guidelines*

Project type and site-specific S&Gs listed below apply to all RRs as well as any activity potentially degrading RR. The Mission Project's consistency with each S&G is discussed below:

- TM-1: The Mission is consistent with TM-1 due to avoiding most RRs. Where harvest occurs in RRs, the objective is to restore riparian vegetation conditions.
- RF-2: Design features described in Appendix D details the process for minimizing landing construction within RRs. No new road construction would occur within RRs. All road work would be designed and implemented with qualified road engineers. High aquatic risk roads were identified from field work and GIS analysis. Where possible, roads that disrupt hydrologic flow paths and have potential to diver streams were proposed for decommissioning. No new road construction would occur.
- RF-4: All new permanent culverts proposed, as well as the bridge replacement across W. Fk. Buttermilk Cr, would be capable of passing the 100-year flow event and consistent to the Forest Service-WDFW MOU for hydraulic projects, which includes provisions for protecting water quality and aquatic life.
- RF-6: All known fish barrier culverts are proposed for upgrading to fish friendly passage structures.
- FM-1: Reintroduction of low-intensity backing fire along would help increase stand resiliency, restore historic vegetation patchiness and species composition, and promote large and old trees. Deciduous vegetation, shrubs, and down material on the ground in RRs would not be targeted and would be marginally reduced.
- FM-4: See FM-1 above.

### *Project Consistency with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives*

The Northwest Forest Plan identifies nine Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives (USDA and USDI 1994) applicable to projects conducted under NWFP management direction

*1. Maintain and restore the distribution, diversity, and complexity of watershed and landscape features to ensure protection of aquatic systems to which species, populations, and communities are uniquely adapted.*

Altered fire regimes, increased road densities, climate, and the condition of soil types and plant communities affect aquatic systems in project area. Proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments would compensate for an altered fire regime and restore certain plant communities, contributing to a project objective to restore the function of landscape-scale processes, such as wildfire, in order to protect the complexity and distribution of plant communities (including riparian areas) across the landscape. The Mission Project is expected to maintain and slightly improve the distribution, diversity and complexity of watershed and landscape features.

*2. Maintain and restore spatial and temporal connectivity within and between watersheds.*

Several culverts create barriers to habitat connectivity in the project area and would be replaced by structures that would allow for full aquatic and riparian species passage. The proposed actions would not create any barriers for fish within the project area.

*3. Maintain and restore the physical integrity of the aquatic system, including shorelines, banks, and bottom configurations.*

Removing culverts through road decommissioning and road closure would eliminate some artificial constraints on the shape of small streams in the project area, which would help restore the physical integrity of these streams. Some activities would result in a minor temporary increase in fine sediment levels within project area streams. Improvements to coarse wood levels would increase channel stability and create more desirable channel conditions. Projects would maintain the physical integrity of the aquatic system, including shorelines, banks, and bottom configurations.

*4. Maintain and restore water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems.*

Proposed commercial thinning would maintain shade levels and not affect stream temperature. Most underburn units with perennial RRs use existing roads within the RRs as control lines. The roads lie at least 100 feet from adjacent streams. Active lighting would stop within 100 feet of perennial streams and 25 feet of intermittent streams. Ignitions in RRs would be designed to meet resource objective of retaining 95% of overstory trees, 66% of the understory/shrub layer, and 50% of the surface ground cover/organic material. Fire would be allowed to back towards streams when resource objectives can be met. Vegetation mortality levels would be low. Some localized shade reduction could occur, but would have minor impacts on stream temperatures, especially where listed fish occur, miles downstream. Therefore, proposed prescribed fire treatments would result in an insignificant negative effect to temperature. The proposed projects are expected to maintain water quality necessary to support healthy riparian, aquatic, and wetland ecosystems at the project and watershed scale. See the discussion below for effects to turbidity.

*5. Maintain and restore the sediment regime under which aquatic ecosystems were formed.*

Thinning within the outer portion of Riparian Reserves would have a low probability of introducing sediment to streams. About 60% of the harvest proposed within RRs would occur over frozen ground with little ground disturbance and no sediment delivery to streams. The other 40% would be optional summer or winter harvest. Protection buffers of at least 100 feet from streams would be applied consistent with Sweeney et al. (2014), to trap ultra-fine sediment from reaching streams. Based on these measures and recent research, little to no sediment delivery would likely occur from commercial thinning units potentially harvested during the summer months. Activities outside of Riparian Reserves, such as tree harvest using mechanical equipment and prescribed burning, would be unlikely to contribute sediment to the streams because the full reserve widths would prevent sediment from reaching streams. Design details that would minimize erosion and sediment movement throughout the units are in Appendix D.

The proposed road maintenance, construction (temporary roads), decommissioning, closure, and log hauling would increase sediment yield. Due to hydrologic connectivity with roads, sediment could reach fish habitat. This increase would last an estimated 1-3 years following treatment. Design Features and Mitigation Measures listed in Appendix D would minimize sediment delivery to streams. Measures like rock armoring perennial stream crossings prior to log hauling and working under dry weather conditions would minimize fine sediment mobilization. The amount of sediment reaching streams, using design features and BMPs would be minor.

Once the road construction, maintenance, and decommissioning sites stabilize and log hauling ceases, the net sediment yield for the Buttermilk and Libby Creek drainages would reduce. The reduction in sediment delivery to streams, coupled with other efforts across the watershed, would act cumulatively to provide long lasting improvements to watershed health in the project area. At the watershed scale, the short-term increase in sediment delivery and long-term reduction would improve the sediment regime.

*6. Maintain and restore instream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats and to retain patterns of sediment, nutrient and wood routing.*

The current road network increases the stream drainage network by ~ 30%. Additionally, historic beaver colony were abundant and the wetland habitat they created provided important natural water storage that sustained higher summer and fall base flows. Currently, base flows are reduced due to irrigation withdrawals off National Forest lands.

The proposed thinning, prescribed fire, and road management activities would change the drainage network. Collectively, with the miles of skid trails and firelines, there would be a temporary increase in the drainage network. Most new temporary drainages would be disconnected to the stream network. In the long term, once the skid trails and fire lines recover, the miles of road decommissioning would result in a net decrease in the miles of artificial streams associated with roads from 30 to 44 percent, depending on the amount of road decommissioning selected.

An objective of this project is to improve base stream flow within the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watersheds. Establishing six beaver habitat enhancement sites, in concert with the existing WA DFW beaver reintroduction project, would provide several opportunities for beaver colonization to improve base flows and move towards a more natural flow regime. If successfully occupied, beaver colony sites would function as 'sponges' soaking up early spring runoff and delivering that water from underground storage where it releases slowly, resulting in increased summer and fall flows. Previous beaver release sites in the Methow Valley Ranger District were monitored and documented to show increased water storage and improved summer flows downstream (Pollock et al. 2003).

The negative effects associated with harvest and fuels activities and the associated road work, when considered collectively with the beaver release sites, would remain an insignificant negative affect for a few years, then an insignificant positive effect in the long-term. This project element is expected to maintain instream flows sufficient to create and sustain riparian, aquatic, and wetland habitats and to retain patterns of nutrient and wood routing.

*7. Maintain and restore the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows and wetlands.*

Existing meadows and wetlands would be protected with the project design features. Releasing beavers at six sites would increase the amount of wetland habitat in the project area. Proposed projects are expected to maintain the timing, variability, and duration of floodplain inundation and water table elevation in meadows, wetlands and floodplain development.

*8. Maintain and restore the species composition and structural diversity of plant communities in riparian areas and wetlands to provide adequate summer and winter thermal regulation, nutrient filtering, appropriate rates of surface erosion, bank erosion, and channel migration and to supply*

*amounts and distributions of coarse woody debris sufficient to sustain physical complexity and stability.*

Most Riparian Reserves would be untreated; therefore, the overall current condition would mostly be maintained. The limited amount of commercial and non-commercial thinning and/or underburning (in shrub communities) in Riparian Reserves is designed to restore the species composition and structural diversity of riparian plant communities. This includes forbs, grasses, shrubs and trees; snags, large and old trees and thickets of young trees; rotten logs and newly-downed wood of various sizes. Thinning competing small-diameter Douglas fir from larger riparian trees may improve the long-term supply of coarse woody debris at a few sites. Decommissioning riparian roads would increase the amount of vegetated riparian area. Therefore, the proposed harvest, prescribed burning, and road management would not retard the area from maintaining or restoring species riparian composition and structural diversity of plants capable of providing the above protection and complexity at the project scale.

*9. Maintain and restore habitat to support well distributed populations of native plant, invertebrate and vertebrate riparian-dependent species.*

Riparian Reserves treatments were chosen carefully to restore habitat and riparian function at those sites. A majority of the Riparian Reserve acres remain untreated and riparian dependent species would be undisturbed over about 90 percent of the total RRs in Buttermilk and 80 percent in the Libby Creek sub-watershed. The commercial and non-commercial thinning and underburning (in shrub communities) are designed to restore the species composition and structural diversity of riparian plant communities that would occur under natural fire regimes in dry forests. Projects are expected to maintain habitat to support well-distributed populations of native plant, invertebrate and vertebrate riparian-dependent species.

### **3.4 Soils**

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Soil Resource Report by L. Cerise (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

#### **3.4.1 Methodology**

The analysis area for soils encompasses all land within an individual treatment unit. In general, soils outside the unit boundaries (activity areas) are not expected to be directly, indirectly, or cumulatively affected by this proposal (no harvest or post-harvest equipment will operate off system roads outside the unit boundaries). The Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan determines suitable land (areas suitable for timber management) with the recognition that there are unsuitable land inclusions within this broader designation. The identification of these inclusions and their significance is left to the project level. Determination of suitability within each unit was completed with the premise of “the growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of crops of trees...” (NFMA 1976). Physical properties of concern include structure, density, porosity, infiltration, permeability, water holding capacity, depth to water table, surface horizon thickness, and organic matter size, quantity, and distribution. Chemical properties include changes in nutrient cycling and availability. Biological concerns commonly include abundance, distribution,

and productivity of the many plants, animals, microorganisms that live in and on the soil and organic detritus.

The proposed treatment units were assessed by field reconnaissance by a professional soil scientist during the spring of 2015 & 2016. GIS data analyses utilized the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Land Survey Inventory (NRCS soil survey), R6 Droughty Soil Index Layer, and the R6 Landtype Association Map.

The proposed treatment units were field reviewed using a walkthrough survey to get an overview of each unit. The surveys identified past management activities, such as timber harvest, that still result in detrimental soil disturbance (DSD). Soil surveys followed guidance provided in the documents listed below for each indicator analyzed.

- The Region 6 Approach to Soils NEPA Analysis Regarding Detrimental Soil Disturbance In Forested Areas – Region 6 Supplement (2500-98-1).
- Forest Soil Disturbance Monitoring Protocol (FSDMP), Volume 1 Rapid Assessment. USDA Forest Service. Gen. Tech. Report WO-82A. September 2009
- Soil –Disturbance Field Guide. USDA Forest Service. National Technology & Development Program. 0819 1815-SDTDC. August 2009.

The soil resource indicators used for analyzing the impact of the proposed alternatives are displayed in Figure 40.

**Figure 40. Soil Resource Elements, Indicators and Measures for Analysis**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Purpose and Need or Key Issue	Source
Soil Erosion	Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting	Percent of total unit	P&N #2	Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), The National Forest Management Act of 1976, Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2500 Chapter 50, Region 6 Supplement to FSM 2500 (2500-98-1)
Soil Disturbance	Compaction, Rutting, Puddling	Percent of total unit	P&N #2	Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), The National Forest Management Act of 1976, Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2500 Chapter 50, Region 6 Supplement to FSM 2500 (2500-98-1)

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Purpose and Need or Key Issue	Source
Site Productivity & Nutrient Cycling	Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material & Ground Cover	Tons per Acre in each unit	P&N #2	Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP), The National Forest Management Act of 1976, Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2500 Chapter 50, Region 6 Supplement to FSM 2500 (2500-98-1)

### 3.4.2 Intensity Level Definitions

Type of Impact:

- Beneficial: de-compaction of soil, re-contouring roads, biomass additions to soil surface, seeding/plantings
- Adverse: excess compaction, rutting >6 in., puddling, removal of organic matter layer, erosion

Duration of Impact:

- Short term: 5-10 years; soil BMPs are designed for soil recovery in the short term
- Long term: 10+ years; if soil BMPs are not followed project impacts to soil productivity could be many decades out

Intensity of Impact:

- Negligible: Impacts to soil productivity are not noticed or measurable. No compaction, rutting or displacement of soil organic layer.
- Minor: Impacts to soil productivity are slightly visible/measurable and are not noticeable the following growing season. Platy soil compaction is friable, soil structure retains micro and macro pores and does not impede root growth, rutting is less than 6 in. in depth, and soil organic layer is fully intact.
- Moderate: Impacts to soil productivity are visible/measurable, have up to 50% of the organic matter layer removed, and have measurable impacts such as platy soil structure and rutting, but sustains a diverse plant community multiple years after project implementation
- Major: Impacts to soil productivity are visible/measurable, rutting and compaction exceeds R6 standards, complete or near complete loss of organic matter layer, visible erosion and have measurable impacts decades after project implementation. These types of soil impacts will not sustain a diverse plant community, but rather a monoculture of non-native plants or no plant growth at all.



### 3.4.3 Affected Environment

Landforms of the project area are comprised of mountain slopes and ridgelines that transition to mid-elevation valley bottoms. Slopes tend to be moderately incised with drainages that empty into the Libby Creek and Buttermilk watersheds. Soils across the project area are derived primarily of volcanic ash over glacial till and glacial fluvial outwash. Volcanic ash from Mount Mazama (Crater Lake, OR) was deposited in the project area approximately 7,000 years ago, followed by more ash depositions from multiple Glacier Peak eruptions starting ~4,500 years ago and a series of Mt. St. Helens eruptions. Physical characteristics of this volcanic ash include low bulk density (0.65 to 0.90), a dominance of silt and very fine sand-sized particles with weak structural development. On north, east, and west aspects the ash forms a distinct horizon (~4 ft.) over a variety of parent materials. On southerly aspects, the ash commonly occurs as a component of the A horizon (0-12" soil depth) and is generally mixed with the underlying parent material due to geologic erosion.

The primary underlying parent material is glacial till and glacial fluvial outwash. The Cordilleran Ice Sheet overrode the project area as late as 12 to 14,000 years ago and strongly influenced topographic expression (Waitt 1972). This massive ice sheet filled valleys and overrode many of the ridges within the analysis area. Glacial till, which is unconsolidated glacial debris, filled valleys and incised uplands within the area. The rest of the underlying parent material in the area is primarily composed of metamorphic bedrock with igneous intrusions (Stoffel, no date). In glaciated areas, the granitic bedrock has been scoured and abraded by glacial ice which exposed hard, relatively unweathered bedrock. These soils commonly have a high percentage of rock fragments ranging from gravel to boulder in size.

Soil textures range from ashy loams to sandy loams with low to high coarse fragment content. The majority of volcanic ash deposition found in the project area ranges from 10-22 inches over glacial till or glacial outwash. Rock outcrops and talus slopes are common features across the landscape. In some locations open talus slopes are present with little to no soil development. Soils across the steep slopes have formed in voids between the talus rocks. These soils are shallow and in some cases only organic soil and duff material can be found overlying the rock or among the rocks. Inclusions of wetland and riparian soils are found throughout the project area.

Inclusions of open talus slopes were identified in various units and are considered unsuitable lands for timber operations. These talus inclusions typically occupy less than 1 acre and do not contain productive timber stands. Thinning and ground based operations would not occur on these open talus slopes. There may be occasions where skyline yarding corridors pass through these areas in order to reach the portions of units below these areas.

A complete list of dominant landtypes within the boundaries of the treatment are included in the Mission Project Soils Resource Report (Cerise 2018).

#### *Resource Indicator: Detrimental Surface Erosion/ Mass Wasting*

Field surveys conducted in 2015-2016 using the FSDMP showed no major signs of erosion in each unit surveyed. DSD was identified in 40 of the proposed commercial treatment units. Existing DSD is within soil quality standards for 26 units and 14 units are at or very near soil

management guidelines. DSD was not identified in the remaining 31 treatment units (full list of units and status included in Cerise 2018).

The majority of the erosion observed in the project area has come from roads. No mass wasting was observed during field surveys. Existing levels of detrimental soil erosion in the analysis area is low to moderate due to previous timber/fuels management activities, grazing related impacts (primarily in riparian areas), roads, and some dispersed recreation. Legacy soil disturbance (disturbance that occurred as a result of past activities) forms the foundation of the soil conditions on the landscape today, the existing soil condition. These activities include but are not limited to: timber harvest, grazing, road construction, recreation, shake mills, and fires.

Harvest activities and heavy traffic associated with past shake mills have created long term (>50 years) DSD and is primarily the result of past ground-based yarding. Past harvest consisted primarily of ground based operations with select areas of skyline yarding. Yarding practices prior to the late 1980's often did not adhere to soil protection measures such as operating on frozen soil, slash mats, designated skid trails, and soil moisture limits. Timber was removed from the forest as economically as possible. Soils were compacted and displaced by skidding. Displacement of mineral soil was often considered desirable because trees regenerated well on these sites.

Based on field surveys, soils in previously disturbed areas are recovering in the majority of the project area. Previously displaced areas have redeveloped organic horizons and are developing productive topsoil horizons in most areas. Some areas, such as old landings, burn piles, and major skid trails, exist where minimal organic horizons have developed and mineral soils are vulnerable to erosion or weed colonization. While compaction has longer lasting effects on soil types with fine textures such as clay loams, there are no clay loam soils present in the project area. Compacted sandy loam to loam soils, which are the dominant soil textures across the project, have improved naturally in the surface horizons (approximately 0 to 6 inches). In some cases, subsurface compaction persists 6 to 12 inches below the soil surface. In areas with persistent compaction, soil restoration methods will be applied to break up soil compaction while leaving subsurface roots and rocks in place to prevent soil horizon mixing. Approximately 30% of historic skid trails identified in select treatment units were determined to have root limiting compaction considered to be detrimental to soil function. This is based on soil monitoring during field surveys.

Past harvest/thinning activities occurred in the proposed treatment units. The majority of these units have had entries since 1970. Past vegetation management involved a wide variety of treatments including clear-cutting, shelterwood harvest, and salvage & sanitation treatments. Ground based yarding was noted on continuous slopes exceeding 35% which would not occur during today's logging practices. Machine piling of slash with dozers and mechanical site preparation was observed in the project area; this was a common practice prior to the mid 1980's (Meurisse 1978), but is no longer an acceptable management practice on NFS lands.

Past ground based operations often gave little thought to soils when considering skid trail layout. In 1985, Froehlich showed that designating skid trail locations greatly decreased the areal extent of soil disturbance. When skid trails were established at 100 foot spacing, 11

percent of a unit would be covered in skid trails (Froehlich et al. 1985). By the mid to late 1980's, forest practices were changing to incorporate these findings. For example, skid trails were designated, season of use considered, and the practice of machine piling slash was limited. The Forest has ended the practice of dozer-piling slash, opting for whole tree yarding or underburning of slash. These and other Watershed Best Management Practices (BMPs) along with Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines were developed using this research to manage timber harvest yet sustain site and soil productivity.

*Resource Indicator: Compaction, Rutting & Puddling*

Evidence of past ground based operations was noted in several units primarily from landings, old skid trails, and mill activity where root limiting soil compaction is still present. Past displacement of organic horizons has not fully recovered in these units. Organic horizons and duff on the old skid trails does not resembled that of adjacent undisturbed areas. Several of the old skid trails cross through talus slopes that have thin organic horizons with little to no mineral soil.

The compaction observed during field surveys was along old skid trails, log landings, stock driveways, and dispersed camping sites. Most of the compaction along skid trails and landings has been reduced from the establishment of grass, forbs, and small diameter trees currently growing on site; except for those units with higher DSD. Stock driveways/paths have compaction along the main travel routes, but grass and forbs were observed growing along and within the path, and no erosion was observed coming from the stock paths.

*Resource Indicator: Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material, Ground Cover, & Nutrient Cycling*

The current condition for organic matter and ground cover are within soil management objectives for all units except those with higher DSD. The organic matter layer is at varying stages of decay indicating that organic material is decomposing in-place and that new additions are being added to the topmost layer. Ground cover was present in about 90% of each unit surveyed that accounts for the new additions of organic matter. Observation of varying stages of organic matter decay indicates that nutrient cycling is occurring in the project area. Coarse woody material is generally within range of soil management objectives for each unit surveyed.

**Figure 41. Soil resource indicators and measures for the existing condition.**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Soil Erosion	Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting	Percent of total unit	2% (no recent mass wasting observed)
Soil Disturbance	Compaction, Rutting, Puddling	Percent of total unit	4-7% average in each unit
Site Productivity & Nutrient Cycling	Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material & Ground Cover	Tons per Acre in each unit	Average 2-8 tons/acre in each unit

### 3.4.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.4.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

The resources listed in Figure 42 were not analyzed in detail.

Figure 42. Soil Resources Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail

Resource	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Soil Water Holding Capacity	Lacked time and funding for accurate analysis. Analyzed current conditions for potential conditions through comparable studies.
Total Soil Carbon	Lacked time and funding for accurate analysis. Used general estimates from comparable studies.

#### 3.4.4.2 Alternative 1

##### 3.4.4.2.1 Direct and Indirect Effects

###### *Resource Indicator: Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting*

The No Action Alternative would not alter the current soil erosion and mass wasting regimes in the project area. Doing no treatments would continue the long-term, adverse, moderate impacts on soil erosion and mass wasting. Erosion from road prisms throughout the project area would continue to some extent in this alternative. Natural and human caused wildfires could affect the project area and cause consumption of the protective layer of litter and duff on the soil surface.

The occurrence of substantial levels of soil erosion and mass movements on the forest has been low where low severity fire has occurred (based on monitoring conducted on the forest). Larger fires and those with moderate or high severity may result in soil erosion and mass movement depending on ground conditions and storm activity (Parrett et al. 2003). Soil erosion occurs where ground cover, duff, and litter are consumed or hydrophobic soil conditions develop. Mass movement occurs primarily in the form of debris torrents within channels following high severity, short duration storm events.

Based on the slope structures and fine fragment content in most of the soils in the project area, erosion and mass wasting potential following a severe fire would be major (based on field observation after the flooding in the Carlton Complex burn area). Colluvial activity may increase in areas where structural support from trees is lost; however, sediment transport would not occur on the rocky slopes. Loss of productive organic horizons through fire consumption would be of greater importance for soil productivity.

###### *Resource Indicator: Compaction, Rutting & Puddling*

Doing no treatments would continue the long-term, adverse, major impacts on soil compaction in the identified areas. Alternative 1 would not lead to direct detrimental soil disturbances in the project area. However, current soil compaction in 14 units exceeds R6 soil standards and this alternative would do nothing to reduce the long-term legacy compaction found in the project area. These units are analyzed for soil restoration by using an implement that breaks up soil compaction while maintaining soil horizonation. The No Action alternative would do nothing to reduce the long-term legacy compaction found in the project area (see Existing Conditions).

*Resource Indicator: Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material, Ground Cover, & Nutrient Cycling*

Doing no treatments would continue the long-term, beneficial, impacts on soil organic matter and nutrient cycling. The No Action Alternative would allow all standing trees (dead and alive) over time to shed needles and fine branches that would accumulate on the soil surface. Eventually, trees would fall to the ground, providing coarse wood for decomposition into the soil. Soil organisms would slowly decompose the organic materials, adding beneficial humus to the soil. Nutrients associated with this material would slowly become available for plant growth. This process would continue until another major disturbance, such as fire, consumes or partially consumes the accumulated litter, duff, and woody material.

Long-term effects on soil health and productivity are likely to be relatively small from future fires that are within the historic range of variability (Reinhardt et al. 2001). Fire severity exceeding the historic range could have detrimental effects on soil productivity and health through the oxidation and loss of soil organic matter and associated soil biota, as well as through accelerated rates of erosion (Campbell et al. 1995; Harvey et al. 1987; Harvey and Sala 1988). Optimal levels account for the historic range of variability in fuel loadings, fire responses to these loadings and to climatic factors in the past few hundred years of the pre-settlement period, as well as considering the risks to resources and firefighters (Reinhardt et al. 2001). Coarse woody material recommendations agree with those of (Graham et al 1994; Jurgensen et al 1981) for unburned Rocky Mountain forests (Figure 44).

Microorganisms would continue to populate the soil, contributing towards site productivity through nutrient cycling and development of soil structure aggregates in areas of poorly developed mineral soils. The occurrence of severe wildfire may alter soil microbial communities by super heating mineral soils and consuming organic matter necessary for microorganism functions. But in all, nutrient cycling would remain at current levels with a no-action alternative.

*3.4.4.2 Summary of Effects*

The No Action Alternative (Alternative 1) would continue to have long-term, adverse, moderate impacts on soil erosion and mass wasting in the project area, and there would continue to be long-term, adverse, major impacts on soil compaction in the identified areas. Alternative 1 would continue the long-term, beneficial, impacts on soil organic matter, coarse woody debris and nutrient cycling found throughout the project area.

**3.4.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3**

Alternatives 2 and 3 include the same proposed actions with the addition of more road decommissioning and stream enhancements. Because of this, the effects for both alternatives are analyzed together.

### 3.4.4.3.1 Effects

**Figure 43. Soil Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 2**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Soil Erosion	Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting	Percent of total unit	5%
Soil Disturbance	Compaction/Rutting/Puddling	Percent of total unit	7-10%
Site Productivity & Nutrient Cycling	Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material & Ground Cover	Tons per Acre	5-20 tons/acre

#### *Resource Indicator: Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting*

Following soil design features will result in adverse, short-term, negligible detrimental surface erosion from management activities. Forests generally have very low erosion rates unless they are disturbed in a manner that exposes bare soils to the erosive energy of water and wind. Management caused disturbances include prescribed fire, road maintenance, harvesting, and post-harvest operations. Soil erosion in harvest units is diminished by minimizing the amount of bare soils created by disturbance (Clayton and Megahan 1997; Robichaud and Hungerford 2000). The practices that maintain soil productivity (such as leaving organic material on the soil surface, reducing the area impacted by skid trails, and maintaining hydrologic function) all reduce the risk of soil erosion (Region 6 BMP's). In addition, implementing specific erosion control measures such as water bars, placing slash on bare soils, and vegetating disturbed soils conserve the soil resource (Mitigations, Design Criteria).

The volcanic ash mantle is highly susceptible to erosion, however, the mitigation measures and BMPs are designed to leave the organic layer and vegetation intact thus minimizing or all together eliminating any erosion that would take place from management activities. The high coarse fragment content of the other soils found in the project area provides armoring against erosion. In some places across the project area, talus slopes and high surface rock content would prevent overland flow.

*Prescribed Fire:* The prescribed burning in the project area should not produce any new or foreseeable soil erosion. Prescribed fire is generally low to moderate burn temperatures that are done in the spring/fall when soil moisture is present and soil temperatures do not overheat causing soil hydrophobicity that leads to erosion. When applicable, Minimum Suppression Techniques (MIST) would be used to reduce soil impacts from fire line construction.

Risk of mass movement from prescribed fire is also very low. Prescribed fire is typically completed when soil moisture is high (greater than 80 percent) and weather conditions are cool and humid. Intense heating of the soil and complete consumption of organic soil horizons typically does not occur except in select cases where a log or accumulated fuel pile burns for an extended period of time. The probability of these small areas of disturbance altering slope stability is very low. It should also be noted that mature trees are typically not affected during

prescribed burning. The rooting systems of these mature trees would remain intact to provide surface stability.

*System & Temporary Roads:* The construction of temporary roads does have a major impact on the soil resource. However, if soil BMPs/design criteria are followed, these temporary roads will have sufficient ground to minimize soil erosion and promote native plant growth by seeding and slashing. There is always some soil erosion from the road prism throughout the year. The proposed road maintenance will have initial soil disturbance during implementation. Soil BMPs will be used during road maintenance to minimize soil erosion from the road prism. The end goal of the proposed road maintenance is to reduce chronic sedimentation points along forest system roads.

*Summer Ground Based Harvest Effects:* Summer ground-based harvest will reduce ground cover on heavily used landings, skid trails, and near landings. An estimated reduction of ground cover up to ten percent in the proposed ground based units has been used for soil disturbance analysis in this project. Old skid trails remaining from past timber management operations are present in some of the ground based units. Most, but not all, old skid trails have naturally rehabilitated and do not currently have detrimental soil conditions. These old trails are difficult to locate in many areas. In order to minimize disturbance to soils that have never been ground based yarded, the old trails that are easily identifiable will be reused to the extent feasible.

The main soil concern for ground based yarding in the project area is displacement of thin organic horizons and the displacement of the volcanic ash mantle. On lightly used trails (one or two passes) ground cover is not anticipated to be reduced along the entire trail length. Compaction of mineral soils may occur but is likely to be buffered by soil BMPs. Constructing water bars, creating brush sediment traps, or seeding/planting forbs, grasses, or shrubs, will hasten groundcover recovery and reduce soil erosion and movement of soil off-site (Soil BMPs). Disturbed vegetation would re-grow in less than five years except where there is root kill.

*Skyline Harvest Effects:* Groundcover in skyline corridors would be reduced approximately five to ten percent as a result of choker setting, cables, and removing logs from the site (Clayton and Kennedy 1985). In many cases, the displaced groundcover along the corridor occurs in small patches. These small areas (less than 100 square feet) of displacement are not considered DSD. Ground cover reduction would only occur along the corridor where log suspension is limited and numerous yarding passes occur. At landings, there would be additional reduction in groundcover due to equipment operations and corridor convergence. One end suspension of logs will be required, but full suspension is required where it is possible, on steep slopes with shallow soils within the project area.

Loss of groundcover in the corridors and landings will be lessened through full suspension of logs during yarding and ceasing of operations if wet conditions are encountered. Corridors and landings will have erosion control treatments following logging and site prep activities. Treatments included in the timber sale contract would include construction of water bars and placing of slash on bare soils in the corridors and landings where deemed necessary by the soil scientist and timber sale administrator. In the long-term, (greater than 10 years) it is anticipated that groundcover would become re-established in displaced areas, with or without post-activity

rehabilitation. Groundcover recovery would be achieved with needle cast and vegetation re-growth.

The shallow soils overlying talus slopes are not conducive to surface mass movements. The proposed thinning treatments would not affect surface stability of these shallow soils (using full log suspension whenever possible) and talus slopes. Mass movements are only likely in the event of a deep seated geologic failure. In summary, the risk of landslide initiation as a result of forest thinning in the action alternatives is very low.

*Resource Indicator: Compaction/Rutting/Puddling*

Following soil design features will result in adverse, short-term, minor detrimental soil compaction, rutting, and puddling from management activities. The potential for compaction with ground-based equipment on the ash cap soil is moderate to high, but if soil BMPs are implemented new compaction would be minor. In addition, commercial thinning would be required under winter conditions in some areas to prevent further soil disturbance. Winter soil conditions allow for protection of detrimentally impacted soils from past management while allowing the area to be thinned by mechanized harvesters to achieve project goals. If the purchaser can implement a harvesting plan that meets the winter soil management objectives then snowplowing and hauling would not take place in winter. The existing compaction of major intensity from past land use is of greater concern. These units have soil compaction conditions that limit water infiltration and storage in the soil profile, promotes invasive plant species while reducing native vegetation from poor soil conditions, and reduced nutrient cycling due to organic matter reduction from poor plant growth. Soil productivity in these relatively young ash-cap soils is dependent on the organic soil horizons for nutrient cycling and water holding capacity.

Alternative 3 would increase soil disturbance through more road decommissioning. However, road decommissioning breaks up soil compaction, re-contours the road to natural slope, and restores soil water infiltration and storage. We expect a temporary moderate disturbance initially, but using soil BMPs the soil will start on a path toward natural recovery.

*Resource Indicator: Organic Matter, Course Woody Material, Ground Cover & Nutrient Cycling*

Following soil design features will result in beneficial, long-term, positive impacts for soil organic matter, woody material, and nutrient cycling. The activities proposed are designed to leave a variety of organic matter on the site. The practice of leaving organic matter on site provides for microbial populations which help maintain site productivity (Harvey et al. 1994). Vegetation and organic matter protects the soil surface from raindrop impact, dissipates energy of overland flow, binds soil particles together, and dampens soil temperature extremes and daily fluxes. Studies have found that 60 percent effective ground cover reduced sediment movement substantially and 30 percent ground cover reduced erosion by half compared to bare soil (Robichaud and Hungerford 2000). Logging slash will add to effective ground cover until fine logging slash decomposes over several decades (Clayton and Kennedy 1985).

All harvest prescriptions would leave a portion of the existing stand on the site. Yarding will be done over a slash mat leaving branches with green biomass on-site contributing to long-term site productivity. Coarse woody material (material greater than 3 inches in diameter) would be left from designated leave trees, both standing and down, and from breakage of limbs and



broken tops that will occur during harvest. While coarse wood is defined as material greater than 3 inches in diameter, by leaving larger sized, faster growing trees that will eventually die, becoming snags and then down coarse woody material, the treatments are designed to provide future coarse wood greater than 15 inches in diameter. Large coarse wood persists for longer durations and provides greater benefits to soil development than smaller coarse wood. Large coarse wood is also much less of a concern for fire management. Following the treatments, the stands would be capable of producing large coarse wood at a faster rate for soil development than current conditions. To the extent feasible, the largest coarse wood (snags or logs) would be left on-site to satisfy coarse woody material requirements for each treatment unit. Silvicultural prescriptions would account for additional trees that will be required for future coarse wood recruitment in the thinned stands.

The amounts of coarse wood listed in Figure 44, for each Fire Group would maintain future soil productivity. The proposed commercial and non-commercial thinning treatments are anticipated to leave slash on the ground through the winter and into late summer/fall before prescribed burning would be completed. This would provide opportunity for the nutrients in the slash to be leached into the soil.

**Figure 44. Coarse Woody Material (CWM) Requirements for soil productivity.**

Fire Group	CWM
2 and/or 4 = Warm, Dry Ponderosa Pine and Douglas-fir Habitat Types	5 to 10 tons/acre
5, 6 = Cool, Dry and Moist Douglas-fir Habitat Types	10 to 20 tons/acre
7, 8, and/or 9 = Cool Lodgepole Pine and Lower Subalpine Fir Habitat Types	8 to 24 tons/acre

Any increase in groundcover and/or fine logging slash through harvest may be offset by fuel treatments. Fuels treatments may reduce the amount of organic matter and groundcover in the short-term (5-10 years after treatment) through the use of prescribe fire. In the long-term (greater than 10 years), re-growth of vegetation and annual needle drop would provide groundcover and leaf and litter material necessary for soil organic matter development.

The status of other nutrients is unknown although there are no site indicators which would point to a problem with nutrient availability or cycling in the units. Removal of potassium in whole tree harvests is modest in comparison to soil reserves according to (Jurgensen et al. 1981). Tree growth and ground cover is within the range expected for the site conditions.

Page-Dumroese et al. (2000) found that relatively small levels of disturbance (less than 15 percent of the area) resulted in relatively small losses in carbon, nitrogen, and cation exchange capacity (CEC), ranging between 1 to 13 percent of the available pools. They concluded that at these levels of loss, current soil quality guidelines appear to be adequate. It must be noted that this is based on initial research from the Long-term Site Productivity Project (LTSP) and results may change as more data is accumulated in future years.

Fire suppression in Ponderosa pine has resulted in a build-up of forest litter and accumulation of organic matter (DeLuca and Zouhar 2000). DeLuca's research has shown the positive benefits

of reducing fuel loading and renewing the growth of desirable understory plants through the use of fire or harvest or a combination of both. Ponderosa pine communities commonly accumulate little inorganic nitrogen in mineral soil because of the slow decay rates and rapid uptake by plants and microorganisms. In addition, limited quantities of nitrogen may be available due to the accumulation of organic matter composed of woody residue, naturally low in nitrogen. Wildfire and prescribed fire release plant available nitrogen, however a first entry of high severity wildfire may result in root kill and overall reduction in nitrogen mineralization potential.

DeLuca (DeLuca and Zouhar 2000) found prescribed fire following a selection or shelterwood harvest to have a short-term increase in mineral nitrogen followed by a long-term decline in available nitrogen. This may seem like a negative impact of fire reintroduction; however, the reduced stand density has a lower nitrogen demand. In addition, the Nitrogen: Potassium ratio would be in better balance increasing the trees resistance to disease and insects.

Retaining limbs and branches on site over the winter provides for nutrient leaching into the soil (Palviainen et al. 2004). They found that there was little leaching of nutrients from live or dried needles immediately after harvest. However, after 3 months of decomposition he noted appreciable nutrient releases. Some of these nutrients may not be available to the remaining stands as organisms in the forest floor use them during decomposition.

By maintaining organic matter and ground cover on at least 80 percent of the site, nutrient cycling and availability would not be altered. This is supported by the study results described in Appendix A in Cerise (2018). The mitigations and Region 6 soil quality guidelines are prescribed to achieve this desired outcome. Localized losses may occur at landings or where severe fire occurs.

#### *3.4.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects*

##### *Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

For the soil resource, the area of consideration for cumulative effects is specific to sites where treatment would occur since effects on soil are site specific. Soil erosion (including mass failure) is an exception. Soil erosion is discussed as sediment transport on a watershed scale in the Water Resource report (Shull and George 2018) in the project file.

For past, present, or future activities to overlap in time, the effects on soils from the activities must overlap. Soil physical changes (detrimental compaction, detrimental displacement, detrimental erosion, severe burning, and puddling) can persist in the landscape for greater than 10 years following management activities. Biological soil conditions change quicker, for example re-vegetation occurs within 5 years (under most situations) and organic matter begins to rebuild in 10 years but may take greater than 50 years to reform humus. Time discussions will look back to at least the 1980's until present, which cover both the physical and biological aspects of the soil.

##### *Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*

The past and present conditions were analyzed for in the Existing Condition section. Past harvest activities and past wildland fires are considered part of the existing condition and discussed in the Affected Environment section of this report.

In consideration of the list of past, present and future actions, those that have effects that overlap in time and space with this project for the soils resource include: grazing, dispersed camping and off-road vehicle use. Other activities such as road maintenance, firewood collection, and other past projects have occurred outside unit boundaries.

**Figure 45. Soil Resource Indicators: Cumulative Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3	Past, Present, and Future Actions	Cumulative Impacts
Soil Erosion	Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting	Percent of total unit	5%	1-3%	6-8%
Soil Disturbance	Compaction/Rutting/Puddling	Percent of total unit	7-10%	1-3%	8-13%
Site Productivity & Nutrient Cycling	Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material & Ground Cover	Tons per Acre	5-20 tons/acre	5-10 tons/acre	10-20 tons/acre

*Resource Indicator: Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting*

Cattle grazing and dispersed camping has the potential to affect the project area but the project design criteria will limit any additional surface erosion to less than 1%. Dispersed camps may be located along the roads and adjacent to or on the edge of harvest units. Multiple dispersed camps were noted during the field review. New dispersed recreational and hunting camps may be located along the roads and adjacent to or on the edge of units.

*Resource Indicator: Compaction, Rutting, Puddling*

Although the amount of future disturbance caused by cattle grazing, dispersed camping, and off-road vehicle use can vary greatly, monitoring suggests there could be a 1-3% increase in soil disturbance in the project area.

*Resource Indicator: Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material, and Ground Cover*

Future site productivity & nutrient cycling can be enhanced by proper grazing techniques. A positive growth response from native vegetation is a good indicator of enhance site productivity. Future dispersed camping & off-road vehicle use can strip away ground cover and organic matter leaving exposed, bare soil. These exposed soil areas can be depleted of nutrients and colonized by non-native plant species that disrupt the nutrient cycling of a particular area.

**3.4.4.4 Summary of Effects**

Following soil design criteria, Alternatives 2 and 3 would have long-term, beneficial, moderate impacts on soil erosion and mass wasting in the project area, and there would be long-term, beneficial, moderate impacts on soil compaction in the identified areas. Alternatives 2 and 3 would continue the long-term, beneficial, impacts on soil organic matter, coarse woody debris and nutrient cycling found throughout the project area.

**Figure 46. Soil Resource Indicators and Measures Summary for All Alternatives**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternatives 2 and 3
Soil Erosion	Detrimental Surface Erosion/Mass Wasting	Percent of total unit	2% (no recent mass wasting observed)	5%
Soil Disturbance	Compaction Rutting Puddling	Percent of total unit	4-7% average in each unit	7-10%
Site Productivity & Nutrient Cycling	Organic Matter, Coarse Woody Material & Ground Cover	Tons per Acre	Average 2-8 tons/acre in each unit	5-20 tons/acre

### 3.4.5 Consistency Statement

#### Compliance with LRMP and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

The proposed actions, design criteria, and mitigation measures are in compliance with the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) standards and guidelines 13-9 and 13-10 by reducing the amount of soil displacement, compaction, and puddling. To comply with National Forest Management Act of 1976, the Chief of the Forest Service has charged each Forest Service Region with developing soil quality standards for detecting soil disturbance and indicating a loss in long-term soil productivity where it occurs. Soil standards are built into the Okanogan National Forest LRMP. Forest Service Manual 2500 Chapter 50 establishes the framework for sustaining soil quality and hydrologic function while providing goods and services outlined in forest and grassland land management plans.

The Region 6 Supplement to Forest Service Manual 2500 (2500-98-1) outline additional policy to maintain or improve soil and water quality. The proposed actions and design criteria are in compliance with all Region 6 policies including improvements to soil compaction, puddling, displacement, and burned soils.

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to soils, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8 (a)(2)(ii) Soils and soil productivity. Thinning on up to 388 acres that would reduce deer winter range cover below S&Gs would have adverse, short-term, minor effects on soils and soil productivity because it would include some commercial thinning that uses machinery that would

compact and/or displace soil as previously discussed. These effects would be mitigated using soil BMPs (such as operating over frozen ground, operating on slash mats, etc.) that are designed to keep soil disturbance within Forest and R6 soil management objectives. Thinning would create beneficial, long-term, moderate effects on soil productivity because it would leave a variety of organic matter on the site that would help maintain site productivity (Harvey et al. 1994), protect the soil surface from raindrop impact, dissipate energy of overland flow, bind soil particles together, and dampen soil temperature extremes and daily fluxes. Coarse woody material (material greater than 3 inches in diameter) would be left from designated leave trees, both standing and down, and from breakage of limbs and broken tops that will occur during harvest operations. While coarse wood is defined as material greater than 3 inches in diameter, by leaving larger sized, faster growing trees that will eventually die, becoming snags and then down coarse woody material, the treatments are designed to provide future coarse wood greater than 15 inches in diameter. Large coarse wood persists for longer durations and provides greater benefits to soil development than smaller coarse wood. Large coarse wood is also much less of a concern for fire management. Following the treatments, the stands would be capable of producing large coarse wood at a faster rate for soil development than current conditions. (Froehlich et al. 1985; Kimsey et al 2015; McNabb et al 2001; Meurisse, R.T. 1978; Dumroese et al 2009).

#### **Required Monitoring:**

Soil monitoring will need to be conducted during sub-soiling project initiation to ensure the proper use of the sub-soiling implement and that the project goals are being achieved by the equipment and operator. Upon project completion monitoring will need to be done on any 3 completed units to ensure implementation effectiveness.

### **3.5 Vegetation**

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Vegetation Report by J. Daily (2016), revised by P. Nash (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

#### **3.5.1 Methodology**

The Restoration Strategy (USDA Forest Service 2012a) outlines the analysis process used to evaluate landscape conditions and assess whether landscape characteristics including forest vegetation composition and structures have departed from historic and/or future ranges of variability. The process involves photo interpretation conducted by Forest Service personnel with local knowledge of the project area to identify multiple vegetation and landscape attributes in each of the two sub-watersheds in the project area: Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek. Photo interpreted data was field verified for accuracy in portions of both sub-watersheds prior to data analysis. The Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS) modeling tool (EMDS 3.0.2; Reynolds and Hessburg 2005) used these data to evaluate existing landscape and patch-level characteristics and trends separately for each sub-watershed. EMDS was used to compare the

current conditions to a range of historical and future reference conditions from a set of similar sub-watersheds found throughout the Interior Columbia River Basin, for each sub-watershed to give insights into how dry and moist forest vegetation composition and structure have changed and how they are likely to change in the future with a predicted warmer and drier climate.

In this analysis, forest structure classes defined as old forest multistory (OFMS), old forest single story (OFSS), stem exclusion closed canopy (SECC), stem exclusion open canopy (SEOC), stand initiation (SI), understory reinitiation (UR), and young forest multistory (YFMS) (O'Hara et al. 1996; Hessburg et al. 2000) are the primary characteristics used to assess how dry and moist forest vegetation composition and structure has changed from 80<sup>th</sup> percentile values for the historical range of variability (HRV) and future range of variability (FRV). The HRV and FRV for this project, were developed from photo interpreted and modelled data collected from mid-1950s aerial photos. Dry forest is defined as hot, warm, or cool dry sites where ponderosa pine or Douglas-fir is the dominant climatic climax tree species. Moist forest is defined as cool mesic sites where Douglas-fir or subalpine fir are the dominant climatic climax tree species. Structure classes describe how forest vegetation develops over time from the stand initiation stage to intermediate successional stages (including stem exclusion closed canopy, stem exclusion open canopy, understory reinitiation, and young forest multistory) and eventually to later successional stages including old forest multistory and old forest single story. The amount and arrangement (collectively referred to as pattern) of structure classes is considered to be an important indicator of landscape condition (Reynolds and Hessburg 2005) in the landscape evaluation and restoration process.

Current aerial photos were used to identify patches with like characteristics of structure, canopy closure, number of canopy layers and tree species. The minimum sized polygon is 10 acres. When vegetation features are smaller than 10 acres they are added to adjacent, larger polygons and the polygons are attributed with the most dominant feature attributes. EMDS was used to classify each polygon into dry and moist forest structures in each sub-watershed into OFMS, OFSS, SECC, SEOC, SI, UR or YFMS classes. Each structure class in the dry and moist forest types was measured by the percentage of the landscape to indicate the overall amount on the landscape and by average patch size to indicate the arrangement of structure classes on the landscape. Current conditions in each sub-watershed were evaluated independently with HRV and FRV reference conditions based on the ecological subregion (ESR) to which they are assigned. ESRs are comprised of areas (sub-watersheds) with similar climate, geology, topography, aquatic characteristics, and disturbance history (Hessburg et al. 2000). The FRV (Gärtner et al. 2008) was developed to provide insight as to how forest vegetation in the sub-watersheds may be affected by a changing climate. FRV reference conditions for a given sub-watershed are based on HRV reference conditions of the next (not necessarily geographically located) environmentally warmer and drier ESR. This is a conservative approach for estimating climate change, and it may underestimate the FRV if the degree of climate change is more severe than indicated by the next warmer and drier ESR.

The desired values for the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structure classes in this analysis were determined by finding where the HRV and FRV overlap; this intersection is called “the desired range of variability” (DRV) for this analysis. One key premise of the

Restoration Strategy, which is based on current knowledge of existing and anticipated future environmental conditions, is that maintaining and restoring forest vegetation conditions to levels that are within ranges where the HRV and FRV overlap will provide for more sustainable and resilient forest ecosystems. Landscape prescriptions for dry and moist forest structure in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek sub-watersheds were developed based on the need to maintain the amount and arrangement of structure classes within this intersecting range, or to move the amount and arrangement of structure classes closer toward the intersecting range where they are outside of (departed from) these values. Detailed descriptions of sub-watershed landscape prescriptions and processes used to develop them are provided in Churchill 2016 and Churchill 2015. Potential vegetation treatments, including timber harvest and non-commercial thinning treatments, were identified to maintain or change the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structure classes based on departures from desired ranges of variability. Treatment locations to apply the landscape prescriptions were developed in ArcGIS based on field reconnaissance, operational feasibility, discussion with resource specialists, and public input.

Where 50% or more of an EMDS vegetation polygon would be affected by treatment, structure classes were reclassified based on estimated effects of the sum of proposed vegetation and fuels management treatments applied within the polygon. The resulting post-treatment data sets for each sub-watershed were modeled by EMDS and evaluated to determine whether the proposed treatments and locations would degrade, maintain, or improve the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structure classes when compared to the desired range of variability. Sensitivity analysis of using a 50% or greater treatment threshold for reclassifying vegetation polygon post-treatment structure classes indicates that this method may have overestimated treatment effects (size of the treatment foot print) compared to the actual number of acres treated by approximately five percent in the Libby Creek sub-watershed. This difference is equivalent to approximately one percent of the total Libby Creek sub-watershed area. Sensitivity analysis indicates that the method used may have underestimated treatment effects by approximately one half of one percent compared to the actual number of acres treated in the Buttermilk Creek sub-watershed. These discrepancies were ignored in this analysis.

A small portion of the project area (205 acres) lies outside of the Buttermilk and Libby Creek sub-watersheds, but within the greater Twisp River watershed. This area was added to the project at the request of adjacent residents in the Buttermilk Firewise Community, and is referred to in this analysis as the Buttermilk Annex. The purpose of treatments in this area is based on the need to reduce fire hazard to the WUI, not maintenance and restoration of forest vegetation composition and structure. This portion of the project area was not analyzed with EMDS because it comprises such a small portion of the Twisp River watershed (less than one percent) and proposed forest vegetation treatment effects would be immeasurable in the context of landscape level restoration objectives.

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest vegetation structures compared to the desired range of variability*

EMDS was used to classify dry and moist forest structures in each sub-watershed into OFMS, OFSS, SECC, SEOC, SI, UR or YFMS classes. Each structure class in the dry and moist forest types was measured by the percentage of the landscape to indicate the overall amount on the landscape and by average patch size to indicate the arrangement of structure classes on the landscape. Current conditions in each sub-watershed were evaluated independently with HRV and FRV reference conditions based on the ecological subregion (ESR) to which they are assigned. ESRs are comprised of areas (sub-watersheds) with similar climate, geology, topography, aquatic characteristics, and disturbance history (Hessburg et al. 2000). The FRV (Gärtner et al. 2008) was developed to provide insight as to how forest vegetation in the sub-watersheds may be affected by a changing climate. FRV reference conditions for a given sub-watershed are based on HRV reference conditions of the next (not necessarily geographically located) environmentally warmer and drier ESR. This is a conservative approach for estimating climate change, and it may underestimate the FRV if the degree of climate change is more severe than indicated by the next warmer and drier ESR.

The desired values for the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structure classes in this analysis were determined by finding where the HRV and FRV overlap; this intersection is called “the desired range of variability” (DRV) for this analysis. One key premise of the Restoration Strategy, which is based on current knowledge of existing and anticipated future environmental conditions, is that maintaining and restoring forest vegetation conditions to levels that are within ranges where the HRV and FRV overlap will provide for more sustainable and resilient forest ecosystems. Landscape prescriptions for dry and moist forest structure in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek sub-watersheds were developed based on the need to maintain the amount and arrangement of structure classes within this intersecting range, or to move the amount and arrangement of structure classes closer toward the intersecting range where they are outside of (departed from) these values. Detailed descriptions of sub-watershed landscape prescriptions and processes used to develop them are provided in Churchill 2016 and Churchill 2015. Potential vegetation treatments, including timber harvest and non-commercial thinning treatments, were identified to maintain or change the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structure classes based on departures from desired ranges of variability. Treatment locations to apply the landscape prescriptions were developed in ArcGIS based on field reconnaissance, operational feasibility, discussion with resource specialists, and public input.

*Resource Indicator: Forest patches with large and medium size trees*

EMDS modeling of photo interpreted data was used to characterize the presence of large and medium size trees in vegetation polygons (patches) in the entire Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek sub-watersheds in the following manner:

- Medium = overstory trees 16 inches to 25 inches diameter at breast height (DBH).
- Large = overstory trees larger than 25 inches DBH with understory trees smaller than 16 inches DBH.



- Large and medium = large size overstory trees (> 25 inches DBH) with medium size understory trees 16 inches to 25 inches DBH.

Estimated effects of implementing the proposed vegetation management treatments indicated that there would be no measurable difference from existing and post-treatment conditions regarding the percentage of the landscape and average patch size of forest patches with medium, large, or large and medium size trees in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek sub-watersheds. The total acreage of treatment to maintain and restore large trees in EMDS vegetation polygons (patches) with medium, large, and large and medium size trees was used to measure the effects of alternatives in each sub-watershed.

Patches with Large and/or Medium sized trees should not be confused with Forest Plan Old Growth (see Glossary for Definition). No Forest Plan Old Growth stands have been included in the project for treatment.

*Resource Indicator: Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability*

Using EMDS, Western spruce budworm vulnerability was classified into three categories (high, moderate, or low) based on site quality, host abundance, canopy structure, stand density, host age, patch vigor, and host patch connectivity of vegetation polygons (Hessburg et al. 1999, USDA Forest Service 2012a). This rating is used to evaluate how vulnerable a landscape is to the propagation of western spruce budworm and shows how insect habitat has changed over time in its amount and configuration. Each vulnerability class was measured by the percentage of the landscape to indicate the overall amount on the landscape. Average patch size and patch density were not included in this analysis because there was little or no detectable difference between current and estimated post treatment conditions for these metrics in all vulnerability classes in both sub-watersheds, thus providing no meaningful differences to compare the alternatives analyzed. Current conditions in each sub-watershed were evaluated independently and compared with HRV and FRV reference conditions based on the ecological subregion (ESR) to which they are assigned.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable Douglas-fir bark beetles*

EMDS modeling of photo interpreted data was used to characterize the vulnerability of vegetation polygons to infestation by the Douglas-fir bark beetle in each sub-watershed. Douglas-fir bark beetle vulnerability was classified into three categories (high, moderate, or low) based on site quality, host abundance, canopy structure, stand density, host age, and host patch connectivity of vegetation polygons (Hessburg et al. 1999, USDA Forest Service 2012a). This rating is used to evaluate how vulnerable a landscape is to the propagation of Douglas-fir bark beetle and shows how insect habitat has changed over time in its amount and configuration. Each vulnerability class was measured by the percentage of the landscape to indicate the overall amount present on the landscape.

Estimating the change in Douglas-fir bark beetle vulnerability based on treatment effects is complex, and the methods considered yielded little or no detectable difference between existing and post treatment EMDS modeled values. Based on professional judgement, it was

determined that these methods underestimated treatment effects and using EMDS generated data would not accurately describe meaningful differences between alternatives. Acres treated to reduce Douglas-fir bark beetle vulnerability in each vulnerability class will be used in this analysis to measure the effects of alternatives.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection*

EMDS modelling was not used directly to estimate and measure forest vegetation vulnerable to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection. Photo interpreted and EMDS modelled data; however, were used to provide an estimate of the extent of Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe vulnerability in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek sub-watersheds following data validation with field observations of dwarf mistletoe infection and local knowledge of the project area. Douglas-fir bark beetle (DFB) vulnerability was used as a surrogate for estimating the extent of dwarf mistletoe vulnerability in the project area. Factors affecting Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection dynamics are very similar to factors used by EMDS to model DFB vulnerability (including site quality, host abundance, canopy structure, stand density, and host patch connectivity). DFB vulnerability was adjusted by including dry forest areas located below 5,001 feet elevation with a high or moderate DFB hazard rating and moist forest areas below 5,001 feet elevation with a high DFB hazard rating to estimate the total area in each sub-watershed where forest vegetation is vulnerable to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection. The total acreage of treatment in the Libby Creek and Buttermilk Creek sub-watersheds to reduce vulnerability to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection and improve resilience to natural disturbances was used to measure the effects of alternatives.

**Figure 47. Vegetation Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Forest Vegetation Composition and Structure.	The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structures compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes occupied by dry forest and moist forest structures.	P&N #3	Restoration Strategy
		Average patch size (in acres) of dry forest and moist forest structures in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes.		

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
	Forest patches with large and medium size trees.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes to maintain and restore large trees in patches with medium, large, or large and medium size trees.		
Resilience to biotic natural disturbances.	Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes with high, moderate, and low risk of Western spruce budworm infestation.	P&N #3	LRMP S&G 20-15, 20-35, MA5-19F Restoration Strategy Spruce Budworm Assessment
	Forest vegetation vulnerable Douglas-fir bark beetles.	Acres of treatment in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes with high or moderate risk of Douglas-fir bark beetles.	P&N #3	LRMP S&G 20-15, 20-35, MA5-19F
	Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes to reduce vulnerability to dwarf mistletoe infection.	P&N #3	LRMP S&G 20-15, 20-35, MA25-19F, MA5-19F

### 3.5.2 Intensity Level Definitions

The following definitions will be used to describe the types of impacts that would be caused by proposed actions analyzed in this report.

Type of Impact:

- **Adverse:** The percentage of the landscape (PL) or average patch size (APS) classes moves away from the desired range of variability. There is an increase in the amount of vulnerability to western spruce budworm, Douglas-fir bark beetle, and dwarf mistletoe infection.
- **Beneficial:** The percentage of the landscape (PL) or average patch size (APS) classes moves toward or stays within the desired range of variability. There is a decrease in the amount of vulnerability to western spruce budworm, Douglas-fir bark beetle, and dwarf mistletoe infection.

Duration of Impact:

- Short-term: Impact lasts up to 20 years.
- Long-term: Impact lasts more than 20 years.

Intensity of Impact:

- None: No impacts
- Negligible: Undetectable but measureable change to forest vegetation composition and structure or resilience to biotic natural disturbances in each sub-watershed; less than 1% change in PL, less than 10% change in APS, or less 10% area treated for Douglas-fir bark beetle or dwarf mistletoe vulnerability.
- Minor: Slightly noticeable, localized effects to forest vegetation composition and structure or resilience to biotic natural disturbances between 1 and 25% PL or 11 and 25% APS in each sub-watershed.
- Moderate: Apparent change in plant community structure, composition, or fuels that shifts ecological functions over approximately 26-50% in each sub-watershed.
- Major: Substantial change in plant community structure, composition, and/or fuels that shifts ecological function across the majority of each sub-watershed.

### 3.5.3 Affected Environment

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest vegetation structures compared to the desired range of variability*

Overview of dry and moist forest structures: Land management practices during most of the twentieth century, including wildfire suppression, timber harvest, and grazing, have contributed to changes in dry and moist forest structures and composition in the project area. These practices have altered the amount of dry and moist forest structures (successional stages) while reducing the abundance of large trees. Up until the 1990s, timber harvest focused on the selective removal of larger, fire tolerant trees over extensive areas and dispersed regeneration harvest treatments. Grazing practices prior to the 1970s are believed to have created favorable site conditions for the establishment of conifer regeneration. Fire suppression eliminated the historically dominant natural disturbance which reduced tree density and influenced structural development and species composition over the majority of the project area (Hessburg et al. 2015). These practices favored the development of dense and often multiple canopy layered structures (SECC, UR, and YFMS) which currently are more abundant in the project area compared to estimated historic levels in the dry forest type. Less dense, single canopy layer structures (SEOC and OFSS) in the dry and moist forest types generally are less abundant compared to estimated historic levels. Dry and moist forest structures with a high proportion of large overstory trees currently are present at very low levels compared to estimated historic conditions (OFMS) or not present at all (OFSS). Dry forest vegetation in the project area has been altered to a greater extent than moist forest vegetation with regard to the amount of individual structure classes currently present

Past land management practices favored the establishment and growth of shade tolerant conifers, including Douglas-fir and subalpine fir. Selective harvest of larger overstory trees, particularly ponderosa pines, promoted regeneration and release of understory Douglas-firs.

Fire suppression maintained conditions that are favorable for the development of shade tolerant trees and unfavorable for the establishment and growth of shade intolerant conifers including ponderosa pines. Over time, the proportion of Douglas-fir stocking in dry and moist forest structures in the project area has increased compared to ponderosa pine stocking. Subalpine fir has become more prominent than Douglas-fir in moist forest structures in portions of the project area. Douglas-fir and subalpine fir are less fire tolerant than ponderosa pine, and management practices have favored the development of less fire tolerant forest structures comprised of dense and multiple canopy layers (SECC, UR, and YFMS) with a high proportion of relatively smaller and less fire tolerant trees. Fire tolerant forest structures (SEOC and OFSS) have become less abundant in the project area.

The spatial arrangement of dry and moist forest structures in the project area has also been affected by past management practices. Selective harvest of larger trees over extensive areas, dispersed regeneration harvest treatments, and fire suppression have contributed to the fragmentation of forest structures in the project area. The average patch size of all dry and moist forest structure classes in the project area currently are at the low end of the range or smaller than the estimated historic average patch size range indicating that current patch sizes in general are smaller compared to historic conditions. Figure 48 displays current forest vegetation structures in the project area.

Restoration Strategy guidance implies that vegetation conditions including the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest vegetation structures be maintained or restored to levels that are within ranges where the HRV and FRV overlap (the DRV) to provide for more sustainable and resilient forest ecosystems in the project area.

Buttermilk Creek: Dry forest structures occupy approximately 28% of the Buttermilk Creek landscape area. For Buttermilk Creek, the percentage of the landscape and average patch size of dry forest OFMS and OFSS structures are within the DRV for both measures; however, OFSS is at the minimum value for the desired ranges of variability (Figure 49). The average patch size of dry forest SI and UR structure classes are within the DRV and the average patch size of dry forest SECC and YFMS are above the DRV. The percentage of the landscape and average patch size of dry forest SEOC structures are below the DRV indicating that this structure class is underrepresented in relatively small patches on the landscape. Based on current dry forest conditions, the Buttermilk landscape evaluation determined there is a restoration need to reduce the amount of area of dry forest SECC, SI, UR, and especially YFMS structures on the landscape and reduce the average patch size of dry forest SECC and YFMS structures.

Moist forest structures occupy approximately 8% of the Buttermilk Creek landscape area. For Buttermilk Creek, the percentage of the landscape and average patch size of moist forest OFMS and OFSS structures are within the DRV for both measures; however, they are present at levels which are at or near (OFSS and OFMS respectively) the minimum value for the desired range of variability (Figure 49). The percentage of the landscape of moist forest SECC, UR, and YFMS structure classes are within the DRV and the average patch size of moist forest SECC and YFMS structures are within the DRV. The average patch size of moist forest UR

structures is below the DRV. The percentage of the landscape and average patch size of moist forest SEOC and SI structures are below the DRV indicating they are underrepresented in relatively small patches on the landscape. Based on current moist forest conditions, the Buttermilk landscape evaluation determined there is a restoration need to increase the amount of area and average patch size of moist forest SEOC, OFMS, and OFSS structure classes.

Libby Creek: Dry forest structures occupy approximately 46% of the Libby Creek landscape area. For Libby Creek, the percentage of the landscape and average patch size of dry forest OFMS and OFSS structures are within the DRV for both measures; however, they are present at levels which are at or near (OFSS and OFMS respectively) the minimum for the desired range of variability (Figure 49). The percentage of the landscape of dry forest UR structure is above the DRV and the amount of dry forest SECC and YFMS structure classes are well above the DRV which is strong indication that that dry forest SECC and YFMS structures are overabundant on the landscape. The average patch size of dry forest UR, SECC, and YFMS are within the DRV. The percentage of the landscape and average patch size of dry forest SI are within the DRV; however, the average patch size is near the minimum value for the desired range of variability. The percentage of the landscape for dry forest SEOC is within the DRV and the average patch size is below the DRV. Based on current dry forest conditions, the Libby Creek landscape evaluation determined there is a restoration need to reduce the amount of dry forest UR, SECC, and YFMS structures on the landscape and to consolidate dry forest SEOC and SI structures into larger patches, increasing the amount of SEOC and SI area on the landscape as needed.

Moist forest structures occupy approximately 11% of the Libby Creek landscape area. For Libby Creek, the percentage of the landscape and average patch size of moist forest OFMS and OFSS structures are within the DRV for both measures; however, they are present at levels which are at or near (OFSS and OFMS respectively) the minimum value for the desired range of variability (Figure 49). The percentage of the landscape of moist forest SECC, SI, UR, and YFMS structure classes are within the DRV. The average patch size for moist forest SECC and YFMS are within the DRV. The average patch size for moist forest SI and UR are below the DRV. The percentage of the landscape and average patch size of moist forest SEOC structures are below the DRV indicating that moist forest SEOC is underrepresented in relatively small patches on the landscape. Based on current moist forest conditions, the Libby Creek landscape evaluation determined there is a restoration need to increase the amount of area and average patch size of moist forest SEOC structures on the landscape while reducing the amount of YFMS area as needed.

*Resource Indicator: Forest patches with large and medium size trees*

Overview of forest patches with large and medium size trees: Large and medium size trees are important elements of forest vegetation composition. Large trees (greater than 25 inches DBH) commonly are old trees with an estimated age of 150 years and greater because of the time required to attain this size in the project area. As old forest or remnant trees, many large old trees, particularly ponderosa pines and Douglas-firs, historically were resistant to wildfires, survived periods of extended drought, provided seed and genetic resources spanning centuries of varying climatic conditions, and contributed important snag and cavity habitat after they died

(Hessburg et al. 2015). Large trees play an important role in post-fire recovery processes including a seed source for regeneration provided by surviving trees and dead trees which provide a source of snags and down logs which ameliorate post-fire site conditions for vegetation reestablishment and add carbon to the soil. Larger medium size trees (21 to 25 inches DBH) are important because they commonly are the largest trees present in forest structures in the project area and are the best candidates for developing into large size trees in the future.

Historically, large trees were more common in the project area where they dominated the overstories of open and closed canopy, old forest structure patches and were present as remnant overstory trees in other structure classes across a larger portion of the project area (Hessburg et al. 2015). Land management practices during most of the twentieth century have reduced the abundance of OFMS and OFSS structures and remnant large trees distributed throughout the project area in other structure classes. Forest patches with large overstory trees and understory trees less than 16 inches DBH in the project area currently are within the DRV; however they are present at levels which trend toward the lower end of the desired range of variability in both landscapes. Past management practices have favored the development of dense and often multiple canopy layered structures in portions of the project area and this has affected existing large trees. Large trees are now typically competing for soil nutrients and water with higher levels of smaller and younger trees compared to historic conditions, which increases the risk of large tree mortality caused by bark beetle attacks. Increased stand density and inter-tree competition also reduces the likelihood of larger medium size trees from developing into large trees. Large trees and larger medium size trees currently are located in landscapes with higher levels of fire intolerant forest structures and are more likely to be growing in less fire tolerant patches compared to historic conditions which increases the likelihood of wildfires that could eliminate large trees and larger medium size trees. Other factors that affect the development and survival of large and medium trees are Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infestations and predation by western spruce budworm.

Figure 50 displays forest patches with large and medium size trees and old forest multistory structure patches currently present in the project area.

Buttermilk Creek: Forest patches with medium size overstory trees 16 to 25 inches DBH comprise an estimated 14,867 acres in the Buttermilk Creek landscape (63%; well above DRV of 24-28%). A majority of these patches are located in the Sawtooth Wilderness or are found in the steeper, less accessible parts of the landscape. Forest patches with large overstory trees and understory trees smaller than 16 inches DBH comprise an estimated 2,391 acres in the Buttermilk Creek landscape (10%; within DRV of 5-29%). Forest patches with large overstory trees and medium size understory trees comprise an estimated 640 acres in the Buttermilk Creek landscape (3%; above DRV of 0-2%). Based on current conditions of forest patches with large and medium trees present, the Buttermilk Creek landscape evaluation determined there is a need to reduce the area of patches with medium size overstory trees and to maintain or increase the area of patches with large size trees (large overstory trees and understory trees less than 16 inches DBH).

Libby Creek: Forest patches with medium size overstory trees 16 to 25 inches DBH comprise an estimated 8,142 acres in the Libby Creek landscape (31%; within DRV of 24-58%). Forest patches with large overstory trees and understory trees smaller than 16 inches DBH comprise an estimated 321 acres in the Libby Creek landscape (1.2%; within DRV of 0.7-28%). Forest patches with large overstory trees and medium size understory trees currently are not present in the Libby Creek landscape (within DRV of 0-8%). Based on current conditions of forest patches with large and medium trees present, the Libby Creek landscape evaluation determined there is a need to increase the area in all structure classes with large trees, and thus a need to maintain existing large trees and restore large trees in patches with medium, large, or large and medium size trees.

*Resource Indicator: Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability*

Overview of western spruce budworm vulnerability: Natural disturbances including insect infestations influence forest vegetation successional patterns including structure and composition. Current insect patterns in the project area are the by-product of the effects of human action and altered disturbance regimes which are being driven by a warmer climate (Hessburg et al. 2015). Past management practices, including fire suppression and selective harvesting of larger trees, have favored the development of densely stocked and multiple canopy layered stand structures with a high proportion of Douglas-fir stocking in the overstory and understory canopy layers in portions of the project area. Douglas-fir is the preferred host of the western spruce budworm in the project area and densely stocked forest patches with Douglas-fir trees in the upper and lower canopy layers are highly vulnerable to western spruce budworm defoliation (Carlson et al. 1985 and Hessburg et al. 1999). Repeated defoliation of host trees causes reduced tree growth, top kill, and mortality of trees. The majority of trees killed by defoliation are smaller understory trees; however, larger and typically older Douglas-fir trees are predisposed to fatal Douglas-fir bark beetle attacks by repeated defoliation. Restoration Strategy guidance implies that vegetation conditions including vulnerability to western spruce budworm infestation be maintained or restored to levels that are within ranges where the HRV and FRV overlap (the DRV) to provide for more sustainable and resilient forest ecosystems in the project area.

Figure 49 displays the percentage of the landscape with low, moderate, and high western spruce budworm vulnerability currently present in the project area.

Buttermilk Creek: Existing conditions in the Buttermilk landscape indicate the amount of area with low vulnerability to western spruce budworm infestation is below the DRV and underrepresented on the landscape (Figure 49). The amount of area with moderate vulnerability is within the DRV and present at a level that is close to the minimum value for the desired range of variability. The amount of area with high vulnerability is well above the DRV indicating that this vulnerability class is overabundant on the landscape. Based on current conditions, the Buttermilk landscape evaluation determined there is a restoration need to increase the amount of area with low western budworm vulnerability and to decrease the amount of area with high western budworm vulnerability on the landscape.



Libby Creek: Existing conditions in the Libby landscape indicate the percentage of the landscape with low vulnerability to western spruce budworm infestation is above the DRV and possibly overabundant on the landscape. The Libby Creek landscape; however has an unusually large portion of non-forested shrub land vegetation (approximately 20% of the landscape) which is classified low vulnerability and skews the estimate of the percentage of the landscape with low vulnerability. Current estimates of the percentage of the landscape with moderate and high western spruce vulnerability are within the DRV. There is a high degree of fragmentation of patches in all vulnerability classes with a high proportion of relatively small size patches distributed throughout the landscape. Many of these smaller patches, however are located in unroaded areas and areas which are low priority for treatment to maintain or restore dry and moist forest structures and/or fuel reduction. Based on current conditions, and restoration priorities, the project management team has determined that there is a need to maintain the percentage of the landscape with high vulnerability to western spruce budworm infestation within the lower half of the DRV.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable Douglas-fir bark beetles*

Douglas-fir bark beetle infestations are another form of natural disturbance which can affect forest vegetation successional patterns including structure and composition. Douglas-fir bark beetles are opportunistic and they typically attack low vigor Douglas-fir trees weakened by stress caused by disease, inter-tree competition, and drought, or by disturbances such as defoliation, fire injury, snow breakage, or blowdown. Factors affecting Douglas-fir beetle vulnerability include host abundance, number of canopy layers, stand density, host age and host patch connectivity, and as these values increase so does the risk rating. Medium and large size trees greater than 120 years old are more likely to be attacked, than younger, more vigorous trees. Past management practices have promoted the development of densely stocked and multiple canopy layered stand structures with high proportion of Douglas-fir stocking in the overstory and understory canopy layers in portions of the project area. These factors contribute to high risk of bark beetle attack primarily in relatively older medium and large size Douglas-fir trees in these areas.

In the Buttermilk Creek landscape, there are an estimated 6,061 acres with moderate vulnerability and 4,463 acres with high vulnerability to Douglas-fir bark beetle infestation. In the Libby Creek landscape there are an estimated 11,820 acres with moderate vulnerability and 2,532 acres with high vulnerability to Douglas-fir bark beetle infestation (Figure 49).

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection*

Natural disturbances including tree diseases influence forest vegetation successional patterns including structure and composition. Dwarf mistletoe is a genus of parasitic plant that drastically affects growth patterns and health of Douglas-fir host trees as well as many other conifers. Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infects only Douglas-fir and it is the primary disease of concern in the project area. This species is native and has always been part of the eastern Washington landscape, but as a relatively minor component of forest patches (stands). Historically Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe was widely distributed in the project area with little intensification. Dwarf mistletoe infections were confined to larger fire resistant trees located in patches, groups, or individual trees that were widely scattered throughout the project area or concentrated in

riparian areas that rarely burned. Spread of the disease was limited by the influence of frequent low intensity fire that maintained more open stand structures with a high proportion of ponderosa pine and other non-host species (Hessburg et al 1994). Management practices during most of the twentieth century, including fire exclusion and selective harvesting, have favored the development of dense and often multiple canopy layered structures with a high proportion of Douglas-fir stocking in the overstory and understory canopy layers. Infection has intensified and spread from infected overstory trees into susceptible understory trees resulting in current infection levels that exceed historic levels of this disease.

There are approximately 6,349 acres within the Buttermilk Creek landscape and 10,961 acres within Libby Creek landscape that have been determined to be infected and/or vulnerable to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection. Figure 51 displays the extent of forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection in the project area.

Figure 48. Existing vegetation structure for the project area.

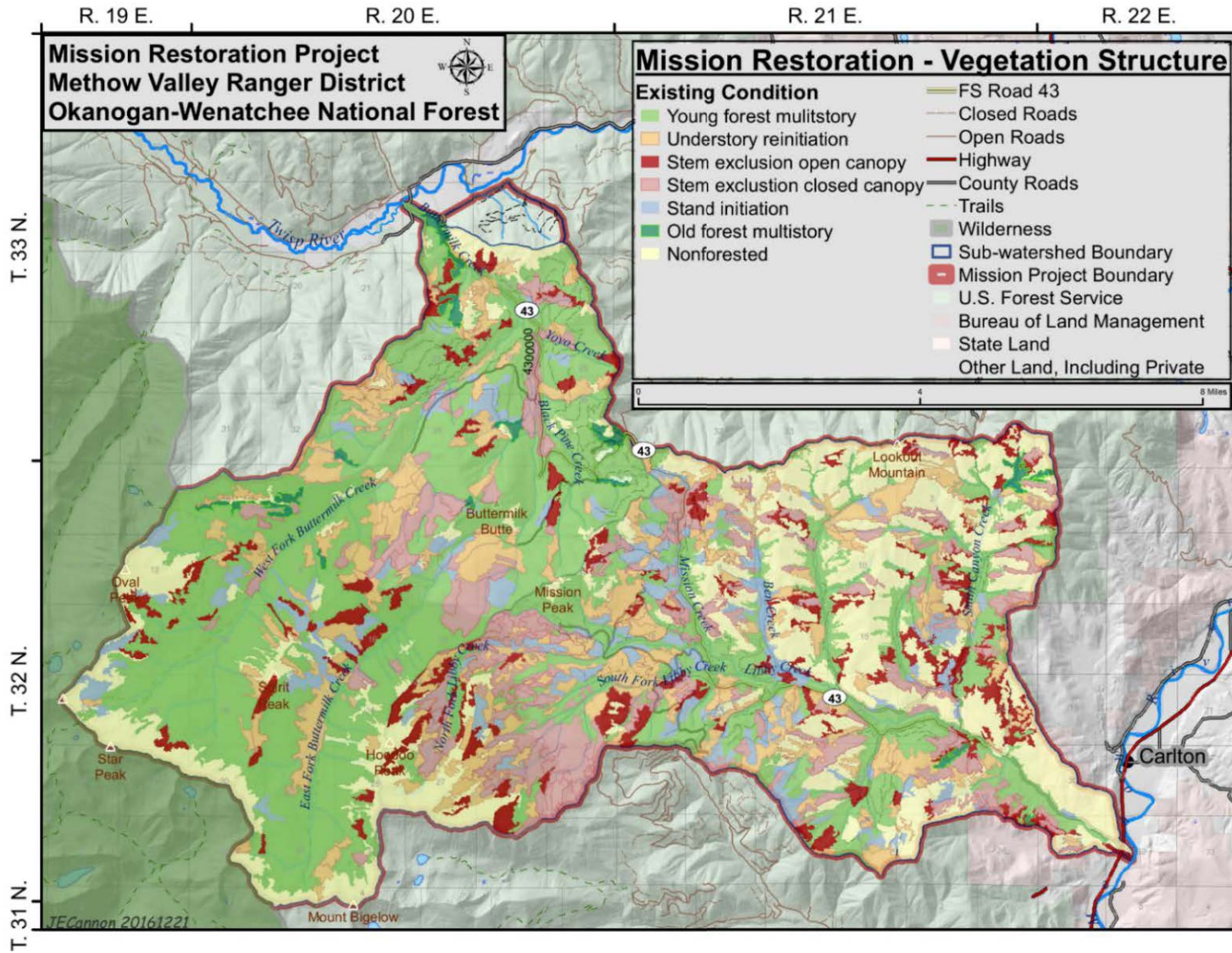


Figure 49. Vegetation Resource Elements, Indicators, and Measures

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition		
Restoration or maintenance of Forest Vegetation Composition and Structure.	The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structures compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes occupied by dry and moist forest structures.	<b>Dry Forest</b>		
			<b>Structure</b>	<b>Buttermilk</b>	<b>Libby</b>
			<b>OFMS</b>	1.4% Within DRV of 0-2.3%	0.04% Within DRV of 0-2.3%
			<b>OFSS</b>	0% Within DRV of 0-2.6%	0% Within DRV of 0-0.9%
			<b>SECC</b>	1.4% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-0.3%	8.0% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-0.8%
			<b>SEOC</b>	2.1% <b>Below</b> DRV of 3.5-6.6%	6.1% Within DRV of 3.5-17.4%
			<b>SI</b>	1.4% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-0.5%	5.2% Within DRV of 0-10%
			<b>UR</b>	3.2% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-2.3%	11.0% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0.2-9.9%
			<b>YFMS</b>	18.6% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-1.7%	14.0% <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-9.1%
			<b>Moist Forest</b>		
			<b>Structure</b>	<b>Buttermilk</b>	<b>Libby</b>
			<b>OFMS</b>	0.5% Within DRV of 0-5.6%	0.5% Within DRV of 0-11.2%
			<b>OFSS</b>	0% Within DRV of 0-5.3%	0% Within DRV of 0-3.0%
			<b>SECC</b>	1.4% Within DRV of 0.4-5.6%	0.8% Within DRV of 0-5%
	<b>SEOC</b>	0.2% <b>Below</b> DRV of 2.5-12.3%	0.4% <b>Below</b> DRV of 2.5-12.3%		
	<b>SI</b>	0.3% <b>Below</b> DRV of 0.9-8.9%	1.4% Within DRV of 0.9-9.9%		
	<b>UR</b>	1.3% Within DRV of 1-10.3%	1.2% Within DRV of 1-18.4%		
	<b>YFMS</b>	4.1% Within DRV of 0.7-8.4%	6.0% Within DRV of 0-18.1%		
	The amount and	Average patch size of dry and moist forest structures in the Buttermilk and	<b>Dry Forest</b>		
			<b>Structure</b>	<b>Buttermilk</b>	<b>Libby</b>
<b>OFMS</b>			68 ac. Within DRV of 0-340 ac	10 ac. Within DRV of 0-318 ac	
<b>OFSS</b>			0 ac. Within DRV of 0-168 ac	0 ac. Within DRV of 0-159 ac	
<b>SECC</b>			54 ac <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-36 ac	35 ac. Within DRV of 0-89 ac	

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition		
			SEOC	SI	UR
Restoration or maintenance of Forest Vegetation Composition and Structure.	arrangement of dry and moist forest structures compared to the desired range of variability.	Libby landscapes Average patch size of dry and moist forest structures in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes. (acres)	SEOC	29 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 52-267	15 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 21-315 ac
			SI	29 ac. Within DRV of 0-90 ac	24 ac. Within DRV of 0-246 ac
			UR	47 ac. Within DRV of 0-137 ac	41 ac. Within DRV of 14-286 ac
			YFMS	200 ac. <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-183 ac	58 ac. Within DRV of 0-290 ac
			<b>Moist Forest</b>		
			Structure	<b>Buttermilk</b>	<b>Libby</b>
			OFMS	57 ac. Within DRV of 0-312 ac	27 ac. Within DRV of 0-348 ac
			OFSS	0 ac. Within DRV of 0-255 ac	0 ac. Within DRV of 0-213 ac
			SECC	68 ac. Within DRV of 42-927 ac	26 ac. Within DRV of 0-174 ac
			SEOC	37 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 50-249 ac	21 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 50-249 ac
			SI	31 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 32-177 ac	27 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 32-177 ac
			UR	39 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 68-246 ac	19 ac. <b>Below</b> DRV of 68-383 ac
	YFMS	74 ac. Within DRV of 46-363 ac	82 ac. Within DRV of 0-440 ac		
	Forest patches with large and medium size trees.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes to maintain and restore large trees in patches with medium, large, or large and medium size trees.	<b>Buttermilk</b>		<b>Libby</b>
			Medium Trees – 14,867 ac available Large Trees - 2,391 ac available Large and Medium – 640 ac available		Medium Trees – 8,142 acres available Large Trees – 321 acres available Large and Medium – 0 acres available
Resilience to biotic natural disturbances.	Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to	Percentage of the Buttermilk and Libby Creek	<b>Risk</b>		
			<b>Buttermilk</b>		<b>Libby</b>
			Low	15% <b>Below</b> DRV of 22-28%	32% <b>Above</b> DRV of 12-28%

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition		
	the desired range of variability.	landscapes with high, moderate, and low risk.	Moderate	15% Within DRV of 13-33%	11% Within DRV of 8-27%
			High	69% <b>Above</b> DRV of 31-52%	57% Within DRV of 29-74% But not within lower half of DRV
	Forest vegetation vulnerable to Douglas-fir bark beetles.	Acres of treatment in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes with high or moderate risk.	Moderate - 6,061 acres available High - 4,463 acres available		Moderate - 11,820 acres available High - 2,532 acres available
Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes to reduce vulnerability.	Buttermilk = 6,349 ac. Available		Libby = 10,961 ac. Available	

Figure 50. Large and medium sized trees in project area with proposed actions displayed.

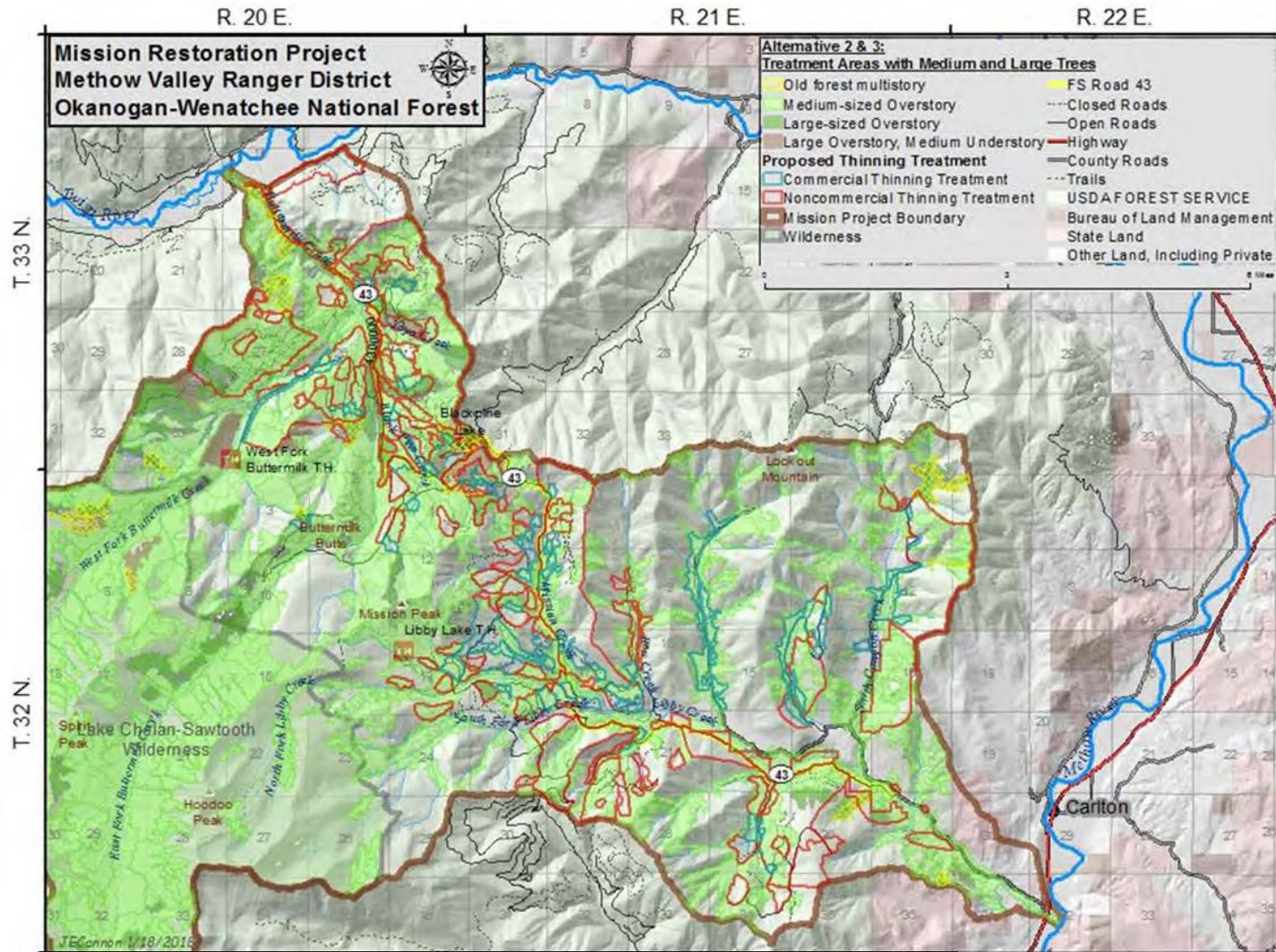
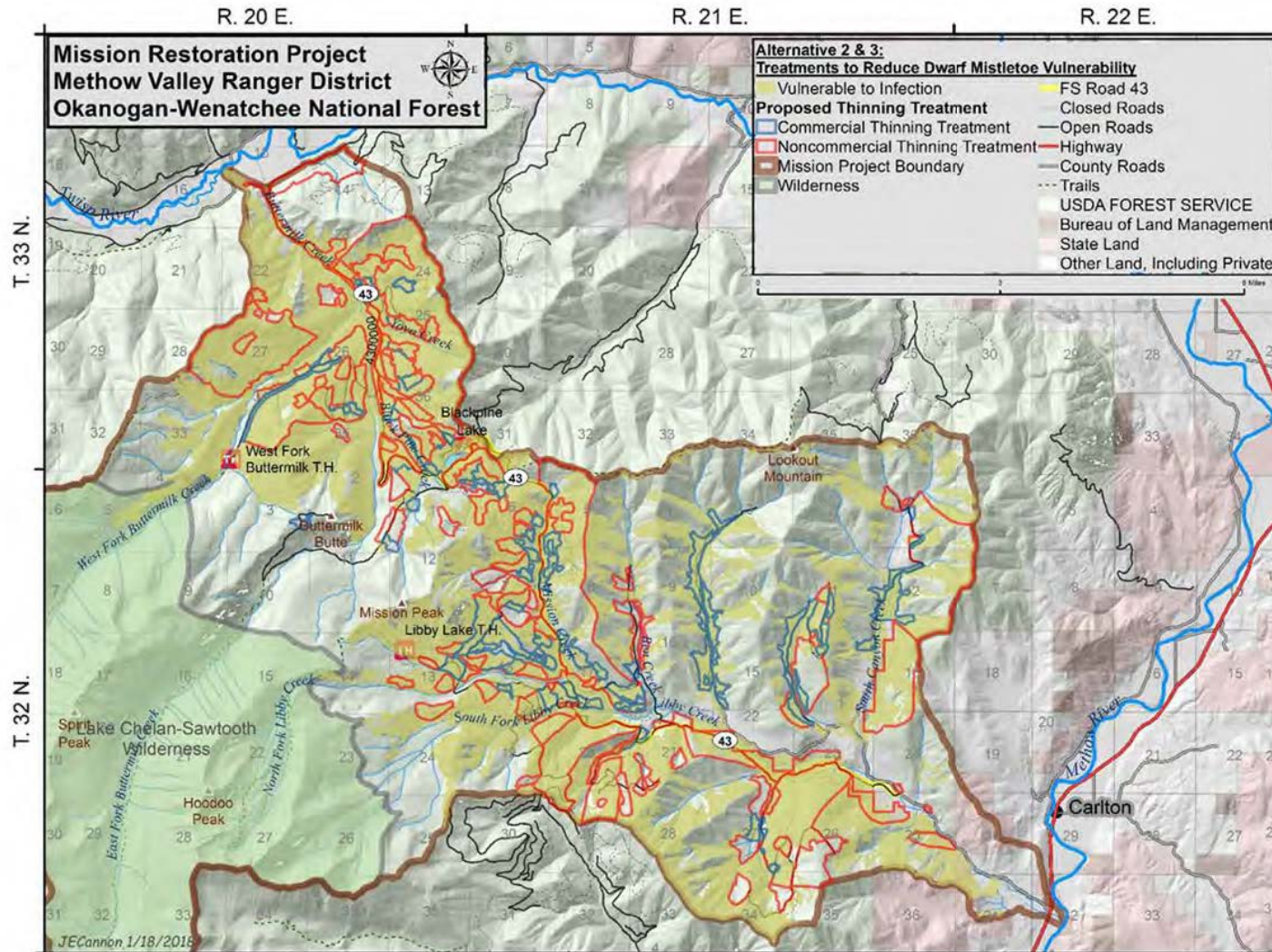


Figure 51. Area vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe with proposed actions displayed





### **3.5.4 Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.5.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail**

The following proposed actions will not be considered further in this analysis because they would have no measurable effect on the restoration or maintenance of the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structures, forest patches with large and medium size trees, western spruce budworm vulnerability, forest vegetation vulnerability to Douglas-fir bark beetles, or forest vegetation vulnerability to dwarf mistletoe infection in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes: fuels reduction treatments in the Buttermilk Annex area, soil restoration, rock armoring, replacing undersized culverts or installing fish culverts, beaver habitat enhancement, coarse woody debris enhancement, or creating hardened fords.

#### **3.5.4.2 Alternative 1**

##### *3.5.4.2.1 Effects*

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest vegetation structures compared to the desired range of variability*

Under Alternative 1, there would be no immediate change in either dry or moist forest vegetation structures in either of the analyzed landscapes. The Percent Landscape (PL) and Average Patch Size (APS) departures for forest structure in moist and dry forest types identified in the Affected Environment section would persist until either new disturbance (fire, defoliation or windthrow) or tree growth put patches in new structure categories. Within the next 20 years (short term), without any man caused or natural disturbances, understory canopies would continue to develop and the percent landscape and perhaps the average patch size of the single storied and/or open stand structures (SI, SEOC and OFSS) would be reduced fairly dramatically (minor), such that where these are currently within DRV, they would likely drop below DRV and if they are currently below HRV, they would stay there until a disturbance takes place (long term). These structure types would evolve to more complex structure types (UR, YFMS and OFMS) such that that if these types are currently below the Desired Range of Variability (DRV), they could go toward or land within DRV within the next 20 years, while if they are currently over DRV they would likely continue to be above until a disturbance takes place. SEEC patches, which tend to grow fairly slowly because of tree to tree competition are likely to stay as they are for at least the next 20 years or until the next disturbance.

*Resource Indicator: Forest patches with large and medium size trees*

Under the no action alternative there would be no overstory and understory treatments. There would be no reduction of inter-tree competition, no reduction in vulnerability to bark beetles, western spruce budworm, or Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe; and no increase of resiliency to fire; all of which would benefit large and medium sized trees. There would be no immediate change in the area of patches with medium and large tree components. However, under drought conditions and especially in conjunction with insect defoliation, dwarf mistletoe or root disease infection, it is very common for the largest trees in a densely stocked stand to succumb to bark beetles. Multiple tree canopy layers and buildup of surface and ladder fuels can contribute to undesired large and medium size tree mortality in the event of wildfire. If enough large and

medium sized trees die, then stands that currently are regarded as stands that contain medium and large trees could lose this attribute. Without thinning younger stands, it would take longer, up to twice as long, for individual trees within these young stands to promote into medium and large size classes. This adverse effect would last until these patches are actively managed, which based on the average length of time to return to a planning area, could be up to 20 years (short term) and it is likely for the Percent Landscape with medium and/or large trees to be reduced by one percent during that time frame with possibilities of much higher impact.

*Resource Indicator: Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability*

Under Alternative 1, there would be no immediate change in western spruce budworm vulnerability levels in both landscapes within the project area. In the short term, vulnerability levels would remain relatively static for approximately 20 years.

In the Buttermilk landscape, the percentage of the landscape (PL) with low risk of defoliation would remain below the DRV, the PL with moderate risk would remain within the DRV, and the PL with high risk would continue to remain well above the DRV. The adverse effects to Low and High categories would last until these patches are actively managed. Overall, these conditions would contribute to an adverse, short term, negligible effect on western spruce budworm vulnerability in the Buttermilk Creek landscape.

In the Libby Creek landscape, the percentage of the landscape (PL) with low risk of defoliation would remain above the DRV for the next 20 years; however, as described previously in the Affected Environment description, this measure is skewed by the unusually high amount of non-forested shrub-land vegetation present in the landscape. The PL with moderate risk would remain within DRV and high risk of defoliation would remain above the lower half of DRV. The effects, for the next 20 years would be adverse, short-term and negligible.

Over the long term, western spruce budworm vulnerability would change in the project area with no action. Factors affecting vulnerability to defoliation include host abundance, number of canopy layers, stand density, and host patch connectivity, and as these values increase so does the risk of defoliation. Douglas-fir stocking levels in the project area would be expected to increase in all canopy layers primarily in the dry and moist forest vegetation types. Forest structures with multiple canopy layers and a high proportion of Douglas-fir stocking in all layers would increase as would the total area with high risk of defoliation. This increase in high risk would come from areas currently rated as moderate risk for defoliation. The total area with low risk of defoliation would decrease as some areas currently with low risk rating change to moderate risk. The total area with moderate risk would change based on the net effect of recruitment from current low risk patches and the loss of moderate risk patches which develop into high risk.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable Douglas-fir bark beetles*

Under Alternative 1, there would be no reduction of forest vegetation vulnerability to Douglas-fir bark beetle (DFBB) attacks on the 17,881 acres with moderate risk and the 6,985 acres with high risk in the project area. Forest vegetation conditions affecting DFBB vulnerability including host abundance, number of canopy layers, stand density, host age, and host patch connectivity would persist or increase over time in the project area. The amount of area with high risk would increase as Douglas-fir stocking levels and multiple canopy layer structures increase in areas

which currently are rated as moderate risk. Low vigor medium and large trees in high and moderate risk areas would remain vulnerable to fatal bark beetle attacks. As Douglas-firs which regenerated or were released from competition by selective harvesting during the past century mature and become older than 120 years, the amount of susceptible trees would increase, further contributing to Douglas-fir bark beetle vulnerability in the project area. The effects of no action would last until the next opportunity to manage, which may be up to 20 years. Overall, these conditions would contribute to an adverse, short-term, minor effect on the reduction of DFBB vulnerability in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek landscapes. However, with such a high proportion of the area in High vulnerability to DFBB, should an epidemic of Douglas-fir bark beetle take place within the project area, there would likely be an increased wildfire risk until the epidemic wanes and the levels of resulting red and fine fuels have subsided. If a wildfire should take place during this extremely vulnerable condition, it could have adverse, long term, major effects on medium and large Douglas-fir trees. The current potential for DFBB epidemic is fairly high due to recent defoliation and drought.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection*

Under Alternative 1, there would be no reduction of dwarf mistletoe vulnerability on the 17,310 acres of forest vegetation vulnerable to infection within the project area.

Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe (DFDM) vulnerability factors are presence of DFDM in or near a stand, presence of the host species (Douglas-fir), high proportions of the host species, and multiple canopy layers of the host species (Hessburg et al. 1999). There would be no reduction of any of these factors under Alternative 1. It is not likely that the acres of stands vulnerable to DFDM would increase more than one percent. Therefore, the effects of no treatment on the acres of the project area vulnerable to DFDM would be adverse, short-term and negligible. However, the effect of no treatment would result in a deterioration of tree and patch health that would be adverse, long-term and moderate.

Within stands that are currently infected with DFDM, within tree infection levels would increase and tree to tree infection would continue, especially in stands with multiple canopies of Douglas-fir which facilitates seed dispersal. Seeds are ejected to up to 50 feet from fruiting DFDM plants. DFDM would spread more slowly through stands that have a low proportion of Douglas-fir or are single storied stands. An average rate of DFDM movement through a stand is 1-2 feet per year (Washington State University Forestry Extension). Any intensification of disease within a tree or a patch is irreversible and long term without active management.

In the many stands that have low intensities of infection, there would be little effect to the ability of the stands to achieve large diameter tree status. Severe levels (number of trees infected) and intensities (proportion of the tree infected) of dwarf mistletoe can change the trajectory and potential of stand development. The average diameter growth rate is reduced by half with severe infections (Hawksworth and Wiens 1996). Poor diameter growth in Douglas-fir trees results in higher risk to bark beetle attack and exacerbates the effects of root disease in drought conditions (P. Nash, USFS, personal communication). This early mortality reduces the length of time that mature and complex stand structures are on site. Dwarf mistletoe infection in younger stands is likely to reduce the potential for these stands to attain desired structure classes (Geils and Mathiasen 1990).

Heavy masses of foliage and small branches (brooms) that are caused by the parasitic plants increase bulk crown density and are likely to hang low to the ground or break off and lay at the base of the tree, forming ladder and ground fuels. These brooms are especially flammable due to the dead material that accumulates within, the abundance of fine branches and the concentration of resins. Stands with severe levels and intensity of dwarf mistletoe are at higher risk to crown fires than similar, uninfected stands (Schmitt 2000).

### **3.5.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3**

Proposed overstory thinning and noncommercial thinning vegetation treatments to affect the amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structures, forest patches with large and medium size trees, and western spruce budworm vulnerability, forest vegetation vulnerable to Douglas-fir bark beetles, or forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes are identical in Alternatives 2 and 3. The effects for both of these alternatives will be described in this section.

#### **3.5.4.3.1 Effects**

*Resource indicator: The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest vegetation structures compared to the desired range of variability*

Under Alternatives 2 and 3, a combination of overstory and understory treatment would result in changing or maintaining stand structure in many of the stands treated. For the most part, only overstory treatment combined with understory fuel treatments would have the potential of changing forest structure, while stand-alone fuels treatments are only seen to contribute towards maintenance of existing structures or contribute over the long term towards promotion of structures with larger diameter trees. Structure conversion treatments that would depend on the reduction of understory trees would have a duration of up to 20 years (short-term), at which point understory would have regenerated to the point that it would return to a multiple storied forest structure. Treatments that would result in conversion from SECC to other structures or the creation of SI (Variable Retention Regeneration harvest and post-harvest planting) would last 20-40 years (long-term) until tree growth moved the stands towards other forest structure types. The effects are shown for each structure type in Figure 52 and a map of post-project vegetation structure is displayed in Figure 53. At least 50 percent of a patch would need to have a structure change for the patch to show a change in the EMDS analysis below and summarized in Figure 52. The planned treatments of overstory together with understory treatments would have a long-term effect and the stand-alone understory treatments would have a short term effect of promoting stands with medium and medium and large sized trees towards Old Forest characteristics. Duration and effectiveness are premised on the design criteria of leaving the most fire and disease resistant species. Leaving high compositions of trees susceptible to fire, disease and dwarf mistletoe may result in high levels of overstory mortality that could lead to structure changes incompatible with the Purpose and Needs #3 and #4. Where no treatment is applied on dry and moist forest vegetation structure, the ecological processes and the resulting effects would be the same as the effects displayed for No Action.

Buttermilk Creek: Within the Buttermilk Creek Landscape, the planned treatments (approximately 613 acres of overstory treatments together with understory treatments as well as approximately 3,207 acres of stand-alone fuels treatments) would result in moving multiple canopied stands towards one or two canopied stands, thinning from below and reducing

competition to older and larger trees. The effects of Alternatives 2 and 3 to stand structure and average patch size are displayed in Figure 52.

Overall, combining the effects of approximately 3,820 acres of planned treatment, which is 16 percent of the Buttermilk landscape, the effects would be beneficial and short-term with minor intensity on the Amount and Arrangement of Dry and Moist Forest Structures Size for the various structure types within the Buttermilk landscape.

Libby Creek: Within the Libby Creek Landscape, the planned treatments (approximately 1,347 acres of overstory treatments together with understory treatments as well as approximately 4,890 acres of standalone fuels treatments) would move multiple canopied stands towards one or two canopied stands, thinning from below and reducing competition to older and larger trees.

Overall, combining the effects of approximately 6,237 acres of planned treatment, which is 24 percent of the Libby landscape, the effects would be beneficial and short-term with minor intensity on the Amount and Arrangement of Dry and Moist Forest Structures Size for the various structure types within the Buttermilk landscape.

Resource Indicator: *Forest patches with large and medium size trees*

Under both Alternatives 2 and 3, approximately 3,304 acres (581 acres of overstory treatment) out of the 17,890 acres with large or medium trees would be treated in the Buttermilk Creek landscape and another 3,129 acres (834 acres of overstory treatment) out of the 8,434 acres with large and medium trees would be treated in the Libby Creek landscape. These treatments would reduce tree stress from inter-tree competition; decrease vulnerability to defoliators and dwarf mistletoe; and increase fire resiliency within treated stands. With the implementation of the design criteria for leaving fire, disease and insect resilient tree species, these would result in the increased potential for survival of large and residual medium trees within the treated acres as well as increase the growth rate of remaining trees that could eventually result in promoting trees into larger size classes and stands into Old Forest Structure characteristics (see Figure 52). Overstory treatments, together with understory treatments are the most effective and enduring because stocking levels of overstory trees would be reduced and more dwarf mistletoe infected trees would be removed, which decreases dwarf mistletoe infection rates of the remaining trees. The increased growth and corresponding increased health due to overstory/understory treatments would have beneficial, long-term, minor effects in both Buttermilk and Libby landscapes. The effectiveness of stand-alone fuels treatments would have shorter duration and would result in beneficial, short-term, minor effects for both landscapes.

No large trees (25 inch DBH or larger) would be harvested. Some of the medium sized trees would be harvested during overstory thinning and sanitizing, but on the most part, the vast majority of these trees were identified to be retained. It is possible that heavily diseased patches (VRR and DFDMT treatments) or patches with barely enough medium trees to qualify for this patch attribute, may not qualify as patches with medium sized trees after harvest treatments, but the resulting percent of the landscape with medium sized trees would continue to be above DRV for Buttermilk and within DRV for Libby landscapes.

Although there appears to be a need and opportunity to reduce the overabundance of stands with Medium sized trees within the Buttermilk landscape, the actual options to do this in the short term are somewhat limited. The only logical way to do this would be to move UR or YFMS

structure to SI structure and SI is already above DRV in the dry forest. The amount of SI in moist forest is on the low end of the DRV, but most of the moist forest patches with Medium sized trees are in the Sawtooth Wilderness and many more potential treatment patches are in areas with no or limited road access. The result is that no patches would be intentionally moved from “Medium” sized trees to “Small” sized trees. However, over time, many of the treated patches would promote into “Large” or “Medium and Large” tree categories.

The expected affects to untreated patches with Medium and Large sized trees would be the same as shown for the No Action alternative.

*Resource Indicator: Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability*

Under Alternatives 2 and 3 a combination of overstory and understory thinning treatments would result in changes and maintenance of western spruce budworm vulnerability risk ratings in the project area. For the most part, overstory thinning treatments combined with understory fuels reduction treatments would have the greatest potential to change vulnerability risk ratings, whereas standalone understory thinning treatments would be more likely to maintain existing vulnerability risk ratings. Overstory thinning treatments would reduce western spruce budworm vulnerability by reducing the density of susceptible host trees 7 to 9 inches DBH and larger in the overstory and understory canopy layers, increase the proportion of residual tree stocking with non-host species including ponderosa pine, and effectively reduce the number of canopy layers in treated areas. The Variable Retention Regeneration treatments would reduce host composition and replace it with ponderosa pine seedlings. Understory thinning treatments would reduce vulnerability of defoliation only in the understory canopy layer by reducing the density of susceptible host trees 8 inches DBH and smaller and would reduce the number of canopy layers where the majority of understory trees are in this size range. Residual Douglas-firs in treated areas would benefit from reduced levels of inter-tree competition for sunlight, water, and soil nutrients which would improve their vigor and ability to withstand and recover from western spruce budworm defoliation should it occur. Treatment effects on vulnerability ratings would be expected to last for approximately 30 years at which time sufficient levels of vulnerable understory trees would become established to diminish treatment effectiveness. Details of post-treatment western spruce budworm vulnerability risk ratings are provided in Figure 52.

Buttermilk Creek: In the Buttermilk Creek Landscape, 613 acres of overstory thinning treatments followed by understory thinning treatments and 3,207 acres of standalone understory thinning treatments would be applied. Following treatment the Percentage of the Landscape (PL) with low risk of defoliation would increase by 1% and move toward attainment of the DRV. The PL for moderate risk would increase by 4% and remain within the DRV. The PL for high risk would decrease by 4% and move toward attainment of the DRV. Overall, post-treatment conditions would be a combination of beneficial, long term, minor effects on western spruce budworm vulnerability classes.

Libby Creek: In the Libby Creek Landscape, 1,347 acres of overstory thinning treatments followed by understory thinning treatments and 4,890 acres of standalone understory thinning treatments would be applied. Following treatment the Percentage of the Landscape (PL) with low risk of defoliation would increase by 1% and move away from attainment of the DRV. The PL for moderate risk would increase by 6% and remain within the DRV. The PL for high risk would decrease by 7% and move toward attainment of the DRV. Overall, post-treatment

conditions would be a combination of beneficial, long term, minor effects for the moderate and high vulnerability classes and an adverse, long term, negligible effect for the low western spruce budworm vulnerability class. Although increasing low vulnerability when it is already above DRV may be adverse for landscape vegetation patterns, it would benefit the health of medium and large Douglas-fir trees and all of the other vegetation attributes that depend on that species and size of trees.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable Douglas-fir bark beetles*

Under Alternatives 2 and 3, there would be overstory and understory treatments totaling 133 acres within patches with Moderate and 463 acres of treatment with High vulnerability to Douglas-fir bark beetles (DFBB) within the Buttermilk landscape, representing 6% of the moderate and high vulnerability acres. Within the Libby landscape there would be overstory and understory treatments totaling 997 acres within patches with moderate vulnerability and 315 acres of treatment with high vulnerability to DFBB, which would be 9 percent treatment of the vulnerable landscape. These treatments would be effective in reducing host abundance, number of canopy layers and stand density in the treated stands. By reducing all of these factors in vulnerability to DFBB, individual tree vigor should improve, allowing these trees to produce pitch and defend themselves from beetle attacks. The thinning of the overstory and the reduction in the abundance of Douglas-fir would be effective for the next 20-40 years, while the understory would return within 20 years. This would result in beneficial, long-term, negligible effects for both landscapes. The Variable Retention Regeneration with planting ponderosa pine after harvest treatments would decrease host species and increase non-host species composition on 59 acres. This effect would last indefinitely. Also, by simultaneously reducing risk for Western spruce budworm and crown fire there is a synergistic effect of reducing the potential for a disturbance that could trigger DFBB outbreaks.

Simultaneously with these more complete treatments, the vulnerability to DFBB would be moderated by understory treatments in an additional 2,897 acres of moderate and high Vulnerability patches in the Buttermilk landscape. Within the Libby landscape, 3,509 acres of the Moderate and High vulnerability patches would receive understory treatments. The duration of these treatments would be more ephemeral than that of overstory treatments and some of the vulnerability factors would only partially be treated. These treatments, which represent 28% and 24% of the moderate and high vulnerability patches in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes respectively. These treatments alone would provide beneficial, short-term, minor impacts for both landscapes, but together with overstory treatments, would result in beneficial, short-term, moderate effects for both landscapes. Also, by simultaneously reducing risk for Western spruce budworm and crown fire, there is a synergistic effect of reducing the potential for a disturbance that could trigger DFBB outbreaks.

*Resource Indicator: Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection*

Under Alternatives 2 and 3, 581 of the 6,349 acres of stands identified as vulnerable to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection within the Buttermilk landscape and 1,244 of 10,961 acres of vulnerable stands within the Libby Creek landscape would receive both overstory and understory treatments. Overstory, together with follow-up ladder fuel reduction treatments, would remove most DMT infected trees less than 18 inches DBH from those patches. Some DMT infected trees between 18 and 24 inches DBH may also be harvested but the need to do this would be weighed against their contribution to elements of Old Forest structure. Overstory

treatments would reduce the density of susceptible host trees and the number of canopy layers, increase the proportion of residual tree stocking with non-host species including ponderosa pine, and isolate residual infected trees in groups or individual trees to reduce vulnerability to infection in the treated stands. The planned Variable Retention Regeneration harvest treatment areas would be planted in ponderosa pine, post-harvest. This would result in reducing host specie and increasing no-host specie composition. These treatments would also restore elements of historic tree species composition and dwarf mistletoe distribution in treated areas. These treatments would have beneficial, long-term, negligible impact in the Buttermilk landscape and beneficial, long-term minor impact on the Libby landscape.

The 2,769 and 3,221 acres of standalone non-harvest thinning treatments planned for the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes, respectively, would result in removal of susceptible understory host trees and a reduction of DFDM in the remaining smaller trees. These treatments would also reduce the number of canopy layers in the treated stands. Where there are no infections in the overstory, these stands would have the potential to progress to target stand structures. These treatments would have beneficial, short term, minor impact to both of the landscapes.

In currently infected stands, the effects of stand thinning, as well as the removal of DFDM infected trees should result in a reduction of competition for remaining trees resulting in increased vigor, overall increase of average diameter growth within treated stands, and an increased potential to survive fires. This would result in increased potential and rate for treated stands to attain or retain desired structure classes. The effects of this treatment should result in a 20-40 year improvement in DFDM rating for the totally sanitized stands.

Infection intensity of any DFDM infected trees that remain would increase by responding to increased sunlight reaching infected branches and by having unimpeded dispersal (Graham 1961). Where infected trees remain in the overstory, future sanitizing and thinning treatments of understory trees would be needed or DFDM would spread to this new cohort of host species and stand DFDM ratings and landscape vulnerability to DFDM would return to current levels.

In stands that are currently free of DFDM, overstory treatment would result in decreased vulnerability by reducing the density of Douglas-fir trees, reducing the overall stocking and reducing number of tree canopies. Reduced vulnerability to DFDM would maintain the potential for those stands to continue to develop towards meeting resource objectives.

Overall, the vegetation treatments in Alternatives 2 and 3 would result in a beneficial, short term, minor effect on the Buttermilk landscape and a beneficial, long-term, minor effect on the Libby landscape.



**Figure 52. Vegetation Resource Indicators and Measures Common to Alternatives 2 and 3**

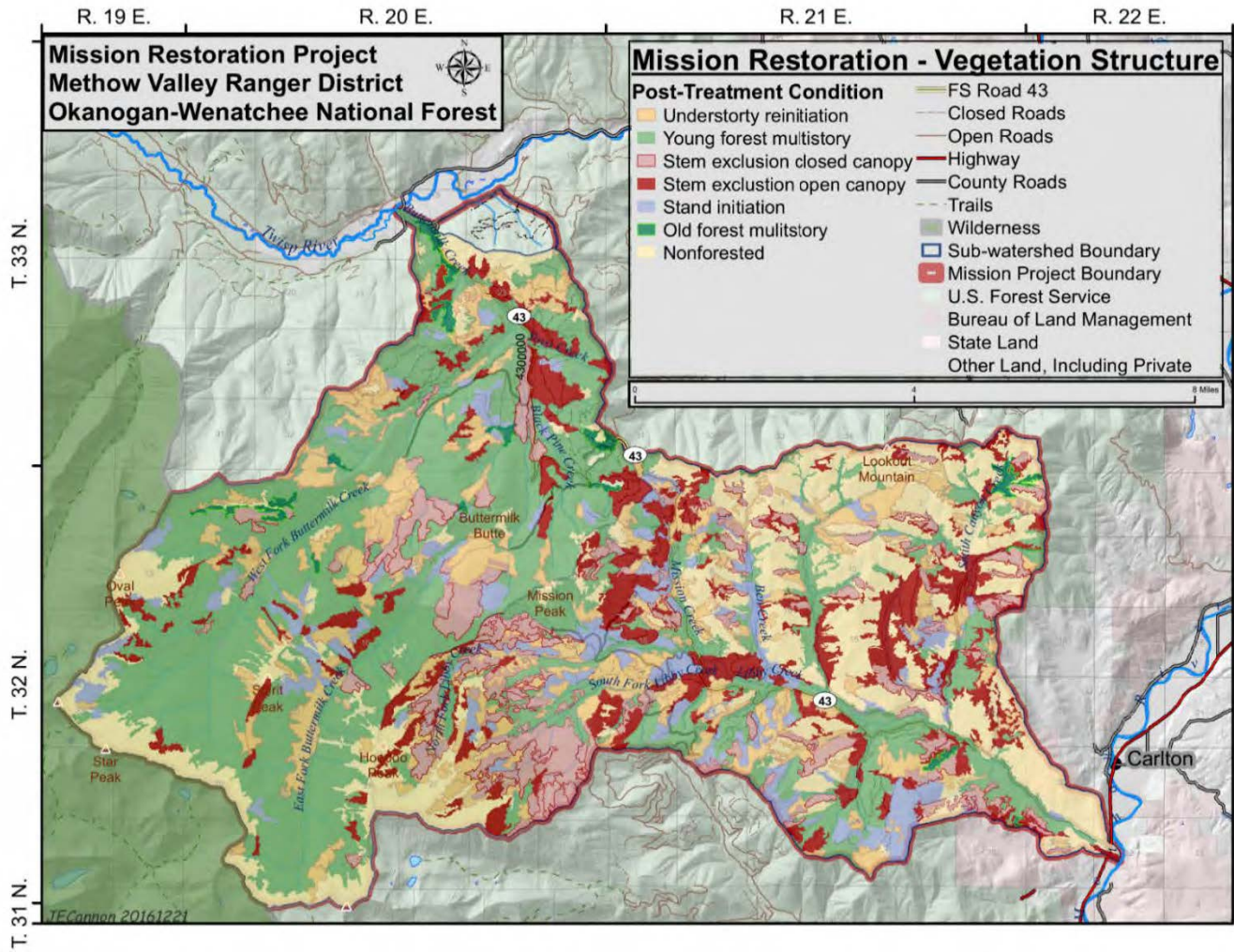
Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Effects of Alternatives 2 and 3		
			Dry Forest		
Forest Vegetation Composition and Structure.	The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structures compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes occupied by dry and moist forest structures.	Structure	Buttermilk	Libby
			<b>OFMS</b>	1.4%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-2.3%	0.4%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-2.3%
			<b>OFSS</b>	0%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-2.6%	0%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-0.9%
			<b>SECC</b>	0.6%; Decrease: 0.8% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-0.3%	6.5%; Decrease: 1.5% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-0.8%
			<b>SEOC</b>	4.5%; Increase: 2.4% Now within DRV of 3.5-6.6%	11.9%; Increase: 5.8% Remains Within DRV of 3.5-17.4%
			<b>SI</b>	1.3%; Decrease: 0.1% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-0.5%	6.4%; Increase: 1.2% Remains Within DRV of 0-10%
			<b>UR</b>	3.3%; Increase: 0.1% Further <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-2.3%	10.2%; Decrease: 0.8% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 0.2-9.9%
			<b>YFMS</b>	17.1%; Decrease: 1.5% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-1.7%	11.0%; Decrease: 3.0% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 0-9.1%
			Moist Forest		
			Structure	Buttermilk	Libby
			<b>OFMS</b>	0.5%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-5.6%	0.5%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-11.2%
			<b>OFSS</b>	0%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-5.3%	0%; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-3.0%
			<b>SECC</b>	1.4%; Negligible Change Remains Within DRV of 0.4-5.6%	0.8%; No Change Remains Within DRV of 0-5%

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Effects of Alternatives 2 and 3		
			<b>SEOC</b>	0.4%; Increase: 0.2% Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 2.5-12.3%	0.7%; Increase: 0.3% Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 2.5-12.3%
			<b>SI</b>	0.3%; No Change Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 0.9-8.9%	1.3%; Decrease: 0.1% Remains Within DRV of 0.9-9.9%
			<b>UR</b>	1.3%; Negligible Change Remains Within DRV of 1-10.3%	1.1%; Decrease: 0.1% Remains Within DRV of 1-18.4%
			<b>YFMS</b>	3.9%; Decrease: 0.2% Remains Within DRV of 0.7-8.4%	5.9%; Decrease: 0.1% Remains Within DRV of 0-18.1%
		Average patch size of dry and moist forest structures in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes. (acres)	<b>Dry Forest</b>		
			<b>Structure</b>	<b>Buttermilk</b>	<b>Libby</b>
			<b>OFMS</b>	68 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-340 ac	27 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-348 ac
			<b>OFSS</b>	0 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-168 ac	0 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-213 ac
			<b>SECC</b>	48 ac.; Decrease 6 ac Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 00-36 ac	26 ac.; No Change Remains Within DRV of 0-174 ac
			<b>SEOC</b>	48 ac.; Increase 19 ac Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 52-267 ac	28 ac.; Increase: 7 ac Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 50-249 ac
			<b>SI</b>	23 ac.; Decrease 6 ac Remains Within DRV of 0-90 ac	29 ac.; Increase: 2 ac Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 32-177 ac
			<b>UR</b>	57 ac.; Increase 10 ac Remains Within DRV of 0-137 ac	18 ac.; Decrease: 1 ac Moving further <b>Below</b> DRV of 68-383 ac
			<b>YFMS</b>	156 ac.; Decrease: 44 ac Brought Within DRV of 0-183 ac	85 ac.; Decrease: 3 ac Remains Within DRV of 0-440 ac
				<b>Moist Forest</b>	

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Effects of Alternatives 2 and 3		
			Structure	Buttermilk	Libby
			<b>OFMS</b>	57 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-312 ac	27 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-348 ac
			<b>OFSS</b>	0 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-255 ac	0 ac.; No Immediate Change Remains Within DRV of 0-213 ac
			<b>SECC</b>	107 ac.; Increase: 39 ac Remains Within DRV of 42-927 ac	26 ac.; No Change Remains Within DRV of 0-174 ac
			<b>SEOC</b>	52 ac.; Increase: 15 ac Now Within DRV of 50-249 ac	28 ac.; Increase: 7 ac Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 50-249 ac
			<b>SI</b>	31 ac.; No Change Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 32-177 ac	29 ac.; Increase: 2 ac Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 32-177 ac
			<b>UR</b>	37 ac.; Decrease: 2 ac Further <b>Below</b> DRV of 68-246 ac	18 ac.; Decrease: 1 ac Further <b>Below</b> DRV of 68-383 ac
			<b>YFMS</b>	66 ac.; Decrease: 8 ac Remains Within DRV of 46-363 ac	85 ac.; Increase: 3 ac Remains Within DRV of 0-440 ac
	Forest patches with, large and medium size trees.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes to maintain and restore large trees in patches with medium, large, or large and medium size trees.		<p>Buttermilk.</p> <p>Medium Trees – 2,496 acres treated of 14,859 ac available</p> <p>Large Trees - 624 acres treated of 2,390 ac available</p> <p>Large and Medium – 184 acres treated of 641 ac available</p>	<p>Libby</p> <p>Medium Trees – 3,007 acres treated of 8,111 acres available</p> <p>Large Trees – 122 acres treated of 323 acres available</p> <p>Large and Medium – 0 acres available</p>

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Effects of Alternatives 2 and 3		
			Risk	Buttermilk	Libby
Resilience to biotic natural disturbances.	Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes with high, moderate, and low risk.	Low	16%; Increase: 1% Remains <b>Below</b> DRV of 22-28%	33%; Increase: 1% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 12-28%
			Moderate	19%; Increase: 4% Remains Within DRV of 13-33%	17%; Increase: 6% Remains Within DRV of 8-27%
			High	65%; Decrease: 4% Remains <b>Above</b> DRV of 31-52%	50%; Decrease: 7% Remains Within DRV of 29-74%
	Forest vegetation vulnerable to Douglas-fir bark beetles.	Acres of treatment in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes with high or moderate risk.	Moderate - 1,111 acres treated (133 overstory treatment) of 6,061 acres available	Moderate - 3,604 acres treated (997 overstory treatment) of 11,820 acres available	
			High - 2,382 acres treated (463 overstory treatment) of 4,463 acres available	High - 1,216 acres treated (315 overstory treatment) of 2,532 acres available	
	Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes to reduce vulnerability.	Buttermilk = 3,350 (581 overstory treatment) of 6,349 ac. Available	Libby = 4,465 (1,244 overstory treatment) of 10,961 ac. Available	

Figure 53. Post-project vegetation structure for Alternatives 2 and 3.



### 3.5.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects

#### *Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*

There are no concurrent or reasonably foreseeable activities within the Mission Forest and Fuels Project area that would affect vegetation.

### 3.5.4.4 Summary of Effects

There is no difference between the two action alternatives. Under both alternatives Two and Three, the planned vegetation management treatments would move towards or maintain the Desired Range of Variability for Forest Vegetation Composition and Structure and vulnerability to western spruce budworm in both the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes. Both alternatives would considerably reduce the acres of high and moderate vulnerability to Douglas-fir beetles and treat acres vulnerable to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe. The planned treatments would maintain or promote medium and/or large trees on nearly 14% of the combined landscapes.

**Figure 54. Summary of vegetation resource indicators for all alternatives.**

Purpose and Need	Indicator	Measure	Alt 1	Alt 2 and 3
P & N #3 – Vegetation Composition and Structure	The amount and arrangement of dry and moist forest structures compared to the desired range of variability.	Percent Landscape	17 out of 28 Categories Within DRV	25 out of 28 Categories within or moving toward DRV
		Average Patch Size	18 out of 28 Categories Beneficial within DRV	24 out of 28 Categories Beneficial within or moving toward DRV
	Forest patches with large and medium size trees.	Acres treated	0	6,433
	Western spruce budworm vulnerability compared to the desired range of variability.	Percent Landscape In Low, Medium and High Vulnerability Levels	3 out of 6 categories within DRV	6 out of 6 categories within or moving toward DRV
	Forest vegetation vulnerable to Douglas-fir bark beetles.	Acres of treatment in the Buttermilk and Libby landscapes with high or moderate risk.	0	8,313
	Forest vegetation vulnerable to dwarf mistletoe infection.	Acres treated in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek landscapes to reduce vulnerability.	0	7,815

### 3.5.5 Consistency Statement

#### *Compliance with LRMP and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans*

Alternative 1 is in compliance with all LRMP, laws, regulations, policies and plans.

Both action alternatives meet Okanogan NF LRMP Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines (FW S&G) in that;

- FW S&G 5-1: No harvest would take place in mixed conifer old growth stands (A definition of mixed conifer old growth is found in the Glossary)
- FW S&G 20-14: Commercial thinning would thin from below (generally leave the largest trees)
- FW S&G 20-15: Intermediate thinning would have a beneficial effect regarding the vulnerability to insects and disease.
- FW S&G 20-28: The Landscapes would be managed to maintain or promote historic composition of tree species.
- FW S&G 20-34: Pre-commercial thinning (understory treatments) would take place in overstocked stands.
- FW S&G 20-35: Pre-commercial thinning (understory treatments) would reduce and minimize the spread of disease or the favorable conditions for injurious forest insects
- FW S&G 20-41: No openings over 40 acres in size would be created.

Both vegetation management in both alternatives would meet Okanogan NF LRMP management direction for Management Area 5 in that stands would be managed to control insects and disease problems and vegetation management activities would meet visual quality objectives for roaded natural recreation by managing the foreground of FSR 4300, retaining natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape. Direction for Management Area 14 would be met in that the proposed timber harvest is designed to perpetuate the Desired Range of Variability for vegetation. Direction for Management Area 25 would be met in that the landscape would be intensively managed using both even aged and uneven aged silvicultural practices, while protecting the land for other resources and stands with high levels of dwarf mistletoe would be treated.

Neither action alternative includes vegetation management treatment within Congressionally Reserved areas (Wilderness) or inventoried roadless areas.

Both action alternatives would meet Northwest Forest Plan Objectives for Matrix in that 15 percent of the units identified for Variable Retention Regeneration treatment would be left through the next rotation and would be comprised of forest patches from 0.5-2.5 acres in size.

Both action alternatives would meet Northwest Forest Plan Objectives for Riparian Reserves in that the proposed commercial and noncommercial stocking reduction of conifers would result in maintaining or promoting deciduous shrub and tree species as well as decreasing fuel levels that would make Riparian Reserves more fire resilient.

Both action alternatives would meet Northwest Forest Plan Objectives for Late Successional Reserves (LSRs) in that planned noncommercial treatments open the canopy and reduce

potential for crown fire and competition between trees, which would reduce the risk of habitat loss of the late/old habitat. There would be 88 acres of TSI activity and 12 acres of Ladder Fuel Reduction work within the Twisp River and Sawtooth LSRs.

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management treatments would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to vegetation, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment;

219.8(a)(1)(iv) System drivers such as wildland fire, and climate change, and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area to adapt to change; (v) Wildland fire and opportunities to restore fire-adapted ecosystems; and (vi) Opportunities for landscape scale restoration. Thinning on up to 388 acres as provided by this amendment would have a beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effect on system drivers such as wildland fire, insects and disease, climate change, the ability of terrestrial ecosystems to adapt to change, opportunities to restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and opportunities for landscape-scale restoration because thinning in deer winter thermal cover would create forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more similar to historical and predicted future conditions and more likely to experience low-severity fire behavior similar to historical conditions. The resulting vegetation structure would be less vulnerable to effects of climate change such as increased summer warming and drying because there would be less vegetation on the landscape competing for increasingly scarce water resources. Thinning as allowed by this amendment may include up to 54 percent of the planned commercial thinning treatments in Libby Creek. Most of these prescriptions are designed to promote dry forest restoration. Besides restoring historical patterns of forest vegetation on the landscape, thinning would maintain and promote medium and large trees [large saw old forest (LSOF)] by reducing stocking levels and reducing levels of dwarf mistletoe infection, all of which creates resilience to fire and insects and promotes ecological sustainability under current conditions and in those associated with projected climate change.

219.9(a)(1) Ecosystem Integrity: The 388 acres of additional vegetation management treatment associated with the amendment would have a beneficial, short to long-term, minor to moderate effect on ecosystem integrity because it would help restore forest structure towards historical composition and patterns that are more sustainable to disturbances such as insects and disease, wildfire, and projected impacts of climate change. Most of this treatment is within Libby Creek sub-watershed and represents up to 54 percent of the overstory treatment in that sub-watershed. Most of the vegetation management activity that would be involved with this reduction of deer winter range cover would be moving multi-storied stand structures (Young Forest Multi Story and Stem Exclusion Closed Canopy), which are over-represented in both Libby Creek and Buttermilk Creek sub-watersheds compared to historical conditions, to more open, single storied structure like Stem Exclusion Open Canopy and Stand Initiation. Levels of



dwarf mistletoe would also be reduced. By returning to more historical stand structure and composition, treated stands and the landscape in general would have an increased resilience to fire and insects. This would allow for future prescribed fire treatments which would increase the presence and diversity of understory species dependent on open stands and/or frequent fire intervals, but decrease the presence and diversity of species dependent on closed canopy stands and infrequent fire intervals.

219.11 Timber Requirements based on NFMA (c) Timber harvest for purposes other than timber production – Timber harvest for timber production is not an identified Purpose and Need for the project. Timber harvest is needed to restore historic forest composition and structure patterns, promote fire and insect resilient tree species and structure, reduce dwarf mistletoe infection levels, and promote and maintain medium and large trees. These results may also be obtained by noncommercial activity alone, but to lesser effect and duration.

### Required Monitoring

After all harvest and post-harvest activities are complete, openings over two acres in size created by proposed activities in the two action alternatives will be planted and then monitored for regeneration success. The minimum acceptable stocking level for reforestation certification is 100 vigorous conifer seedlings per acre.

## 3.6 Fire/Fuels

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Fire/Fuels Report by M. Trebon (2018, available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

### 3.6.1 Methodology

Figure 55 describes the fuels and fire resource indicators that will be used to evaluate existing conditions in this project area and effects of proposed treatments.

**Figure 55. Fire/Fuels Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Restoration or maintenance of fire behavior to within the desired range of variability.	The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk as compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of Libby and Buttermilk landscapes in Low, Moderate, & High risk of crown fire	P&N #1 P&N #3 P&N #4	LRMP S&G NWFP S&G FSM Restoration Strategy FMP

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
		Average patch size (in acres) of Libby and Buttermilk landscapes in Low, Moderate, and High risk of crown fire		
Wildfire hazard in Wildland Urban Interface	Fire behavior in WUI	Percent of flame length by size class	P&N #6	LRMP S&G NWFP S&G FSM FMP CWPP
		Percent of fire behavior by type (none, surface, crown)		
	Fire behavior along FS Roads 43 and 4340	Percent of flame length by size class		
		Percent of fire behavior by type		
Access for vegetation and fire management	Roads in project area	Percent of FS roads greater than ½ mile in length that would remain or be decommissioned.	P&N #7	LRMP S&G

The methodologies used to analyze resource indicators are described below. Modeling results were interpreted using more than twenty-five years of local prescribed burning and fire suppression experience gained in similar terrain, fuel types, fuel loading, stand composition, and weather conditions.

*Resource Indicators: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek watersheds as compared to the desired level between historical and future ranges of variability.*

Crown fire risk (CFR) is the likelihood that a surface fire in a given landscape type may carry into the tree canopy through continuous layers of vegetation. The Restoration Strategy (Reynolds 2002; Reynolds et al. 2003; USDA Forest Service 2012a) outlines the analysis process used to evaluate landscape conditions and assess whether landscape characteristics such as crown fire risk have departed from historic and/or future ranges of variability. The process involves conducting photo interpretation to identify multiple vegetation and landscape attributes in each of the two sub-watersheds in the project area: Buttermilk Creek and Libby

Creek. The Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS) modeling tool (EMDS 3.0.2, *ibid*) used these data to evaluate existing landscape and stand-level characteristics and trends separately for each sub-watershed. EMDS was used to compare the current conditions to a range of historical and future reference conditions for each sub-watershed to give insights into how vegetation and disturbance systems have changed and how they are likely to change over time.

In this analysis, crown fire risk (CFR) at low, moderate, and high levels (Appendix C in Huff et al. 1995) is the primary fire characteristic used to assess how fire behavior has changed from 80<sup>th</sup> percentile values for the historical range of variability (HRV) and the future range of variability (FRV). HRV refers to the fluctuations in ecosystem composition, structure, and process over time, especially prior to the influence of Euro-American settlers (USDA Forest Service 2012a). FRV refers to expected fluctuations in these elements due to projected changes in climate (*ibid*). Crown fire risk describes the potential for a surface fire to transition into a crown fire, which increases fire severity (the effect of a fire on ecosystem properties, usually defined by the degree of soil heating or mortality of vegetation as indicated by vegetation mortality, habitat alteration, and other fire effects (Agee 1993).

CFR naturally exists at various levels in forest vegetation in the project area, and is influenced by vegetation structure, number of canopy layers, crown cover, weather, and surface fire behavior such as flame length (Huff et al. 1995). Vegetation characteristics in turn are influenced by temperature and moisture regimes. From a management perspective, changes in the type, amount, and arrangement of crown fire risk on the landscape may cause concern because some of the conditions that increase CFR (i.e. greater flame length from surface fuel accumulation, and denser, multi-level stands that provide a pathway for surface fire to move to crown fire) contribute to uncharacteristic fire effects, including more severe air quality degradation, greater difficulty in controlling a wildfire, and higher risk of stand-replacement wildfires in areas that did not usually experience this type of disturbance (*ibid*). Uncharacteristic fire behavior in this analysis is defined as fire frequency and effects in a given landscape that are departed from the historical natural fire regime's range for that landscape (Hardy et al. 1998). A historical natural fire regime is a description of the frequency and impacts of historical fire conditions under which vegetation communities evolved and were maintained without fire exclusion (Hardy 2005). The fire regimes and characteristic fire behavior and effects in the project area are further described in Affected Environment below, under "Overview of Crown Fire Risk".

EMDS was used to classify CFR into low, moderate, and high levels in each sub-watershed. Each level of CFR was measured by the percentage of land to indicate the overall amount on the landscape, and by average patch size to indicate the arrangement of this fire behavior on the landscape. Patch size is a landscape ecology term defined as a relatively homogeneous area that differs from its surroundings; patches are the basic unit of the landscape that change and fluctuate through a process called patch dynamics ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape\\_ecology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_ecology), accessed 10/20/16). HRV was determined by analyzing an ecosystem sub-regions (ESR) composed of similar climate, geology, topography, aquatic characteristics, and disturbance histories to the respective sub-watersheds in the project area (Huff et al. 1995;

Hessberg et al. 1999; USDA Forest Service 2012a). The future range of variability (FRV) was developed to provide insight as to how the sub-watersheds may be affected by changing climate. EMDS was used to model an ecosystem with landscape characteristics in the next warmer ESR than each sub-watershed as a conservative proxy for reference conditions under climate change (USDA Forest Service 2012a). These outcomes are used in this analysis as the FRV. Because EMDS used a conservative approach in estimating climate change, it may underestimate the FRV if the degree of climate change is more severe than indicated by the next warmer ESR.

The desired values for CFR at each level were determined by finding where the HRV and FRV overlap; this intersection is called “the desired range of variability” in this analysis. The landscape prescription for CFR was developed based on the need to maintain this fire behavior characteristic within this intersecting range, or to move this characteristic closer towards the intersecting range where it is outside of this value. Proposed prescribed fire and thinning treatments were developed to alter the conditions that affect CFR, including surface fuels, multiple and continuous canopy layers, and canopy density, while recognizing that terrain and weather (other factors that influence crown fire behavior) cannot be changed. Treatment locations were developed in ArcGIS to apply the landscape prescription based on departure from the desired CFR range, field reconnaissance, discussion with resource specialists, and public input. Where at least 50% of the EMDS vegetation polygon was within a proposed treatment unit, changes were made to crown fire risk, flame length, and other vegetation characteristics depending on the type of treatment proposed to emulate their effects on CFR. The resulting dataset was modeled by EMDS and compared to the HRV and FRV to determine whether the proposed treatments and locations would degrade, maintain, or improve the amount and arrangement of each level of crown fire risk in comparison to the HRV and FRV. Using a 50% breakpoint to select polygons affected by proposed changes will slightly underestimate changes in the project area where less than 50% of the polygon was not affected by a proposed treatment.

A small portion of the project area (205 acres) lies outside of the Buttermilk and Libby Creek watersheds, but within the greater Twisp River watershed. This area was added to the project at the request of adjacent residents in the Buttermilk Firewise Community, and is referred to in this analysis as the Buttermilk Annex. The purpose of proposed treatments in this area is based on the need to reduce fire hazard created by the volume, condition, arrangement, and location of fuels in this area of WUI. The area was added to the project area after photo interpretation and initial EMDS modeling had been completed for the rest of the project area. For these reasons, this portion of the project area was not analyzed with EMDS for consistency with HRV or FRV of any comparable ESR.

#### *Resource Indicator: Fire behavior in WUI*

Wildfire risk is defined as the combination of likelihood, intensity, and effects of wildfires. (Scott et al. 2013). In this analysis, two fire characteristics that contribute to wildfire intensity were analyzed: crown fire behavior and flame length. For the purposes of this analysis, Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) consists of the area described by the CWPP (Bloch et al. 2013a, 2013b), including two priority treatment areas identified by the CWPP that lie within the project area

boundary. Fire behavior in the WUI was evaluated by modeling the existing type of fire behavior (surface or crown) and flame length, fire characteristics that affect wildfire risks to life and property and allow or limit the use of direct suppression opportunities. FlamMap 5.0 software (Finney 2006) was used to spatially model these elements at the stand level under constant weather conditions to determine current values and those expected post-treatment under the modeled conditions. FlamMap modeling used data from LANDFIRE (LANDFIRE 2010, LANDFIRE 2012) to create a 30-meter grid over the project area, with each cell of the grid assigned an elevation, slope, aspect, canopy height, canopy cover, crown base height, crown bulk density, and surface fuel model. The resulting data were clipped to the WUI in the project area using ArcGIS software.

Weather data used in modeling came from the Douglas Ingram Ridge (DIR) Remote Access Weather Station (RAWS), located nine miles southeast of the project area. This RAWS was selected because it is the closest station at a similar elevation and aspect to the project area. Data from the DIR RAWS cover a 20-year period from 1985 to 2016, with hourly readings of temperature, relative humidity, dead and live woody fuel moistures, and herbaceous fuel moistures used in this analysis. Errors and omissions in this data were corrected against the Leecher Mountain and North Cascades Smokejumper Base RAWS. FireFamilyPlus 4.0 software (Bradshaw and McCormick 2000) was used to calculate 90<sup>th</sup> percentile weather conditions from this data for input to FlamMap. This percentile was selected because it represents the conditions most prevalent during fire growth, excluding 10% of the more severe conditions such as wind events or drought that contribute to extreme fire behavior. Testing proposed treatments against 90<sup>th</sup> percentile conditions gives a good indication as to whether treatments have the potential to affect fire behavior during the conditions under which most fires grow. Treatments proposed by this project are not intended to effectively change fire behavior past 90<sup>th</sup> percentile weather as these environments include low humidities, high temperatures, and winds that create fire behavior that is difficult to alter with thinning and prescribed fire treatments.

Winds can accelerate fire characteristics dramatically, but for this analysis, fire behavior was modeled in FlamMap with no wind to show baseline crown fire activity without its influence. Historical wind data from nearby RAWS are available in the analysis file for indications of the wind speeds and directions typical of the area. FlamMap made relative fire behavior calculations for each cell in the grid, assuming that each one burns independently and simultaneously. By creating a static representation of the landscape where there is no predictor of fire movement across the landscape and wind and weather values are constant, FlamMap output is useful for comparing landscapes and treatment effects, and for identifying hazardous fuels and topographic combinations (Stratton 2006). However, this modeling process may underestimate fire behavior due to modeling limitations (for example, it does not consider fire growth through spotting, and keeps interactions between fire, fuel and weather static).

The values used in this analysis will underestimate fire behavior during the latter part of the fire season (approximately late August - September) when fuels are drier, during drought conditions when fuels have cured sooner and more fully than expected, or during windy periods (especially when wind and slope direction align). Modeling parameters and data sources used in this

analysis are described in detail in the Fuels/Fire Resource Report (Trebon 2018) in the project file.

Crown Fire Behavior in WUI: If wildfires move from the surface into the forest crown, they become more difficult to attack directly with personnel or equipment because fireline intensity increases, rates of spread can outpace available resources, and hazards to personnel increase. In addition to these concerns, crown fires promote more rapid fire growth by producing embers that may spot miles away (Koo et al. 2010). FlamMap determined fire behavior values for each grid cell as none, surface, passive (single or small groups of trees are involved) or active (where a solid flame develops in the crowns of trees, but the surface and crown phases advance as a linked unit dependent on each other). This analysis groups passive and active crown fire together in recognition of the modeling limitations of FlamMap, which under-represents crown fire, and because differentiating between the types of crown fire has limited value when the outcome in either case is ultimately the loss of the tree canopy (Scott and Reinhardt 2001; Stratton 2004) with greater potential for higher fireline intensity, resistance to control (defined as the relative difficulty of constructing and holding a control line as affected by resistance to line construction and by fire behavior; NWCG 2003), and more rapid, widespread fire growth through spotting.

The aspect of crown fire behavior most affected by proposed treatments in this project is the surface fuel loading and crown base height (CBH), the lowest height above the ground above which there is sufficient canopy fuel to propagate fire vertically (Scott and Reinhardt 2001). In general, surface fuels combine with slope to create flame lengths that may ignite lower branches; lower CBH values indicate greater susceptibility to ignition that initiates crown fire. Lowering surface fuel loading through underburning, and raising the CBH through scorching lower branches (as may occur during underburning) or thinning the understory (as occurs during ladder fuel reduction thinning and pruning) reduces the risk of crown fire initiation because surface fires have less ground fuel and less canopy fuel to ignite directly (Agee and Skinner 2005). For this analysis, changes to CBH and resulting crown fire behavior were modeled by changing the surface fuel values and reducing the minimum CBH value within proposed treatment units to 4 meters (12 feet) to simulate the reduction of surface fuels and small-diameter trees through proposed understory thinning and pruning, and scorching of lower branches through proposed prescribed fire treatments.

Flame Length in WUI: In addition to influencing crown fire initiation, flame lengths affect the ability to use direct suppression tactics on wildfires in WUI, which in turn affects the size of the fire. Lower flame lengths may be approached more directly by personnel and ground equipment to contain and suppress wildfires, while longer flame lengths become inapproachable by these resources and must be contained and suppressed indirectly. FlamMap used fuel models and associated fuel loading combined with CBH values and weather parameters to predict flame lengths, which are compared below to established categories (Andrews and Rothermel 1982) that indicate likely suppression responses dictated by flame length. Because FlamMap works with gridded 30m data that doesn't allow precise translation to the general categories below, an adjusted range is used in this analysis that allows for an approximation of the same conditions

(to a wildland firefighter, a 3.3 flame length is barely distinguishable in intensity from a 4' flame length, and so on for the remaining categories)

- 0 to 4 feet: Personnel can generally attack fire directly at the head or flanks of the fire using hand tools. Hand fireline should hold the fire effectively. (For this analysis, this category will be called Low and include values from 0 to 3.3 feet.)
- 5 to 8 feet: Fires are too intense for direct attack on the head by personnel using hand tools. Hand fireline will not reliably hold the fire. Equipment such as plows, dozers, engines, and retardant aircraft can be effective. (For this analysis, this category will be called Moderate and include values from 3.4 to 9.8 feet.)
- 9 to 12 feet: Control efforts at the head of the fire will probably be ineffective. Personnel and equipment are unable to attack the fire directly. Retardant may be effective. (For this analysis, this category will be called High and include values from 9.9 to 13.1 feet.)
- Greater than 12 feet: Control methods at the head or directly adjacent to the fire are ineffective. Personnel, equipment, and retardant are ineffective. Indirect attack methods must be used, in which the control line is located some considerable distance away from the fire's active edge. (For this analysis, this category will be called Extreme and include values from 13.2 feet or greater.)

*Resource Indicator: Fire hazards along FS Roads 43 and 4340*

Forest Service Road 4300000 (referred to as FS Road 43 in this analysis) is the primary ingress/egress route for the project area, with 15.7 miles traversing both sub-watersheds to connect with adjacent county roads. Approximately 3.9 miles of Forest Service Road 4340000 (referred to as FS Road 4340 in this analysis) provides another primary route linking Libby Creek to the adjacent Gold Creek drainage. These two roads offer important ingress/egress option for nearby residents, forest visitors, and suppression resources. During a wildfire, the safest conditions along these roads would be created by conditions that support low flame lengths and as little crown fire as possible. These conditions also increase the likelihood of successfully using these roads as control points during a wildfire. Given that these roads go through many forested areas, a 150' buffer was created around these road features in ArcGIS to detect the type of conditions created by torching trees within 1 to 2 tree lengths of the road. The results of the FlamMap modeling described above were clipped to this buffer for comparison.

*Resource Indicator: FS Roads in Project Area > 0.5 miles*

The ability to treat vegetation, apply prescribed fire, and respond to wildfires on NFS lands in the project area is affected by road access. Roads that would remain open or allow Administrative Access post-project would provide rapid access to areas for these purposes. Post-project road closures would limit access by vehicles for vegetation and prescribed fire treatments, but would still be available for future access to conduct vegetation and fuels management activities. Closed roads would increase the response time for engines because the road barrier would need to be removed by machinery before emergency access would be possible. Road decommissioning would eliminate vehicle access for ongoing vegetation and prescribed fire treatments and suppression response, and limit the type of resources that may be used to respond to wildfires.

This indicator will compare the miles of roads greater than 0.5 miles that remain post-project to those that would be decommissioned. ArcMap was used to determine the miles of roads in each category for each alternative. Changes to roads that are less than 0.5 miles long are not included in this analysis because they access relatively small portions of the landscape that have access from other roads, or access areas with limited need for vegetation management, or offer little effective access for fire management.

### **3.6.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

The following definitions will be used to describe the types of impacts that would be caused by proposed actions analyzed in this report.

Type of Impact:

- Adverse: Increases the likelihood of uncharacteristic fire behavior and/or risk to developments; reduces access for vegetation/fuels & fire suppression activities.
- Beneficial: Decreases the likelihood of uncharacteristic fire behavior and/or risk to developments; maintains or increases access for vegetation/fuels & fire suppression activities.

Duration of Impact:

- Short-term: Impact lasts up to 15 years.
- Long-term: Impact lasts more than 15 years, or (in the case of road decommissioning) is permanent.

Intensity of Impact:

- None: No impacts
- Negligible: Undetectable change to plant community structure, composition, and/or fuels that shifts fire behavior and ecological functions; minimal impacts to WUI; or access for fuels & fire management changed by less than 10 percent.
- Minor: Slightly noticeable, localized change to plant community structure, composition, and/or fuels that shifts fire behavior and ecological functions on up to one-third of the project area. Noticeable impacts to up to 33% of WUI. Access for vegetation and fire management changes by 11-25%.
- Moderate: Apparent change in plant community structure, composition, and/or fuels that shifts fire behavior and ecological functions on one-third to half of the project area; impacts to 33-66% of WUI; or access for vegetation and fire management changed by 26-40%.
- Major: Substantial change in plant community structure, composition, and/or fuels that shifts fire behavior and ecological function across more than 50% of the project area; impacts to over 66% of WUI; or access for vegetation and fire management changed by more than 40%.



### 3.6.3 Affected Environment

#### *Overview of fire history and crown fire risk in the project area*

Historically, the areas within the project sub-watersheds that experienced low CFR occupied the hot-dry and warm-dry forest areas in the northern portion of the Buttermilk Creek drainage and the northern and eastern portions of Libby Creek drainage. Fire frequency and severity in these environments were typical of Fire Regime I, where fire-return intervals ranged from 0 to 35 years with mostly low-severity fires that replaced < 25% of dominant overstory vegetation (Hardy et al. 1998; Hann and Strohn 2001; Hann et al. 2003). Forest stand structure in these areas would have been more open because frequent wildfires that consumed surface fuels also killed smaller seedlings and saplings and scorched lower tree branches, keeping the likelihood of surface-to-crown fire transition low. Crown fire and widespread overstory tree mortality would have been the exception; larger trees were highly resilient to wildfire because low-severity wildfire would have been less likely to reach higher tree canopies or penetrate the thick bark common to the dominant tree species of this area. As described in the Vegetation specialist report, past timber harvest in the sub-watersheds have altered the response to wildfires by reducing the proportion of fire-tolerant forest cover types that have been replaced with more shade-tolerant species. This change also caused an increase in tree canopy cover and lowered canopy-base-heights in many dry forested areas, allowing surface fires to more readily carry into overstory crowns. Harvest removed many of the large fire-resistant trees, leaving younger trees that are less tolerant to fire because of thinner bark and lower canopy base heights. Other management activities such as fire suppression (that allowed accumulation of surface fuels and development of understory tree layer) and pre-1970s grazing practices (that created bare soil over large areas and fostered germination of seedlings) helped many dry forested areas in the Buttermilk drainage to develop a greater CFR than historically. Surface fires have a greater likelihood of transitioning into crown fire, causing uncharacteristic adverse fire effects such as more widespread tree mortality and attendant adverse effects on wildlife and aquatic habitat. Because many of the areas that typically had low CFR now have moderate or high CFR, more of this landscape is at risk for uncharacteristically severe wildfires with detrimental effects to hydrologic and soil processes, as well as terrestrial and aquatic habitat.

Areas of moderate CFR historically occupied the cool-dry portions of the sub-watersheds and generally experienced mixed-severity fire behavior typical of Fire Regime III, where fire-return intervals ranged from 35 to 200 years (ibid). Mixed-severity fire behavior would have included a mosaic of low to high fire severity. These areas generally lie in mid-elevation in the project area (approximately 3000-4000') and/or on north aspects. Areas of high CFR historically occupied the cool-moist portions of the sub-watersheds that generally lie at higher elevations (approximately 4000' or more) or along narrow perennial stream channels; these areas historically experienced high-severity, or stand-replacement, fires typical of Fire Regime IV, where fire return intervals ranged from 35 to 200 year-intervals (ibid). These findings are supported by research that found that, while short-term fluctuations in weather can strongly influence fire behavior, the self-reinforcing dynamics resulting from fire history and vegetation type are more important determinants of fire severity (Thompson and Spies 2010; Collins and Stephens 2010).

Wildfire records available at the district contain information on ignitions in the project area since the 1920s. From 1920 – 2010, 173 ignitions were recorded, averaging 19 fires per decade in the project area with approximately 93% caused by lightning. The frequency of ignitions in this period ranged from 1 to 8 per year. This information indicates that fire historically occurred frequently in the project area. There is no reason to think this frequency or pattern of ignitions would change in the future.

The existing measures for the fire/fuels resource indicators are displayed in Figure 56.

**Figure 56. Fire/Fuels Resource Indicators and Measures for the Existing Condition**

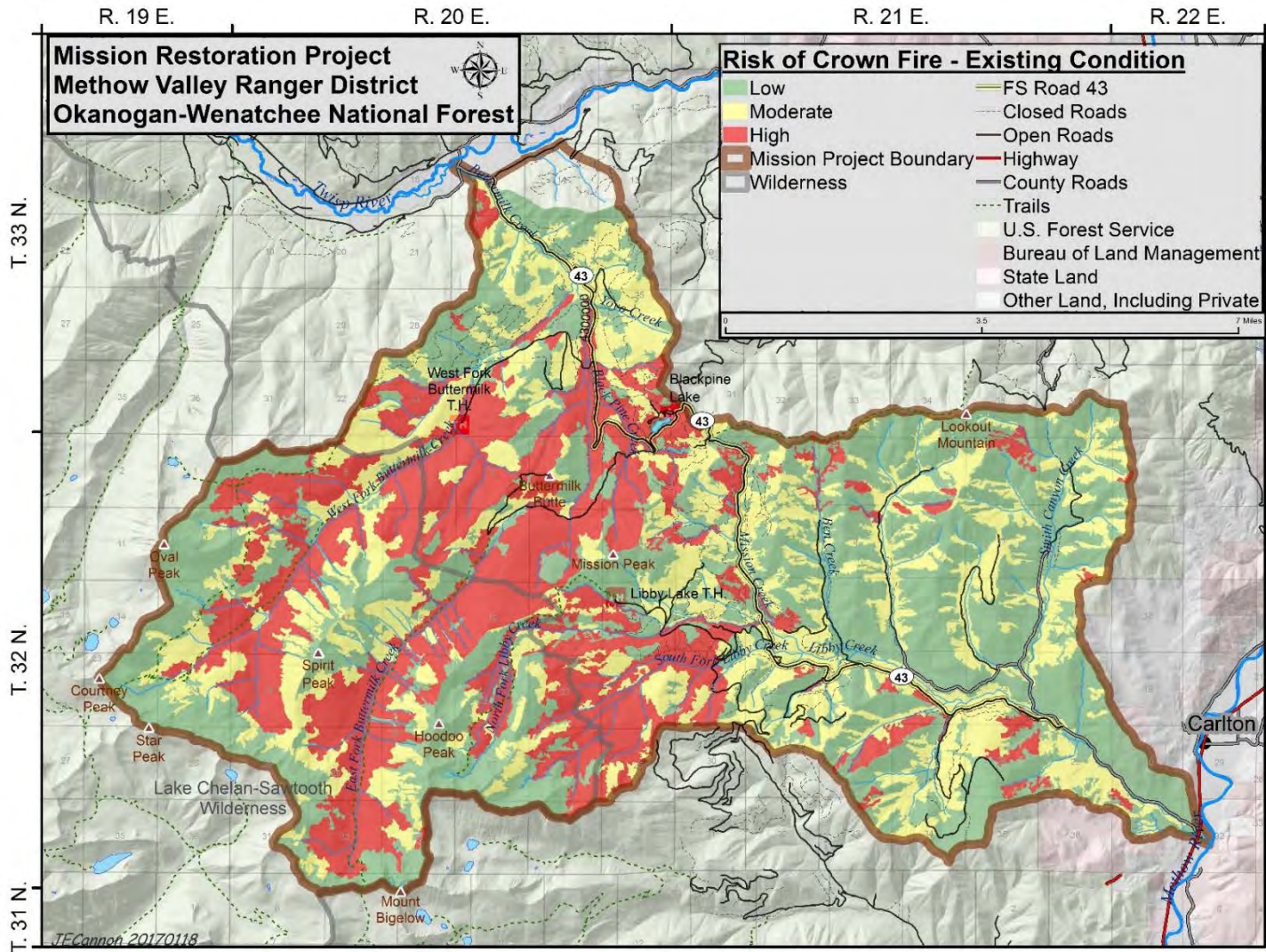
Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Restoration or maintenance of fire behavior to within the desired range of variability.	The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of landscape in Low, Moderate, & High risk of crown fire	LOW CFR Buttermilk = 32% Below desired range of 45-67% Libby = 53% Within desired range of 41-67%
			MODERATE CFR: Buttermilk = 27% Within desired range of 20-30% Libby = 32% Within desired range of 20-36%
			HIGH CFR: Buttermilk = 41% Above desired range of 12-28% Libby = 16% Within desired range of 5-24%
		Average patch size in Low, Moderate, and High risk of crown fire	LOW CFR Buttermilk = 207 ac Below desired range of 1651-3714 ac Libby = 400 ac Below desired range of 713-3714 ac
			MODERATE CFR: Buttermilk = 305 ac Below desired range of 460-2073 ac Libby = 268 ac Below desired range of 460-1776 ac
			HIGH CFR: Buttermilk = 1504 ac Within desired range of 523-2125 ac Libby = 248 ac Within desired range of 242-934 ac

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Wildfire hazard in Wildland Urban Interface	Fire behavior in WUI (23,000 acres total)	Percent of flame length by size class  Percent of fire behavior by type	Low: 52% Moderate: 35% High: 4% Extreme: 9%  None: 3% Surface: 82% Crown: 15%
	Fire behavior along FS Roads 43 and 4340 (701 acres total)	Percent of flame length by size class  Percent of fire behavior by type	Low: 85% Moderate: 9% High: 2% Extreme: 4%  None: 28% Surface: 61% Crown: 11%
Access for vegetation and fire management	FS Roads in project area. > 0.5 miles (99.3 miles total)	Percent of FS roads greater than ½ mile in length that would remain or be decommissioned.	Remain: 100% Decommissioned: 0%

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.*

Current CFR in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek drainages is shown in Figure 57 below. The Buttermilk Creek drainage has less forested area with low CFR than desired, which means that more of the forested area in this sub-watershed has a greater CFR than it would have historically, with a higher likelihood of uncharacteristic fire behavior and effects. The amount of forested area in Buttermilk Creek with moderate CFR is within the desired range, allowing room to treat these areas to maintain vegetation characteristics that improve resiliency to wildfire. Areas with high CFR occupy more of this drainage than is desired, dominating dry forested locations where low-severity wildfire was common historically.

Figure 57. Existing risk of crown fire in the project area.



The average patch size of dry forest areas that historically experienced low CFR in the Buttermilk drainage is well below the desired range, and areas of moderate CFR are slightly below the desired range. These types of CFR are fragmented into smaller pieces than desired, and, during a wildfire, would be more likely to be overcome by the type of fire disturbance occurring in adjacent patches. For example, smaller patches that historically experienced low CFR lie adjacent to patches with moderate or high CFR that are more likely to support and transfer uncharacteristic fire behavior and effects into and through the patches of low CFR. Since areas with moderate CFR historically experienced mixed-severity fire behavior that included low and high fire severity, being influenced by fire behavior in adjacent patches with low or high CFR would cause effects within the range of historical fire behavior of this crown fire type. The patch size of high CFR is within the desired range. The dominance of high CFR around smaller patches of low and moderate CFR makes these areas vulnerable to uncharacteristic wildfire behavior with high likelihood of more severe fire behavior and effects than desired.

Another consideration for patch size is how it influences post-disturbance recovery rates. Ecological properties of a patch are influenced by the surrounding neighborhood, and the magnitude of these influences are affected by patch size and shape (McGarigal et al. 2015). The recovery process for species removed by a disturbance (like wildfire) is closely connected to the dispersal capability of that species and the distance between the disturbed site and surviving source populations (Paine 2016). The ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir tree species at risk for mortality in areas with low CFR have seeds that are too large to be transported great distances, and their post-fire recolonization rate and success is heavily influenced by proximity to seed sources. If uncharacteristic fire behavior causes increased mortality in larger patches that cross low, moderate, and high CFR, trees would be slower to recolonize because of distance from seed sources. When subsequent disturbances continue to occur during its recovery period, they create conditions that can lead to the formation of alternative vegetation communities (ibid). A local example of this lies adjacent to the project area in the boundary of the 2001 Libby South Fire that burned again in the 2014 Carlton Complex fire. The 2001 fire created a large patch of high-severity fire in a hot-dry, warm-dry forested area that would have experienced frequent, low-severity fires historically. Conifer seedlings had started to naturally colonize the edges of this burned area and were replanted in other small portions, but outside of these locations, herbaceous cover (grass and shrubs) dominated the area. When the area burned again in 2014, many of these seedlings were killed and the patch size of high-mortality fire was enlarged further into adjacent stands of mature Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine, creating more distance from seed sources.

The length and severity of wildfire seasons across the Western U.S. is expected to increase (Liu et al. 2010; Climate Central 2012; Westerling et al. 2006). The project landscape is predisposed to burning in the dry summer climate (Agee and Skinner 2005) and, coupled with the historical pattern and frequency of lightning ignitions shown by district fire records, makes wildfires a certainty, not a possibility. Fire frequency and behavior would be exacerbated by anticipated likely climate changes such as reduced snowpack with earlier melt-off, drought, longer summer weather conditions, and lower stream flow levels. This would create conditions that allow fuels to dry out earlier and more completely, adding to available fuels for wildfires (Millar et al. 2007). The combination of these factors create the strong possibility for more frequent fires with

potential for ignition over a longer period of the growing season and greater likelihood for a recently disturbed area to experience another disturbance before recovery is complete.

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Libby Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.*

The proportions of the landscape occupied by low, moderate, and high CFR in Libby Creek are within the middle or high end of their desired ranges. The areas with low and moderate CFR would benefit from further treatments to help maintain or improve resilience to wildfire without moving these characteristics outside of the desired ranges. However, the arrangement of low and moderate CFR is undesirable because each type is fragmented into too many small patches that lie close together, making them more vulnerable to more severe type of disturbance occurring in adjacent larger patches and possibly affecting their post-fire recovery as described for the Buttermilk Creek drainage above. In several location, smaller patches of low CFR lie adjacent to moderate or high CFR, indicating a high potential for uncharacteristic fire behavior and effects from the more dominant patches. Similar to Buttermilk Creek, the areas with the most departure from the desired range lie in the dry forested portions of the drainage that would have experience similar fire behavior as described for Fire Regime I.

*Resource Indicator: Fire behavior in WUI*

The project area contains approximately 23,000 acres of WUI as defined in the CWPP (see Figure 58). About 16,400 acres of this amount is identified in the CWPP as Rural WUI; most of this lies in the Libby Creek drainage with a small portion in the Buttermilk Creek drainage around Blackpine Lake Campground. About 5000 acres of WUI within the project area is part of the CWPP's "Twisp-Carlton Neighborhoods" and is characterized in the CWPP as having moderate to high risk of wildfires, especially on mid- to upper-slopes and in developed drainages. Within this area, the CWPP further identifies Libby Creek as a potential "hot spot" for fire activity due to economic values, fuel types, fire history, and access issues. The project area also contains approximately 1600 acres of WUI in the Buttermilk Creek vicinity is in another priority treatment area, the "Twisp River Neighborhood", and is characterized in the CWPP as having very high risk of experiencing a damaging wildfire in part because of existing fuel types, fuel loading, and topography. Recommended treatments in both areas include fuel reduction around private lands and along ingress/egress routes.

FlamMap modeling under 90<sup>th</sup> percentile conditions with no wind indicates that approximately 15% of the WUI within the project area is at risk for crown fires, and 58% of the WUI is likely to experience moderate to extreme flame lengths. Large patches of crown fire risk exist in the Libby Creek drainage adjacent to private lands with developments. Crown fire risk and flame lengths would likely increase during an actual wildfire because fires often occur during windy periods that accelerate fire behavior; when winds align with slope direction, these values would increase at an even greater rate. Risks to developed areas increase with longer flame lengths and increase crown fire because these types of fire behavior generate more fire intensity that limit direct attack options and produce firebrands that are lofted in the fire's convective column, providing potential ignitions sources as they land. Greater flame lengths also increase risk for firefighters, limit direct attack opportunities, and increase the risk of wildfires moving off NFS lands to private lands (or vice versa). When direct attack options are limited, fire growth may

continue unabated until suppression resources find and prepare a suitable barrier, or wait until the fire behavior diminishes enough to attack directly. Private lands in the project area generally lie at the bottom of drainages and, while some landowners have reduced fuels and used Firewise principles in building materials and landscaping, the risk of a wildfire on private lands moving on to NFS lands still exist. Figure 58 shows current fire behavior in the WUI under modeled conditions.

*Resource Indicator: Fire behavior along FS Roads 43 and 4340*

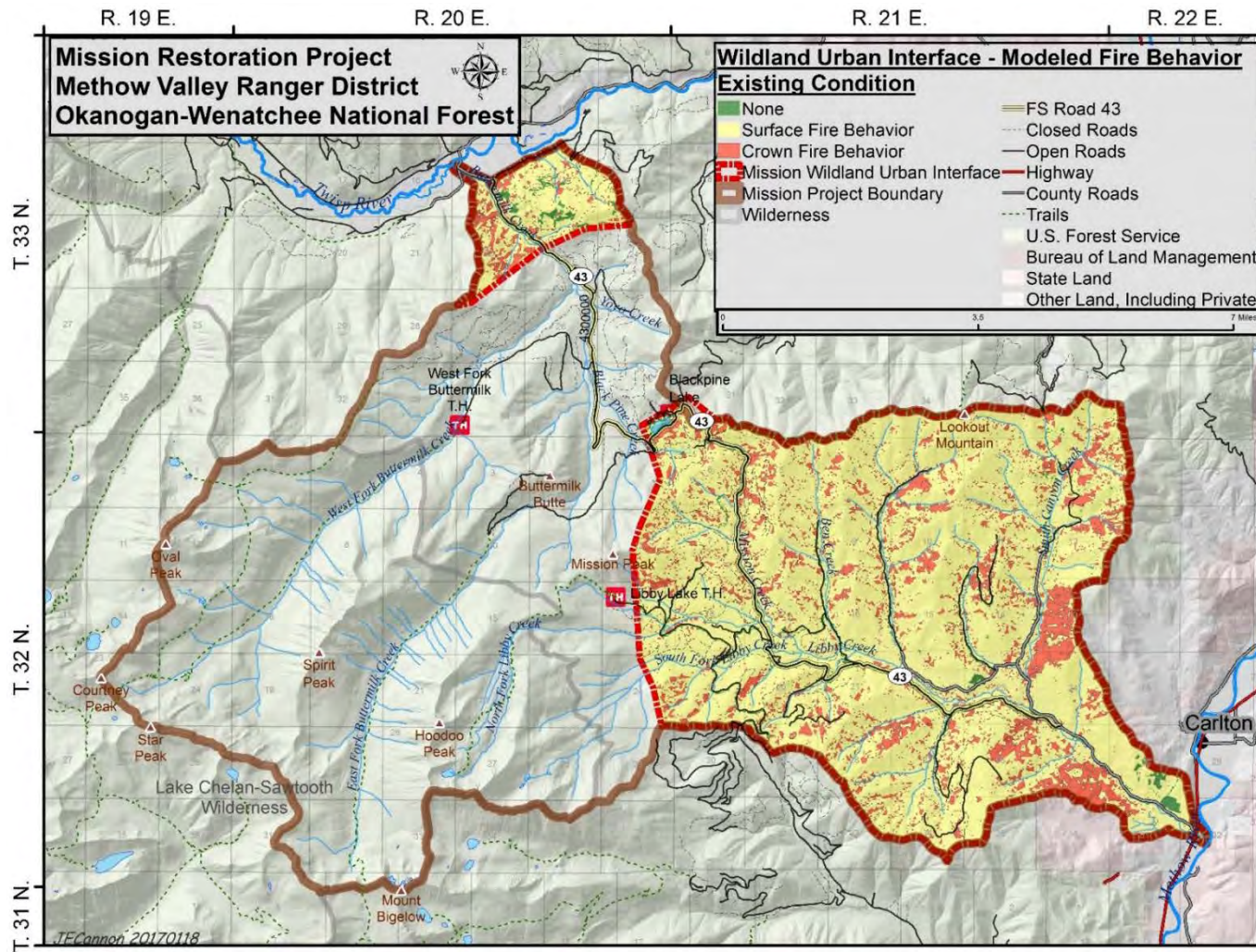
Approximately 21 miles of FS Roads 43 and 4340 lie within the project area. During the 2014 Carlton Complex wildfire, some understory thinning and pruning occurred within 25 to 50 feet of approximately 7 miles on the south side of FSR 43. This work, performed with restricted time and resources during fire suppression efforts, created a narrow buffer along one side of this road that where wildfire behavior would likely be reduced, but the potential for crown fire initiation exists just beyond this narrow buffer because fuel continuity from the surface to understory trees with low branches to the overstory tree canopy above the road still exists. Crown fire initiation within 50' of these roads would have a strong potential to carry fire over the road or increase fire intensity, either of which would limit use of these roads during a wildfire.

Buffering these roads by 150 feet on either side to model fire behavior adjacent to the roads created an area of 701 acres. FlamMap modeling under 90<sup>th</sup> percentile conditions with no wind indicates that approximately 11% is at risk for crown fires, and 15% is likely to experience moderate to extreme flame lengths. These values would likely increase during an actual wildfire because fires often occur during windy periods that accelerate fire behavior; when winds align with slope direction, these values would increase at an even greater rate. The smaller areas of greater fire behavior are interspersed between areas of surface fire with low flame lengths, but even a small area of crown fire or moderate to extreme flame length could serve to block ingress or egress to the area, create greater risks to those using the roads, limit direct attack options, and produce firebrands that are lofted in the fire's convective column, providing potential ignitions sources as they land. As use of these roads becomes limited by fire behavior, nearby residents, forest visitors, and suppression resources may be unable to leave or access the area as needed.

*Resource Indicator: FS Roads greater than 0.5 miles*

The project area contains approximately 134.6 miles of roads on National Forest System (NFS) lands. Of these roads, 99.3 miles are at least 0.5 miles long and access substantial areas for vegetation or fire management. Whether open or closed, these roads maintain access to several key locations in the project area and are important for continuing vegetation management, prescribed fire treatments, and fire suppression, especially where these roads provide substantial access to WUI, ridgelines, and midslope hillsides. About 54% of these roads are currently open, providing continual access, while the remaining 46% are closed and can be re-opened rapidly during emergency fire response, or remain closed until future management needs require access. Roads on the project landscape provide for more rapid fire suppression access with a wider range of options, including the potential use of equipment such as engines and tenders. Both open and closed roads provide options for containment lines and escape routes.

Figure 58. Existing condition of modeled fire behavior in the Wildland Urban Interface.





In one area across the bridge over the West Fork Buttermilk Creek, approximately 10.7 miles of roads greater than 0.5 miles are currently designated as closed because the bridge accessing these roads was closed due to safety concerns around 2011. The bridge has not yet been replaced, leaving these roads closed because of circumstance and not because of resource concerns supported by an environmental analysis and subsequent decision. The condition of the bridge limits efficient and effective land management access on approximately 920 acres of NFS lands; as long as these roads remain closed, future treatment options will be limited. Suppression options in this area are currently restricted because equipment such as engines, tenders, or dozers cannot access this area. Wildfire response here will likely rely heavily on limited aerially delivered resources such as smokejumpers or rappellers, and when these resources are not available, ground resources will require a longer response time to access much of the area. The limitation on vehicles makes the road less useful as a rapid escape route, further narrowing suppression response options in this area during wildfires.

### **3.6.4 Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.6.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail**

The following proposed actions will not be considered further in this analysis because they would have no measurable effect on restoration or maintenance of CFR to within the desired range of variability, changing wildfire risk in the WUI, or altering access for vegetation and fire management: soil restoration; rock armoring; replacing undersized culverts or installing fish culverts; beaver habitat or coarse woody debris enhancement; or creating hardened fords.

#### **3.6.4.2 Alternative 1**

##### *3.6.4.2.1 Effects*

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk Creek watershed as compared to the desired level between historical and future ranges of variability.*

If no action is taken to increase the amount and average patch size of low CFR levels and decrease the amount of high CFR in dry forests, then these areas would likely experience adverse, long-term, minor to major effects from uncharacteristic, high-severity wildfire behavior. The direction and amount of departure will likely increase because projected wildfire behavior and climate impacts would likely cause uncharacteristically severe impacts that further shift the type and amount of departures away from the desired range. The resilience of dry forested areas in the landscape would decline further because areas dominated by high CFR would influence wildfire behavior in adjacent uncharacteristically smaller patches of low CFR, causing unusually severe fire effects to be more widespread than historically. Terrestrial and aquatic habitat would have a strong likelihood for negative impacts including loss of vegetation and browse. Surface fuels and live vegetation would continue to increase over time until affected by wildfires, or other disturbances.

Areas of moderate CFR would experience short-term to long-term, adverse, minor, to moderate effects because their spatial distribution in the project area makes them vulnerable to more severe behavior from adjacent areas with high CFR. Rather than experiencing a range of fire severity, these areas are at risk of experiencing more crown fire behavior with greater rates of vegetation mortality during wildfires with adverse impacts to aquatic and terrestrial habitat. Vegetation recovery would likely take longer because of the potential for more severe fire effects over a larger area that decreases proximity to seed sources. Smaller patches of low to

moderate CFR would be less likely to sustain characteristic types of fire behavior and would be more likely to be influenced by adjacent, more severe types of wildfire. Many streams and forested stands in the drainage provide direct habitat for Threatened or Endangered species or connect to this habitat, and lie within or adjacent to areas where the amount and arrangement of low CFR is outside of the desired range. Past studies suggest substantial continuity in fire disturbances between sideslope and adjacent riparian forests (Everett et al. 2003). While some wildfires in the pre-suppression era may have stopped when reaching more moist riparian areas, the likelihood of stream channels providing an effective change in burning conditions that may stop or diminish fire behavior decreases on a landscape with an uncharacteristic tendency toward higher CFR. Many streams are surrounded by continual vegetation from just above the forest floor through multiple canopy layers on both sides of the stream, increasing available fuel for wildfires occurring on adjacent patches with high CFR to carry fire through riparian areas. Increased mortality that is likely to accompany crown fires would have greater potential to reduce shade along streams, increasing water temperature. Uncharacteristically high-severity fires would likely result in the loss of more vegetation across a larger portion of this drainage, increasing the chance that post-fire runoff would carry greater loads of sediment to streams and compromising aquatic habitat.

Given proximity to WUI and other resource values, it is highly likely that fire suppression will continue in the project area, especially given the level and direction of departure in CFR levels and the potential for undesirable fire behavior and effects. When ignitions occur, current LRMP and NWFP standards and guidelines and fire management policies require consideration of the values at risk, including human lives and developments and terrestrial and aquatic habitats. In some areas within the project boundary, management direction requires that fires be kept as small as possible when feasible. Therefore, the option of using wildfires to help move CFR levels into the desired amount and arrangement on the landscape would not be viable, regardless of suppression policies influenced by land management plans. Wildfires would be more likely to result in an adverse, long-term, moderate impact to dry forests in the sub-watershed. As a result, taking no action would not meet Purpose and Needs #1, #3, or #4.

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Libby Creek watershed as compared to the desired level between historical and future ranges of variability.*

Without intervention, the amount of this landscape at each level of low, moderate, or high CFR would likely remain within the desired range until affected by wildfire, insect and disease outbreak, and/or climate impacts such as drought. However, since areas with low and moderate CFR are below the desired range, they would be more at risk to experience the type of disturbance occurring in the patch with the more dominant type of CFR. Areas with small patches of low CFR that lie adjacent to areas of high CFR would be more likely to experience uncharacteristic high-severity fire. Wildfires would be more likely to result in an adverse, long-term, moderate to major impacts to dry forested areas within the sub-watershed. As a result, taking no action would not meet Purpose and Needs #1, #3 or #4.

*Resource Indicator: Fire behavior in WUI*

The result of taking no action in WUI to reduce fire hazard would be adverse, long-term, moderate impact on fire behavior because the risk of crown fire initiation would continue to grow due to ongoing fire suppression in around the WUI. In addition, natural processes would continue to allow accumulation of dead fuels and live vegetation faster than natural decomposition in this predominantly dry ecosystem could remove it. The risks to developed areas that accompany increased flame lengths and crown fire behavior would continue to exist, with fire intensity that limits direct attack options, torching that produces firebrands that contribute to spotting, and overall fire behavior that increases risks to firefighters and developments and the likelihood of wildfires moving off NFS lands to private lands (or vice versa). As a result, taking no action would not meet Purpose and Need #6.

*Resource Indicator: Fire behavior along FS Roads 43 and 4340*

The result of taking no action to reduce fire hazards along FSR 43 and 4340 would be adverse, long-term, minor to moderate impacts because hazards would continue to increase along more of these roads as surface fuels accumulated, continued growth of vegetation created more ladder fuels to initiate crown fire, and surface fires included high flame lengths that increase fire intensity. These effects would restrict the use of these roads for ingress/egress, limit their usefulness as fuelbreaks during a wildfire, and curtail the use of direct suppression strategies with personnel and equipment. As a result, taking no action would not meet Purpose and Need #6.

*Resource Indicator: FS Roads greater than 0.5 miles*

Keeping roads in their current state would create beneficial, long-term, moderate impacts to access for vegetation and fire management. If roads are kept in their current state, open road access to several ridges and mid-slope forested stands would provide more options to continue using a wider variety of tools for forest management and allowing for more rapid access with equipment and personnel during fire suppression efforts. Roads that are currently closed would remain on the landscape for use during future land management activities, and could be re-opened quickly to provide emergency fire suppression access. Open and closed roads would be available for use as escape routes. Although this results in more favorable access for vegetation and fire management resources than taking actions to close or decommissioning roads, taking no action would not meet Purpose and Need #7 because keeping all roads as they are in the project area does not provide for a road system that can be maintained to current standards.

**3.6.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3: Direct and Indirect Effects Common to Both Action Alternatives or to Alternative 2 Only**

Proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments that affect the amount and arrangement of CFR in Buttermilk Creek or Libby Creek, fire hazards in WUI, or fire hazards along FSR 43 or FSR 4340 are identical in Alternatives 2 and 3. Thinning and prescribed fire methods and prescriptions are described in Appendix A, including maintenance burning that would help maintain low levels of surface fuels and reduce small-diameter understory vegetation. The effects of these proposed treatments for both alternatives will be described in this section. With regards to proposed transportation changes, this section will only describe the effects of the Alternative 2 proposed transportation changes on access for vegetation and fire management.

### 3.6.4.3.1 Effects

The effects common to both action alternatives or to Alternative 2 only are displayed in Figure 59.

**Figure 59. Fire/Fuels Resource Indicators and Measures Common to Alternatives 2 and 3 or unique to Alternative 2 Only**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Restoration or maintenance of fire behavior to within the desired range of variability.	The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of landscape in Low, Moderate, & High risk of crown fire	<p><b>LOW CFR</b></p> <p>Buttermilk = 39% Increased 7% towards desired range of 45-67%</p> <p>Libby = 65% Increased 12%, remains within desired range of 41-67%</p> <p><b>MODERATE CFR:</b></p> <p>Buttermilk = 23% Decreased 4%, still within desired range of 20-30%</p> <p>Libby = 21% Decreased 11%, remains within desired range of 20-36%</p> <p><b>HIGH CFR:</b></p> <p>Buttermilk = 38% Decreased 3% towards desired range of 12-28%</p> <p>Libby = 14% Decreased 2%, remains within desired range of 5-24%</p>
		Average patch size in Low, Moderate, and High risk of crown fire	<p><b>LOW CFR</b></p> <p>Buttermilk = 299 ac Increased 92 ac towards desired range of 1651-3714 ac</p> <p>Libby = 825 ac Increased 425 ac, now within desired range of 713-3714 ac</p>

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
			<p><b>MODERATE CFR:</b>            Buttermilk = 237 ac            Decreased 68 ac away from desired range of 460-2073 ac</p> <p>Libby = 170 ac            Decreased 98 ac away from desired range of 460-1776 ac</p> <p><b>HIGH CFR:</b>            Buttermilk = 1734 ac            Increased 230 ac, remains within desired range of 523-2125 ac</p> <p>Libby = 264 ac            Increased 16 ac, remains within desired range of 242-934 ac</p>
Wildfire hazard in Wildland Urban Interface	Fire behavior in WUI (22,890 acres total)	Percent of flame length by size class	Low: 57% Moderate: 32% High: 3% Extreme: 8%
		Percent of fire behavior by type	None: 3% Surface: 88% Crown: 9%
	Fire behavior along FS Roads 43 and 4340 (701 acres total)	Percent of flame length by size class	Low: 92% Moderate: 6% High: 1% Extreme: 1%
		Percent of fire behavior by type	None: 28% Surface: 69% Crown: 3%
<b>Alternative 2 Only</b>			
Access for vegetation and fire management	FS Roads in project area > 0.5 miles (99.3 miles total)	Percent of FS roads greater than ½ mile in length that would remain or be decommissioned.	Remain: 89% Decommissioned: 11%

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.*

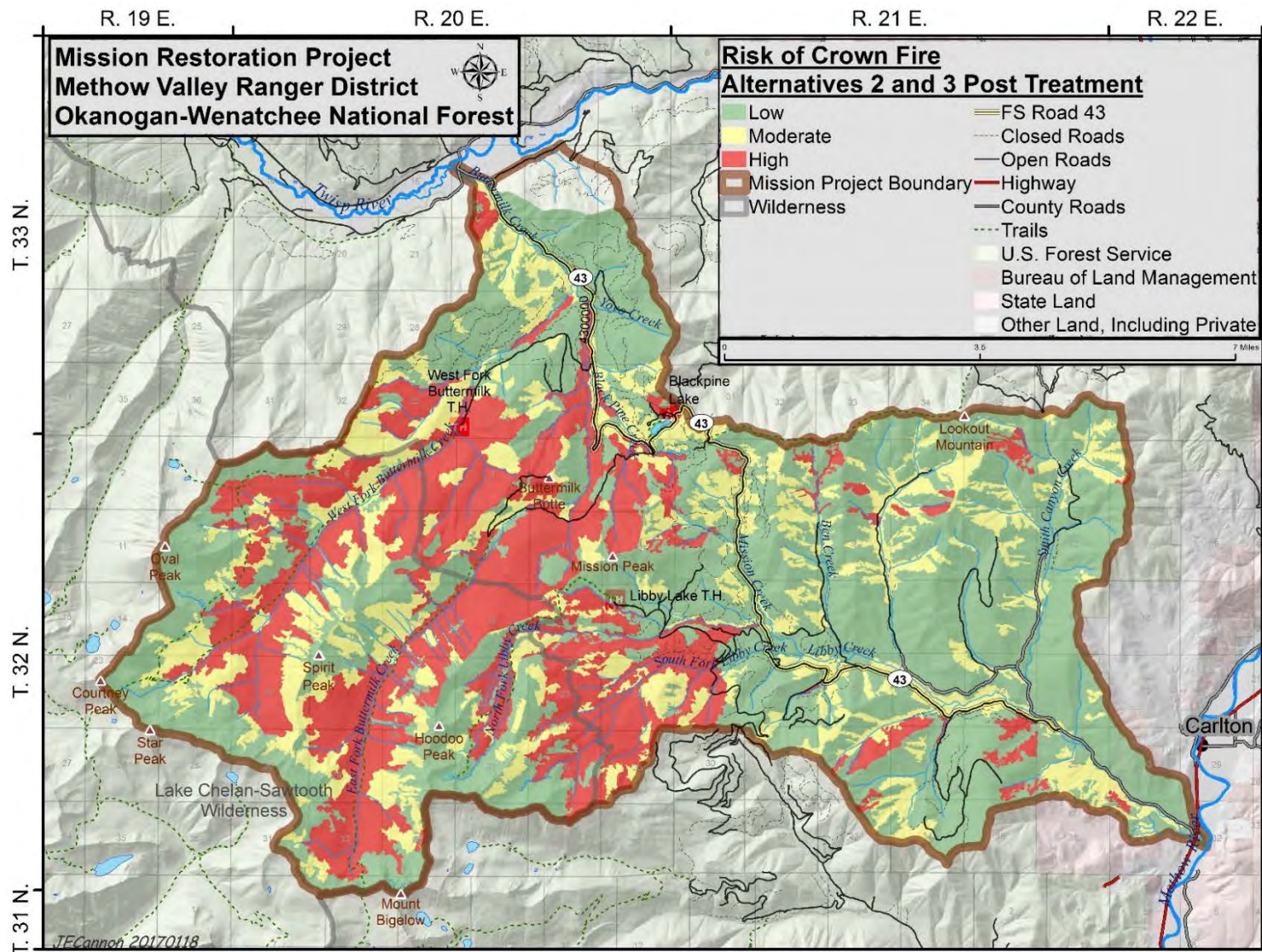
Post-treatment changes in CFR in the Buttermilk and Libby Creek drainages are shown in Figure 60 below.

While fire behavior is strongly influenced by climate and topography, these factors cannot be easily altered by treatments; therefore the treatments proposed in this project to address any aspect of wildfire behavior focus on altering the amount and arrangement of surface fuels and standing vegetation. The combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, long-term, minor effect in re-establishing the desired amount and arrangement of low CFR because these combined treatments would occur in a mosaic pattern dispersed across the drainage. The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire (without overstory thinning) would create beneficial, short-term, moderate effects on re-establishing the desired amount and arrangement of low CFR because they affect more areas within the drainage. The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire has been shown to be most effective at reducing residual overstory tree mortality in modeled and actual wildfires (Collins et al. 2014). Given that overstory trees largely dictate the function of forests and services they provide (e.g., wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, soil stability), these results have strong implications on forest resilience in the longer term (ibid). Both prescribed fire and its mechanical surrogates (i.e. thinning) help change stand structure and fuel beds so that treated stands are more resistant and resilient to high-intensity wildfire (Stephens et al. 2012). Proposed management actions including thinning and prescribed fire treatments would increase the amount of low CFR in the Buttermilk drainage, although the amount would remain below desired range after project implementation was complete. The average patch size of areas with low CFR would increase slightly but remain well below the desired range. Additional management actions would be needed to continue to increase the area and average patch size with low CFR after this project is completed. The combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, long-term, minor effect in re-establishing the desired amount and arrangement of low CFR because these areas are not widespread across the drainage. The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire (without overstory thinning) would affect more of this drainage, creating beneficial, short-term, moderate effects on re-establishing the desired amount and arrangement of low CFR. Where underburning is proposed, the initial entry of thinning and underburning would be followed by a second underburning treatment within approximately 15 years that would reduce surface fuel loading, scorch lower tree branches, and help maintain the open arrangement of understory trees to limit the potential for crown fire initiation. These maintenance treatments would create a beneficial, long-term, minor to moderate effect by extending the impact of the first treatments. Beyond this period for these and all thinning and prescribed fire treatments proposed in this project, landscape conditions would be re-evaluated for further treatment needs, and any proposed treatments would undergo new analysis. Proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments are viable fire surrogates that would help restore desired fire behavior and effects (Agee and Skinner 2005; Agee and Lolley 2006; Covington 2003; Fule et al 2011; Graham et al. 2004; Harrod et al. 2007a; Harrod et al. 2007b; Harrod et al. 2009; Prichard et al. 2010;

Stephens and Moghaddas 2005; Stephens et al. 2012). Burning alone is less effective at altering these characteristics in mature stands (Agee and Lolley 2006; Harrod et al. 2007b, Harrod et al. 2009; Schwilk et al. 2009; Stephens and Moghaddas 2005; USDA Forest Service 2012a). The effects of proposed treatments would include:

1. Increasing canopy base heights by thinning units and pruning small-diameter understory trees up to approximately 8 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) to reduce ladder fuels that provide a path for fire to move from the surface to the overstory tree canopy, or through the overstory. This treatment would mimic understory tree mortality and lower branch removal caused by wildfires (Peterson et al. 2005).
2. Reducing overstory canopy bulk density and canopy continuity in overstory thinning units by removing trees averaging 10 inches DBH and 20 feet tall.

Figure 60. Post-treatment risk of crown fire in project area.





3. Reducing surface fuels in thinning units through a combination of piling and pile burning, and underburning. In units where debris was piled, surface fuel reduction would generally be limited to the footprint of the piles.

Proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments would directly affect surface and canopy fire behavior as described in Figure 61 (Agee and Skinner, 2005). Proposed thinning treatments, in particular commercial thinning treatments that change the overstory stand structure and arrangement, would create a more open landscape to the varying degrees that thinning occurred, allowing more sunlight and moisture to reach the surface, contributing to the growth of more understory herbaceous materials and drying out fuels faster than if they were sheltered by an overstory canopy (Agee and Skinner 2005). In the dry forested portions of the project area, these conditions are consistent with a landscape created by frequent recurrent fires that left surface fuels consisting of needles, shrubs, and herbaceous plants; consumed woody fuels; and disrupted canopy fuels by killing many of the smaller trees (Reinhardt et al. 2008). Ecologically robust treatments may often increase rate of spread or leave it unchanged (ibid).

Opening the arrangement of the overstory canopy may also change the amount of wind that reaches the surface, which may also contribute to increased fire spread rates depending on the slope and the position of the opening on the landscape, as modeled in Behave 5.0 (results in the project file). In this way, proposed treatments would redistribute fire risk on the landscape by altering fire behavior because it would change fire spread rates while reducing the likelihood of crown fire behavior (Cochrane et al. 2012). The herbaceous fuels in these openings, however, would experience lower flame lengths and fireline intensity than those created by torching trees. Since spotting is a key component in fire growth (ibid), reducing the likelihood of trees torching would help reduce spread rates by limiting the opportunity for the production of embers. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments would also break up surface and canopy fuel continuity; this would have the effect of reducing potential fire growth and rates of spread in the short term (Finney 2001) by creating gaps in both surface and canopy fuels. The risks posed by potential increase spread rates would be countered by the advantages of fire-resilient forests described in Figure 61 (Agee and Skinner 2005). These effects would persist until surface fuels accumulate and vegetation regrows (Finney 2001). The maintenance underburning described above would help limit the accumulation of surface fuels and vegetation regrowth.

**Figure 61. Principles of Fire-Resilient Forests**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Effect</b>	<b>Advantage</b>
Reduce surface fuel	Reduce potential flame length	Easier control, less torching/spotting
Increase canopy base height	Requires longer flame length to begin torching	Less torching/spotting
Decrease crown density	Decreases probability of tree-to-tree crown fire	Reduces crown fire potential
Retain larger trees	Remaining trees have thicker bark and taller crowns	Increases survivability of trees

In areas with moderate CFR, the combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, long-term, minor effect in maintaining the desired amount of moderate CFR because these treatments increase resilience to wildfires as described above over limited areas of moderate CFR. The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire (without overstory thinning) would create beneficial, short-term, moderate effects on maintaining the desired amount of moderate CFR because they affect more areas within the drainage. The amount of moderate CFR in the Buttermilk Creek drainage would decrease as some of these areas would be treated to increase the area and average patch size of low CFR, but the overall amount of moderate CFR would remain within the desired range. The initial entry of thinning and underburning would be followed by a second underburning treatment within approximately 15 years that would reduce surface fuel loading, scorch lower tree branches, and help maintain the open arrangement of understory trees to limit the potential for crown fire initiation. The average patch size of areas with moderate CFR would move further from the desired range because these areas would be treated in some locations to create larger patches of low CFR. The remaining smaller patches of moderate CFR would be likely to have fire behavior related to low CFR (low fire severity, low mortality rates) infiltrate the smaller remaining patches of moderate CFR. Post-fire, the rapid rate of recovery from adjacent areas of low CFR would likely affect that of areas with moderate CFR. This type of fire behavior and recovery would increase resilience to wildfire in smaller patches of moderate CFR and is within the range of low-to-high severity fire behavior common to these areas.

The combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, short-term, minor effect in moving toward the desired amount of high CFR because these treatments affect small areas of high CFR in limited areas of the drainage. The amount of high CFR in this drainage would decrease post-treatment to create areas of low CFR, but remain above the desired range, indicating that more treatments would be needed in the future to reduce the amount of high CFR in this drainage. The average patch size of areas with high CFR would increase, but remain within the desired range. The amount and arrangement of high CFR would remain largely unaffected where it existed historically in the upland areas in the southern portion of this drainage. These areas are within a designated wilderness or inventoried roadless area (IRA) with none to very limited options for active management to reduce CFR; these areas will likely remain unchanged till affected by wildfire. Some areas of high CFR lie outside in the lower portion of the drainage, outside of a wilderness or IRA, but have limited to no road access to provide for safe conditions for personnel during prescribed fire activities. In all types of crown fire risk across both drainages, some degree of mixed-severity fire behavior (i.e. fire behavior ranging from low-to-high-severity) would remain to a degree commensurate with the existing fire regimes in the project area because proposed treatments would not create a uniform stand structure devoid of ladder fuels with no possibility of crown fire initiation, the potential for fire ignitions would not be affected by treatments, and terrain and weather and their contributions to fire behavior would remain unchanged.

*Resource Indicator: The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Libby Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.*

The combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, long-term, minor to moderate effect in maintaining or re-establishing the desired amount and arrangement of low CFR because the arrangement of treated areas would help create more continuous patches of low CFR. The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire (without overstory thinning) would create beneficial, short-term, moderate effects on re-establishing the desired amount and arrangement of low CFR because they affect more areas within the drainage. The amount of low CFR in the Libby Creek drainage would increase and remain within the desired range after project implementation was complete. The average patch size of areas with low CFR would increase to within the desired range. The initial entry of thinning and underburning would be followed by a second underburning treatment within approximately 15 years that would reduce surface fuel loading, scorch lower tree branches, and help maintain the open arrangement of understory trees to limit the potential for crown fire initiation. The effects of proposed treatments would include those listed in Figure 59 above.

In areas with moderate CFR, the combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, long-term, minor effect in maintaining the desired amount of moderate CFR because these treatments increase resilience to wildfires as described above over limited areas of moderate CFR. The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire (without overstory thinning) would create beneficial, short-term, moderate effects on maintaining the desired amount of moderate CFR because they affect more areas within the drainage. The amount of moderate CFR in the Libby Creek drainage would decrease as some of these areas would be treated to increase the area and average patch size of low CFR, but the overall amount of moderate CFR would remain within the desired range. The initial entry of thinning and underburning would be followed by a second underburning treatment within approximately 15 years that would reduce surface fuel loading, scorch lower tree branches, and help maintain the open arrangement of understory trees to limit the potential for crown fire initiation. The average patch size of areas with moderate CFR would move further from the desired range because these areas would be treated in some locations to create larger patches of low CFR. The remaining smaller patches of moderate CFR would be likely to have fire behavior related to low CFR (low fire severity, low mortality rates) infiltrate the smaller remaining patches of moderate CFR. Post-fire, the rapid rate of recovery from adjacent areas of low CFR would likely affect that of areas with moderate CFR. This type of fire behavior and recovery would increase resilience to wildfire in smaller patches of moderate CFR and is within the range of low-to-high severity fire behavior common to these areas.

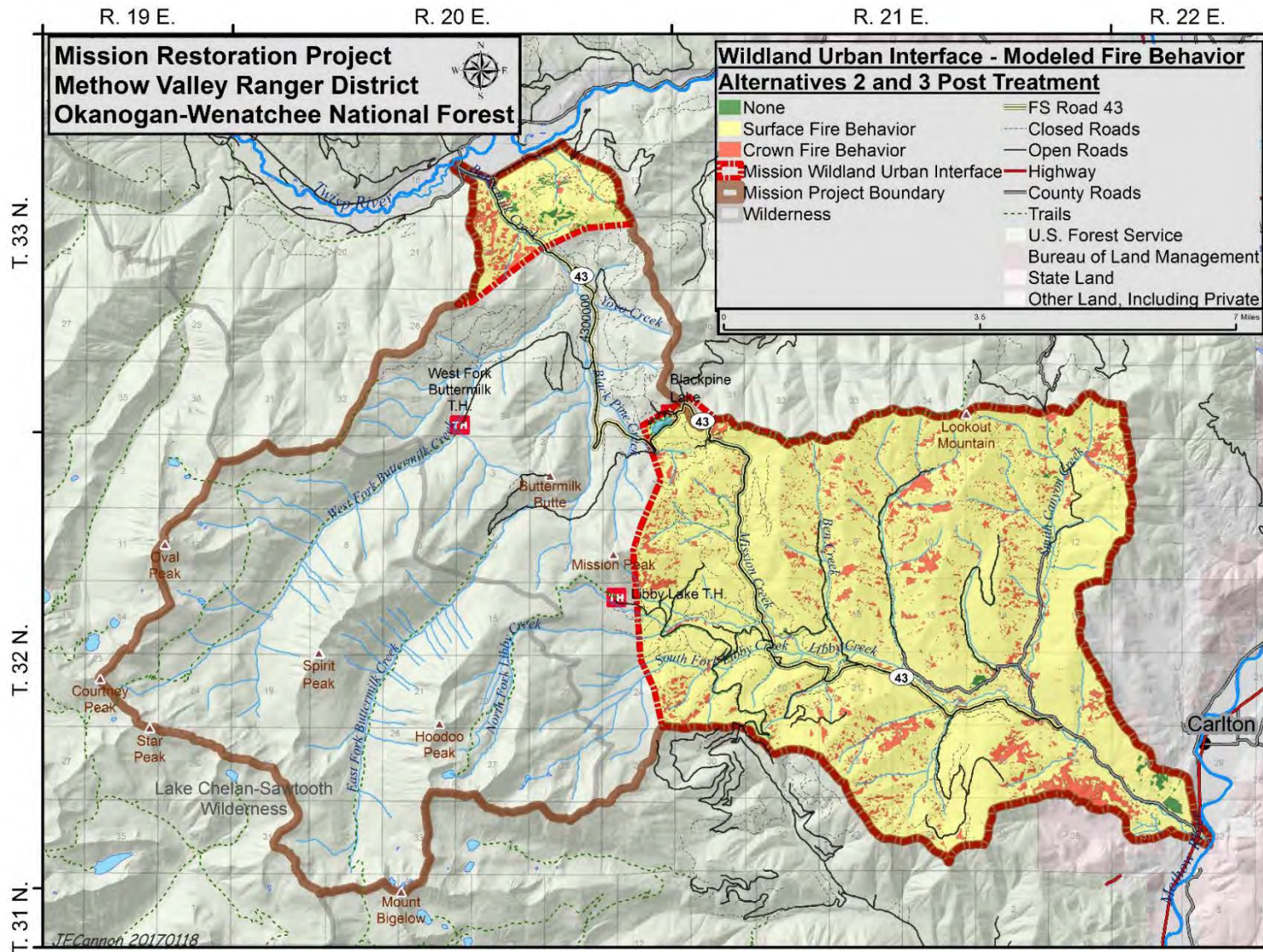
The combination of overstory thinning, understory thinning, and prescribed fire treatments would create a beneficial, short-term, minor effect in maintaining the desired amount of high CFR because these treatments keep this risk level from increasing in undesirable areas such as adjacent to WUI in the drainage. The amount of high CFR in this drainage would decrease post-treatment to create areas of low CFR and remains within the desired range. The average patch size of areas with high CFR would increase, but remain within the desired range. The amount and arrangement of high CFR would remain largely unaffected where it existed historically in the

upland areas in west-southwestern portions of this drainage. These areas are within a designated wilderness or inventoried roadless area (IRA) with none to very limited options for active management to alter high CFR; these areas will likely remain unchanged till affected by wildfire.

*Resource Indicator: Fire behavior in WUI*

Proposed treatments would affect 30% of the WUI (6,842 acres) in the project area, creating beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effects by reducing flame lengths and limiting crown fire behavior because proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments would have the impacts described in Figure 59 above. A short-term increase in risk would occur during the period between thinning and curing, and prescribed fire treatments that would reduce the surface fuels created by thinning; on average, this period lasts from one to three years. Under modeled conditions, the amount of area with low flame lengths would increase by 5%, the amount with moderate flame lengths would decrease by 3%, and areas with high or extreme flame lengths would decrease by 1% each. The amount of area with surface fire would increase by 6%. Reducing crown fire behavior in the WUI would increase the likelihood of successful direct suppression tactics by creating lower fire intensities that accompany reduced flame length and more limited crown fire behavior. As the fireline intensity decreases, opportunities for more direct and varied suppression responses by ground and aerial resources increases. Research also suggests that thinning and prescribed fire treatments may help alter the spatial patterns of fire severity around the Wildland-Urban interface (Kennedy and Johnson 2014). Spotting potential would diminish because torching potential would decrease, which in turn reduces the production and transport of embers that may act as ignition sources in the WUI. Treatments proposed in this project would create a more open landscape where understory herbaceous vegetation would eventually grow, contributing to fuel loading. As discussed previously, these conditions may contribute to greater rates of fire spread. Fuels reduction treatments to reduce wildfire risks alter the probability of fire occurrence both positively and negatively across landscapes, effectively redistributing fire risk by changing surface fire spread rates and reducing the likelihood of crowning behavior. The potential for increased rate of spread is a tradeoff for reductions in fireline intensity and spotting potential that contributes to more rapid fire growth than can occur by surface fires. These tradeoffs are created between formation of large areas with low probabilities of increased burning and smaller, well-defined regions with reduced fire risk (Cochrane et al 2012). To help maintain the effects resulting from initial proposed treatments, areas where underburning is proposed would receive a second underburning treatment within approximately 15 years. This maintenance treatment would help maintain lower surface fuel loading, scorch lower tree branches, and help sustain the open arrangement of understory trees to limit the potential for crown fire initiation. This would create a beneficial, long-term, minor to moderate effect by extending the impact of the first treatments. Figure 62 shows post-treatment fire behavior in the WUI under modeled conditions.

Figure 62. Post-treatment modeled fire behavior in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).



*Resource Indicator: Fire hazards along FS Roads 43 and 4340*

Proposed treatments along FS Roads 43 and 4340 would create beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effects by reducing flame lengths and limiting crown fire behavior because proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments would have the effects described in Figure 59 above. Under modeled conditions, the amount of area with low flame lengths would increase by 7%, the amount with moderate flame lengths would decrease by 3%, the amount of area with high flame lengths would decrease by 1%, and extreme flame lengths would decrease in 3% of the area. The amount of area with surface fire would increase by 8%. Reducing fire behavior along these roads would increase the safety of those using them for ingress and egress, and provide for more successful direct suppression tactics by creating lower fire intensities that accompany reduced flame length and more limited crown fire behavior. Spotting potential would diminish because torching would be more limited. A reduction in flame lengths and crown fire behavior would help create a safer environment for firefighters and developments. Treatments would create a more open landscape where understory herbaceous vegetation would eventually grow and contribute to fuel loading and increased flame lengths. The flame lengths created by these fuels, however, would still be less than those created by torching trees. Openings in the tree canopy would allow for more successful use of retardant to limit fire spread. Where underburning is proposed, the initial entry of thinning and underburning would be followed by a second underburning treatment within approximately 15 years that would maintain lower surface fuel loading, scorch lower tree branches, and help sustain the open arrangement of understory trees to limit the potential for crown fire initiation. These treatments would help create a fuelbreak with beneficial, long-term, minor to moderate effects by extending the impact of the first treatments. WUI treatments adjacent to private lands would be prioritized as funding became available. The effectiveness of these treatments would last approximately 10-15 years until surface fuels and vegetation accumulated enough to counteract the changes brought about by proposed treatments. At that time, further thinning and/or prescribed fire treatments would be necessary to extend the effectiveness of these fuelbreaks.

*Resource Indicator: FS Roads greater than 0.5 miles*

Alternative 2 would have 11% fewer miles of roads greater than 0.5 miles on NFS lands than Alternative 1, resulting in adverse, long-term, minor impacts to access for vegetation and fire management. Most of the changes in road status between Alternatives 1 and 2 would be from open to closed, allowing for their continued use during emergency fire suppression or longer-range vegetation and fuels management activities. Decommissioning would occur on roads that access areas that are generally accessible from other roads, or on roads that access areas with limited forest management needs.

*3.6.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects*

*Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

The spatial boundary for analyzing the cumulative effects to the fire and fuels resource is the project area boundary because it follows the natural geographical border of sub-watersheds that form the boundary of the area assessed for departure from the desired range of CFR. Wildfires within this area are the most likely to affect WUI and the use of FS Roads 43 and 4340. Roads within this area provide the only access to the project area for vegetation and fuels management and fire suppression.

The temporal boundary for analyzing the cumulative effects to amount and arrangement of CFR and wildfire hazards in WUI is 15 years post-project because after this point, surface fuels and understory vegetation changed by proposed treatments would accumulate to the point of contributing to increased CFR and wildfire hazards. Overstory thinning would have a longer effect on crown fire behavior (up to 30-50 years) depending on the length of time it took for understory trees to grow into the overstory; however, this time period will not be used as temporal boundary because surface fuels and understory vegetation changes that would affect fire behavior would occur 15 to 35 years before this period. The temporal boundary for analyzing the cumulative effects to access for vegetation and fuels management is 30 years, the likely period of time until future management activities would occur after all treatments proposed in this project are completed.

#### *Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*

The cumulative effects of past management actions before 2011 on CFR have already been evaluated in this analysis because EMDS considered the type and arrangement of vegetation, surface fuel, species composition, stand structure, and other characteristics created by past thinning, prescribed burning, insect & disease outbreaks, wildfires, and grazing. Effects of wildfires in the project area have been considered in WUI hazard analysis by adjusting fuel models to account for changes when determining existing fire behavior. Past actions to close or decommission roads have helped create the existing condition. For these reasons, the analysis of past actions in this section is based on current environmental conditions.

There are no present or reasonably foreseeable actions within the spatial or temporal context for this effects analysis that would affect the amount or arrangement of crown fire risk, change fire behavior in WUI or along FS Roads 43 and 4340, or alter road access for vegetation and fire management. Some private landowners in the Libby Creek watershed may intend to reduce hazardous fuels around their homes to minimize wildfire hazards in WUI, but the location and timing of these plans are known. Considering the impacts of the proposed actions again in a cumulative effects analysis would repeat the existing condition analysis described above. Therefore, there are no cumulative effects to this resource element in Alternative 2.

#### *3.6.4.3.3 Summary of Effects*

Implementing the proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments described above would cause beneficial, short term to long term, minor to moderate effects on maintaining or moving toward the desired range of crown fire behavior in the Buttermilk and Libby sub-watersheds. These treatments would cause beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effects on reducing fire behavior in WUI and wildfire risks along FS Roads 43 and 4340. Alternative 2 would implement proposed changes in transportation access that would cause adverse, long term, minor impacts to road access for vegetation and fire management.

#### **3.6.4.4 Alternative 3**

Because the proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments described for Alternative 2 are identical in Alternative 3, this section will only describe the effects of the Alternative 3 proposed transportation changes on access for vegetation and fire management.

### 3.6.4.4.1 Effects

The only fire/fuels resource indicator that is different in Alternative 3 is displayed in Figure 63.

**Figure 63. Fire/Fuels Resource Indicator and Measure for Alternative 3**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3
Access for vegetation and fire management	FS Roads in project area > 0.5 miles (99.3 miles total)	Percent of FS roads >0.5 miles long that would remain or be decommissioned post-project.	Remain: 69% Decommissioned: 31%

#### *Resource Indicator: Roads in project area*

Alternative 3 would have 31% fewer miles of remaining roads that are greater than 0.5 miles than Alternative 1, resulting in adverse, long-term, moderate impacts to access for vegetation and fire management. Alternative 3 would have three times the amount of decommissioning compared to Alternative 2. The greatest impacts for vegetation and fire management would be approximately 2,645 acres in areas accessed by the roads listed in Figure 64 below. Those noted as within “Designated WUI” lie within the CWPP WUI boundary in areas identified as areas with high risk to private lands. The loss of roads in these areas would limit the options available for vegetation management because, although roads could theoretically be built into these areas again in the future, it is highly unlikely that the amount of current roaded access would be recreated. Current limitations on the harvest technology and uneconomical alternatives such as helicopter or cable logging would further restrict opportunities to conduct treatments such as overstory thinning in future projects. Understory thinning and prescribed fire treatments may still occur in the future, but limited access would increase implementation costs and would increase safety hazards for personnel working in these areas. Fire suppression access in the areas listed below would require longer access times with more limited resources (in the case of ground-based resources) or would be more dependent on aerially delivered firefighters.

**Figure 64. Road Systems Proposed for Decommissioning in Alternative 3**

FS Road System	Area Accessed	Designated WUI
4300145 4300146 4300150-1.22L-1	Hornet Ridge	Y
4300220	Forest south of Blackpine Meadows	N



FS Road System	Area Accessed	Designated WUI
4300550 4300553 4300555 4300556 4300560	West of West Fork Buttermilk Creek, Scaffold Ridge	N
4300615	Yoyo Creek/Shady Nook basin	N
4300645	Yoyo Creek/Shady Nook basin	N
4340700 4340785 4340788	West of Mission Creek	Y
4342300	Chicamun Canyon	Y

#### 3.6.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects

There would be no impacts from cumulative effects for Alternative 3. Further information on potential cumulative effects are described as part of the Alternative 2 section.

#### 3.6.4.4.3 Summary of Effects

Implementing proposed transportation system changes in this alternative would cause adverse, long-term, moderate impacts to access for vegetation and fire management.

#### 3.6.4.5 Summary of Effects

If no action were taken in this project, restoration of desired ranges of CFR would experience adverse, long-term, minor to major impacts. Fire behavior in WUI and fire hazards along FS Roads 43 and 4340 would experience adverse, short-term to long-term, minor to moderate impacts. Road access for vegetation and fire management would experience beneficial, long-term, moderate impacts.

In either action alternative, proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatments would cause beneficial, short term to long term, minor to moderate effects on maintaining or moving toward the desired range of crown fire behavior in the Buttermilk and Libby sub-watersheds. These treatments would cause beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effects on reducing fire behavior in WUI and wildfire risks along FS Roads 43 and 4340. Alternative 2 would implement proposed changes in transportation access that would cause adverse, long term, minor impacts to road access for vegetation and fire management. Alternative 3 would implement proposed changes in transportation access that would cause adverse, long term, moderate impacts to road access for vegetation and fire management.

Figure 65. Summary of existing condition and effects for the proposed alternatives.

Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
The amount and arrangement of each type of crown fire risk in the Buttermilk Creek and Libby Creek watershed as compared to the desired range of variability.	Percentage of landscape in Low, Moderate, & High risk of crown fire	<b>LOW CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 32% Below desired range of 45-67%  Libby = 53% Within desired range of 41-67%	<b>LOW CFR</b> Buttermilk = 39% Increased 7% towards desired range of 45-67%  Libby = 65% Increased 12%, remains within desired range of 41-67%	<b>LOW CFR</b> Buttermilk = 39% Increased 7% towards desired range of 45-67%  Libby = 65% Increased 12%, remains within desired range of 41-67%
		<b>MODERATE CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 27% Within desired range of 20-30%  Libby = 32% Within desired range of 20-36%	<b>MODERATE CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 23% Decreased 4%, still within desired range of 20-30%  Libby = 21% Decreased 11%, remains within desired range of 20-36%	<b>MODERATE CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 23% Decreased 4%, still within desired range of 20-30%  Libby = 21% Decreased 11%, remains within desired range of 20-36%
		<b>HIGH CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 41% Above desired range of 12-28%  Libby = 16% Within desired range of 5-24%	<b>HIGH CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 38% Decreased 3% towards desired range of 12-28%  Libby = 14% Decreased 2%, remains within desired range of 5-24%	<b>HIGH CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 38% Decreased 3% towards desired range of 12-28%  Libby = 14% Decreased 2%, remains within desired range of 5-24%

Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
	Average patch size in Low, Moderate, and High risk of crown fire	<p><b>LOW CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 207 ac Below desired range of 1651-3714 ac</p> <p>Libby = 400 ac Below desired range of 713-3714 ac</p>	<p><b>LOW CFR</b> Buttermilk = 299 ac Increased 92 ac towards desired range of 1651-3714 ac</p> <p>Libby = 825 ac Increased 425 ac, now within desired range of 713-3714 ac</p>	<p><b>LOW CFR</b> Buttermilk = 299 ac Increased 92 ac towards desired range of 1651-3714 ac</p> <p>Libby = 825 ac Increased 425 ac, now within desired range of 713-3714 ac</p>
		<p><b>MODERATE CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 305 ac Below desired range of 460-2073 ac</p> <p>Libby = 268 ac Below desired range of 460-1776 ac</p>	<p><b>MODERATE CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 237 ac Decreased 68 ac away from desired range of 460-2073 ac</p> <p>Libby = 170 ac Decreased 98 ac away from desired range of 460-1776 ac</p>	<p><b>MODERATE CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 237 ac Decreased 68 ac away from desired range of 460-2073 ac</p> <p>Libby = 170 ac Decreased 98 ac away from desired range of 460-1776 ac</p>
		<p><b>HIGH CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 1504 ac Within desired range of 523-2125 ac</p> <p>Libby = 248 ac Within desired range of 242-934 ac</p>	<p><b>HIGH CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 1734 ac Increased 230 ac, remains within desired range of 523-2125 ac</p> <p>Libby = 264 ac Increased 16 ac, remains within desired range of 242-934 ac</p>	<p><b>HIGH CFR:</b> Buttermilk = 1734 ac Increased 230 ac, remains within desired range of 523-2125 ac</p> <p>Libby = 264 ac Increased 16 ac, remains within desired range of 242-934 ac</p>
Fire behavior in WUI (23,000 acres total)	Percent of flame length by size class	<p>Low: 52%</p> <p>Moderate: 35%</p> <p>High: 4%</p> <p>Extreme: 9%</p>	<p>Low: 57%</p> <p>Moderate: 32%</p> <p>High: 3%</p> <p>Extreme: 8%</p>	<p>Low: 57%</p> <p>Moderate: 32%</p> <p>High: 3%</p> <p>Extreme: 8%</p>
	Percent of fire behavior by type	<p>None: 3%</p> <p>Surface: 82%</p> <p>Crown: 15%</p>	<p>None: 3%</p> <p>Surface: 88%</p> <p>Crown: 9%</p>	<p>None: 3%</p> <p>Surface: 88%</p> <p>Crown: 9%</p>

Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Fire behavior along FS Roads 43 and 4340 (701 acres total)	Percent of flame length by size class	Low: 85% Moderate: 9% High: 2% Extreme: 4%	Low: 92% Moderate: 6% High: 1% Extreme: 1%	Low: 92% Moderate: 6% High: 1% Extreme: 1%
	Percent of fire behavior by type	None: 28% Surface: 61% Crown: 11%	None: 28% Surface: 69% Crown: 3%	None: 28% Surface: 69% Crown: 3%
FS Roads in project area.> 0.5 miles (99.3 miles total)	Percent of FS roads greater than ½ mile in length that would remain or be decommissioned.	Remain: 100% Decommissioned: 0%	Remain: 89% Decommissioned: 11%	Remain: 69% Decommissioned: 30%

### 3.6.5 Consistency Statement

#### *Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*

Implementing the proposed action would be consistent with the goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan as follows:

#### Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines:

- 19-4: Prescribed fire would be used to meet Management Area goals.
- 19-6: Fuels treatments would be designed to be cost-effective and consider fuel profiles, site-productivity, and other relevant objectives. Desired fuel profiles and treatments necessary to achieve this profile have been determined. Treatment methods have been selected based on analysis of long-term site-productivity considerations.
- 19-7: Fuels treatments would help provide for retention or, in some areas, increase of large woody debris on the forest floor.
- 19-8: Treatment of natural fuels would not occur in old growth stands meeting the criteria for Forest Plan Old Growth.
- 19-9: Fuels treatments in stands managed as future old growth would provide for retention of key old growth components.
- 20-1: site-preparation objectives would occur concurrently with fuels management objectives.
- 20-26: Firewood availability would be considered in site preparation planning.
- 20-49: Fuels treatments after precommercial and commercial thinning would minimize damage to residual stems. Post-treatment tree retention levels would be prescribed in fuels treatments.

Management Area 5 (Roaded Natural Recreation and Scenic Viewing, Retention or Partial Retention):

- MA 5-19C: Prescribed fire would meet the visual quality objective within three years of application.
- MA5-19C: Fuels treatment methods and locations would consider recreation, visual, and wildlife values.

Management Area 14 (Deer Winter Range – Wood Fiber Production):

- MA 14-19C: Fuels would be treated to reduce the risk of wildfire to acceptable levels and further protect timber stands, wildlife values, and other resources from unacceptable losses caused by wildfire.
- MA14-19D: Where cost-effective, fire-tolerant stands would be on a prescribed burning schedule.

Management Area 15B (unmodified primitive environment within designated wilderness):

- MA 15B-19C: Planned ignitions are not proposed in wilderness.
- MA15B-19D: Prescribed fire is not proposed in wilderness.
- MA15B-19E: Prescribed fire is not proposed in wilderness.

Management Area 17 (Developed Recreation Opportunities):

- MA17-19C: Fuels treatments would incorporate visual and recreation objectives and be designed to reduce or eliminate damaging wildfire effects to recreation resources.

Management Area 25 (Intensive Timber and Range Management):

- MA25-19C: Fuels treatments would reduce risk of wildfire to acceptable levels while maintaining long-term site productivity.
- MA25-19D: Fuels would be treated to reduce the risk of wildfire to acceptable levels and further protect timber stands, wildlife values, and other resources from unacceptable losses caused by wildfire.
- MA25-19E: Where cost-effective, fire-tolerant stands would be on a prescribed burning schedule.

Management Area 26 (Deer Winter Range, Modified Recreation):

- MA26-19C: Fuels treatments would provide for the retention and/or enhancement of key wildlife habitat wherever practicable by increasing forage available for deer and by reducing the risk of widespread loss of habitat from uncharacteristic wildfire behavior.

*Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to fire and fuels, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8(a)(1)(iv) System drivers such as wildland fire.

219.8 (a) (1) (iv) System drivers such as wildland fire. Thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments on 388 acres as provided by the amendment would reduce surface fuels and understory stand density in dry forested areas, lessening the likelihood of uncharacteristic widespread crown fire initiation. Where overstory thinning occurred as a result of this amendment, the risk of crown-to-crown fire would be reduced because thinning would decrease crown density. This type of fire behavior is similar to the type of wildland fire that occurred historically in dry forest types (primarily low-intensity fires with limited crown fire behavior) (Agee and Skinner 2005; Agee and Lolley 2006; Covington 2003; Fule et al 2011; Graham et al. 2004; Harrod et al. 2007a; Harrod et al. 2007b; Harrod et al. 2009; Prichard et al. 2010; Stephens and Moghaddas 2005; Stephens et al. 2012). Burning alone is less effective at altering these characteristics in mature stands (Agee and Lolley 2006; Harrod et al. 2007b, Harrod et al. 2009; Schwilk et al. 2009; Stephens and Moghaddas 2005; USDA Forest Service 2012a). The combination of understory thinning and prescribed fire has been shown to be most effective at reducing residual overstory tree mortality in modeled and actual wildfires (Collins et al. 2014). Given that overstory trees largely dictate the function of forests and services they provide (e.g., wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, soil stability), these results have strong implications on forest resilience in the longer term (ibid). Both prescribed fire and its mechanical surrogates (i.e. thinning) help change stand structure and fuel beds so that treated stands are more resistant and resilient to high-intensity wildfire (Stephens et al. 2012).

219.8(b)(1) Social, cultural and economic considerations. Thinning as provided by this amendment would have a beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effect on social conditions because of how it would affect fire behavior in the WUI. Deer winter cover overlaps with most of the WUI in the project area, and thinning treatments that would reduce cover below S&Gs overlaps up to 3% of the WUI. Thinning and associated prescribed burning treatments as allowed by this amendment would reduce surface fuel loads, increase canopy base height, and, where commercial thinning occurred, decrease crown density in the overstory. The combined effect of these changes would be a reduction in potential surface flame lengths with easier control; a reduction in the chance for crown-fire initiation and therefore less fire growth through torching and spotting; and a reduction in the probability of tree-to-tree crown fire (USDA Forest Service 2012a; Agee and Skinner 2005; Prichard et al. 2010). Thinning treatments would create a more open landscape where understory herbaceous vegetation would eventually grow, contributing to fuel loading. The flame lengths created by these fuels, however, would be less than those created by torching trees that is currently more likely. Openings in the tree canopy would allow for more successful use of retardant to limit fire spread. By reducing wildfire risks near private lands and increasing the likelihood of successful suppression actions in the WUI, thinning as a result of this amendment would help increase sustainability of local communities in the WUI.

#### *Northwest Forest Plan*

##### Riparian Reserves:

- FM-1: Fuels treatments would help attain Riparian Management Objectives by increasing the resilience of RRs to disturbance by wildfire while minimizing disturbance of riparian ground cover and vegetation. Treatment strategies have been developed

with recognition of the role of fire in ecosystem function and identify instances where fuels management activities could damage long-term ecosystem function.

- FM-4: Prescribed burn projects and prescriptions would be designed to contribute to attainment of Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.
- FM-5: If Riparian Reserves are significantly damaged by prescribed burning outside prescribed parameters, a review by district aquatic, soil, and/or hydrology staff would occur to determine whether adverse effects occurred and what, if any, rehabilitation treatment would be needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives, and what that treatment plan would entail.
- Other: In Riparian Reserves, water drafting sites would be located and managed to minimize adverse effects on riparian habitat and water quality, as consistent with Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.

#### Late-Successional Reserves:

- Fuels management in LSRs will use minimum impact suppression methods in accordance with guidelines for reducing risks of large-scale disturbances.

#### Matrix:

- Fuels management activities were developed based on input from local governments, agencies, and landowners as well as input from watershed analyses and considered factors that may affect hazard reduction goals.

#### *Forest Service Manual Direction*

FSM 5103.2 Ecological: This project identified and used fire ecology to frame land and resource management objectives. Fire Management programs and activities would be used to implement LRMP objectives. Public health and environmental quality considerations have been factored into proposed activities. Proposed treatments would provide for a landscape that is more resilient to disturbance in accordance with management objectives

FSM 5140.3 Policy: Proposed treatments would implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program applying principles and policy elements to restore resilient landscapes described in FSM 5103 and Wildland Fire Doctrine (FSM 5131); principles from the Cohesive Strategy (A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Phase II National Report, Wildland Fire Leadership Council; May 2012); and guidelines from the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide (NWCG 2014).

FSM 5141 Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire Planning: Proposed hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire treatments have been developed in compliance with the LRMP to meet resource management objectives. Resource objectives for specific hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects were derived from the NEPA analysis. The entire project area has been analyzed under NEPA. The NEPA analysis document identifies objectives and analyzes the effects of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects.

FSM 5142.3 Prescribed Fire Policy: Proposed prescribed fire treatments would be used in a safe, carefully planned, and cost-effective manner to achieve desired conditions and attain

management objectives identified in the LRMP. Prescribed fire plans, including wildfire declarations, will use the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide. Weather conditions would be monitored during all phases (including mop-up) of prescribed fire implementation. Long-term weather conditions such as drought would be considered in all phases of prescribed fire planning and implementation. Unless the authorizing official makes an exemption, a project-specific spot weather forecast would be obtained prior to ignition; for each day that ignition continues; on any day the fire is actively spreading; or when conditions adversely affecting the prescribed fire are predicted in the general forecast.

#### *Watershed Analyses*

Recommendations from watershed analyses that have been considered in this project include considering landowners input in implementing prescribed fire in the watershed; proposing treatments in Libby Creek to minimize the potential for high-severity fires to degrade large areas and destroy habitat for threatened or endangered fish species; proposing treatments in Libby Creek that utilize thinning, underburning, and mistletoe sanitation to maintain stand health and minimize potential for stand-replacing fires; and focusing proposed thinning and prescribed burning treatments in WUI to minimize the risk of fire spread between NFS and private lands, especially in Smith Canyon, Elderberry Canyon, Chicamun Canyon, and Lower Libby Creek.

#### *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*

This analysis recognizes wildland fire as an essential ecological process. Proposed activities focus on reducing hazardous fuels and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems and used planning and decision analysis processes that address current and anticipated conditions.

#### *Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Restoration Strategy*

The Restoration Strategy was used to analyze conditions in the Mission project area and develop possible treatment options to respond to findings. Proposed treatments would maintain forested landscapes in the desired range, or help move them toward this range.

#### *Spruce Budworm Assessment*

Recommendations from this document that have been considered in this project include focusing silvicultural and prescribed fire treatments in the dry-cover types to reduce susceptibility to western spruce budworm and reduce risk of uncharacteristic crown fires; and implementing a fuelbreak and road treatment strategy to provide additional time for silvicultural and fuels reduction treatments to occur.

#### *Okanogan County Community Wildfire Protection Plan*

This project proposes treatments to reduce wildfire risks in the WUI and specifically within the two CWPP priority treatment areas that lie within the project boundary.

#### *National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change*

This analysis is consistent with the guidance for National Forests to adapt and prepare for changing climates, with a management emphasis on restoring the functions and processes characteristic of healthy, resilient ecosystems through adaptive restoration. Proposed restoration treatments in this project would also improve the ability of ecosystems to withstand the stresses and uncertainties associated with climate change. Proposed thinning treatments



are aligned with those suggested to promote resistance, resilience, and response to climate change as synthesized in *Responding to Climate Change in National Forests: a Guidebook for Developing Adaptation Options* (Peterson et al. 2011).

### 3.7 Wildlife

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Wildlife Resources Report by A. Glidden (2017) (Amended by Rohrer, 2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

#### 3.7.1 Methodology

The wildlife resource indicators used for analyzing the impact of the proposed alternatives are displayed in Figure 66.

**Figure 66. Wildlife Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Habitat for threatened species- spotted owls, lynx, and Critical Habitat (CH) for lynx.	Changes to suitable habitat	Acres of habitat change, % landscape.	P/N #4	ESA, Forest Plan, NWFP, Recovery Plan
		Road changes-miles		
Habitat for sensitive/focal species- goshawk, gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker and western gray squirrel.	Changes to suitable habitat	Acres of change, % landscape.	P/N #4	NFMA, Forest Plan, Executive Order 13186
		Road changes-miles		
Habitat for MIS for mature/old growth forest (spotted owls), winter range (mule deer) and lodgepole pine (lynx).	Changes to habitat	Acres of change, % landscape/area.	P/N #4	NFMA, Forest Plan, Restoration Strategy, Revised Recovery Plan for Northern Spotted Owl, Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy
		Road changes-miles		
Habitat for Landbirds	Changes to habitat	Acres of change, % landscape/area.	No	Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186

GIS comparison of habitat types and amount of habitat changed by project activities, field and literature review, and review of district observation database (NRM Wildlife). EMDS computer modeling of habitat and analysis of historical and future range of variability, with field validation. Surveys for spotted owls and goshawks.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Threatened species- spotted owls, lynx, Critical Habitat for lynx.*

Habitat for spotted owls, lynx and Critical Habitat for lynx is present in the analysis area. The basis for effects will be the changes in amount and quality of late/old mixed conifer forest habitat for spotted owls, and changes to roads in suitable habitat.

Lynx habitat will be evaluated by structural stage of habitat within the subalpine fir zone in Lynx Assessment Units (LAUs), and the capability to support the primary prey species of the lynx-snowshoe hare. Critical Habitat for lynx will be assessed by the effects of the treatments on the Primary Constituent Elements (PCEs) of the habitat. Changes to roads in suitable habitat will also be measured.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Sensitive Species- goshawk, gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker and western gray squirrel.*

Goshawks use late/old structure forest, aspen stands and large trees. Evaluation of habitat will be based on change to these features. If active territories are found, changes to habitats within the territory or post-fledgling area will be assessed. Roads allow access for falconers to collect young birds, a permitted activity in Washington State. Road changes will be measured.

Gray flycatchers use open ponderosa pine/bitterbrush/bunchgrass stands. Assessment of habitat will be based on the stand changes in the hot/dry and warm/dry environmental zones, and changes to roads in suitable habitat.

White-headed woodpeckers are a focal species for dry forest management, and a sensitive species. Indicators for this species and habitat will be potential habitat changes in hot/dry and hot/warm/dry environmental zones, measured by acres treated, and changes to roads in suitable habitat.

Western gray squirrels use ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands, and adjacent riparian black cottonwoods. Ideal conditions may be a balance between open conditions that encourage pine seed production and clumping of trees allowing arboreal travel, secure nesting sites and patches of high canopy closure that produce abundant fungi (Linders and Stinson, 2007). Indicators used for this species will be changes in stand structure and open roads.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for MIS for mature/old growth forest (spotted owls), winter range (mule deer) and lodgepole pine (lynx).*

Mature/old growth stands, winter range and lodgepole pine stands are found in the analysis area and provide important, and often limited, habitats for many wildlife species.

The late/old successional habitat was modelled using the EMDS process. Changes to this habitat type will be described in the vegetation resources report (Daily 2016, Revised by P. Nash 2018). Large trees will not be harvested. Winter range is delineated by Forest Plan

management areas and will be assessed using changes to cover and forage acres, and changes to roads in suitable habitat. Lodgepole pine habitats and boreal forest types used by lynx will be assessed by acres change to stands within the Lynx Assessment Units (LAUs) and habitat within the LAUs (in the Changes to Habitat for Threatened Species-lynx section above).

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Landbirds*

The project area has four primary environmental zones that are habitat for a variety of landbirds. Figure 67 below lists the types:

**Figure 67. Environmental Zones for Landbird Analysis**

<i>Envirozone</i>	<i>% of Project Area</i>
Hot-dry Shrub/steppe	21%
Hot/Warm-dry	42%
Cool-Dry	18%
Cool/Cold Mesic	18%

Focal species for the hot/dry and hot/warm ponderosa pine types are white-headed woodpeckers, gray flycatchers, flammulated owls, and chipping sparrows. For the higher elevation mixed conifer habitats, focal species are varied thrush, brown creepers, and goshawks. Ruffed grouse, yellow warbler and willow flycatchers are focal species for riparian and deciduous habitats. Treatments and effects to suitable habitat will be analyzed.

**3.7.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

Type of Impact:

- Negative or Adverse: Degrades habitat or reduces amount of habitat.
- Neutral or Mixed: Some habitat components would be improved or increased, while others are degraded or reduced.
- Beneficial: Improves habitat quality or increases amount of habitat.

Duration of Impact:

- Short-term: Up to 5 years.
- Medium-term: 5-10 years.
- Long-term: 10 or more years.

Intensity of Impact:

- None: No effect.
- Negligible: Effect is not measurable.
- Minor: Effect is small in scale or amount.
- Moderate: Effect would cause a measurable and noticeable change to habitat.
- Major: Effect would cause substantial habitat loss or gain and may affect populations.

### 3.7.3 Affected Environment

Figure 68 summarizes the wildlife resource indicators and the existing condition.

**Figure 68. Wildlife Resource Indicators and Measures for the Existing Condition**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Habitat for threatened species- spotted owls, lynx, and Critical Habitat (CH) for lynx.	Suitable Spotted Owl Habitat (late old successional habitat)	Nesting, Roosting, Foraging habitat (NRF) acres  Open roads in NRF	1,054 acres  2.2 miles
	Suitable Lynx habitat in LAUs	Early successional habitat in subalpine fir zone	Spirit Mountain--245 ac.  Methow Gold- 123 ac.
	Critical Habitat for lynx	Open roads in habitat Acres of designated habitat Open roads in habitat	2.6 miles 12,890 acres 9.9 miles
Habitat for sensitive/focal species- goshawk, gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker and western gray squirrel.	Suitable habitat	Goshawk- dense stands with large trees.	13,022 acres (38% of non-Wilderness project area)
	Suitable habitat	Gray flycatcher- mid-successional ponderosa pine and shrub-steppe.	21,743 acres of potential habitat (63% of non-Wilderness project area)
	Suitable habitat	Western gray squirrel- Ponderosa pine/mixed conifer and riparian habitats.  Open roads in habitat	21,743 acres of potential habitat (63% of non-Wilderness project area)  45.3 miles in habitat
	Suitable habitat	White-headed woodpecker	21,743 acres of potential habitat (63 % of non-Wilderness project area)  0 ac. Buttermilk (below historical levels)  38 ac. Libby (lower end of historical range)

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Habitat for MIS for mature/old growth forest (spotted owls), winter range (mule deer) and lodgepole pine (lynx).	Spotted owls	See Spotted owls, above	See Spotted owls, above
	Winter range	Cover: forage ratios/Forest Plan standards	MA 14: 52% cover (SIT-22%, WT-30%) MA 26: 35% (SIT-16%, WT-19%) 23.5 miles
	Lodgepole pine	Open roads in habitat See Lynx and Critical Habitat, above	See Lynx and Critical Habitat, above
Habitat for Landbirds	Pine, mixed conifer and deciduous/riparian habitats.	Effects to suitable habitats	Ponderosa pine- 8,426 acres.
			Mixed conifer- 1,817 acres. Riparian- 4,993acres Deciduous- 430 acres

*Resource Indicator: Change to habitat for threatened species*

*Spotted owls:* Spotted owls use late/old mixed conifer habitat for nesting, roosting, foraging and dispersal habitat, generally in the more mesic areas of the district, although nest sites in dry douglas-fir/ponderosa pine stands are also used. Exclusion of fire from dry and mesic forests has increased suitable habitat conditions for spotted owls, but simultaneously resulted in greater risk of habitat loss due to fire (Buchanan et al.1995; Everett et al.1997). Everett et al. (1997) suggested that while vegetation manipulation to reduce fire hazard may create less optimal habitat for the Northern spotted owl, habitat effects from vegetation treatments should be considered against the risk of stand replacement fires and the loss of nesting and roosting habitat over large areas. Over 50% of the Northern spotted owl nest-sites in the eastern Cascades of Washington occur within dry and mesic forests (in Gaines et al. 2010), which are at risk of uncharacteristic fire (Everett et al. 2000; Hessburg et al. 2007).

While surveys done in the 1980's and 1990's have documented the presence of spotted owls in the project area, follow-up visits indicated that they were likely transient through the area or dispersing single birds. No nests or activity centers have been located. The Mission project area was surveyed to the USFWS endorsed 2012 protocol in 2014 and 2015. Six visits were completed on 5 separate routes each year. No northern spotted owls were detected. The western edge of the project area, with its primarily warmer and drier forest types, may be a dispersal route between more mesic habitats in the Twisp River drainage and higher elevations of Gold Creek. Currently, 1,054 acres have been identified as nesting, roosting, foraging habitat

(NRF) and 4,113 acres as dispersal habitat, using a combination of EMDS modelling, GIS, and field verification. The NRF habitat is generally marginal, and found primarily in riparian stringers and small, isolated patches. It is unlikely that enough habitat is present in these drainages to support spotted owls, and potential for these vegetation types to produce sustainable owl habitat is extremely limited. Approximately 4,112 acres of dispersal habitat are found in the project area. Like the NRF habitat, these denser stands are at high risk of wildfire and not sustainable.

Approximately 2,335 acres of the analysis area are designated as Late-successional reserve (LSR), to be managed for late-successional habitat for spotted owls and other species. Currently, about 118 acres (5% of the LSR within the project area) of NRF habitat and 306 acres (13% of the LSR within the project area) of dispersal habitat are present in the area.

Habitat in the project area has changed due to fire suppression and logging, which have resulted in reduced numbers of large trees, fragmented stands, and forest conditions dominated by dense multilayered stands of smaller trees that are at risk for wildfire, insects and disease, and that also compete with larger trees. Old forest structural attributes (large trees, large snags and down wood) in these dense overstocked stands are at a high fire risk (Everett et. al. 1997).

Approximately 2.2 miles of open road intersect NRF habitat in the analysis area, which could cause disturbance to spotted owls.

*Lynx*: Lynx are medium size cats that inhabit mesic coniferous and coniferous/deciduous forests that have cold, snowy winters and provide a prey base for snowshoe hares (Koehler 1990, Koehler and Aubry 1994, Mowat et al. 2000, McKelvey et al. 2000, Ruggiero et al. 1999). Good snowshoe hare habitat is comprised of dense, horizontal vegetation 3-10' above the ground or snow level that provides both browse and cover.

The project area is in the core area for lynx, where long-term persistence of lynx has been documented. Portions of two lynx analysis units (LAUs) are present in the analysis area, and lynx habitat (subalpine fir zone) is present in the western, higher elevation portion of the LAUs. Habitat in both LAUs is dominated by mid-successional structures, with little stand initiation phase that would provide hare browse. There are approximately 2,274 acres of lynx habitat within the LAUs.

The Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS), considered some of the best available science currently, provides conservation measures that are the basis for ESA consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service. Measures applicable to this project are, in part:

- Maintain a mosaic of lynx habitat across LAUs.
- Design vegetation management to develop and retain dense horizontal cover.
- Do not reduce stem density through thinning, until stands no longer provide winter hare habitat.
- Retain mature multi-story conifer stands providing horizontal cover.
- No more than 30% of the habitat in an LAU is in early stand initiation structural stage or treated to remove horizontal cover (i.e. does not provide winter hare habitat.).

- When designing fuels reduction projects, retain patches of untreated areas of dense horizontal cover within treated areas.
- Management change of habitat on federal lands that creates early stand initiation structural stage or treated to reduce horizontal cover should not exceed 15% of lynx habitat on federal lands within a LAU over a 10-year period.

In addition, the LCAS notes that in drier forests adjacent to the boreal forest, fire suppression may have resulted in unnaturally dense fuels, and restoration of these communities may be desirable to reduce the risk of spreading frequent of severe fires into lynx habitat. This is the case in the project area.

The EMDS model does not consider lynx habitat. However, it does look at stand structures and vegetation types in the cold forest that lynx prefer. In the cold forest areas, the young forest multistoried structure and stem-exclusion single story structure are overrepresented, in comparison to historical levels, resulting in reduced diversity of habitat types across the landscape. Providing a mosaic of stand structures, including dense early-successional stands and mature multi-story coniferous stands that will produce winter snowshoe hare habitat over time, across the landscape, is important for lynx conservation.

Recommendations for the cold forest type from the EMDS analysis include reducing area and patch size in the young forest multi-storied stand type, and to a lesser extent, the stem-exclusion single story type, and reducing the area in subalpine fir types. However, there is limited opportunity to restore stand structures within the lynx habitat, due to topography, elevation, and the existing transportation system.

Approximately 2.6 miles of open road are located within the mapped lynx habitat in LAUs which could result in disturbance.

*Critical habitat for Lynx:* Approximately 12,890 acres within the project area are designated Critical Habitat for lynx. The Fish and Wildlife Service designated boreal (northern, high-elevation moist forests) forest landscapes providing a mosaic of forest structures as Critical Habitat. The primary constituent element (PCE) for critical lynx habitat was identified as boreal forest landscapes supporting a mosaic of differing successional forest stages and containing:

- the presence of snowshoe hares and lynx preferred habitat conditions, which include dense understories of young trees, shrubs or overhanging boughs that protrude above the snow, and mature multistoried stands with conifer boughs touching the snow surface;
- winter snow conditions that are generally deep and fluffy for extended periods of time;
- sites for denning that have abundant coarse woody debris, such as downed trees and root wads;
- matrix habitat (e.g., hardwood forest, dry forest, non-forest, or other habitat types that do not support snowshoe hares) that occurs between patches of boreal forest in close juxtaposition (at the scale of a lynx home range) such that lynx are likely to travel through such habitat while accessing patches of boreal forest within a home range (US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2009).

Critical Habitat consists of areas considered to be essential to the conservation of the species and which may require special management considerations or protection. Critical Habitat receives protection under section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, and agencies must ensure that any actions are not likely to result in destruction or adverse modification of Critical Habitat. Some of the activities that may affect Critical Habitat for lynx include actions that would remove understory vegetation in boreal forest on a large scale, actions that would result in loss or conversion of boreal forest on a large scale, and actions that would increase traffic volume and speed in lynx Critical Habitat. In matrix habitat, activities that change vegetation structure or condition would not be considered an adverse effect to Critical Habitat unless they would create barriers or impede lynx movement between habitat components.

In the North Cascades in Washington, most lynx occur above 4,101 ft. and select Engelmann spruce-subalpine fir forest cover types in winter (Koehler et al. 2008; Maletzke 2004). Lynx in this area avoid Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine forests, openings, recent burns, open canopy and understory cover, and steep slopes (Koehler et al. 2008).

Boreal forest in the project area is primarily confined to the western half of the LAUs. Critical Habitat is delineated along the northeast and southcentral ridgelines dividing the Libby watershed with watersheds to the north and south. These areas have some cold/cool forest habitat, but are generally warmer drier forest types that aren't providing quality lynx habitat or connections to other LAUs. This is not likely to change, given the warming climate. In the (non-Wilderness) project area, 12,890 acres are designated Critical Habitat for lynx. Approximately 4,604 acres are within the mapped lynx habitat. Early successional habitat is estimated at 853 acres, 7% of the Critical Habitat in the project area.

Approximately 9.9 miles of road are found in Critical Habitat, which could result in disturbance or habitat disturbance.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Sensitive and Focal Species*

*Northern Goshawk:* Goshawks are a focal species that use stands with large trees, dense canopies, and high canopy closures for nesting. Goshawk nesting habitat is generally composed of mature and older forests (McGrath et al. 2003). In eastern Washington, nest stands typically have a relatively high number of large trees, high canopy closures (>50%), multiple canopy layers, and a relatively high number of snags and downed wood (Finn 1994, McGrath et al. 2003). Although old-growth characteristics are important to breeding goshawks, McGrath et al. (2003) found that old-growth stands were used for nesting only in proportion to their availability, while closed canopy stem exclusion stands were used more than expected based on availability.

Post-fledgling areas (PFAs) surround the nest area and are used by juveniles until they no longer depend on adults for food. PFAs provide hiding cover and foraging habitat for juveniles. PFAs consist of a variety of forest types and conditions, but in eastern Washington, were composed largely of structurally complex late-successional forests (McGrath 1997). Hargis et al. (1994) found that foraging occurs in various cover types and structural stages and that the juxtaposition of several habitat types may enhance foraging.



Densely canopied stands with large trees suitable for nesting goshawks are found across the analysis area, and estimated at approximately 6,090 acres in Libby Creek (27% of non-Wilderness watershed in project area) and 6,932 acres in Buttermilk Creek (63%). Goshawks have been documented in the project area, although current surveys have not located active territories.

Goshawks cover large areas and use many habitats while foraging, and may be found across the project area. Approximately 34.8 miles of open roads are found in the potential habitat.

*Gray Flycatchers:* Breeding habitats for the gray flycatcher are shrub-steppe and open woodland. On the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, habitat is scattered open ponderosa pine with bitterbrush and bunchgrass understories (Kent Woodruff, USFS, personal communication). In the central Washington Cascades, ponderosa pine trees within gray flycatcher territories are mid-successional size (mean DBH 11-13") (Altman and Woodruff 2011). Nests are generally open-cups in trees or shrubs within a few meters of the ground, up to 20 meters, and nest-building and egg-laying occur in early to mid-June in Washington (Altman and Woodruff 2011).

Habitat loss and alteration that reduces the amount or suitability of flycatcher habitat is the most likely threat to the gray flycatcher population (Altman and Woodruff 2011) and recent changes in fire regimes threaten persistence of the primary habitat type for this species.

Gray flycatcher habitat is abundant in the project area, in the hot/dry and warm/dry environmental zones and is estimated at approximately 21,743 acres. These two habitats comprise approximately 63% of the project area outside of Wilderness.

*White-headed Woodpeckers:* White-headed woodpeckers inhabit low-elevation dry forests, and are a focal species for dry forest management in the eastern Washington Cascade Range, as well as an R6 sensitive species. White-headed woodpeckers are most abundant in burned or cut stands with residual large live and dead pine trees (Raphael and White 1984; Raphael et al. 1987). Many low-elevation dry forest species have been considered at risk due to the closing of dry forest canopies with fire exclusion, loss of large old ponderosa pine trees to logging, decline of herb and shrub understories from stand-canopy closure, and exclusion of low-intensity burns (Lehmkuhl et al. 1997; Wisdom et al. 2000).

Approximately 63% of the project area is classified as dry forest habitat. In the south end of the project area, the Carlton Complex Fire burned about 800 acres in 2014 providing additional habitat in the short-term. There are 45.3 miles of open road in the dry forest habitat.

The EMDS model was run for white-headed woodpecker habitat, and was modelled as ponderosa pine cover type with medium or large tree overstory of 30-40% canopy closure and elevations between 3,000' and 4,000'. The EMDS model shows no current high-quality habitat for white-headed woodpeckers in the Buttermilk drainage. Potential habitat occurs across 2% of the landscape, above historic levels which ranged from 0.01% to 0.3%. The mean patch size is slightly above historical levels and patches are closer currently than historically.

In the Libby drainage, the amount of current high-quality habitat for white-headed woodpeckers is within the historic range, although towards the lower end (range is 0.01-4.15%). Patch density, large patch index, and mean patch size are within HRV, although all towards the lower end of the range. Mean nearest neighbor value is below historical levels, which means that patches are closer than they were historically.

*Western Gray Squirrels:* Western gray squirrels inhabit mast-producing conifer-hardwood forests throughout their range. In Okanogan County, gray squirrels use ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir stands, and adjacent riparian black cottonwoods (Linders and Stinson 2007). Sites with more large (>15" DBH) trees may be better habitat because they provide more food, better cover, more cavities, and, often, interlocking crowns important for nest site security and arboreal travel.

Approximately 63% of the project area is comprised of forested stands that could be habitat for gray squirrels, and they have been documented in the project area. Generally, lower elevation forested stands in the project area have the potential to provide adequate nest sites and ample potential for arboreal travel. Larger pines, and a variety of shrubs, produce seeds and berries for a diversity of food resources for squirrels. Red squirrels are abundant in the area and can be expected to compete for these foods.

Mortality by vehicles is a threat to squirrel populations, in addition to habitat loss and disease (Linders and Stinson 2007). Approximately 45.3 miles of open roads are found in the habitat for western gray squirrels.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Management Indicator Species*  
*Spotted Owls:* included in first resource indicator.

*Winter Range for Mule Deer:* Mule deer are a Management Indicator Species for winter range, and the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan contains standards and guidelines for winter range cover and access. Since the time that the Forest Plan was written, studies have found that thermal cover is not as critical as forage quality and quantity for winter survival of ungulates (Forest Restoration Strategy; USDA 2012a). Cook et al. (1998) concluded that their findings, combined with those of other thermal cover studies (e.g., Robinson 1960; Freddy 1986), offered strong evidence that influences of thermal cover on animal performance and, by extension, population dynamics was rarely of consequence. Cook et al. (2005) noted that there are tradeoffs between providing dense forest cover and providing forage resources, and concluded that cover is needed where security is low or where snow accumulations are factors limiting animal performance. Mysterud and Ostbye (1999) found that, although cover is important for habitat selection of temperate ungulates, there is no hard evidence that cover affects demography so much that it limits population growth in forested areas, and that there is no evidence that specific arrangements of food and cover areas confer any large advantage to deer. The Okanogan-Wenatchee Restoration Strategy suggests that emphasizing the reduction of road density and enhancement of forage, can allow reduction in thermal cover while meeting the intent of standards for deer winter ranges, to resolve the potential conflict between restoring forests and winter range thermal cover.

Mule deer populations in Washington Department of Wildlife's Region 2, where the project is located, have experienced a gradual long-term decline in numbers which is attributed to

reduced shrub diversity, declining productivity of aging shrubs and lack of recruitment of new shrubs due to fire suppression (Fitkin and Heinlen 2012; 2015), rather than thermal cover. Herd growth has plateaued, and productivity and recruitment has fallen off as the herd reached 20-25,000 animals, which appears to be the landscape carrying capacity for deer (Fitkin and Heinlen 2012). In 2014, wildfires burned about 40% of the winter range in the Methow watershed, including high density winter range areas (Fitkin and Heinlen 2016). Additional large fires in 2015 continued this trend. Initial review indicates that much of the winter range in the area burned in the last 2 years and will likely impact the winter range carrying capacity for deer until shrubs reestablish and grow large enough to function as winter browse (Fitkin and Heinlen, 2016).

The current condition of thermal cover on the winter range in the project area is displayed in Figure 69.

**Figure 69. Cover on Deer Winter Range**

<i>Management Area</i>	<b>Current Condition</b>		
	<i>Winter thermal cover</i>	<i>Snow-intercept thermal cover</i>	<i>Total</i>
<b>Standards &amp; Guidelines</b>	25%	15%	40%
MA-14	30%	22%	52%
MA-26	19%	16%	35%

These cover amounts are the result of fire suppression over the last century, which has led to increased acreages in denser stands that provide more thermal cover, and less forage than more open conditions. Dense stands are not a sustainable condition, and are at risk of mortality from insects, disease and wildfire (Townsend, 2004).

**Access:** Road densities are analyzed in the Transportation section. Open road density standards for deer winter range are 1 mile per square mile in MA-26 and 2 miles per square mile in MA-14. Road densities in the winter range land allocations for the project are below the maximum densities in each discrete management area. Approximately 23.5 miles of open roads are found in winter range in the project area, which could result in disturbance or habitat avoidance. However, the Forest roads are closed by snow during the critical winter period.

**Lynx:** included in the first resource indicator.

**Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Landbirds**

Landbirds are an issue if habitat for the focal landbirds is present and would be affected by project activities. Direction for landbird conservation is provided by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186 Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds and MOU 08-MU-1113-2400-264 Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to Promote the Conservation of Migratory Birds.

Guidance for landbird conservation is provided by the Landbird Strategic Plan and The Conservation Strategy for Landbirds in Oregon and Washington (Altman 2000a; b, and Altman and Holmes 2000).

Project area habitat has changed over the last century, and current stands are denser, more uniform, and have fewer large trees in comparison with historical forests (Franklin et al. 2008). In addition, fewer large snags are available due to firewood cutting and danger tree management. This has resulted in a decrease in habitat quality in the project area for chipping sparrows and flammulated owls. The increase in density and multistoried habitat may have improved conditions for varied thrushes.

White-headed woodpeckers, gray flycatchers and goshawks have been discussed in the previous resource indicator.

**Figure 70. Landbirds and Conservation Strategies**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Conservation strategies</b>
Chipping sparrow (focal species for open understory)	Create open stand conditions and open understory with burning and thinning.
Flammulated owl (focal species for large snags)	Retain large snags. Open stands, but leave some thickets. Limit snag loss to firewood cutting.
Varied thrush (focal species for structural diversity)	Retain structurally diverse, multi-story conifer forest.
Brown creeper (focal species for large trees)	Retain large trees.
Ruffed grouse	Riparian and deciduous habitat
Yellow warbler	Riparian subcanopy foliage
Willow flycatcher	Dense riparian shrubs

### 3.7.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.7.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

The Wildlife Resource Report (Glidden 2017) (Amended by Rohrer, 2018), describes in detail the wildlife species that were considered but not analyzed in detail.

**Figure 71: Resources Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Habitat type /availability in analysis area</b>	<b>Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis</b>
Threatened and Endangered		

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Gray wolf (endangered)	Generalist / habitat present	<p>Gray wolves are habitat generalists and one of the most adaptable large predators in the world (USFWS 2009). They require only a sufficient year-round prey base and protection from excessive human-caused mortality. Restrictions on human development and other land use practices have not been necessary to achieve wolf recovery in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming (USFWS 2009), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did not designate critical habitat for wolves in the western United States (Wiles et al. 2011). The project area is part of the Lookout Pack's territory. Gray wolves and a rendezvous site are documented in the project area, but no den sites have been found there. Timing restrictions may be implemented if a den or rendezvous site is found. Deer are found across the project area, year-round, and provide a prey base. Deer forage is expected to increase in quantity and palatability as a result of planned treatments, which may increase deer numbers in the area. Disturbance and vegetation changes from treatments would not be expected to negatively affect wolves, although wolves and prey may be temporarily displaced during activities. Current open road density in the project area is 1.1 mile per square mile, and will be decreased to 1.0 post-project with alternative 2. Alternative 3 would reduce road densities to 0.8 miles per square mile. The determination for wolves is "may affect (due to temporary and short-term disturbance), not likely to adversely affect". Reduction in road density would be a beneficial effect for wolves and their prey (alternative 3). More detail in biological assessment.</p>

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Grizzly bear (threatened)	Generalist / habitat present	<p>The project area is in the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. Habitat for grizzlies and a food source (deer, plants) occur across the area. No sightings of grizzly bears have been reported in the project area, but a confirmed sighting occurred in 2015 approximately 60 miles north. Deer, a prey item for bears, would benefit from increased forage expected from project activities. Disturbance to bears and deer would occur during project activities and could displace them temporarily. Road closures and decommissioning would occur and would increase core area for bears. There would be no net loss of core in the bmu. Temporary roads are not in core area. Determination for grizzly bear is "may affect (due to disturbance), not likely to adversely affect". Core area would increase slightly due to road decommissioning in alternatives 2 and 3, and forage for bears and ungulate prey would improve in quality and quantity due to treatments. More detail in biological assessment.</p>
Marbled murrelet (threatened)	No	Not within the known range
Critical habitat- Northern spotted owl	Present	<p>The proposed Mission project would not result in the destruction or adverse modification of any habitat in Critical Habitat subunit ECN1. The effect of underburning of 2.8 acres of nonhabitat for northern spotted owls on the edge of this subunit would be insignificant and discountable. The proposed project "may affect, but would not likely adversely affect" critical habitat designated for the northern spotted owl. The 2.8 acres is on the outside edge of the critical habitat unit and appears to cross over a topographic feature in order to keep the Critical Habitat Unit boundary line straight.</p>
Wolverine (Proposed as threatened)	Wolverine/no habitat present	Analysis area too low in elevation (except Wilderness). No treatments are planned in wolverine habitat.
Sensitive Species		

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Habitat type /availability in analysis area</b>	<b>Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis</b>
American peregrine falcon	Cliff/talus/no habitat present outside of Wilderness	Cliffs suitable for nesting are not found in the project area. Transient use while foraging around lakes may occur, but buffers would protect lakes.
Common loon	Lakes/habitat present, but not occupied by loons	Blackpine Lake could provide habitat, but is not currently occupied by loons. Habitat would be protected by riparian buffer.
Sandhill crane	Non-forest Habitat/habitat present	Sandhills are not known to nest on Forest, but are occasionally sighted during migrations.
Bald eagle	Riparian and Wetlands/no nesting habitat present.	Nesting habitat (along larger fish-bearing streams) is not present in analysis area.
Harlequin duck	Riparian and Wetlands/some habitat.	Nesting habitat is medium size streams and rivers. Activities would avoid riparian areas along these larger streams.
Great gray owl	Cold Moist/ some habitat present	Meadows & snags provide important habitats, but would be protected during activities. Some minor snag loss expected, but overstory treatments are limited in this habitat to 0.9% of the habitat (dry forest thin 17 acres, moist forest- 13 acres, aspen release 27 ac.). Surveys are not required in this area (south of highway 20).
Sharp-tailed grouse	Non-forest Habitat/ no habitat present	Native grasslands that provide spring/summer cover not present in project area. Prescribed fire may improve habitat if woody vegetation is not reduced.
Lewis's woodpecker	Riparian and Wetlands/habitat present	Species uses large cottonwoods in riparian and also recently burned areas. Treatments are limited in riparian habitat, and would not remove cottonwoods or large trees.
Larch mountain salamander	Cliff/talus/no habitat present	Known sites on the Okanogan-Wenatchee are in areas with annual precipitation greater than 60".
Western pond turtle	Ponds/habitat limited.	Historic range is western Washington and Columbia River Gorge.
Striped whipsnake	Non-forest Habitat/ habitat present.	Not in range. Northern extent of range is central Washington.
Giant palouse earthworm (Federal Register, 2011)	Scattered/habitat not well-defined	Nearest known location is south of Lake Chelan.
Puget oregonian	Riparian and Wetlands/ habitat present.	Range is western Washington and moister habitats. Mollusk surveys on the Methow district failed to locate species.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Habitat type /availability in analysis area</b>	<b>Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis</b>
Grand coulee mountainsnail	Cliff/talus/habitat present	Project activities would not affect low elevation rocky outcrops.
Shiny tightcoil	Cliff/talus/ habitat present.	Range appears to be further south. Mollusk surveys on the Methow district failed to locate this species.
Blue-gray tail-dropper	Dry Mesic/no habitat	Habitat very limited on Okanogan-Wenatchee, species has not been found.
Astarte fritillary	Non-forest Habitat, high elevation/no habitat.	Habitat not found in analysis area.
Freija fritillary	Non-forest Habitat, high elevation/no habitat.	Habitat not found in analysis area.
Labrador sulphur	Non-forest Habitat, high elevation/no habitat.	Habitat not found in analysis area.
Lustrous copper	Non-forest Habitat, high elevation/no habitat.	Habitat not found in analysis area.
Melissa arctic	Non-forest Habitat, high elevation/no habitat.	Habitat not found in analysis area.
Western bumblebee	Wide variety of habitats/habitat present	Treatments would be beneficial to bees. Reduction of overstory would lead to increases in understory plants providing foods.
Meadow fritillary	Non-forest Habitat/ habitat present	Habitat is meadows, aspen stands, grasslands and wet roadsides, pine forest openings. Species would benefit from more open understory.
Peck's skipper	Non-forest Habitat/ habitat present	Mountain meadows, riparian habitats, and roadsides are habitat. Project activities would increase understory species that provide forage and reproductive sites.
Mardon skipper	Non-forest Habitat/ habitat not present.	Not within the known range, which is southern part of Forest.
Tawny-edged skipper	Non-forest Habitat/some habitat present	Uses grassy habitats. Not documented on Forest. Project activities would increase understory species that provide forage and reproductive sites.
Great basin fritillary	Non-forest Habitat/habitat limited.	Montane meadows, ridges, forest openings & rocky ridges. Not documented on Forest.
Zigzag darner	Riparian and Wetlands/habitat present.	High elevation boreal fens/bogs not found in project area.



<b>Resource</b>	<b>Habitat type /availability in analysis area</b>	<b>Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis</b>
Subarctic darner	Riparian and Wetlands/habitat present.	Similar to zigzag darner.
Subarctic bluet	Riparian and Wetlands/habitat present.	Similar to zigzag darner.
Boreal whiteface	Wetlands/ habitat present	Marshy ponds. Confirmed in Okanogan Co. Riparian buffers would protect species. No heavy equipment use is planned near wetlands. Placement of beaver structures, beavers, and cutting of small trees in meadows to reduce conifer encroachment would not use heavy equipment.
Townsend's big-eared bat	Dry Mesic/habitat present	Foraging habitat (open pine and shrub/steppe) may be near project activities. Large snags may be used as roosts. Snags will be retained, except for minor loss of hazard trees or along roads that would be reopened to public use (firewood cutting). This effect is offset by road decommissioning, which will close areas to firewood cutting.
Little Brown myotis	Wide range of habitats	Uses wide range of habitats, including human-made for rest and maternity sites. Forages over water. Winters in caves, mines, tunnels. Riparian buffers will protect foraging bats from disturbance.
Wolverine	Wolverine/no habitat present	Analysis area too low in elevation.
Mountain goat	High elevation non-forest/no habitat present outside of Wilderness.	Analysis area is too low in elevation.
Rocky Mtn. bighorn sheep	Cliff/talus/ no habitat present.	Species not present on Forest.
California bighorn sheep	Cliff/talus/ no habitat present.	Habitat not found in analysis area.
Pacific fisher	Fisher/habitat present	Considered extirpated in Washington State, except where reintroductions are occurring. Habitat is similar to that used by marten (although less mesic), which is discussed below.
Cascade red fox	High elevation forest/no habitat	Analysis area too low in elevation.

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Strategic Species		
Washington duskysnail	Kettle lakes/habitat not present	No kettle lakes in project area.
Masked duskysnail	Kettle lakes/habitat not present	No kettle lakes in project area.
Chelan Mountainsnail	Open forest/balsamroot habitat	Outside the known range.
<b>Management Indicator Species</b>		
Pileated woodpecker	Mature and old-growth conifer (not necessarily Forest Plan old growth)	Activities occurring in mature/old growth habitat would focus on protection of this important habitat type from uncharacteristic wildfire and reducing competition between trees to maintain large trees on the landscape. Pileated woodpeckers use habitats similar to those of spotted owls, and effects would be similar. Snag loss would reduce habitat used for nesting, roosting and foraging, and is discussed in the spotted owl section and Appendix A of the Wildlife Report.

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Three-toed woodpecker	Mature and old-growth conifer (not Forest Plan old growth)	Activities occurring in old growth habitat would focus on protection of this important habitat type from uncharacteristic wildfire and reducing competition between trees, thus perpetuating the large trees on the landscape over time. This species uses more boreal habitats, which have limited treatment in the project area. 31 acres of mature/old-growth habitat would be thinned from below to remove smaller trees out of 2,190 acres estimated late/old forest. Large trees would not be removed in treatments. Snags would be cut only if they are a safety concern during project activities and along open roads. Snag cutting is allowed for firewood use on 200' on each side of open system roads except in LSRs and riparian reserves. Trees up to 8" dbh would be cut on 309 acres (14%) of the late/old habitat in this environmental zone, which would open the canopy and reduce potential for crown fire and competition between trees. This would reduce the risk of loss of the late/old habitat and accelerate growth of remaining trees. Appendix A of the Wildlife Report discusses snag management and project effects.
Pacific marten	Mature and old-growth conifer (not limited to Forest Plan old growth)	Project activities are very limited in the mesic habitat used by marten. Eleven acres would have commercial harvest with an aspen release or moist forest treatment. All old growth stands would be retained. 32 acres in this habitat would have a ladder-fuel reduction treatment, which would reduce risk of crown fire and accelerate development of larger trees. An additional 5 acres are scheduled for non-commercial thinning in existing plantations of small trees. Snags and large down wood would be retained except a minor loss of snags as hazard trees and along roads for firewood use (see three-toed woodpecker section, above. Appendix A of the Wildlife Report discusses snag management and project effects.

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Barred owl	Mature and old-growth conifer (not Forest Plan old growth)	Analysis of habitat for spotted owls and other mature and old-growth indicators would cover barred owls, which are an invasive species and are documented in the project area.
Ruffed grouse	Riparian and deciduous	Riparian buffers will protect habitat. Aspen treatments will improve habitat by removing encroaching conifers, although short-term would occur during implementation. Aspen treatments would occur on 231 acres and would retain the aspen on the landscape by reducing shading by conifers.
Primary Cavity Excavators-pileated, three-toed, black-backed, downy, hairy, Lewis', white-headed woodpeckers, northern flickers, and Williamson's and red-naped sapsuckers.	Dead and defective trees	These are management indicator species for dead and defective tree habitat. Snag habitat does exist within the project area and is not limiting due to insect activity, root rot, competition between trees, and 800 acres of burned area in the easternmost portion of the project area. Snag removal is not part of the proposed treatments unless dead trees are considered hazardous to workers, in which case, they may be felled and left on site to provide large woody debris. Prescribed burning will result in some loss of old, soft snags, but also creates new, hard snags. Snags are also cut along open roads for public safety and for firewood use on 200' on each side of open system roads except in LSRs and riparian reserves. The proposed project would have a minor negative impact on dead and defective tree habitat on 6% of the project area where large snags may be cut as hazard trees. Snags would be created on the 21% of the project area that would be underburned. It would not affect the size or health or primary cavity excavator populations. Youkey (2011) evaluated snag habitat for the forest PCE species using DecAid information and comparisons between current and historic conditions. Appendix A of the Wildlife Report discusses snag management in the project area.
Northwest Forest Plan Compliance		

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Survey and Manage Species- Chelan mountainsnail, blue-gray tailedropper, Puget Oregonian, Columbia Oregonian, larch mountain salamander, masked duskysnail, and great gray owl.	Discussed above, except Columbia Oregonian, a riparian associated snail.	Columbia Oregonian – range is south-central Washington. Surveys have not found this species in the Methow Valley.
Late-successional Reserves (LSRs)		89 acres of plantation thinning (of small, young trees) would occur in the LSR (~ 4% of the LSR). This activity is covered under the Assessment of the Northeastern Cascades Late-Successional Reserves (USDA Forest Service, 1998) and is exempted from further review by the Regional Ecosystem Office (Regional Ecosystem Office 1998). Thinning would accelerate development of small trees into larger trees, and is consistent with direction for LSRs.
Matrix Guidelines Retain coarse woody debris during logging. Retain 120' logs/acre in regeneration units Provide green trees and snags for white-headed woodpeckers, black-backed woodpeckers, pygmy nuthatches, flammulated owls. Retain 15% of the area in a unit for green tree and snag retention. Protect bats by surveying caves, mines, and abandoned wooden bridges and buildings.		Coarse woody debris is not removed during logging. Prescribed burning with low intensity prescriptions does not consume large wood. These guidelines are followed in units by applying ICO (individual, clumps and openings) prescriptions.  Caves, mines, abandoned bridges and buildings are not found in project area.
Forest Plan Compliance		

Resource	Habitat type /availability in analysis area	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Deer non-winter range	All Management Areas (MAs)	Standards and guidelines require 15% thermal cover and 15% hiding cover, well-distributed across MAs 5 and 25, 20% each across MA 14. Estimated cover for non-winter range is 66%, well-above the Forest Plan standard, and limiting to forage production. Current levels are not sustainable. Post-treatment, a conservative estimate of remaining cover would be 49% (assuming all harvest and noncommercial treatments would remove all cover).

### 3.7.4.2 Alternative 1

#### 3.7.4.2.1 Effects

##### *Resource Indicator: Changes to Habitat for Threatened species*

*Spotted owls:* If the no action alternative is implemented, stands would continue to increase in density, and fuel loadings would increase. Development of large trees that are important habitat elements for spotted owls, and limited in the project area, would be retarded by competition from the smaller trees. Competition would also result in mortality of the large trees, producing large snags, which are also important habitat elements. The few dense multistoried stands currently providing marginal owl habitat would be at elevated risk from high intensity wildfire due to abundant ladder fuels, which could carry fire into the crowns. High severity wildfire alters the forest structure associated with spotted owl nest and roost sites: high canopy closure, large-live tree basal area, and total live-tree basal area (Gaines et al. 1997; Roberts et al. 2008; Bond et al. 2009). (Low to moderate severity wildfires may have little or slightly positive impacts on spotted owls (Bond et al. 2002; Roberts et al. 2008; Bond et al. 2009).

In the short-term, current NRF and dispersal habitat would not be degraded or downgraded with implementation of the no action alternative and habitat fragmentation would not increase. In the long-term, stands would not become NRF or dispersal habitat as quickly, (if at all) in comparison to the action alternative. There would be no short-term effect. The long-term effect of the no-action alternative would be a neutral effect to habitat, because of the increased risk of habitat loss through wildfire and slowed development of large tree habitat used as nesting structures balanced by increased stand densities, which provide better habitat for owls.

*Lynx and Critical Lynx Habitat:* If the no action alternative is selected, the lynx habitat in the LAUs and in critical habitat would remain the same in the short-term, and increase in stand densities and tree size, over time. If disturbance is absent, over time, the stand initiation stage stands would grow into stands of larger size trees not providing concentrated hare forage. Open-canopied stands with understories providing hare foods would eventually become less open, and understory forage would be reduced. This would reduce the prey base for lynx, and reduce capability of the LAU and Critical Habitat to support lynx. This would have a minor

adverse effect in the long-term in lynx habitat, because there are few units proposed in boreal habitat and a larger adverse effect (long-term) in critical habitat, because critical habitat was designated in drier forest types as well as boreal forest.

*Resource Indicator: Changes to Habitat for Sensitive Species*

*Northern Goshawk:* If the no action alternative is implemented, over time, denser stands would develop, and areas with high canopy closures and large trees would provide suitable habitat for goshawks. However, because goshawks use a more open understory, increased densities in the understory could be detrimental. Large trees, snags and down wood, important for nests and prey habitat would develop more slowly due to competition, and would be at higher risk than in the action alternative, due to wildfire and insect activity. The no action alternative would have mixed effects in the long-term- the understory would become denser and potential nest trees would develop more slowly, and these would be at higher risk for fire and insect activity, which is a negative effect to goshawks, but the overall canopy closures would also increase, providing more habitat for goshawks.

*Gray Flycatcher:* Fire suppression has resulted in higher stand densities and reduced understory vegetation, resulting in a reduction in habitat suitability for gray flycatchers. The no action alternative would continue this trend. As forest canopies close, understory shrubs would be shaded out, and fewer nesting opportunities would exist. Implementation of the no action alternative would result in long-term moderate adverse effects due to increased stand densities.

*White-headed Woodpecker:* Implementation of the no action alternative would result in higher stand densities and increased canopy closures, resulting in a reduction in habitat suitability for white-headed woodpeckers. In the long-term, the large ponderosa pines used for nesting would be at a higher risk from wildfire, due to the presence of ladder fuels. Competition from smaller trees would result in mortality of the large pines, which would reduce nesting opportunities. Implementation of the no action alternative would result in long-term moderate adverse effects due to increased stand densities.

*Western Gray Squirrels:* With implementation of the no action alternative, stand densities would continue to increase, providing increased arboreal travel and fungi foods. Competition on large pines from smaller trees would slow their growth, and reduce production of seeds, which are an important winter food source. Mortality due to vehicle strikes would continue on 45.3 miles of open roads. Implementation of the no action alternative would result in long-term mixed effects due to increased stand densities and reduced growth of large pines.

*Resource Indicator: Habitat for Management Indicator Species*

*Spotted Owls-* analyzed in first resource indicator.

*Winter Range for Mule Deer:* Implementation of the no action alternative would allow stand densities to continue to increase, providing more thermal cover and less forage for mule deer. This would result in an overall decline in the ability of the winter range to support mule deer over time. Implementation of the no action alternative would result in long-term moderate adverse effects due to a reduction in forage species. The no-action alternative would result in road densities being maintained at current levels. The proposed action would close and decommission roads, resulting in reduced action and higher quality habitat for mule deer.

Implementation of the no action alternative would result in long-term minor adverse effects due to road effects in comparison with the action alternatives.

*Lynx*- analyzed in first resource indicator.

*Resource Indicator: Changes to Habitat for Landbirds*

If the no-action alternative is selected, denser stand conditions would be maintained, reducing habitat quality for species using open stands (chipping sparrow, white-headed woodpecker, gray flycatcher), large trees (spotted owl, goshawk, brown creeper) or large snags (flammulated owl) and improving habitat availability for species preferring dense stands and smaller trees (varied thrush). Degraded riparian habitats would be maintained in their current condition, resulting in poor quality habitat for species using riparian habitats (yellow warbler, willow flycatcher, ruffed grouse). No road decommissioning would occur, resulting in continued snag loss, disturbance, habitat avoidance, and access-related mortality. Implementation of the no action alternative would result in mixed effects to landbirds. There would be a long-term moderate adverse effect to landbirds that prefer open stands, and a long-term moderate beneficial effect to species preferring denser conditions. There would be a long-term moderate adverse effect to landbirds resulting from roads and road use.

**3.7.4.3 Alternative 2 and 3 – Proposed Action Effects Common to Both Action Alternatives or to Alternative 2 Only**

**3.7.4.3.1 Effects**

The effects of the proposed actions of both alternatives or to Alternative 2 only are summarized in Figure 72 and presented in more detail below. A Biological Assessment for this project was prepared by Ann Glidden and Gene Shull and is available in the analysis file.

**Figure 72. Wildlife Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 2**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2
Habitat for threatened species- spotted owls, lynx, and Critical Habitat (CH) for lynx.	Suitable Spotted Owl Habitat (late old successional habitat)	Nesting, Roosting, Foraging habitat (NRF) area- acres treated	1,054 acres (-3.0% would be degraded but not downgraded)
		Open roads in NRF	17.2 post-project
	Suitable Lynx habitat in LAUs	Early successional habitat in subalpine fir zone- acres treated	Spirit Mountain- 5 ac.(2%) treated Methow Gold- 53ac. (43%) treated



Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2
		Open roads in habitat-mi.	2.6 mi. post-project
	Critical Habitat for lynx	Acres of designated habitat with treatments	2,132 acres treated (17%)
		Open roads in habitat	15.7 miles post-project
Habitat for sensitive/focal species- goshawk, gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker and western gray squirrel.	Suitable habitat	Goshawk- dense stands with large trees.	11,636 acres (34% of non-Wilderness project area)
		Open roads in habitat	40.2 post-project
	Suitable habitat	Suitable habitat improved (acres; sensitive species- gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker and western gray squirrel.)	1,795 acres of potential habitat improved. (8% of the habitat)
		Open roads in habitat	51.5 post-project
Habitat for MIS, winter range, mule deer.	Spotted owls	See Spotted owls, above	See Spotted owls, above
	Winter range	Cover: forage ratios/Forest Plan standards	MA 14: 36% cover (SIT-13%, WT-23%) MA 26: 33% (SIT-16%, WT-17%)
		Open roads in habitat	21.0 post-project
	Lodgepole pine	See Lynx and Critical Habitat, above	See Lynx and Critical Habitat, above

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2
Habitat for Landbirds	Pine, mixed conifer and deciduous/riparian habitats.	Effects to suitable habitats	Ponderosa pine- 8,395 acres treated (39%)  Mixed conifer- 1,813 acres treated (14%)  Riparian- 668 acres (13%)  Deciduous (aspen) 231 acres

*Resource Indicator: Changes to Habitat for Threatened Species*

*Spotted owls:*

In east-side habitats of the Washington and Oregon Cascade Range, the only viable conservation strategy is to actively manage fire-prone forests and landscapes to sustain spotted owl habitat (USDA Forest Service 2012a). The proposed treatments in the action alternatives would achieve this, and are consistent with the revised recovery plan for spotted owls (US Fish and Wildlife Service 2011), by treating primarily areas that are not currently providing habitat, to better protect habitat from large scale, high-severity fires and to set appropriate stands (which are very limited in the analysis area) on a trajectory to become habitat in the future. Suitable habitat in the analysis area is inadequate to support owls, and marginal due to small isolated stands on the edge of the range. Two of those stands (36 acres) would be thinned to retain the large tree component, while retaining adequate canopy closure to function as NRF.

Disturbance from noise and human presence could occur during implementation of all treatments, particularly those using heavy equipment and chainsaws. Surveys were completed in areas where NRF habitat was concentrated, with no responses from spotted owls.

*Silvicultural treatments in NRF:* Figure 73 displays the extent of the silvicultural treatments for Alternative 2 in suitable owl habitat (NRF).

**Figure 73. Silvicultural Treatments in Spotted Owl Habitat (NRF)**

Prescription	NRF (acres)
Dry Forest with mistletoe sanitation	0
Dry Forest Restoration	0
Moist Forest Thin	32
Post and Pole	0
Regeneration	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

Moist forest treatments would occur in 36 acres (3%) of marginal NRF habitat for spotted owls. Treatment prescriptions for this type would limit size of understory trees that would be cut around the largest trees, to 21" DBH, and retain snags and defective trees.

Silvicultural treatments that change the overstory in owl habitat would open the canopy and slightly degrade NRF habitat. This would be a minor (36acres), short- to medium-term (1-10 years), negative effect to the habitat, followed by a minor long-term beneficial effect (because the treatments would retain large trees on the landscape, and reduce risk of fire and insect activity).

*Silvicultural treatments in dispersal habitat:* Approximately 556 acres of dispersal habitat would be thinned (about 14% of the dispersal habitat), which would open the canopy and slightly degrade this habitat type. This includes treatments that remove mistletoe infections, which produce deformed branches often used for nesting. This treatment is planned for 127 acres in dispersal habitat (3% of the dispersal habitat). In the short-term, this would decrease nest site availability in stands that may become habitat in the future, while improving growth on remaining trees in the longer term. (These treatments do not occur in stands currently providing suitable NRF habitat.) Regeneration harvest would occur on 35 acres of dispersal habitat (1%), which would downgrade the habitat to non-habitat.

The amount of dispersal habitat for spotted owls would be reduced by silvicultural treatments in the short and medium term, likely for a minimum of 10 years, (until the medium and large trees released from understory competition grow enough to provide a high canopy closure). This would make the project area less suitable for spotted owls than it is currently. There would be a moderate (14% degrade/downgrade of dispersal habitat), adverse effect to dispersal habitat in the short-to medium term. Approximately half of this reduction would occur in the northeastern portion of the analysis area, where dry forest conditions interspersed with non-forest habitat adjacent to private land and the eastern edge of the owl's range, make this area a poor candidate for managing as owl habitat. In the longer term, accelerated growth of large trees would occur more quickly than if left unmanaged, providing better habitat over time for spotted owl and other species using large trees.

Silvicultural treatments would also result in moderate beneficial effects to the dispersal habitat, in the short and longer term (immediately to >20 years). Release of large and medium trees would reduce competition on the remaining trees, accelerating their rate of growth into larger trees. It would also reduce the ladder fuels that could carry fire from the ground into the canopy, and reduce risk of losing the stands of large trees. This would improve habitat at the individual stand and at the landscape level for spotted owls.

In all prescriptions except regeneration harvest (35 acres of the 4,113 acres of dispersal; <1%), NRF and dispersal stands will retain some habitat function as foraging habitat, post-treatment. Habitat would be slightly degraded for flying squirrels (Carey 2001; Lehmkuhl et al. 2006b) but habitat for woodrats and other prey (Lehmkuhl et al. 2006a), would be retained or would rapidly recover functionality (in less than 5 years)(Irwin et al. 2012), and would provide a food source for owls. Variable thinning, which is planned for the project, is expected to be favorable compared to even-aged thinning because it creates within stand heterogeneity (Carey 2001;

Lehmkuhl et al. 2006a, b). Carey found that after variable thinning treatments, total biomass of squirrels was enhanced within 5 years which would provide additional food for owls.

*Ladder fuel treatments:* Research suggests that thinning and burning treatments in dry coniferous forests have few detrimental effects on native understory vegetation (USDA Forest Service 2012a). Ladder fuel thinning that affects the understory would have minor effects on the NRF and dispersal habitat. Understory fuels less than 8" DBH would be cut, piled and burned. In dense stands of large trees that comprise suitable owl habitat, these contribute little to canopy closures and are too small to provide shading, habitat for prey species or cover from predators. Removal of this component would reduce competition and risk of fire to the larger trees. Stand-alone ladder fuel thinning (without an overstory treatment) would occur in about 260 acres of NRF habitat (3%) and about 1,200 acres of dispersal habitat (about 29%). However, ladder fuel reduction (LFR) in non-habitat stands would result in reduced risk of crown fire across the landscape, which would protect existing owl habitat, as well.

*Prescribed burning:* Prescribed burning has less effect on overstory than thinning, and usually does not reduce tree density or basal area of the dominant overstory (USDA Forest Service 2012a). Patchiness, structural complexity and habitat heterogeneity increase with prescribed burning, unless there are multiple entries or burn is large (greater than 1000 hectares; Pilliod 2006). Prescribed burning with low/moderate prescriptions would have minor negative effects on owl habitat in the short- to medium term (1-10 years). It would result in slightly more open canopies, loss of large, soft snags, and creation of small, hard snags. Beneficial effects would be increased diversity of structures and increased complexity of habitats which would increase foraging opportunities in about 5 years.

Fireline construction by machine and hand would be completed to support burns. None of the machine firelines are in suitable NRF habitat, but several are adjacent. Surveys have been completed and no responses were elicited from spotted owls.

*Road actions:* No temporary roads would be built in suitable NRF habitat. Several closed roads (ML 1) would be opened. While 2.4 miles would be opened, only 0.5 would be open to public use. The remainder would be open to administrative use, which is infrequent. Decommissioning of closed and open roads, opening of closed roads for administrative use, and changes in maintenance levels would occur, and could result in short-term disturbance to owls. There would be mixed effects to owls- a short-term minor adverse effect could occur during road actions (decommissioning, opening, closing), a moderate intensity, long-term benefit would occur, as decommissioned roads would eventually revegetate, possibly providing additional habitat in 40 years or more.

Minor vegetation changes could occur as a result of the decommissioning or reopening, if small trees and shrubs are removed on the road bed.

Surveys have been completed and no responses were elicited from spotted owls.

*Soils treatments:* Soil treatments would occur in 28 acres of NRF and 21 acres of dispersal habitat. The tree component would not be changed, and this treatment would not change habitat function. Timing restrictions would not be required, as surveys have been completed

and spotted owls were not found. Disturbance to owls in the area, but undetected by surveys, could occur.

*Wetland treatments:* These treatments occur outside of suitable owl habitat, however, disturbance to adjacent habitat could occur. No timing restrictions were required, because surveys were completed in these areas, and no spotted owls were found.

*Aquatic Projects:* Vegetation effects would be minor for these projects, and large trees would not be affected. Timing restrictions for fish protection on the culverts would prevent disturbance to nesting owl season, as well.

Overall, considering all project components, the project would have minor (to NRF habitat) to moderate (dispersal habitat) short-term to medium-term (1-10 years), mixed effects for spotted owl habitat, and long-term moderate beneficial effects (because fire/insect activity risk would be reduced across landscape, and stands would be more likely to have large tree habitat suitable for owls). There is currently not enough habitat in the project area to support owls.

*Determination of Effects on Spotted Owls:* Alternative 2 may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect spotted owls. The area does not have enough habitat to support nesting owls currently. The limited suitable habitat is avoided in treatments, except for 36 acres which would be thinned to retain the largest trees. Surveys of the habitat concentrations have not elicited responses from spotted owls.

For owls as MIS- this alternative would have a small short-term negative impact, as vegetation treatments affect 3% of the current suitable, but unoccupied, habitat. Treatments across the landscape would accelerate the growth of large trees more suitable for owl habitat, and would reduce risk of large-scale fire on the habitats. The loss of unoccupied habitat and short-term disturbance would be minor at the Forest scale.

*Lynx:*

**Figure 74: Treatments in LAUs**

Treatments in LAUs in Lynx Habitat	
	acres
Aspen	5
Pre-commercial thinning	53
Total	58

*Silvicultural and fuels treatments:* Approximately 1,770 acres of treatment would occur in the LAUs in the analysis area. However, only 58 acres occur within the boreal forest area where lynx are expected. In the Methow Gold LAU (Libby drainage), 53 acres of non-commercial thinning (in plantations) would occur in stands that are typed as stand-initiation phase. The plantation stands have grown out of reach of hares and are no longer providing a food resource. Five acres of aspen understory treatment with conifer girdling would occur in the Spirit LAU (Buttermilk) in an open-canopied stand. The prescription for these acres is to thin conifers <10" DBH in 15' – 30' circles around aspen trees with chainsaw, and to girdle conifers 10 – 21" DBH

with chainsaws. This could result in a minor loss of hare browse provided by smaller, open-grown conifers over less than 5 acres.

All overstory treatments would result in more open habitat that will generate browse for hares, an important prey item for lynx. This effect would occur rapidly after overstory change (1 to 10 years (Pilliod, 2006)), and persist until shrubs and tree limbs grow out of reach of hares. Slash would be hand-piled.

*Soils treatments, Wetland treatments:* These are not proposed in the LAUs.

*Fisheries and aquatics projects:* Several projects aimed at improving aquatic habitat condition are proposed in alternative 2, and are located in lynx habitat in the LAUs. Installation of culverts, coarse wood and beaver dam analogs would result in short-term noise and human presence in lynx habitat. Disturbance could occur, but lynx do not appear to be particularly sensitive to human presence (Staples, 1995; Mowat et al. 2000). Minor vegetation effects could occur where heavy equipment is used, but this would be limited in extent and would not reduce vegetation foods for snowshoe hare and other lynx prey species. Timing of the work would prevent disturbance to den sites.

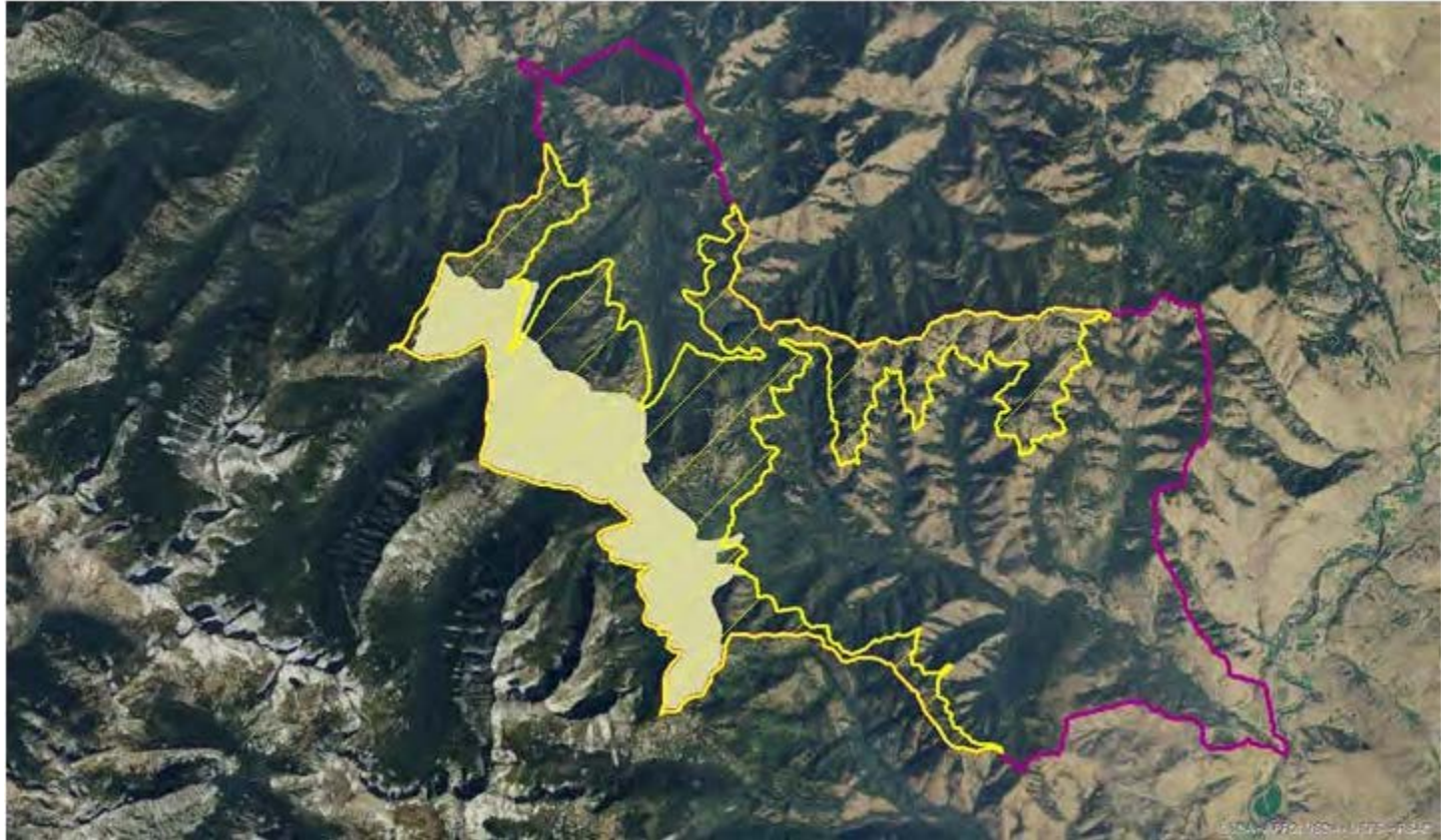
*Road construction and decommissioning:* No temporary road construction is proposed in the LAUs. Other road actions are proposed in alternative 2, and would result in temporary noise and human presence in the short-term, during implementation. Disturbance could occur, but lynx do not appear to be particularly sensitive to human presence (Staples, 1995; Mowat et al. 2000), nor to avoid roads (McKelvey et al., 2000, Kolbe et al. 2006, Squires et al. 2010). Ruggiero et al (2000) Ruediger et al. (2000). Squires et al. (2010) reported that lynx denned further from roads than random expectation, but did not think that was related to human disturbance, but rather related to fewer roads in the mature forests. Roads are a source of mortality for lynx (Ferrerias et al. 1992, Kramer-Schadt et al 2004). Lynx are also vulnerable to overexploitation from trapping (Bailey et al. 1986). Access for trapping is increased by the presence of roads and trails. However, lynx are a threatened species, and no legal trapping is allowed.

The only road actions would occur in the lynx habitat within the LAUs are decommissioning of already closed roads. These actions would result in reduced potential for disturbance to lynx prey.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be a minor (because it involves only 58 acres in boreal forest), short- to medium term, beneficial effect to lynx habitat, because hare forage would increase.

*Determination of Effects on Lynx:* Alternative 2 may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect lynx. Treatments are very limited in the mapped lynx habitat (58 acres), and would increase understory growth that provides cover and forage for prey species. Alternative 2 is consistent with the LCAS. It doesn't reduce stem densities through thinning until stands no longer provide winter hare habitat. For lynx as MIS- This alternative would slightly improve conditions for lynx in the project area. The Mission project would not contribute to a negative trend in viability on the Forest.

**Figure 75: Mission Project (purple outline), critical habitat for Lynx (cross-hatched), and Boreal (lynx) habitat (light green shading).**



**Critical Habitat for Lynx:**

Approximately, 2,132 acres would receive silvicultural or fuels reduction treatments with implementation of the proposed action. Treatments in the critical habitat area are in matrix habitats (dry forest, plantations, aspen) or have grown out of hare reach, with the exception of the 58 acres in lynx habitat that are discussed above, in the “Lynx” section.

**Figure 76: Overstory Treatments in Lynx Critical Habitat**

Overstory Treatments in Critical Habitat	
	<b>acres</b>
Aspen	59
Conifer girdling for aspen release	37
Dry forest/mistletoe sanitation	112
Dry forest restoration	0.3
Moist forest thin	15

<b>Overstory Treatments in Critical Habitat</b>	
Post/poles	0.4
Regeneration	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>243</b>

Silvicultural treatments would open the canopy and result in increased understory vegetation, which would be beneficial to hares and other lynx prey. This would continue until the overstory closes again. Depending on how open the stands are, post-treatment, this effect could last for a decade or more.

**Figure 77: Stand-alone Understory Treatments in Lynx Critical Habitat**

<b>Understory Treatments in Critical Habitat</b>	
	<b>acres</b>
Ladder fuel reduction (LFR)	1,468
Timber stand improvement (TSI)	421
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,889</b>

Ladder fuel reduction could affect understory structure and reduce food availability for hares. Shrubs are not cut in this treatment, but small trees could provide some limited food resources for hares and other prey, although many trees are suppressed and lacking branches, or branches are too high for hares to reach. A general mitigation in fuels treatments is to leave 20% of the acreage in unthinned patches of trees from 0.1 to multiple acres and to retain the complex patches, clumpiness and gaps retained in the harvest units. This will provide cover and forage for hares. Because understory vegetation is not limited across the critical habitat unit and treatments are in matrix or grown out of hare reach, the treatments are not expected to reduce hare forage or populations. Prey for lynx in the matrix habitat would be maintained. Timber stand improvement units are plantations, generally of ponderosa pine, provide limited cover, and have grown out of reach of hares.

*Road actions:* Approximately 0.04 miles of temporary road would be built in critical habitat, and result in a minor amount of vegetation loss. Approximately 0.3 miles of open road and 6.6 miles of closed road would be decommissioned. No closed roads would be opened. These actions would have minimal effects on vegetation, depending on how long the roads have been closed and other factors. Decommissioned roads may revegetate in the long-term to provide some habitat for lynx or their prey.

*Other actions:* No soil treatments or wetland thinning is planned in critical habitat. Fisheries projects- coarse wood placement in streams and culverts of stream crossings, would occur. These projects would not change vegetation or effect critical habitat.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be a minor (because it involves only 58 acres in boreal forest), short- to medium term beneficial effect to lynx habitat (because hare



forage would increase), and a negligible short- to medium term, beneficial effect to critical habitat.

*Determination of Effects on Critical Habitat for Lynx:* The proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect critical habitat for lynx. Only 58 acres of treatment would occur within the boreal forest area mapped as lynx habitat. These stands have grown out of reach of hares and are no longer providing a food resource. All overstory treatments would result in more open habitat that will generate browse for hares, an important prey item for lynx.

The proposed action is consistent with the LCAS. In the remainder of the critical habitat, treatments would not result in large-scale loss of understory vegetation in boreal forest. The area is mostly not boreal forest, and treatments are in matrix or stands that have grown out of reach of hares.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Sensitive Species*

*Northern Goshawk:*

Surveys for goshawks were limited and no territories were identified. If nests are located prior to contract award, the nest site would be protected. If found during contract activities, timing restrictions would protect the active nest, as per Forest Plan direction.

*Silvicultural and fuel treatments:* Treatments that open the overstory would make the stands less suitable for use by goshawks for nesting in the short-term. This would occur on approximately 1,386 acres. Foraging use may still occur, and opening the stands would create structural diversity and a potential increase in prey availability and diversity. Loss of snags as danger trees during logging would occur.

Ladder fuel reductions (LFR) would benefit goshawks by reducing understory density and reducing risk of fire and insect activity which could destroy nest stands and post-fledgling areas. LFR would remove a smaller size class of trees than the commercial thinning, and would result in little opening of the canopy. Loss of snags used for nesting or prey habitat would also occur. Timber stand improvement (TSI) thinning would occur in plantations of small trees that are not providing habitat for goshawks or prey. In the longer term, thinning would increase structural diversity and diversify prey habitat across the stand, and accelerate growth into larger trees that may become habitat for goshawks. Underburning would result in some loss of snags and large down wood, particularly soft snags, although some hard small snags would also be produced. The proposed actions would move stand structures toward mature and old forest structure, provide a variety of canopy closures and stand conditions, and result in a less uniform horizontal structure across the landscape, and would potentially improve habitat conditions for goshawks and their prey in the long-term over the current condition.

Riparian habitat with dense deciduous vegetation that would provide habitat for important prey items such as ruffed grouse and hares would be retained by use of riparian buffers. Some canopy opening through fuels treatments would stimulate deciduous vegetation that would improve habitat quality for grouse. In addition, aspen treatments would occur on 231 acres (approximately 65% of the deciduous habitat) and would retard the encroachment of conifer species on the aspen stands, which will perpetuate and increase the size of the aspen stands.

Reynolds et al. (1992) and Squires and Reynolds (1997) recommended prescribed fire and thinning from below to achieve non-uniform spacing of trees, with a maximum of 30-50% canopy opening, to sustain habitat for the northern goshawk and their prey. However, these recommended canopy closures are higher than historical conditions for the dry forest, and would preclude thinning and harvest options. Retention of clumps, patches, and riparian buffers, would result in denser conditions that would help to mitigate the overall reduction of overstory canopy. This is a component of the silvicultural prescriptions.

Post-harvest, assuming all overstory treatments result in open canopies that would not support nesting goshawks in the short-term, approximately 34% of the landscape would remain as potential habitat for goshawks. This is a 4% loss of habitat across the project area. Nest habitat does not appear to be a limiting factor in this landscape, and the proposed treatments would increase prey diversity and availability, accelerate growth into better habitat, and help to protect current habitat from fire, while protecting and retaining the largest size class trees.

*Road actions:* Approximately 0.2 miles of temporary road would be built in goshawk habitat. This could remove a small amount of habitat, a maximum of 0.7 acre, if all the area is timbered. Approximately 34% of the analysis area would still be habitat. Public access would not be permitted on temporary roads, so they would not increase access for falconers. Other road actions would not produce measurable change in vegetation. Decommissioning of currently open roads would occur on 1.6 miles in goshawk habitat, which would reduce access for falconers. However, 1.9 miles of closed road would be reopened for public use, so a net increase in access of 0.3 miles would occur.

*Other projects:* None of the other project proposals would result in measurable changes to vegetation in goshawk habitat.

All proposed projects have the potential to disturb nesting goshawks that have not been detected. If territorial goshawks are observed, a biologist would attempt to locate the nest site, and timing restrictions would be imposed.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be minor, mixed, short- to long-term effects to goshawk habitat. In the short-term, overstory treatments would open the canopy, making habitat less suitable. In the longer-term, these treatments would accelerate growth of large trees and snags, diversify and protect habitats.

*Determination of Effects on Northern Goshawk:* Alternative 2 may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. Habitat would be reduced by 1,386 acres, due to treatments that open the overstory. Approximately 11,636 acres would remain as potential habitat. A net increase in access of 0.3 miles of roads would occur, which could increase access for falconers, as well as increase disturbance from noise and human access.

*Gray Flycatcher:*

Silvicultural treatments would occur in 1,795 acres (8%) of the potential gray flycatcher habitat.

The proposed treatments (harvest, thinning, ladder fuel reduction, prescribed fire) would result in more open habitats across the project area. Post-harvest stand level canopy cover is expected to be above 25%, with the exception of the regeneration harvests on 58 acres, (approximately 0.3% of the project area), which are predicted to be 10%. However, to provide for a diversity of habitat types and species, prescriptions would emphasize clumps and gaps, so areas <10% and >70% canopy closure would be present, post-project. Fuels treatment units would retain 20% of the area in an untreated condition, to provide hiding cover and thermal cover for deer, and to meet habitat needs of gray flycatchers and other species.

Research suggests that thinning and burning in dry forest have few detrimental effects on native understory vegetation, and that the understory is largely unchanged several years after the treatment (USDA Forest Service 2012a). In the short-term, stand-level shrub cover would be changed by prescribed burning, and effects from prescribed burning are expected to be patchy. Shrub cover would be reduced in small areas of heavy fuel loadings, but overall effects of the prescribed burning are expected to be low-severity. Some loss of shrub component would occur during underburning, but abundant shrub cover would remain to provide habitat for this species. In the longer term, burning would increase the amount and quality of shrub habitat.

Thinning of the densely canopied stands would improve habitat for gray flycatchers. These heavily-stocked stands are not currently good habitat. Thinning would reduce stand density and open the canopy, possibly enough to produce an understory component of shrubs that may provide nest or forage habitat and would increase overall understory richness.

Because the treatments would result in patchy effects, it is difficult to predict how much habitat would be improved for gray flycatchers as a result of treatments. However, approximately 1,795 acres of hot dry or warm dry environmental types are proposed for treatments that would potentially result in conditions that are not too open or too densely canopied for gray flycatcher use. This is about 8% of the total hot dry/warm dry environmental type in the project area.

Harvest, thinning, burning and treatment of ladder fuels could have a short-term disturbance effect, but would reduce fuel loadings to protect remaining habitat. Abundant structure for nests and foraging would remain across the lower elevations used by gray flycatchers.

*Road actions:* There would be a net increase of 1.2 miles of open roads during project implementation, and 6.1 miles post-project in this habitat type, which could affect flycatchers.

*Other projects:* None of the other project proposals would result in measurable changes to vegetation in hot dry or warm dry vegetation types.

All proposed projects have the potential to disturb nesting birds, if the project occurs during that time.

*Determination of Effects on Gray Flycatcher:* Overall, considering all project components, there would be minor, negative, short-term effects to gray flycatcher habitat due to activity disturbance, minor amounts of shrub loss, and increased road densities during the project. There would be a short to long-term, minor, beneficial effect on 8% of the habitat (from overstory treatments), due to creation of more open habitat types and reduced risk of habitat

loss. There would be a long-term, moderate, beneficial effect from understory thinning of stands that are not suitable habitat now, because growth of trees would be accelerated and risk of large-scale habitat loss would be reduced on 6,542 acres, 30% of the habitat.

Alternative 2 may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. Vegetation treatments would have a beneficial impact on gray flycatchers. The project would reduce stand densities and increase availability of shrub habitat. However, a small net increase in open roads in this habitat type could have a long-term negative effect. Because these roads are not heavily used, this negative effect would be minor. Mechanical treatments could also cause a short-term disturbance effect.

*White-headed woodpecker:*

Thinning and burning in dry forest stands would improve habitat for the white-headed woodpeckers by reducing competition and ladder fuels around large pines, which would accelerate development of large trees and increase the availability of seeds. Trees larger than 21" DBH would generally not be cut and would remain on the landscape to provide foraging habitat and, in time, large snags for nesting. The harvest treatments would provide additional stumps for nesting.

Because the treatments would result in patchy effects, it is difficult to predict how much habitat would be improved for white-headed woodpeckers. However, 1,853 acres (8% of the total hot dry/warm dry environmental type) are proposed for treatments that would potentially result in improved conditions for white-headed woodpecker use.

Harvest, thinning, burning and treatment of ladder fuels could have a short-term disturbance effect, but would reduce fuel loadings to protect remaining habitat.

*Road Actions:* Opening of 2.4 miles of currently closed roads in potential habitat would lead to snag loss on as much as 116 acres. This would reduce nesting and foraging habitat for white-headed woodpeckers. Approximately 2.2 miles of currently open roads would be decommissioned, which would offset the potential snag loss on a maximum of 107 acres.

*Other projects:* None of the other project proposals would result in measurable changes to vegetation in hot dry or warm dry vegetation types.

All proposed projects have the potential to disturb nesting birds, if the project occurs during that timeframe.

*Determination of Effects on White-headed woodpecker:* Overall, considering all project components, there would be a moderate (8% of the habitat), long-term beneficial effect from vegetation treatments and a minor, long-term adverse effect on snag habitat.

Alternative 2 may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. Vegetation treatments would have a beneficial impact on white-headed woodpeckers. Tree growth would be

accelerated by removal of competing smaller trees, and potential for large-scale habitat loss through high-severity wildfire would be reduced. However, a net increase of 0.2 miles of open roads would result in loss of snags on about 9 acres. Overall, the proposed project would improve conditions for white-headed woodpeckers in the project area and would not contribute to a negative trend in Forest-wide viability.

*Western Gray Squirrels:*

*Silviculture and fuels treatments:* Effects from harvest and fuels treatments on gray squirrels are mixed. Harvest and fuels treatments may result in loss of nests and potential nest sites (generally trees >15.8" DBH), would fragment the tree canopy that squirrels use for travel and escape cover, and would reduce abundance of fungi foods. Nest site loss is expected to be minimal because trees > 21" would rarely be cut, and known natal nests would be protected. Thinning prescriptions would provide for retention of clumps of trees, which would provide opportunity for arboreal travel. Some loss of cavity habitat that would provide potential nest sites would occur with harvest and burning. Because nests are usually in the larger size class trees, it is unlikely that noncommercial or ladder fuel reduction thinnings would affect nests.

Underburning would remove some surface fuel which may reduce escape cover for squirrels moving along the ground. However, burning is generally patchy and larger down wood is not generally consumed. Thinning would increase food resources by accelerating growth of large ponderosa pines, which produce more pine seeds than small trees (Linders and Stinson 2007), and also by opening of the tree canopy, which would allow the development of a shrub understory and additional foods. All fuels treatments would help to protect occupied and potential gray squirrel habitat from effects of uncharacteristic wildfire.

*Road actions:* Approximately 1.2 miles of temporary road would be opened for logging use and could result in additional mortality from vehicle strikes due to logging traffic. Temporary road construction would result in a maximum loss of vegetation of 4.1 acres, which would reduce availability of cover and potential for arboreal travel. Post-harvest, open road decommissioning would occur on 2.2 miles in western gray squirrel habitat. However, other road changes would result in a net increase of 6.0 miles of open roads in this habitat post-project including 2.4 miles of currently closed road that would be opened to general use.

*Other projects:* None of the other project proposals would result in measurable changes to vegetation in hot dry or warm dry vegetation types.

All proposed projects have the potential to disturb squirrels. This would be a short-term effect during project implementation.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be moderate (30% of habitat affected), mixed effects to western gray squirrels in the long-term.

*Determination of effects on Western Gray Squirrels:* Alternative 2 may adversely impact individuals through loss of arboreal travel opportunities or nests and potential for mortality from vehicle strikes during logging, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the project area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing. There would be a long-term moderate beneficial effect from understory thinning of stands that are not suitable habitat now, because growth of trees

would be accelerated and risk of large-scale habitat loss would be reduced on 6,542 acres, 30% of the habitat.

Post-project, open road mileage would increase, increasing risk of mortality from vehicle strikes.

*Resource Indicator: Habitat for Management Indicator Species  
Spotted Owls-* see above for discussion.

*Winter Range for Mule Deer:*

*Silvicultural and fuels treatments:* There are approximately 951 acres in harvest units and 3,841 acres of ladder fuel reduction treatments (without overstory treatment) and other non-commercial thinning of small trees that would occur on deer winter ranges. Approximately 542 acres, in 15 units would be logged during the winter in the Libby MA14 block. No winter activities are proposed in the Buttermilk MA14 block, or in any of the MA 26.

The proposed action would reduce thermal cover and increase forage for mule deer. The table below displays the cover remaining after treatments, and was modeled assuming that the harvest treatments would remove all thermal cover within the unit. The assumption for the LFR units (outside of the harvest areas) was that approximately ½ of the seedling/sapling and post/pole-size component within the unit would be removed in the ladder fuel reduction treatments.

**Figure 78. Estimated Post-treatment Thermal Cover, before mitigation**

Alternative 2						
Management Area	Winter thermal cover		Snow-intercept thermal cover		total	
	acres	%	acres	%	acres	%
MA-14	- 2,576	23%	1,448	13%	4,024	37%
MA-26	199	17%	185	16%	384	33%

The total cover remaining across the winter range would be approximately 37% in each MA -14 and 33% in MA-26. To mitigate cover post-treatment levels below Forest Plan standards (by 368 acres in MA-14 and 81 acres in MA-26, and to provide for adequate cover distribution across the project area (and to increase diversity and provide connectivity and habitat elements for other wildlife species), each ladder fuel reduction unit would leave 20% of the area untreated, in patches from 0.1 acre to multiple acres in size.

The canopy reduction from harvest and fuel treatments would result in an increase in forage species. Underburning would also result in increases in availability and palatability of forage species, as the older woody vegetation is burned and new vegetation growth is stimulated. However, it is important that patches of dense cover of at least 0.1 acres be retained to provide hiding cover for mule deer (Germaine et al. 2004). In addition, the treatments would contribute to the sustainability of thermal cover and other vegetation on the landscape by promoting low-intensity wildfire behavior with less canopy fire. Treatments would maintain and restore stand structure, composition, and arrangement that would be less susceptible to stand-replacing

wildfires that could extensively damage and reduce vegetation (including thermal cover) on the landscape.

Disturbance could occur as a result of winter logging, and deer may be temporarily displaced from the area being logged. The Forest winter range is higher elevation than the more heavily used areas on private land that are lower elevation and have less snow. Winter logging standards call for frozen ground and a minimum snowpack of 8" of compacted snow, to protect soils. By the time this amount of snow has accumulated, deer have often moved to lower elevations where food is more available. Anecdotal information suggests that deer may remain in units being logged in the winter to forage on lichens and fir needles from logged trees.

*Road actions:* Approximately 0.3 miles of temporary road would be constructed in winter range, open for logging use, then decommissioned. This would result in minor loss of vegetation for the short-term (less than 2 acres) until the vegetation regrows. Shrub species that may provide browse for deer may grow back within 5 years of decommissioning. Approximately 0.03 mile of closed road would reopen to general use on winter range, however the roads would still be closed by conditions during the winter period.

Decommissioning of currently open roads would occur on 2.2 miles. In the short and longer term, decommissioning of open roads would reduce access disturbance to deer, mortality from collisions, hunting and poaching and avoidance of habitat. Eventually, vegetation would regrow and provide additional browse.

*Other actions:* Other proposed projects would cause short-term, temporary disturbance to deer during project implementation, but involve only minor vegetation change. No measurable changes to cover or forage for deer are expected.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be moderate (canopy opening occurring on 39% of the winter range) short- to long-term beneficial effects on winter range for mule deer. Forage would be increased in the short and longer term. Cover would remain on more than 36% of the total winter range (MA-14 and 26). Road decommissioning on winter range would be a minor, long-term beneficial effect.

*Lynx-* see discussion above.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Landbirds*

The effects of forest restoration treatments on landbirds have been studied in several research projects. Gaines et al. (2007) found that dry forest restoration treatments implemented using the range of variation to guide forest thinning and burning, increased overall avian density and the overall density of neotropical migrants. There were positive density responses from several species that have been identified as species important to managers, including white-headed woodpeckers (which were only found in the treated stands) and chipping sparrows. Their results suggested that two aspects of the restoration treatments were important contributors to positive species responses: retention of the large tree component and creation of a more open overstory canopy.

Bagne and Purcell (2011) found that low-severity prescribed fires applied in spring served to drive the bird community towards pre-suppression conditions. Positive effects were found for riparian associate species, aerial foragers, and bark foragers.

Prescribed fire reduces populations of ground and shrub nesting birds (Wilson et al. 1995; Artman et al. 2001; Blake 2005), while benefiting populations of woodpeckers (Blake 2005; Russell et al. 2009) and species that forage in the air and on the ground (Saab et al. 2007; Russell et al. 2009).

Fuel reduction treatments that change stand structure or composition would cause some species to gain habitat and others to lose (Lehmkuhl et al. 2007). Figure 79 displays the expected effects for these focal species.

**Figure 79. Summary of habitat conditions and effects from fuels and vegetation treatments**

Species	Direct and Indirect Effects	Conclusion
Chipping sparrow (focal species for open understory)	Stands would become more open with more ground foraging opportunities on approximately 39% of the pine habitat in the project area.	Beneficial effect for chipping sparrow.
Flammulated owl (focal species for large snags)	Bigger trees over time and reduced potential for fire loss would improve habitat on about 39% of the pine habitat in the project area.	Beneficial effect for Flammulated owls. Combination of leave areas and thinning create improved habitat in dry forest.
Varied thrush (focal species for structural diversity)	Stand structure would become more open and have fewer canopy layers as a result of treatments, over 14% of the habitat type. Mitigations of retaining 20% of fuels units in clumps and patches would retain habitat for the species.	Treatments would reduce habitat suitability for varied thrushes, but retained clumps and patches, and riparian buffers would leave a minimum of 20% of the area untreated. 86% of the mixed conifer habitat in the project area would remain in the current condition.
Brown creepers	Bigger trees over time and reduced potential for fire loss would improve habitat on about 14% of the mixed conifer in the project area.	Beneficial effect for brown creepers.
Ruffed grouse	Approximately 231 acres of aspen habitat would be maintained by removal of encroaching small conifers and girdling of large conifers that are shading the aspen stands. This would allow stands to grow larger.	Beneficial effect for ruffed grouse.
Yellow warbler and willow flycatcher	Approximately 668 acres of commercial and noncommercial treatments would occur in riparian habitats and would affect vegetation. Mechanized harvest (52 acres) and fuel treatments would occur at the outer edges of the riparian reserves, and could result in increases in availability of shrub habitat, reduce susceptibility to fire and accelerate growth of large trees.	Possible slight benefit for yellow warbler and willow flycatcher.

Other proposed actions would result in short-term disturbance. Riparian projects would improve riparian habitat conditions and reduce disturbance in the long-term.

Overall, there would be a moderate, long-term beneficial effect for species utilizing more open conditions and a moderate, long-term adverse effect for species preferring higher canopy closures and denser stand conditions.



#### 3.7.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects

*Spatial boundary:* The geographic boundary is the project area, unless otherwise stated. The two drainages are sufficient in size to address effects to most species. Lynx geographic boundaries are the LAUs, and critical habitat. For deer and winter range, the geographic area is the winter range in the project area.

*Temporal boundary:* The temporal boundary is the last 100 years, since fire suppression began in the National Forests, to 20-40 years into the future, when the project's effects to vegetation would no longer be in evidence.

*Past Actions:* Fire-suppression and preferential logging of large trees have changed the character of forested stands from open, single-storied patches of large pioneer species, to dense multi-storied stands. This has led to a loss of structural and compositional heterogeneity and a predominance of young dense and relatively homogenous forest (Knapp et al. 2013). It has also led to accumulation and continuity of forest fuels which have contributed to large and more severe wildfires, which are projected to become even more common as the climate continues to warm (Westering et al. 2006). Fewer large snags occur compared to historical conditions, due to loss of large trees (fewer to become snags and down wood), firewood cutting and danger tree cutting. Road construction has resulted in habitat loss and increased access, which increases potential for disturbance, habitat avoidance, loss of snags through firewood cutting and danger tree management, mortality from collisions, hunting/poaching, trapping, and collecting.

*On-going Actions:* Fire-suppression, danger tree cutting and firewood cutting are on-going in the project area, contributing to increases in stand densities and loss of snags. Road maintenance, weed treatments, and grazing are also occurring. Road maintenance and weed treatments may add noise disturbance. Grazing may alter vegetation, reducing the grass/forb component and reducing competition around small trees.

*Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions:* No future vegetation projects have been identified.

#### 3.7.4.3.5 Summary of Cumulative Effects

Past actions have resulted in denser forest conditions, with fewer snags and large trees, and increased access to the project area.

The Travel Management decision will reduce access by motorized vehicles and the associated disturbance and habitat avoidance.

The following indicators would have a measurable change in cumulative effects:

*Spotted owls and goshawks:* On-going firewood cutting is reducing snags that provide nesting structures and habitat for prey for both owls and goshawks. Proposed road decommissioning will reduce this effect. The cumulative effect is that the area is less suitable for owls, but probably neutral for goshawks, since abundant dense habitat will remain.

*Landbirds:* Snag levels have been reduced by firewood cutting. Loss of snags and large trees and denser, more uniform forest structure has reduced habitat quality for flammulated owls and chipping sparrows. The proposed actions would open the stands on about 39% of the project

area, counteracting this effect on 8,395 acres. This would improve habitat for chipping sparrows and flammulated owls. However, a net increase in open roads would occur, and result in additional snag loss. Travel management does not affect snag levels and firewood cutting, thus there is no overlap in effects for snag-associated species. Travel management could improve riparian habitats, by closing them to off-road motorized use.

### 3.7.4.4 Alternative 3 – Effects Unique to Alternative 3

#### 3.7.4.4.1 Effects

See Alternative 2 for effects of vegetation treatments. These are the same for both alternatives.

All other projects except for rock armoring and road actions would be the same as in Alternative 2.

Rock armoring would occur in Alternatives 2 and 3 as a mitigation at six perennial stream crossings used for summer haul routes in Libby Creek, and at several other locations only in Alternative 3, and would potentially cause noise disturbance, which would be short-term in nature. Vegetation effects would minimal. No substantial effects to any wildlife species are expected, and this will not be discussed further.

Across the analysis area, the following road actions would occur in Alternative 3:

- Temporary road construction 1.2 miles
- Decommissioning of open roads 6.0 miles
- Decommissioning of closed roads 50.1 miles

These actions would have a net beneficial effect for wildlife, including landbirds (Habitat effects for landbirds would be the same as for alternative 2, except for minor changes to snags due to road changes, and landbirds will not be discussed further in this section. Snag level changes for the project area are discussed in Appendix A of the Wildlife report (Glidden, 2017) (Amended by Rohrer, 2018). Fewer roads mean less access for firewood harvest, hunting, trapping, poaching and collecting, reduced avoidance of suitable habitat and less disturbance from motorized vehicles and human presence. As vegetation returns to the roadbed, additional forage and cover would be produced. Short-term disturbance would occur during decommissioning and road construction. Road construction would remove 4.1 acres of habitat across the project area.

In general, Alternative 3 would have more beneficial effects to wildlife in the long-term than Alternative 2. The wildlife resource indicators that would change for Alternative 3 are discussed below.

**Figure 80. Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 3 (Road actions only)**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3

Habitat for threatened species- spotted owls, lynx, and Critical Habitat (CH) for lynx.	Suitable Spotted Owl Habitat (late old successional habitat)	Open roads in NRF	12.7 post-project
	Suitable Lynx habitat in LAUs	Open roads in habitat-mi.	2.6 mi. post-project
	Critical Habitat for lynx	Open roads in habitat	9.8 miles post-project
Habitat for sensitive/focal species- goshawk, gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker and western gray squirrel.	Suitable habitat- goshawks	Open roads in habitat	28.0 post-project
	Suitable habitat- gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker, and western gray squirrel	Open roads in habitat	34.5 post-project
Habitat for MIS, winter range, mule deer	Winter range	Open roads in habitat	12.2 post-project

**Resource Indicator: Changes to Habitat for Threatened Species**

**Spotted Owls:** No temporary roads would be built in suitable (NRF) habitat. Approximately 1.4 miles of roads would be decommissioned in suitable habitat, which could result in short-term disturbance to owls. Only one segment is a currently open road, 0.03 miles. The other roads are closed and in various stages of revegetation. Approximately 0.9 miles of closed road would be reopened for administrative access, which is generally infrequent. Habitat concentrations have been surveyed, with no responses from spotted owls. It is unlikely that the analysis area has sufficient habitat to support owls currently. A long-term benefit would occur, as decommissioned roads would eventually revegetate, possibly providing additional foraging habitat in 20 years or more.

Overall, considering all project components (vegetation, aquatics and roads), the project would have minor (to NRF habitat) to moderate (dispersal habitat) short-term to medium-term (1-10 years), mixed effects for habitat, and long-term moderate beneficial effects (because fire/insect activity risk would be reduced across landscape, and stands would be more likely to have large tree habitat suitable for owls). There is currently not enough habitat in the project area to support owls.

**Determination of Effects on Spotted Owls:** Alternative 3 may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect spotted owls. The area does not have enough habitat to support nesting owls currently. No roads would be built in suitable habitat, but 1.4 miles of open roads would be decommissioned, which would reduce disturbance to owls. Surveys of the habitat concentrations have not elicited responses from spotted owls.

*Lynx and Critical Habitat:* No temporary roads would be constructed in lynx habitat. Approximately 0.6 mile of closed road would be reopened for public use, and 1.5 miles for administrative use. Approximately 2.6 miles of currently closed roads would be decommissioned with implementation of Alternative 3. This would probably have a minimal effect on lynx, as they are not particularly disturbed by human presence, are not hunted or trapped (since they are a sensitive species) and with one exception near Buttermilk Butte, these roads are not likely to receive much OHV use due to vegetation, length, and lack of interesting destination. In the long term, decommissioned roads will revegetate, producing forage and cover for prey species. This would be a minor effect on about 9 acres, from about 5 years after decommissioning, if roads are not already vegetated and will be ripped or subsoiled, to 30 or 40 years or more, when tree species would grow out of reach by hares.

Temporary avoidance of the sites could occur during implementation.

In critical habitat, 0.04 miles of temporary road would be constructed, and 1.6 miles of open road would be decommissioned. Temporary road construction would remove less than 1 acre of habitat. Decommissioning would result in revegetation over time, which could provide more cover and forage for hares and other prey on less than 6 acres. This is a minor effect covering only 0.05% of the critical habitat. No closed roads would be reopened.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be a short- to medium term, beneficial effect to lynx habitat and critical habitat, because hare forage would increase.

*Determination of Effects on Lynx and Critical Habitat:* Alternative 3 may affect lynx (due to short-term disturbance to prey) but is not likely to adversely affect lynx. Den sites are not likely to be disturbed, as sites (both road decommissioning and vegetation treatment units) are generally not accessible during the early season when denning occurs.

For critical habitat, the determination is “may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect critical habitat for lynx”. Only 58 acres of treatment would occur within the boreal forest area mapped as lynx habitat. These stands have grown out of reach of hares and are no longer providing a food resource. All overstory treatments would result in more open habitat that will generate browse for hares, an important prey item for lynx. Alternative 3 is consistent with the LCAS. In the remainder of the critical habitat, treatments would not result in large-scale loss of understory vegetation in boreal forest. The area is mostly not boreal forest, and treatments in the cooler, moister types are limited and dispersed across the area. Road actions in critical habitat are limited to 0.05% of the habitat.

*Resource Indicator: Change to Habitat for Sensitive Species*

*Northern Goshawks:* Open roads provide access for falconers, which may result in loss of nestlings. Alternative 3 would decommission 4.1 miles of currently open road, which would make access more difficult.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be minor, mixed, short- to long-term effects to goshawk habitat. About 38% of the habitat would be treated, resulting in an overall reduction of suitable habitat of 4%. Additional road decommissioning in Alternative 3 (compared to alternative 2) would result in a long-term, moderate, beneficial effect for goshawk habitat.

*Determination of Effects on Northern Goshawk:* Alternative 3 may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. Habitat would be reduced by 1,386 acres, 4% of the analysis area. Approximately 1,636 acres would remain as potential habitat. Approximately 4.1 miles of open road would be decommissioned, reducing access for falconers.

*Gray flycatchers:* Open roads may affect gray flycatchers. However, no specific information was found on the response of gray flycatchers to roads. Noise effects have been documented, but at much higher levels than would occur with use of forest roads.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be minor, negative, short-term effects to gray flycatcher habitat due to activity disturbance, minor amounts of shrub loss, and increased road densities during the project. There would be a long-term, moderate, beneficial effect on 8% of the habitat, due to creation of more open habitat types and reduced fuel loadings/fire risk, and a possible minor adverse effect due to increases in open roads.

*Determination of Effects on Gray flycatchers:* Alternative 3 may adversely impact individuals, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the project area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing.

*White-headed Woodpeckers:* Decommissioning of open roads would be beneficial for woodpeckers and snag-associated species because it would reduce snag loss from firewood collection and danger tree management. This would occur on 4.7 miles. Temporary roads would not be open for public use, so no firewood collection should occur. Some danger tree management could occur and result in snag loss. This is likely to be minor. Approximately 0.1 mile of currently closed road would be opened, which would result in minor snag loss.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be a minor, negative, short-term effect to habitat due to activity disturbance. A short to long-term, minor, beneficial effect would occur on 8% of the habitat (from overstory treatments), due to creation of more open habitat types and reduced risk of habitat loss. There would be a long-term moderate beneficial effect from understory thinning of stands that are not suitable habitat now, because growth of trees would be accelerated and risk of large-scale habitat loss would be reduced on 6,542 acres, 30% of the habitat. A negligible adverse effect from opening of roads that have been closed, to public use and firewood removal, which will result in snag loss (0.1 mile). There would be a short- to long-term beneficial effect from decommissioning open roads (4.7 miles), which will result in retention of snags that develop over time. A minor short-to long term adverse effect to snag availability would occur from felling as hazards in harvest and burn units. There would be a minor, short-to long term beneficial effect to snag availability from prescribed burning.

*Determination of Effects on White-headed Woodpeckers:* Alternative 3 would have a beneficial impact on white-headed woodpeckers. Tree growth would be accelerated by removal of competing smaller trees, snag loss would be reduced, and potential for large-scale habitat loss through wildfire would be reduced. Conditions for white-headed woodpeckers in the project area and would not contribute to a negative trend in Forest-wide viability.

*Western Gray Squirrel:* Approximately 1.2 miles of temporary road would be constructed in habitat for gray squirrels, open for logging use, then decommissioned. This would result in increased potential for squirrel mortality from vehicle strikes and a minor loss of vegetation for the short-term (less than 5 acres) until the vegetation regrows. Shrub species that may provide cover or forage may grow back within 5 years of decommissioning.

Decommissioning of currently open roads would occur in 4.7 miles of western gray squirrel habitat. In the short and longer term, decommissioning of open roads would reduce access and disturbance to squirrels, mortality from vehicle strikes, and avoidance of habitat. Eventually, vegetation would regrow and provide additional cover and forage. Disturbance to squirrels and avoidance of habitat could occur during decommissioning, but would be temporary and short-term. Approximately 0.1 mile of currently closed road would be opened, which would result in vehicle traffic and potential loss of squirrels through vehicle strikes.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be moderate (30% of habitat affected), mixed effects to western gray squirrels in the long-term.

*Determination of Effects on Western Gray Squirrel:* Alternative 3 may adversely impact individuals through reduction in arboreal travel opportunities or loss of nests and potential for mortality from vehicle strikes during logging, but is not likely to result in a loss of viability in the project area, nor cause a trend toward federal listing. Mitigation measures are in place to reduce effects to habitat. Effects would occur on 8,337 acres, about 38% of the habitat type. Post-project, open road mileage would decrease, due to the decommissioning of roads. Alternative 3 would increase habitat resilience to severe, large-scale wildfire, protecting it into the future.

*Resource Indicator: Habitat for Management Indicator Species*

*Winter Range for Mule Deer:* Approximately 0.3 miles of temporary road would be constructed in winter range, opened for logging use, and then decommissioned. This would result in minor loss of vegetation for the short-term (less than 2 acres) until the vegetation regrows. Shrub species that may provide browse for deer may grow back within 5 years of decommissioning. Deer may be displaced during use of the temporary roads. However, logging would occur in a limited area at any one time, and road use would be short-term. This would mitigate effects to deer.

Decommissioning of currently open roads would occur on 3.4 miles. In the short and longer term, decommissioning of open roads would reduce disturbance to deer, mortality from collisions, hunting and poaching and avoidance of habitat. Eventually, vegetation would regrow and provide additional browse. Disturbance to deer and avoidance of habitat could occur during decommissioning, but would be temporary and short-term.

Approximately 0.03 miles of closed road would be reopened, and could result in disturbance, displacement, access for hunting and potential for collisions with deer.

Overall, considering all project components, there would be moderate (occurring on 14% of the winter range) short- to long-term beneficial effects on winter range for mule deer (from decreasing cover and the increases in forage that would result on 1,717 acres). Forage would

be increased in the short and longer term, and would become more palatable and nutritious, and treatments would maintain and restore stand structure, composition, and arrangement that would be less susceptible to stand-replacing wildfires that could extensively damage and reduce vegetation (including thermal cover) on the landscape. Adequate cover would remain on more than 36% of the winter range. Road decommissioning on winter range would be a minor, long-term beneficial effect.

#### 3.7.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects

There would be no additional cumulative effects for Alternative 3. Refer to Alternative 2 for a description of potential cumulative effects for the proposed actions.

#### 3.7.4.4.5 Summary of Effects

**Figure 81. Summary of wildlife resource indicators for all alternatives.**

Resource Indicator	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Spotted Owl nesting, roosting, foraging (NRF) habitat	1,054 acres	1,054 acres (-3%)	1,054 acres (-3%)
Open road miles in nesting, roosting, foraging habitat	2.2 miles	15.8 during project 17.2 post project (0 temporary roads built, 0.3 miles decommissioned)	15.8 during project 12.7 post project (0 temporary roads built, 0.3 miles decommissioned)
Treatments in lynx habitat (early successional habitat in the subalpine fir zone) in LAUs	Spirit Mountain – 0 acres Methow Gold – 0 acres	Spirit Mountain – 5 ac. (2% treated) Methow Gold – 53 ac. (43% treated)	Spirit Mountain – 5 acres (2% treated) Methow Gold – 53 acres (43% treated)
Open roads in lynx habitat in LAUs	2.6 miles	2.6 miles during project 2.6 miles post-project (0 miles temporary roads built, 0 miles decommissioned)	2.6 miles during project 2.6 miles post-project (0 miles temporary roads built, 0 miles decommissioned)
Acres of treatment in designated critical habitat for lynx	0 acres	2,132 acres treated (17%)	2,132 acres treated (17%)
Open roads in critical habitat for lynx	9.9 miles	9.8 miles during project 15.7 miles post-project (.04 miles temporary roads built, 0.2 miles decommissioned)	9.8 miles during project 14.3 miles post-project (.04 miles temporary roads built, 1.6 miles decommissioned)
Goshawk suitable habitat (dense stands with large trees).	13,022 acres (38% of non-Wilderness project area)	11,636 acres (34% of non-Wilderness project area)	11,636 acres (34% of non-Wilderness project area)
Goshawk changes to suitable habitat (open road miles)	45.3 miles	35.2 miles during project 40.2 miles post-project (0.2 miles temporary road built, 1.6 miles decommissioned)	35.2 miles during project 28.0 miles post-project (0.2 miles temporary road built, 4.1 miles decommissioned)

Resource Indicator	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Improvements in habitat for sensitive species-gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker, and western gray squirrel	0 acres	1,795 acres of potential habitat improved (9% of the habitat)	1,795 acres of potential habitat improved (9% of the habitat)
Miles of roads open in habitat for sensitive species-gray flycatcher, white-headed woodpecker, and western gray squirrel	45.3 miles total	46.5 miles during project 51.5 miles post-project (1.2 miles temporary roads built, 2.2 miles of open roads decommissioned)	46.5 miles during project 34.5 miles post-project (1.2 miles temporary roads built, 4.7 miles of open roads decommissioned)
MA 14 winter range cover: forage ratios.	52% cover (SIT = 22%, WT = 30%)	36% cover (SIT = 13%, WT = 23%)	36% cover (SIT = 10%, WT = 23%)
MA 26 winter range cover: forage ratios.	35% cover (SIT = 16%, WT = 19%)	33% cover (SIT = 16%, WT = 17%)	33% cover (SIT = 16%, WT = 17%)
Open roads in winter range (mule deer)	23.5 miles	23.8 miles during project 21.0 miles post-project (0.3 miles temporary road built, 1.1 miles decommissioned).	23.8 miles during project 12.2 miles post-project (1.2 miles temporary road built, 3.4 miles decommissioned).
Treatments in habitat for landbirds (pine, mixed conifer and deciduous/riparian habitats)	Ponderosa Pine = 0 acres	8,395 acres treated (39%)	8,395 acres treated (39%)
	Mixed conifer = 0 acres	1,813 acres treated (14%)	1,813 acres treated (14%)
	Riparian = 0 acres	668 acres treated (plus 40 acres aspen) (20%)	
	Deciduous (aspen)= 0 acres	231 acres	231 acres

Vegetation treatments are the same in both alternatives, and restore habitat conditions and reduce risk of high-severity disturbance on 6% of the project area through silvicultural treatments. Risk of fire is reduced on another 24% of the project area through fuels treatments.

It is likely that fire suppression resulted in better habitat for spotted owls than would have otherwise have existed in the area, because the forests became denser. However, past logging of large trees degraded that habitat. Currently, the project area does not have enough habitat to support owls. Suitable nesting, roosting, foraging habitat would be further degraded on 3% of the habitat, by thinning which would reduce canopy closures. Vegetation treatments would retain large trees, reduce ladder fuels to protect old growth structure, and set stands on a trajectory towards becoming dry forest old growth habitats, which are currently lacking compared to historical conditions. Treatments would also reduce the risk of losing these habitats to wildfire.

Lynx habitat comprises little of the project area, and early-successional stands providing hare forage would not be treated. Critical habitat for lynx comprises a much greater proportion of the



project area, but is largely dry forest that won't contribute to boreal forest conditions. Treatments would occur over 17% of the critical habitat.

There would be a 4% reduction in goshawk habitat, with 34% of the project area remaining as goshawk habitat, post treatment. Large trees would be retained, and understory stand densities would be reduced. Habitat diversity would result from the treatments and would provide prey habitat. Roads open to public use would increase by 0.4 miles, during project activities. Opening of 1.9 miles of closed roads to public use would occur in alternative 2, post-activities, with a net open road increase of 5.4 miles which would provide more access for falconers than current conditions. Alternative 3 would reduce open roads by 6.0 miles and would protect goshawk nests better than alternative 2.

Habitat for western gray squirrels would be degraded by opening of the canopy, which could reduce arboreal travel. However, the habitat would be better protected from large-scale disturbance from wildfire, insects and disease spread. Roads would increase in alternative 2, increasing chance of mortality through vehicle strikes.

Habitat on mule deer winter range would experience moderate short- to long-term beneficial effects, occurring on 14% of the winter range. Forage would be increased in the short and longer term. Cover would be reduced, although adequate cover would still remain. Post-treatment cover levels would be lower than Forest Plan standards and guidelines, however. To mitigate this, and to provide for well distributed cover across the project area, each ladder fuel reduction unit would leave 20% of the area untreated, in patches from 0.1 acre to multiple acres in size.

Since the time that the Forest Plan was written, studies have found that thermal cover is not as critical as forage quality and quantity for winter survival of ungulates (USDA Forest Service 2012a). Population declines in the region have been attributed to reduced shrub diversity, declining productivity of aging shrubs and lack of recruitment of new shrubs due to fire suppression (Fitkin and Heinlen 2012, 2015), rather than thermal cover.

The Okanogan-Wenatchee Restoration Strategy suggests that emphasizing the reduction of road density and enhancement of forage, can allow reduction in thermal cover while meeting the intent of standards for deer winter ranges, to resolve the potential conflict between restoring forests and winter range thermal cover. Road decommissioning on winter range would be a long-term beneficial effect. Decommissioning of currently open roads would occur on 2.2 miles. Approximately 0.3 miles of temporary road would be constructed in winter range, open for logging use, then decommissioned. Disturbance could occur to deer on winter range and may result in displace from active units, but would be short-term in nature.

Landbirds using open stands and those using riparian habitats would be benefitted by vegetation and other non-road treatments. Treatments would improve habitat conditions for white-headed woodpeckers and gray flycatchers, both sensitive species preferring more open habitats. There would be less habitat for species using denser stands of small trees, such as the varied thrush. However, vegetation treatments occur on a small portion of the project area, about 29%, and abundant dense habitat would remain over 71% of the area.

Alternative 3 reduces disturbance, habitat avoidance, access and related mortality to wildlife species compared to the current condition. Alternative 2 decommissions 2.2 miles of open roads and results in approximately 66.1 miles of open roads (15.4 miles administrative use only). Alternative 3 decommissions 6.0 miles, and results in approximately 44.7 miles of open roads (4.7 miles administrative use only) making Alternative 3 the more beneficial alternative to wildlife species.

### 3.7.5 Consistency Statement

#### *Compliance with LRMP and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans*

The action alternatives comply with Executive Order 13186 (because they restore habitat for migratory birds to more historical conditions with silvicultural, fuels and wetland treatments), Okanogan Forest Plan (with an amendment that would reduce deer winter thermal cover), Northwest Forest Plan (develops old-growth forest characteristics), Recovery Plan for Northern Spotted Owl (emphasizes vegetation management treatments outside of spotted owl core areas or high value habitat), the Forest Restoration Strategy (retains legacy structures while restoring spatial patterns and maintaining spotted owl habitat), and the Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (does not cut current early successional stands that have hare forage value).

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment.

The justification for a reduction in deer winter cover is based on literature review that failed to find a need for 40% thermal cover and the landscape analysis for the project area that found an overabundance of dense stands. The best available science information (BASI) considered during the literature review includes Cook's 1996 and 1998 papers because they were cited in the Forest Restoration Strategy (USDA Forest Service 2012a), which provides the BASI for forest restoration used in this project. Other literature also emphasized the importance of forage. A summary of BASI regarding deer thermal cover resulted in these findings:

- Cook et al. (1998) concluded that their findings, combined with those of other thermal cover studies (e.g., Robinson 1960; Freddy 1986), offered strong evidence that influences of thermal cover on animal performance and, by extension, population dynamics was rarely of consequence. Cook (in Duncan 2000) notes that "the finding that thermal cover failed to provide energetic benefits during winter is consistent with every other study of thermal cover influence on large ungulates conducted under rigorous scientific conditions", and supports the need for forage over a specific amount of cover, at least for elk, with four key findings:
  1. No significant positive effect of thermal cover was found on condition of elk during any of four winter-long experiments and two summer-long experiments. In fact, during winter, dense cover actually provided the most costly energetic environment.

2. The lack of significant positive benefits of thermal cover during any winter of the study is consistent with every other study of thermal cover influences on large wild ungulates conducted under rigorous scientific conditions.
  3. During summer, results showed no indication that elk performance was influenced in any way by forest cover treatments, despite temperatures significantly above normal both summers. Other researchers have found elk to be surprisingly tolerant of high summer temperatures.
  4. The energetic benefits of thermal cover seem inconsequential, thus leaving forage effects as the primary mechanism through which habitat influences individual animal performance.
- Hobbs (1989) also found thermal cover to have negligible effects on deer during winter. Cook et al. (2005) noted that there are tradeoffs between providing dense forest cover and providing forage resources, and concluded that cover is needed where security is low or where snow accumulations are factors limiting animal performance. They reviewed four experiments on quantitative value of thermal cover on deer and elk, and concluded that the weather-moderating effects of thermal cover were probably insufficient to be of much biological value.
  - Mysterud and Ostbye (1999) found that, although cover is important for habitat selection of temperate ungulates, there is no hard evidence that cover affects demography so much that it limits population growth in forested areas, and that there is no evidence that specific arrangements of food and cover areas confer any large advantage to deer.
  - Coulombe et al. (2011) concluded that deer space use appeared to be based more strongly on forage biomass than on cover, particularly at higher population densities.
  - Findings by Masse and Cote (2009) suggested that habitat selection by white-tail deer at high population densities and in the absence of predators, were driven by forage acquisition rather than a trade-off between forage and cover.
  - Local studies of mule deer winter range use in Okanogan and Chelan counties found little use of dense cover stands. Naney and Myers (undated) followed 11 radio-collared deer and made 692 observations representing 1,044 deer in the Methow Valley during two winters. Of the deer observed, 73% were on sites with no conifer crown closure. Five percent of the total winter observations were of deer using cover with greater than 60% crown closure. Ninety percent of the winter range was dominated by habitat classes dominated by bitterbrush, sagebrush, bunchgrass, and pole-sized trees with undergrowth of shrubs or bunchgrass. In this study, deer did not appear to prefer thermal cover. However, they noted that observations were daylight hours only, and during winters that were warmer and drier than normal. Moore (2003), in a similar study in Chelan County, found that mule deer use was positively associated to areas without cover, and had a negative association to areas of cover. No difference in day and night habitat use was observed.
  - Mule deer populations in Washington Department of Wildlife's Region 2, where the project is located, have experienced a gradual long-term decline in numbers which is attributed to reduced shrub diversity, declining productivity of aging shrubs and lack of recruitment of new shrubs due to fire suppression (Fitkin and Heinlen, 2012). Herd

growth has plateaued, and productivity and recruitment has fallen off as the herd reached 20-25,000 animals, which appears to be the landscape carrying capacity for deer (ibid). Fitkin and Heinlen conclude that unless steps to revitalize shrub growth on winter range and human development is managed, this declining trend can be expected to continue. This project would increase forage on more than 2,000 acres of winter range, including the 388 acres as provided by the amendment, and move habitat conditions closer to historical characteristics that developed under natural disturbance regimes.

- During the public scoping period for this project, one commenter provided several references regarding deer cover. Two of these references have already been evaluated previously (Cook et al. 1998 and 2005). Of the remaining references, Forrester and Wittmer (2013) discussed population dynamics, but not thermal cover, and support the need for quality forage. Bender (2012) discusses mule deer habitats in arid and semi-arid habitats with very different plant associations (pinyon, juniper, oak-mountain mahogany, mesquite shrublands and others) than the winter range habitats dominated by ponderosa pine, mixed conifer, and open shrub-steppe habitats of bitterbrush, serviceberry and bluebunch wheatgrass that are used by the migratory mule deer population in north central Washington. The mule deer population in the Bender publication does not appear to be migratory. The percentages recommended in the Bender publication are not applicable.
- A more recent literature search (April, 2017) did not locate additional research on specific cover levels on either winter or other seasonal ranges; no references were found that indicated the need for 40% or more of the winter range to be in a cover condition.

The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how the proposed Forest Plan amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to wildlife, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8(a)(1)(i) Contributions of the plan area to ecological conditions within the broader landscape influenced by the plan area. Thinning would cause beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on ecological conditions within the broader landscape because it would reduce canopy closure and increase sunlight reaching the ground, resulting in an increase of forage available to mule deer and other wildlife species. Creating more forage contributes to a greater proportion of mule deer surviving winter conditions, which increases the sustainability of the migratory mule deer populations in the greater Methow Valley beyond the project area. Forage would be increased in the short and longer term, and cover would be reduced, but adequate cover would remain on more than 36% of the winter range.

219.9(a)(1) Ecosystem integrity. Thinning as provided by the amendment would have a beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effect on terrestrial ecosystems because thinning and associated prescribe fire treatments in deer winter range cover would maintain and restore stand structure, composition, and arrangement that would be less susceptible to stand-replacing wildfires that could extensively damage and reduce vegetation (including thermal cover) on the landscape.

219.9(a)(2)(i) Key characteristics associated with terrestrial ecosystem types. There would be a minor, long-term, beneficial effect from thinning as provided by the amendment (acceleration of growth of large trees which will become large snags) and a minor, long-term, adverse effect on snag habitat used by cavity excavators and other species due to minor loss of snags as hazard trees in units. Thinning as provided by the amendment would create a beneficial, short- to long-term, minor effect on forage available for deer because thinning would open up the tree canopy and allow more sunlight and precipitation to reach the ground, resulting in more vegetation that provides more browse for deer). Thinning would cause a slight reduction in habitat connectivity that overlaps with deer winter range cover as forested stands would become more open as a result of thinning, and would provide conditions more similar to historical conditions. The outcome on connectivity habitat would be mixed, with an adverse, short- to medium-term, minor effect on species that prefer more closed habitat, and a beneficial, short- to medium-term, minor effect on species that prefer more open habitat. With the exception of the 26 acres of units in deer winter range cover that would be thinned with the Variable Retention Regeneration prescription, most units would continue to provide forested connectivity because clumps of denser forest would be retained due to the marking method that would leave clumps of trees in commercial thinning units, and design criteria #88 for noncommercial thinning that would retain 20% of each unit in unthinned patches from 0.1 to multiple acres in units treated with the ladder fuel reduction prescription.

219.9(b) Additional species-specific plan components. The following federally-listed threatened or endangered species are in or have habitat within the project area, and would be affected by thinning as allowed by the amendment as follows:

- Wolves: Although gray wolves exist in the project area and could move through thinning units, no dens or rendezvous sites have been found in the units. Thinning may temporarily displace prey species (deer) (Glidden, 2017 and Biological Assessment-amended by Rohrer, 2018). There would be minor short- to long-term beneficial effects on winter range for mule deer. Forage would be increased in the short and longer term, and cover would be reduced, although adequate cover would still remain on 36% of the winter range. There would be a negligible, short-term negative effect to wolves due to short-term displacement of prey, and short-to long-term, minor beneficial effects to wolves because forage for deer would be increased.
- Grizzly bear: The project area is in the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. Habitat for grizzlies and a food source (deer, plants) occur across the area. No sightings of grizzly bears have been reported in the project area. Forage for bears and ungulate prey would improve in quality and quantity due to treatments, (Glidden, 2017 and project Biological Assessment -amended by Rohrer, 2018). There would be a negligible, short-term, negative effect to bears due to short-term displacement of prey, and short-to long-term, minor beneficial effects to bears because forage for deer would be increased.
- Northern spotted owl: NRF habitat that overlaps within deer winter range cover would be slightly degraded, but not downgraded, by commercial thinning on 23 acres. Design features #83 & 84 for work in NRF stands would reduce negative effects to owl habitat while also reducing risk from wildfire, competition between trees, insects and disease,

and would prevent downgrading the habitat. Mitigations include limiting diameter of large trees cut to smaller than 21" DBH in NRF stands, retaining snags and down logs, creating no openings larger than ¼ acre and maintaining canopy closures at 60% or more. The amendment would have adverse, short-term to medium-term, minor effects for spotted owl habitat due to the slight opening of the canopy. The amendment would have beneficial, short- to medium-term, minor effects for spotted owl habitat because thinning would reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire, which increases protection for the NRF habitat, and beneficial, long-term, minor effects because large-scale fire/insect activity risk would be reduced across landscape, and stands would be more likely to have large tree habitat suitable for owl.

- Designated Critical Habitat (CH) for Lynx: There are 740 acres of CH in winter range, which is 6% of the total CH in the project area. CH in winter range is isolated from the mapped lynx habitat and consists of some colder mesic forest surrounded by dry forest. Of the 12,890 acres of CH in the project, 2 acres would be treated with noncommercial thinning. The amendment would affect a maximum of 0.02% of the project CH. There would be a beneficial, short- to medium term, minor effect to critical habitat, because hare forage would increase

Region 6 Regional Forester Sensitive Species that would be affected by thinning as allowed by the amendment include gray flycatchers, white-headed woodpeckers, western gray squirrels, and Northern goshawk. Total habitat for gray flycatchers, white-headed woodpeckers, and western gray squirrels, modelled as the hot/dry and warm/dry habitat types, is 21,743 acres. Most of the winter range (93%) is habitat for these species. The amendment for deer winter cover affects 388 acres of the proposed thinning (commercial and non-commercial), which is 1.7% of the total habitat in the project area, assuming all the treatments are in this habitat and that all treatments would reduce cover. Thinning as allowed by the amendment would cause the following effects to these R6 Sensitive Species:

- Gray flycatchers: Thinning would cause adverse, minor, short-term effects to habitats for this species due to activity disturbance, minor short-term shrub loss, and increased road densities during the project and beneficial, long-term, minor effects due to creation of more open habitat types and reduced risk of habitat loss, and a negligible adverse effect due to increases in open roads
- White-headed woodpeckers: Thinning would cause an adverse, long-term, minor effect on snag habitat because some snags would be removed as hazard trees during project activities; however, the loss of these snags would be counterbalanced by the creation of some snags through expected mortality caused by prescribed burning. There would be a beneficial, long-term, minor effect from thinning treatments because thinning would accelerate the development of larger trees that would, in time, become larger snags for this species to use as habitat.
- Western gray squirrel: Thinning would cause adverse, short- to medium-term, minor effects to western gray squirrels due to the loss of arboreal travel opportunities or nests, potential for mortality from vehicle strikes during logging, and reduced abundance of fungi foods. However, thinning would also cause beneficial, medium- to long-term, minor

effects because thinning would increase food resources by accelerating growth of large ponderosa pines, which produce more pine seeds than small trees (Linders and Stinson 2007), and also by opening of the tree canopy, which would allow the development of a shrub understory and additional foods. Thinning would help to protect occupied and potential gray squirrel habitat from effects of uncharacteristic wildfire.

- Northern Goshawk: There are about 13,022 acres of goshawk habitat in the project area and about 29% is in winter range. Thinning as allowed by the amendment would affect a maximum of 3% of the total habitat in the project area for this species, assuming all the treatments are in this habitat and that all treatments would reduce cover. There would be adverse, short- to long-term, minor effects to goshawk habitat as a result of the amendment because thinning that opens the overstory would make the stands less suitable for use by goshawks for nesting in the short-term, although foraging use would still occur. Some snag habitat used for species that may be prey items for goshawks, such as woodpeckers, would be removed as hazardous trees during commercial thinning operations. Beneficial, short- to long-term, minor effects from thinning include opening the stands, which would create structural diversity and a potential increase in prey availability and diversity. Understory thinning would benefit goshawks by reducing understory density and reducing the risk of fire and insect activity which could destroy nest stands and post-fledgling areas. In the longer term, thinning would beneficially increase structural diversity and diversify prey habitat, and accelerate growth into larger trees that may become habitat for goshawks. Riparian habitat with dense deciduous vegetation that would provide habitat for important prey items such as ruffed grouse and hares would be retained by the use of riparian buffers. Canopy openings created by thinning treatments would stimulate deciduous vegetation that would improve habitat quality for grouse. In addition, aspen treatments would occur on 13 acres and would retard the encroachment of conifer species on the aspen stands, which will perpetuate and increase the size of the aspen stands used by grouse.

## **3.8 Transportation**

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Transportation Resources Report by C. Bauman (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

### **3.8.1 Methodology**

The transportation resource indicators analyzed are displayed in Figure 82.

**Figure 82. Transportation Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Road System	Miles of road in project area by maintenance level	Miles	P&N #7	36 CFR 212.5
	Open (NFS) road density in discrete management areas	Miles per square mile	P&N #7	Okanogan NF LRMP S&G

*Resource Indicator: Miles of Road in Project Area by Maintenance Level*

Only NFS roads are considered.. A NFS road may be closed (Maintenance Level 1; other road maintenance levels defined in Appendix B) when it is determined it will not be needed for access to meet management objectives for one year or longer. Closing NFS roads reduces the potential environmental impacts and maintenance costs of the road.

A complete inventory of NFS roads in the project area was compiled. In addition, an inventory of existing unauthorized roads was developed. Most roads were field checked and data updated to reflect existing conditions. This information was used to update the project GIS database. As unmapped roads were discovered, they were added to the inventory of unauthorized roads.

Data came from field surveys, GIS data (roads, streams, topography, etc.), and historical data (previous project files, reports, etc.).

An earlier travel analysis the “Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Forestwide Travel Analysis Report” conducted in July of 2015. This project incorporated updated field data and more site specific detail for completing the Travel Analysis (TAP). Further information about evaluated roads in the Travel Analysis (including timing of road activities by project phase) can be found in Appendix B along with definitions of road maintenance levels and other road related activities such as closure and decommissioning. Recommendations and specialist input made are documented in the Mission Restoration Engineering Resources Report analysis file, as spreadsheets and supplemented with resource specific narratives.

*Resource Indicator: Open National Forest System (NFS) Road Density in Discrete Management Areas*

Under the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, roads standards should be consistent with the goals and activities of the management area or the collective requirements of the management areas served.

Using the inventory of NFS roads described above, GIS analysis was conducted overlaying discrete management areas with roads to calculate density. The Mission Restoration project boundary includes, wholly or in part, seven discrete management areas (MA).

**3.8.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

Type of Impact:



- Beneficial: Changes in transportation system bring the resource indicators closer to management goals.
- Adverse: Changes in transportation system push the resource indicators away from management goals.

Duration of Impact:

- Short-term: Effects to transportation occur only during project and shortly (less than 10 years) post-project.
- Long-term: Effects to transportation occur long than 10 years post-project activities.

Intensity of Impact:

- None: No impact to transportation system or access. May or may not address economic of Analysis requirement 36CFR212.5.
- Negligible: A noticeable change to transportation system via access or economics that would be so small that it would not be of any measurable or perceptible consequence. No change in mileages (<0.1miles total in analysis). May or may not address economic of Analysis requirement 36CFR212.5.
- Minor: A noticeable change to transportation system roads or access opportunities that would be small, localized and of little consequence. Effects on access would be detectable (via open/closed mileage and location). Effects on transportation system would be minor and show only minor change in economics needed for maintenance-affecting only ML2 roads or less and affecting Unauthorized and Non Forest System Roads (FSR) roads.
- Moderate: A distinct measurable change to transportation system that would be measurable through mileage (>1.0 mile) via Forest System Roads (FSR), designation of unauthorized roads, or addressing closures of Non-system or unauthorized roads. These would be readily apparent and measurable, localized and possibly long term. Some measures and effects are long term for visibility or completion; not visible till project completion, or when rehabilitation funds are available- Measurable effects could include mileage available to public use, Maintenance Levels (MLs) decreased, and subsequent maintenance would occur on infrequent basis, providing safety only for the levels planned as required by Transportation Analysis Process 36 CFR212.5.
- Major: A distinct measurable change to transportation system that would be measurable through mileage (>5 miles) via Forest System Roads (FSR), designation of unauthorized roads, or addressing closures of Non-system or unauthorized roads. These would be readily apparent and measurable, localized and possibly long term. Some measures and effects are long term for visibility or completion; not visible till project completion, or when rehabilitation funds are available- Measurable effects could include mileage available to public use, Maintenance Levels (MLs) decreased, more roads closed or decommissioned not accessible for management or public. Subsequent maintenance would occur on infrequent basis, providing safety only for the levels planned as required by Transportation Analysis Process 36 CFR212.5.

### 3.8.3 Affected Environment

The road system within the analysis area was built over the last 60 years, primarily for access for timber harvest and developed campground. Some roads do not meet current safety or design standards, are located in areas where they adversely impact aquatic habitat and hydrological function or are now in excess to management needs because of changes in logging system practices or management objectives. Additionally, the bridge over West Fork Buttermilk Creek, on road 4300550, is closed due to safety concerns.

The primary access routes into the project area are provided by State Highway 153 and Okanogan County Roads 1049, 1051, 1090, 1091 as well as National Forest System (NFS) roads 4300000, 4340000, 4342100, 4342200, and 4342300.

**Figure 83. Transportation Resource Indicators and Measures for Existing Condition**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Road System	Miles of road in project area by maintenance level (NFS only)	Miles per Maintenance Level (ML)	
		ML 1	62.81
		ML 2	27.63
		ML 3	25.02
		ML 4	3.41
	Open (NFS) road density in discrete management areas	Miles per square mile	
		(MA5-03)	1.64
		(MA14-10)	1.25
		(MA17-135)	N/A
		(MA25-13)	0.55
		(MA25-14)	0.53
		(MA25-15)	1.17
		(MA26-06)	0.29
	(MA26-07)	0.19	

*Resource Indicator: Miles of Road in Project Area by Maintenance Level*

Existing roads consist of both NFS roads and Unauthorized roads. A NFS road may be closed (Maintenance Level 1) when it is determined it will not be needed for access to meet management objectives for one year or longer. Closing NFS roads reduces the potential environmental impacts and maintenance costs of the road. Further information about each road evaluated in the Travel Analysis in the Engineering resources analysis file. Timing of road activities by project phase can be found in Appendix B along with definitions of road maintenance levels and other road related activities such as closure and decommissioning.

**Figure 84. Current Road System in Project Area**

	Open Roads (miles)	Closed Roads (miles)	All Roads (miles)
NFS Roads	56.06	62.81	118.87
Unauthorized Roads*	0	15.78	15.78
Total	56.06	78.59	134.64

\*Note that all Unauthorized Roads by definition are not considered Open roads. Refer to Roads definitions Appendix B: Road Management Activities – Forest Restoration Projects.

*Resource Indicator: Open National Forest System (NFS) Road Density in Discrete Management Areas*

All management areas within the Mission Forest and Fuels Restoration Project currently meet Forest Plan standard.

**Figure 85. Comparison of Current NFS Open Road Density and Forest Plan Standards for Density by Discrete Management Area (MA).**

Discrete Management Area (MA)	MA (mi <sup>2</sup> )	Forest Plan Standard Density (mi/mi <sup>2</sup> )	*Open Road Miles	**Open Road Density (mi/mi <sup>2</sup> )
5-03	31.3	***3.0	51.34	1.64
14-10	32.14	2.0	40.20	1.25
17-135	0.06	N/A	0.59	N/A
25-13	6.5	3.0	3.58	0.55
25-14	1.58	3.0	0.84	0.53
25-15	24.2	3.0	28.31	1.17
26--06	3.9	1.0	1.12	0.29
26-07	5.72	1.0	1.1	0.19

\*Assumes Unauthorized roads are counted as closed - actual numbers will be somewhat higher depending on how many Unauthorized roads are currently being driven on by highway vehicles. Post-project numbers are correct.

\*\*Calculated using an intersect of the project road layer and discrete management area boundaries and following the Road Density Calculation Guide approved by the Okanogan NF FLT 11-6-1992.

\*\*\*Forest Plan standard open road density for MA 5 does not include arterials and collectors.

### 3.8.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.8.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

Project activities related to transportation system changes and vegetation management have effects on the engineering resource. The other proposed project activities, such as culvert replacement, prescribed burning, moving the snowmobile gate, building fence, treating invasive plants, etc., will not have an effect on engineering resources and will not be discussed in the effects section.

### **3.8.4.2 Alternative 1**

#### *3.8.4.2.1 Effects*

The potential environmental impacts and maintenance costs of the existing roads would continue. The bridge on road 4300550 would stay closed for safety concerns and the environmental impacts of replacement would have to be analyzed as part of a future project.

The direct/ indirect effects of no action on the transportation system would result in continuing high sediment delivery from open roads and no removal or treatment of road stream crossings. This would occur because the current road maintenance funding levels are lower than needed to maintain all the existing roads. All maintenance costs would continue to be the responsibility of the Forest Service. Therefore, these roads would continue to be maintained to a lesser standard; which is not sustainable over the long term. Deferred maintenance costs would continue to increase to this road system with no foreseeable funding to make the necessary repairs. Refer to Figure 84 and Figure 85 for current road densities and NFSR mileage by Maintenance Level.

#### *Resource Indicator: Miles of Road in Project Area by Maintenance Level*

The effects of Alternative 1 would be negligible, adverse, and long-term because the current funding is less than needed to maintain the existing roads, contributing to adverse for resources needing or affected by roads (less usability/access and sediment contribution) and would occur greater than 10 years.

#### *Resource Indicator: Open National Forest System Road Density in Discrete Management Areas*

The effects of Alternative 1 would be negligible, adverse, and long-term because the road density wouldn't change within & outside project area, so minor for transportation density effects, but long term, greater than 10 years because no change would be likely implemented to change the density before that time.

### **3.8.4.3 Alternative 2**

#### *3.8.4.3.1 Effects*

Direct/Indirect affects for this alternative is described in the following section.

During project activities, some currently closed NFS roads and unauthorized roads would be opened and maintenance and/or reconstruction activities would occur. Short temporary roads would be constructed for use during vegetation management activities and decommissioned after use. For clear definitions of roads types- NFS, Non-system, unauthorized, or temporary, see to Appendix B. During project activities, approximately 80.6 of open system roads would be used. The remaining 68.49 miles would remain closed or decommissioned. Post-project open road miles would be 50.7 (with 15.4 additional miles of open roads that would be used for Administrative Use only). Approximately 55.72 miles of road would be used for log hauling. The bridge over West Fork Buttermilk Creek, on road 4300550, would be replaced in a manner following best management practices. This replacement would occur at a future date when adequate funds become available.

Water source for dust abatement of roads for the Mission Restoration Project will be at areas with large culverts, adjacent hardened sites, with access. All water removal will be in accordance with WDFW/FS MOU. More information on water withdrawal areas can be found in Appendix D.

**Figure 86. Transportation Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 2**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2
Road System	Miles of system roads in project area by maintenance level	Miles per Maintenance Level (ML)	
		ML 1	34.82
		ML 2	37.45
		ML 3	25.29
		ML 4	3.41
	Open (NFS) road density in discrete management areas After Treatments	Miles per square mile	
		(MA5-03)	1.74
		(MA14-10)	1.17
		(MA17-135)	N/A
		(MA25-13)	1.28
		(MA25-14)	2.41
		(MA25-15)	1.21
(MA26-06)	0.29		
(MA26-07)	0.19		

*Resource Indicator: Miles of Road in Project Area by Maintenance Level*

The effects of Alternative 2 on the miles of road in the project area would be moderate, long-term, and beneficial because it would reduce the number of roads to be maintained, allowing limited funds to be used more effectively and reduce impacts, yet facilitate needed access (per TAP requirements) and would be short term, in that it would occur within 10 years. Figure 87 displays miles of road by maintenance level during the various project phases.

**Figure 87. Transportation System Summary\* for Alternative 2**

	Current Condition	During Harvest Activities	After Harvest Activities	Post-Project
NFS Roads - Open (ML 2-5) <sup>1</sup>	56.06	80.60	63.76	66.15 <sup>2</sup>
NFS Roads - Closed (ML 1) <sup>1</sup>	62.81	38.27	50.03	34.82
NFS Roads – Decommissioned <sup>1</sup>	0	0	5.07	33.6

\*Figures are in miles; totals are to be considered approximate due to mapping errors and rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Figures for during and after harvest activities and post-project reflect the addition of 7.09 miles of unauthorized

<sup>2</sup> Figure includes ML2 Admin which has very limited motorized use access.

*Resource Indicator: Open National Forest System Road Density in Discrete Management Areas*

Open road density by discrete MA during the project and post-project is shown in Figure 88. For during harvest and after harvest activities, open road densities will not exceed or increase above Forest Plan Standard. MA 25 numbers indicate an increase of open roads post project compared to initial existing condition. These numbers are the result of finding more roads present on landscape during planning, adding some into corporate data base as the open road FSR system. It doesn't reflect the roads found and Decommissioned from the existing condition in the MAs. The effects of Alternative 2 on the road density in the project area would be moderate, short-term, and beneficial because road densities will not change outside the project area but will lessen due to reductions within the analysis area; therefore minor on density effects, but beneficial in both short and long-term as densities are within the Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan and moves toward compliance with 36CFR212.5.

**Figure 88. Open Road Density by Project Phase and Discrete Management Area for Alternative 2**

Discrete Management Area (MA)	MA Area (mi. <sup>2</sup> )	Forest Plan Standard Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )	During Harvest		After Harvest		Post-Project	
			Open Road Miles	Open Road Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )	Open Road Miles	Open Road Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )	Open Road Miles	Open Road Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )
5-03	31.30	3.0	59.97	1.9	54.64	1.75	54.33	1.74
14-10	32.14	2.0	45.52	1.42	38.72	1.20	37.72	1.17
17-135	0.06	N/A	0.59	n/a	0.84	n/a	0.59	N/A
25-13	6.50	3.0	5.18	0.80	5.09	0.78	9.85	1.28
25-14	1.58	3.0	4.07	2.58	4.06	2.57	8.34	2.41
25-15	24.20	3.0	34.08	1.41	30.02	1.24	29.31	1.21
26-06	3.90	1.0	1.12	0.29	1.12	0.29	1.12	0.29
26-07	5.72	1.0	0.24	0.04	0.86	0.15	1.10	0.19

### 3.8.4.4 Alternative 3

#### 3.8.4.4.1 Effects

The direct/ indirect effects of this alternatives are described in the following section.

During project activities, some currently closed NFS roads and unauthorized roads would be opened and maintenance and/or reconstruction activities would occur. During project activities, approximately 81.4 miles of open roads would be used. Post-project, the total miles of open and administrative use roads would be 44.71 miles, while the remaining 91.1 miles would remain closed or decommissioned. Approximately 55.72 miles of road would be used for log hauling. The roads and their miles for both Alternative 2 & 3 are the same for log haul.

Therefore, both the direct and indirect effects of Alternative 3 would be the same as discussed in Alternative 2 regarding timber harvest activities. The effects between the two alternatives

differ post project; with more NFSR roads being closed or decommissioned. . Additionally, Alternative 3 would allow for a temporary crossing to be constructed across West Fork Buttermilk Creek on the 4300550 road to allow equipment access to roads slated for decommissioning. After decommissioning has occurred, the temporary crossing would be removed and the existing bridge would stay in place.

**Figure 89. Transportation Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 3**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3
Road System	Miles of system roads in project area by maintenance level Post Activity	Miles per Maintenance Level (ML)	
		ML 1	33.80
		ML 2	16.02
		ML 3	25.29
		ML 4	3.41
	Open (NFS) road density in discrete management areas Post Activity	Miles per square mile	
		(MA5-03)	1.70
		(MA14-10)	0.91
		(MA17-135)	N/A
		(MA25-13)	0.31
		(MA25-14)	1.45
		(MA25-15)	1.09
		(MA26-06)	0.29
	(MA26-07)	1.70	

*Resource Indicator: Miles of Road in Project Area by Maintenance Level*

The effects of Alternative 3 on the miles of road in the project area would be moderate, long-term, and beneficial because it would reduce the number of roads to be maintained, allowing limited funds to be used more effectively and reduce impacts, yet facilitate needed access (per TAP requirements) and would be short term, in that it would occur within 10 years. Its effect for effective on road maintenance is similar to Alternative 2, because it is close to the same mileage open for the ML3-4s, but has less open roads. Like Alternative 2 it contains the rocked crossings which require maintenance. So those costs would remain. Figure 90 displays miles of road by maintenance level during the various project phases.

**Figure 90. Transportation System Summary\* for Alternative 3**

	Current Condition	During Harvest Activities	After Harvest Activities	Post-Project
NFS Roads - Open (ML 2-5) <sup>1</sup>	56.06	80.60	63.76	44.7 <sup>2</sup>

	Current Condition	During Harvest Activities	After Harvest Activities	Post-Project
NFS Roads - Closed (ML 1) <sup>1</sup>	62.81	38.27	50.03	33.8
NFS Roads – Decommissioned <sup>1</sup>	0	0	5.07	56.1

\*Figures are in miles; totals are to be considered approximate due to mapping errors and rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Figures for during and after harvest activities and post-project reflect the addition of 7.09 miles of unauthorized roads to the NFS.

<sup>2</sup> Figure includes ML2 Admin which has very limited motorized use access.

Note Unauthorized at project end is eliminated by decision to Decommission, or adopt as NFSR.

### Resource Indicator: Open National Forest System Road Density in Discrete Management Areas

Open road densities post-project decrease in the project area. Open road density is shown for each phase of the project in the figure below.

Open road density by discrete MA during the project and post-project is shown for Alternative 3 below, in Figure 91. For during and after harvest activities, plus Post-Project the road density for all the MAs will meet Forest Plan Standard; being below the thresholds. It doesn't reflect the roads found then Decommissioned from the existing condition in the MAs. The effects of Alternative 3 on the road density in the project area would be moderate, short-term, and beneficial because road densities will not change outside the project area but will lessen due to reductions within the analysis area; therefore minor on density effects, but beneficial in both short and long-term as it moves toward compliance with 36CFR212.5

Figure 91. Open Road Density by Project Phase and Discrete Management Area for Alternative 3

Discrete Management Area (MA)	MA Area (mi. <sup>2</sup> )	Forest Plan Standard Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )	During Harvest		After Harvest		Post-Project	
			Open Road Miles	Open Road Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )	Open Road Miles	Open Road Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )	Open Road Miles	Open Road Density (mi./mi <sup>2</sup> )
5-03	31.30	3.0	59.26	1.89	53.37	2.16	53.06	1.70
14-10	32.14	2.0	45.39	1.41	33.20	1.03	29.29	0.91
17-135	0.06	N/A	0.59	n/a	14.89	N/A	0.59	N/A
25-13	6.50	3.0	3.90	0.60	3.82	0.59	0.23	0.04
25-14	1.58	3.0	2.50	1.58	2.30	1.46	0.77	1.45
25-15	24.20	3.0	33.59	1.39	28.83	1.19	0.44	1.09
26-06	3.90	1.0	1.12	0.29	1.12	0.29	0.29	0.29
26-07	5.72	1.0	1.10	0.19	1.10	0.19	1.10	0.19

#### 3.8.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects

There are no other projects currently planned or in future foreseeable activities that would affect the resource indicators of open roads or road densities.



Other actions proposals in the alternatives have the following general direct/indirect effects, but are not good resources indicators and measures. The following narrative compares those action effects.

Proposed rocking, and reinforcement of riparian/ stream areas will necessitate more roads maintenance than the current condition (Alternative 1). Alternatives 2 & 3 are almost identical in the Rock Armoring proposal, except for two (2) road segments, where Alternative 3 would decommission the roads of 4300550. Rock armoring would not occur at those two locations, since the road would be decommissioned in Alternative 3. Maintenance on about 1/3 of the crossings are on ML 2 roads, and not likely to occur unless scheduled with non- appropriated funds. The other crossings (approximately 2/3) are on ML 3 roads, and are likely to receive maintenance more frequently.

Culvert replacement proposed for Both Alternatives 2 and 3 are likely to have only the effects of timing and funding for travel access on those routes. During replacement, there would be interruptions in access for both administrative and public use.

### 3.8.4.5 Summary of Effects

There are fewer roads and lower road densities in Alternative 3 compared to Alternative 2. Like Alternative 2, there are fewer NFSR road than the Existing Condition described for Alternative 1. Road densities for Existing Condition vs Post Project for Alternative 1 are higher than Alternative 2, and subsequently Alternative 2 is higher than Alternative 3. Both Action Alternatives meet Forest Plan (FLMP) Standards and Guidelines.

Figure 92. Transportation Resource Indicators and Measures for Cumulative Effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Past, Present, and Future Actions (Units)Alt 2 & Alt 3	Cumulative Impacts (Units)	
						Alt 2	Alt 3
Road System	Miles of systemroads in project area by maintenance level	Miles per Maintenance Level (ML)					
		ML 1	34.82	33.80	0	34.82	33.80
		ML 2	37.45	16.02	0	37.45	16.02
		ML 3	25.29	25.29	0	25.29	25.29
		ML 4	3.41	3.41	0	3.41	3.41
	Open (NFS) road density in discrete management areas	Miles per square mile					
		(MA5-03)	1.74	1.70	0	1.74	1.70
		(MA14-10)	1.17	0.91	0	1.17	0.91
		(MA17-135)	N/A	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
		(MA25-13)	1.28	0.31	0	1.28	0.31
	(MA25-14)	2.41	1.45	0	2.41	1.45	

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Past, Present, and Future Actions (Units) Alt 2 & Alt 3	Cumulative Impacts (Units)	
						Alt 2	Alt 3
		(MA25-15)	1.21	1.09	0	1.21	1.09
		(MA26-06)	0.29	0.29	0	0.29	0.29
		(MA26-07)	0.19	1.70	0	0.19	1.70

### 3.8.5 Consistency Statement

Both proposed action alternatives meet applicable regulations and laws (LRMP and CFR).

## 3.9 Botany

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Botany Resources Report by K. Baraibar (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

### 3.9.1 Methodology

The resource elements, indicators, and measures used to analyze and compare potential effects of the Mission Restoration on botanical resources are shown in Figure 93. Indicators and measures address the purpose and need and key internal issues raised during project planning.

Figure 93. Botanical Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
R6 Sensitive plant <i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>	Viability of occupied <i>B. crenulatum</i> habitat	Poor, Fair, or Good	P&N # 5	S/G 6/19, FSM 2620, FSM 2670
	Population and individual plant count and vigor	Numbers of populations or individual plants	P&N # 5	S/G 6/19, FSM 2620, FSM 2670
Unique and Sensitive Plant Habitats	Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity	Acres of unique and sensitive habitat treated	P&N # 5	FSM 2670.2 and FSM 2670.3
Understory Vegetation Composition	Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation	Acres of forest canopy opened	P&N # 3	FSM 2670

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2	Alternative 3	Past, Present, and Future Actions (Units) Alt 2 & Alt 3	Cumulative Impacts (Units)	
						Alt 2	Alt 3
		(MA25-15)	1.21	1.09	0	1.21	1.09
		(MA26-06)	0.29	0.29	0	0.29	0.29
		(MA26-07)	0.19	1.70	0	0.19	1.70

### 3.8.5 Consistency Statement

Both proposed action alternatives meet applicable regulations and laws (LRMP and CFR).

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R6 Sensitive plant <i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>	Viability of occupied <i>B. crenulatum</i> habitat	Poor, Fair, or Good	P&N # 5	S/G 6/19, FSM 2620, FSM 2670
	Population and individual plant count and vigor	Numbers of populations or individual plants	P&N # 5	S/G 6/19, FSM 2620, FSM 2670
Unique and Sensitive Plant Habitats	Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity	Acres of unique and sensitive habitat treated	P&N # 5	FSM 2670.2 and FSM 2670.3
Understory Vegetation Composition	Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation	Acres of forest canopy opened	P&N # 3	FSM 2670

Prior to conducting botanical surveys for Sensitive and Survey and Manage (S&M) plant species, all existing data regarding known populations and habitats in the project area was analyzed. Data was collected from Methow Valley Ranger District (MVRD or District) past botanical survey records, Natural Resource Information System (NRIS), and the Washington Natural Heritage Program (WNHP) rare plant database. Habitat data was compiled from prior survey data as well as Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest GIS layers. Species on the 2015 Region 6 Regional Forester's Interagency Special Status Species list and the 2003 Survey and Manage species list were surveyed for this analysis (See appendices in the Botany Resources project folder). The surveys were conducted at the time of year when plants are identifiable. The Intuitive Controlled method was used to conduct surveys. This method is defined as follows: the surveyor has given the area a closer look by conducting a complete survey through a specific area of the project after walking through the project area and perimeter or by walking more than once through the area. Most of the project area is examined (USDA Forest Service 2005b).

Spatial and numerical data collected are stored in the Region 6 Natural Resource Information System database. Effects are analyzed by determining where disturbance will overlap with R6 Sensitive and S&M populations, determining the nature and level of disturbance, and assessing plant's vulnerability to the disturbance.

All known R6 Sensitive and S&M populations documented in the project area were delineated and mapped. When populations were small enough, exact counts of individuals were taken. For larger populations, the number of individuals was estimated based on smaller subsets of data. Acreage of each population was determined using GIS software.

This project uses information from photo interpretation, field reconnaissance, and analysis results of the Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS) tool to identify restoration and wildfire hazard reduction needs at the stand and landscape levels in the project area. A majority of the Unique and Sensitive Habitats were areas identified by the North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative (NCWFHC) that focused on aspen restoration. The Forest Service used the GIS deciduous vegetation models and National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) aerial imagery to identify additional Unique and Sensitive Habitats.

The same models and methods above were used to identify forested habitats for restoration treatments where understory vegetation composition would be enhanced and maintained by treating overstory vegetation.

*Resource Indicator: Viability of occupied *B. crenulatum* habitat and population and individual plant count and vigor*

Identification of threats is somewhat challenging for moonworts (which includes *B. crenulatum*), since so much information is still needed on habitat requirements, environmental tolerances and the effects of management. In a conservation assessment written by Ahlenslager and Potash (2007), threats to moonworts in Oregon and Washington (ORNHC 2002; WNHP 2002) are actions that alter existing site characteristics, including actions that would change the

microclimate, canopy coverage, hydrology, or mycorrhizal association on a site from the regime that has supported a given population over the past decade. The moderate threat from logging and other vehicular activities is the actual physical disturbance of the soil that breaks root and mycorrhizae connections or otherwise uproots the moonwort plants (Ahrensleger and Potash 2007). These species require some degree of active management to maintain individual sites/populations. Management approaches for these species should include maintenance of suitable, but unoccupied habitat that will be available for colonization by spores and the development of new populations (Ahrensleger and Potash, 2007). The overarching, likely most important management consideration for site/population management is to continue the level and type of disturbance that has supported the site/population over the last decade (Farrar 2006). For all but *Botrychium pumicola* and *B. montanum*, this includes maintaining and encouraging a 10-30 year disturbance cycle (Ahrensleger and Potash, 2007). Fire in and of itself is not detrimental to moonworts (Johnson-Groh and Farrar 1996a). The leaves brown, but unless the fire is intense moonworts don't burn because of their succulent nature. Johnson-Groh and Farrar (1996a) compared burned and unburned prairie plots and found similar return in both treatments in subsequent years. Johnson-Gogh et.al. (1996a) concluded that normal (not excessively hot or dry) burns pose no serious threat to moonworts. However they noted that an exceptionally hot burn or one that comes when the soil is desiccated is harmful. Fires that are hot and stationary are likely to cause damage by killing the plant outright or indirectly by killing the mycorrhizae. Johnson-Groh and Farrar (1996a) note that leaf loss due to fire does little harm to the plant. Moreover the concurrent effects of fire such as damaged tissue, desiccation or sedimentation may be more important (Ahrensleger and Potash, 2007). Some *B. crenulatum* populations would be excluded from both thinning and prescribed fires treatments, while others would be included in order to improve population vigor. In sites where treatments would be avoided, established boundaries around plant locations have been delineated, and a 50-foot buffer would be applied. All *B. crenulatum* populations involved in project treatments would be monitored over the course of the project and the results of this monitoring may result in modifications of design criteria.

Indicator: In this analysis, viability of occupied *B. crenulatum* is measured as good, fair or poor. A rating of good means actions over the last decade have not altered the habitat requirements listed above for occupied *B. crenulatum*. A fair rating means there have been some habitat alterations over the last decade. Under a fair rating, populations have remained stable but may experience a downward trend as habitat viability is at risk due to actions that has changed the microclimate. A rating of poor would mean the viability of the occupied habitat has been on a downward trend, and *B. crenulatum* within that habitat have been decreasing in numbers over the past decade. Population count and vigor of *B. crenulatum* near treatment areas will be documented, where accidental or unforeseen treatment effects to Sensitive plant populations has occurred. Population count and vigor of *B. crenulatum* that have been included in treatment areas.

Analysis Methods: Funding implementation, including monitoring will be scheduled and requested on a yearly basis. Monitoring would occur at all *B. crenulatum* populations within unit boundaries.

Analysis Area: *B. crenulatum* sites within the project area and their immediate surrounding habitats would be analyzed.

*Resource Indicator: Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity*

In dry east-side forests, aspen and wetland ecosystems are limited across the landscape and are biodiversity hotspots for wildlife and plant species. These unique habitats usually have deeper, richer soils than the surrounding coniferous forests. The partial shading overstory and rich soil in the understory supports many herbs, forbs, and grasses in the understory community (Seager et al. 2013). Aspen's palatable twigs and foliage, and tendency to develop cavities, make it valuable habitat for wildlife such as deer (*Odocoileus* sp.), elk (*Cervus elephas*), woodpeckers, and songbirds (Swanson et al. 2010). Mature competing conifers can suppress aspen overstory trees, and conifers of any size can suppress growth of aspen suckers. In addition, conifers compete strongly for soil moisture with aspen in an environment where moisture is often in short supply (Swanson et al. 2010). Succession of aspen to conifers in our area is driven by both the greater shade tolerance of the conifers, and by competition for moisture (Swanson et al. 2010). Conifers intercept more moisture than aspen, especially snow (DeByle 1985).

Indicator: Aspen stand and wetland vegetation vigor. Increase of vegetation and biodiversity of plant species.

Analysis Methods: Funding implementation, including monitoring will be scheduled and requested on a yearly basis. Monitoring would occur in select aspen stands and wetlands within the project area.

Analysis Area: Sensitive and Unique habitats within the project area were analyzed

*Resource Indicator: Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation*

Analysis relies on a comparison of the amount of cover and diversity of native species before and after treatment.

Indicator: Increase/Decrease in Amount/Diversity of Cover

Analysis Methods: Funding implementation, including monitoring will be scheduled and requested on a yearly basis.

Analysis Area: Select forested areas proposed for restoration treatments.

### **3.9.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

Type of Impact:

- Beneficial: An increase in *B.crenulatum* populations/ species count and vigor near treatment areas. An increase in aspen stand vigor and plant diversity in unique habitats. An increase in the amount and diversity of understory vegetation.
- Adverse: A decrease in *B.crenulatum* populations/species count and vigor near treatment areas. A decrease in aspen stand vigor and plant diversity in unique habitats. A decrease in the amount and diversity of understory vegetation.

Duration of Impact:

- Short term: Immediately through the first growing season after treatments.
- Long term: 1 to 20 years post-treatment.

Intensity of Impact:

- Negligible: A change to botany resources that would be so small that it would not be of any measurable or perceptible consequence. Sensitive plants, unique habitats and understory vegetation would not be affected or the effects to these plants would not be detectable.
- Minor: Change to sensitive plants, unique habitats and understory vegetation would be detectable, although these effects would be localized and of little consequence. Minor effects to understory vegetation would be less half an acre in any given location. Activities would not physically disturb individual sensitive plants. Unique habitats may experience alterations, however, overall ecological functioning would be inconsequential and immeasurable.
- Moderate: A change to botany resources that would be readily apparent and measurable. Measurable effects could include physical disturbance or removal of sensitive plants, and disturbance to unique habitats and understory vegetation. Disturbance to understory vegetation would be more than half an acre in any given location.
- Major: Effects to sensitive plants, unique habitats and understory vegetation would be readily apparent, measurable, severe, and would occur on a regional scale. The viability of plant populations, unique habitats and understory vegetation would be altered. Mitigation measures to offset effects would be extensive and success would not be assured.

### 3.9.3 Affected Environment

*Botrychium crenulatum* (scalloped moonwort) is considered a Sensitive species according to the Region 6 ISSSSP 2015 list. *B. crenulatum* occurs within, or in close proximity to unit boundaries.

Habitats for *B. crenulatum* will be discussed and analyzed, as populations of this species are either within unit boundaries or in close proximity.

Figure 94. Botanical Resource Indicators and Measures for the Existing Condition

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
R6 Sensitive plant <i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>	Viability of occupied <i>B. crenulatum</i> habitat	Poor, Fair, or Good	Fair
	Population and individual plant counts of <i>B. crenulatum</i>	Numbers of populations or individual plants	5 populations totaling 40 individuals

Unique and Sensitive Plant Habitats	Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity	Acres of unique and sensitive habitats treated	0 acres
Understory Vegetation Composition	Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation	Acres of forest canopy opened	0 acres of forest canopy opened. Sparse or no understory in areas with closed canopy.

*Resource Indicator: Viability of occupied B. crenulatum habitat*

Two proposed treatment units (16 and 503) have known populations of *B. crenulatum*. There are patches of dense conifer canopies surrounding the occupied habitat in these units. Encroaching conifers could displace riparian trees and shrubs that are associated with *B. crenulatum* habitats. Dense stands of conifers could also lead to a high severity fire which could mean a long recovery time for vegetation. Habitats where known populations exist and in surveyed suitable habitat, are outside of the 10-30 year disturbance window suggested by Farrar (2006). Conifer encroachment within known and suitable habitats, could limit available water, soil nutrients and sunlight to associated species. Conifer encroachment and the potential for fire processes occurring outside their biophysical baseline conditions in the occupied sites, makes the current surrounding habitat fair quality.

*Resource Indicator: Population and individual plant counts of B. crenulatum*

Five populations of the R6 Sensitive plant, *B. crenulatum* occurs within the analysis area in moist- wet riparian areas with saturated soils, dominated by riparian vegetation such as *Populus tremuloides* (aspen) and *Cornus sericea* subsp. *sericea* (red osier dogwood). *B. crenulatum* requires nearly permanent moisture, often occurring in saturated headwater fens and seeps (Farrar 2006). It is usually found in partly shaded to heavily shaded sites at mid to high elevations (Farrar 2005). There is an accumulation of downed debris and a dense overstory and understory of both riparian and upland vegetation. Conifer encroachment and fire behavior outside the range of scientifically acceptable ecological consequences, could be a threat to these sites.

Two populations, totaling 9 individuals occurs in riparian habitats within proposed treatment units, and three populations totaling 31 individuals occurs in riparian habitats outside unit boundaries.

*Resource Indicator: Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity*

Unique and Sensitive Plant Habitats are dominated by aspen and other deciduous riparian vegetation. Aspen stands within some units have a multi-age structure where mature aspen dominate the overstory and younger aspen are establishing where the overstory canopy has opened. Other stands have a single age structure, where mature aspen dominate the overstory but young aspen regeneration is limited by both conifers and mature aspen. Conifer encroachment in the overstory and understory within these habitats are limiting available sunlight, nutrients and water on which the riparian vegetation depend.



Conifer encroachment and closed canopies are limiting available nutrients, water and sunlight to the riparian vegetation in unique and sensitive plant habitats. Seager (2013) et al. state, “Thus, conifers that invade meadows and associated aspen stands decrease soil moisture, soil resources, and overstory sunlight that are necessary for aspen persistence”.

*Resource Indicator: Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation*

Current conditions in the forested area in the two sub-watersheds are dominated by dense, multi-layered forest. In the Libby Creek sub-watershed, there is an excess of small patches of dense, young trees. The Buttermilk sub-watershed has excessive areas and large patch sizes of dense, multi-story forests. Current overstory vegetation conditions are decreasing the amount and diversity of understory vegetation composition.

The understory vegetation composition in the analysis area is decreasing in amount and diversity due to lack of available resources caused by closed canopies and dense patches of young trees.

### 3.9.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.9.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

Botanical resources would not be affected by proposed transportation changes (closing, opening, or decommissioning roads), culvert replacement, coarse woody debris enhancement, or soil treatments as these activities would not occur in locations that have known populations of R6 Sensitive plants species. The activities mentioned above would have negligible effects on unique and sensitive habitats and understory vegetation.

Additionally, Figure 95 displays plant species considered but not analyzed in detail.

**Figure 95. Botanical Resources Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail**

Resource	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Endangered Plant Species	Two Endangered plant species are known to occur on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest; showy stickweed ( <i>Hackelia venusta</i> ) and Wenatchee Mt. checker-mallow ( <i>Sidalcea oregana var. calva</i> ). There are no known populations of these species on the Okanogan portion of the Forest. These species were not located during field inventory and there is no suitable habitat for them within the project area.
Threatened Plant Species	Two Threatened plant species are known to occur on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest; water howellia ( <i>Howellia aquatalis</i> ) and Ute ladies'-tresses ( <i>Spiranthes diluvialis</i> ). There are no known populations of these species on the Okanogan portion of the Forest. These species were not located during field inventory and there is no suitable habitat for them within the project area.

Resource	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Sensitive and Survey and Manage (S&M) Plant Species	There is one R6 Sensitive species, <i>Pinus albicaulis</i> (whitepark pine) and two S&M species, <i>Mycena overholtsii</i> (Cat B fungi) and <i>Botrychium montanum</i> (Mountain moonwort- Cat A vascular plant), which occur within the project boundary. Populations of <i>P. albicaulis</i> , <i>Mycena overholtsii</i> and <i>Botrychium montanum</i> occurring within the analysis area, but in isolated locations where there would be no effects from the proposed treatments, will not be analyzed.

### 3.9.4.2 Alternative 1

#### 3.9.4.2.1 Effects

Under a no-action alternative, existing populations of *B. crenulatum* would remain stable in the short-term, but plant vigor within these populations would decrease due to competition for light, water and nutrients from dense over/understory vegetation. A no-action alternative would have long term, moderate adverse impact from canopy closure on *Botrychium crenulatum* populations, unique and sensitive habitats and understory native plant species. In addition, there would be long term moderate adverse impact on *B. crenulatum* and unique and sensitive habitats from potential stand replacement fire. Unique and Sensitive habitat conditions would deteriorate over time due to the encroachment of conifers from lack of thinning and prescribed fire treatments. There would be a trend of overstory and understory tree build-up due to the lack of thinning and prescribed fire, which could contribute to large wildfires in the future and would decrease the amount and diversity of understory vegetation composition.

### 3.9.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3

The effects for R6 Sensitive plants in Alternative 2 would be the same as those described for Alternative 3 and therefore are considered the same for analysis.

#### 3.9.4.3.1 Effects

Botanical resources would not be affected by proposed transportation changes (closing, opening, or decommissioning roads), culvert replacement, coarse woody debris enhancement or soil treatments as these activities would not occur in locations that have known populations of R6 Sensitive plants species. The activities mentioned above would have negligible effects on unique and sensitive habitats and understory vegetation.

**Figure 96. Botany Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternatives 2 and 3**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2 & 3
R6 Sensitive plant <i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>	Viability of occupied <i>B. crenulatum</i> habitat	Poor, Fair, or Good	Good

	Population and individual plant counts of <i>B. crenulatum</i>	Numbers of populations or individual plants	2 populations totaling 9 individuals
Unique and Sensitive Plant Habitats	Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity	Acres of unique and sensitive habitats treated	231 acres
Understory Vegetation Composition	Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation	Acres of forest canopy opened	10,220 acres of forest canopy opened.

*Resource Indicator: Viability of occupied B. crenulatum habitat*

*B. crenulatum* is found within two unit boundaries (units 16 and 503). Proposed treatments in these units include commercially harvesting or girdling conifers for aspen release, ladder fuel thinning in the understory, and underburning. The population in unit 16 is in an area flat enough for tractor logging, so there would be no effect from skyline cable logging. No roads are proposed over the population. There is occupied *B. crenulatum* habitat within proposed beaver habitat enhancement treatments. Design criteria have been established to protect the viability of the habitat.

This species needs some overstory, but excess shade causes an adverse, long-term, moderate impact by reducing the amount of light needed for this species to maintain itself. Conversely, too much opening of the canopy around the population may make the site too hot and dry for the species. Thinning the canopy and using prescribed fire would have a long-term, moderate benefit keeping the canopy open enough for *B. crenulatum* to maintain itself, thus meeting Purpose and Need #5 to maintain and enhance existing and potential R6 Sensitive, Survey and Manage plant populations and Unique habitats within meadows and aspen stands. The above treatments would have a long-term, moderate benefit to *B. crenulatum* habitats by mimicking natural effects of wildfire and reducing the likelihood of damage from wildfires that are occurring outside of their biophysical baseline conditions.

Design features and mitigation measures identified as part of Alternative 2 and 3 call for identification and avoidance of *B. crenulatum* when locating slash piles or skid trails. Design criteria also call for underburning while soils within the occupied *B. crenulatum* sites are moist in order to protect the population from intense fire that may damage this species. The equipment buffer zone for Riparian Reserves would be adequate to protect *B. crenulatum* populations occurring in close proximity to proposed unit boundaries.

*Resource Indicator: Population and individual plant counts of B. crenulatum*

Given the design features and mitigation measures, negligible to minor, short term, adverse impacts would occur to the species from harvesting, thinning, prescribed fire treatments, beaver habitat enhancements, and aquatic enhancement projects. There could be a beneficial, moderate long term impact to *B. crenulatum*; individual plant counts within these populations may increase due to decreased competition from conifers and the increased availability of

nutrients, water and sunlight, meeting Purpose and Need #5. There would be a long term moderate beneficial impact to *B. crenulatum* populations and individual plants from the reduced likelihood of stand replacement fire from thinning and prescribed fire treatments.

*Resource Indicator: Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity*

A total of 19 Sensitive and Unique habitats units are proposed for restoration treatments where encroaching conifers would be commercially thinned and/or girdled, with prescribed fire treatments. As a result, treatments within aspen stands would have a moderate, beneficial, long term affect by increasing plant biodiversity as well as stand vigor, and meeting Purpose and Need #5. Ecosystem functioning would improve by increasing the availability of water, sunlight and nutrients. Aspen are shade intolerant and susceptible to conifer competition and replacement in the absence of disturbance such as fire, timber harvest, or pest/disease outbreak. Conifers will eventually overtop the aspen, reducing the aspen overstory and contributing to stand collapse (Seager et al. 2013). Openings created by conifer removal would encourage suckering of young aspen, creating a moderate, long-term benefit. A diverse age structure in aspen stands is beneficial, as it can provide protection against the effects of wildfire, insects and disease and browsing. There would be a long term, moderate beneficial impact to unique and sensitive habitats from the reduced likelihood of stand replacement fire from commercial thinning, girdling, and prescribed fire treatments.

*Resource Indicator: Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation*

Approximately 10,220 acres of closed forest canopies and dense patches of young trees are proposed for thinning and prescribed fire treatments. The use of slash mats by heavy equipment used for commercial thinning during summer months would cause adverse, short term, moderate damage to understory vegetation. In skyline units where cables are used, there would be an adverse, short term, moderate impact to understory. Prescribed fire would also reduce vegetation cover in the short term. Prescribed fire and thinning treatments would have a long term, moderate benefit to understory vegetation by increasing plant vigor and diversity. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments would open up the tree canopy in the analysis area, allowing more light to get to the ground and less competition for soil resources such as water. More understory vegetation would grow, with more diversity of forb and graminoid species. This treatments would meet Purpose and Need #3 by maintaining and restoring forest vegetation characteristics to within estimated historical and future ranges of variability to improve forest resiliency to insect, disease, and wildfire events. Early successional species favored by disturbance would be maintained or increase in the analysis area (Weaver 1951; McConnell and Smith 1970; Dodson et al. 2008; Harrod et al. 2008; Stark et al. 2006; Sullivan et al. 2009; Dodson and Peterson 2010; Ferguson et al. 2011).

Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) occurs in portions of the analysis area. It is utilized by wildlife such as deer and grouse. Disturbance by heavy equipment operating during summer logging or prescribed fire line construction would damage snowberry tops but its underground rhizomes would allow it to persist. With more open canopy, the species could increase with time (Noste and Bushey 1987; Morgan and Neuenschwander 1988; Stark et al. 2006; Nelson et al. 2008).

Small amounts of willow (*Salix scouleriana*) a shrub that wildlife browse, occur in upland areas. If the top of a willow plant is damaged by logging or prescribed fire it could resprout from the roots and maintain itself (Leege 1979; Noste and Bushey 1987; Harrod et al. 2008).

Strawberries (*Fragaria vesca* and *F. virginiana*) are forbs that produce berries consumed by wildlife. Strawberries can suffer damage to tops from hot fire (McLean 1969) or logging. With time, *Fragaria* tends to increase after disturbance (Armour et al. 1984; Nelson et al. 2008; Stark et al. 2006; Sullivan et al. 2008).

The shrub kinnikinnick (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) produces a fruit used as food by wildlife species. Kinnikinnick is susceptible to tops of the plants burning, but with time tends to increase after prescribed fire (Harrod et al. 2008; Nelson et al. 2008; Sullivan et al. 2008).

An increase of flowering forbs and shrubs would better support pollinators, e.g. butterflies and bumblebees (Miller and Hammond 2007; Pengelly and Cartar 2010; Neill and Puettmann 2013). This increase would be a result of proposed treatments. More pollinators would promote seed production and help maintain understory species.

#### 3.9.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects

##### *Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

The spatial boundaries for analyzing the cumulative effects to botanical resources are within the boundaries defined by the analysis area. Analyzing cumulative effects outside the analysis areas would have no relevancy to botanical resources, as cumulative effects would be too far removed to be impactful.

The temporal boundaries 20 years into the future, the period of post-treatment understory vegetation response.

##### *Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*

**Past Actions:** In order to understand the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action, this analysis relies on current environmental conditions as a proxy for the impacts of past action. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior human actions on natural events that have affected the environment and might contribute to cumulative effects.

**Present and Future Actions:** Of the list of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future activities, those that are pertinent to the analysis of cumulative effects to botanical resources include ongoing cattle grazing, recreation uses (including legal and illegal OHV use, snowmobiling, dispersed and developed camping, and sightseeing), firewood cutting, fire suppression, and ongoing weed control. The effects of livestock grazing in the project area were analyzed in the recent Libby, Little Bridge, Newby, and Poorman Allotment Management Plan (AMP) Revision. This plan provides for making changes to livestock management as needed. Eliminating or reducing grazing is outside of the scope of the project because current grazing activities and associated impacts are addressed in the AMP.

*Resource Indicator: Impact on occupied B. crenulatum habitat*

Cattle currently have access to *B. crenulatum* habitat and minimal amount of cattle use is evident. Firewood cutting and other recreational uses have no or immeasurable effects on habitat.

*Resource Indicator: Population and individual plant counts of B. crenulatum*

Cattle currently have access to *B. crenulatum* populations and individual plants and minimal amount of cattle use is evident. Firewood cutting and other recreational uses have no or immeasurable effects on populations and individual plant counts.

*Resource Indicator: Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity*

Currently aspen canopy allows access to cattle but there is very minimal sign of use in these stands. It is unlikely that cattle will impact aspen stands enough to change the stand vigor or plant biodiversity. Weed control may change biodiversity but would focus on removal of harmful weeds. Weed control activities are also monitored for change and environmental effects. Firewood cutting and other recreational uses have no or immeasurable effects on aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity.

*Resource Indicator: Change in understory composition*

Cattle grazing, weed control, firewood cutting, and other recreational activities may affect the understory composition, especially within grazing allotment boundaries, but the effect will be minor and will not change the status of the resource indicator.

*Summary of Cumulative Effects*

Under Alternatives 2 and 3, there would be negligible cumulative effects to the viability of *B. crenulatum* habitat or populations. The action alternatives would have a long term beneficial moderate effect by creating more transitory range, potentially changing cattle distribution in the analysis area and their access to sensitive plant populations. The *B. crenulatum* population occurs in an area where several hundred acres would be treated with thinning, ladder fuel reduction thinning, underburning or pile burning. The action alternatives would have a long-term, beneficial, minor effect on *B. crenulatum* populations because thinning and prescribed fire treatments would help create more transitory range that would disperse cattle over more ground, thereby reducing the potential for cumulative impacts from grazing and trampling. Recreational activities, firewood cutting and special forest products collections would have a long term, minor, adverse effect minimal effect on resource indicators, as they these activities involve vehicle and foot travel which can be vectors for invasive plant spread establishment. Weed control would be beneficial in and near aspen stands and in forest understories by decreasing the amount of spread and establishment of weedy species and increasing the availability of valuable resources.

#### **3.9.4.4 Summary of Effects**

A No Action Alternative would have a long term, moderate, adverse effect on understory vegetation by decreasing plant vigor and diversity. Dense pockets of conifers would continue to grow, leading to closed canopy with less light getting to the ground. With less light, many understory species would have a hard time growing and surviving. There would be less diversity of species and cover in understory shrub, forb, and graminoid plants. This Alternative would

have a Long term, moderate adverse impact from canopy closure on *B. crenulatum* populations, unique and sensitive habitats and understory native plant species. It would also have a long term moderate adverse impact on *B. crenulatum* and unique and sensitive habitats from potential stand replacement fire.

Alternative 2 and 3 would have a long term moderate beneficial impact to *B. crenulatum* populations, unique and sensitive habitats and native understory species by decreasing shade and competition for nutrients and sunlight. These two alternatives would have a long term moderate beneficial impact *B. crenulatum*, unique and sensitive habitats and native species from reduced likelihood of stand replacement fire. With mitigation to protect sensitive plants, Alternatives 2 and 3 would allow sensitive species to sustain themselves and maintain viability in the analysis area. Activities such as thinning, ladder fuel reduction thinning, and prescribed burning would have a long term, moderate benefit to understory vegetation by opening up the canopy, favoring the growth of understory plant species. There would be more diversity and cover of understory plants.

**Figure 97. Summary of Alternative for Botany Resource Indicators**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2 & 3
R6 Sensitive plant <i>Botrychium crenulatum</i>	Viability of occupied <i>B. crenulatum</i> habitat	Poor, Fair, or Good	Fair	Good
	Population and individual plant counts of <i>B. crenulatum</i>	Numbers of populations or individual plants	5 populations totaling 40 individuals	2 populations totaling 9 individuals
Unique and Sensitive Plant Habitats	Change in aspen stand vigor and plant biodiversity	Acres of unique and sensitive habitats treated	0 acres	231 acres
Understory Vegetation Composition	Change in amount and diversity of understory vegetation	Acres of forest canopy opened	0 acres of forest canopy opened. Sparse or no understory in areas with closed canopy.	10,220 acres of forest canopy opened.

### 3.9.5 Consistency Statement

#### Compliance with LRMP and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans

##### *Okanogan National Forest Land and Management Plan*

S&G 6-19 addresses Sensitive species, stating, “Sensitive plants and animals should be protected.” Through design criteria and mitigation measures, this project will be in compliance with FP S&G 6-19.

### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to botanical resources, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.9(a)(2)(ii) Key Characteristics. With regard to ecosystem diversity, thinning on up to 388 acres of deer winter range under this amendment in alternatives 2 and 3 would have a long term, moderate, beneficial effect on key characteristics associated with terrestrial ecosystem types in the project area by increasing community heterogeneity and species diversity. In a study by Dodson et al. (2010), burning and thinning treatments in similar habitats, environmental heterogeneity created by treatments likely provided favorable microsites for disturbance-adapted species, thereby increasing species co-existence at the treatment-unit level. The paper goes on to say, “we found no evidence that any of the active restoration treatments reduced species richness at any scale, including community heterogeneity. In contrast, the thin/burn treatment increased community heterogeneity and colonization by new species without increasing local species extirpation. Collectively, these results suggest that few species in the frequent-fire adapted forests are negatively impacted by restoration treatments”.

219.9(a)(2)(iii) Diversity of native tree species. The diversity of native species is important for ecosystem functioning. Thinning within deer winter range as provided by this amendment may occur on 2 acres of the 71 acres proposed for aspen stand treatments, and within 15 acres of the 160 proposed acres of overstory aspen treatments. This translates into approximately 3% of the total aspen stand treatments and 9% of the total aspen overstory treatments within deer winter range under the amendment in alternatives 2 and 3. There would be a long-term, moderate benefit to aspen stands by thinning and prescribed fire treatments because they would promote health and vigor of the aspen by removing competing conifers. Conifer encroachment can suppress aspen sprouts and overtop and kill the aspen overstory through vegetative competition for lights and soil resources) Shepperd et al., 2001a; Jones et al., 2005). As mentioned above, thinning of conifers within aspen strands would help create a diverse age structure that could provide protection against the effects of wildfire, insects and disease, and browsing.

Thinning in deer winter range would have no effect on rare plant communities or the recovery of T&E species, conservation of species of concern, or botanical Regional Forester Sensitive Species. None of the above species or communities intersect with thinning treatments in deer winter range.



### Lower Methow and Twisp River Watershed Analyses

In compliance with the watershed analyses, surveys were performed a year or more in advance prior to activities. Habitat for *Botrychium spp.* has been delineated for this project and will continued to be monitored.

### Forest Service Manual

This project is in compliance with FSM 2670 in that a Biological Evaluation was prepared and the project is properly designed and mitigated to maintain viable populations of Sensitive plant species, and does not contribute to or trend these species toward being listed as Threatened or Endangered.

This project is in compliance with FSM 2620 in that it considers the distributions of species and habitats and ensures that habitat is provided for the number and distribution of reproductive individuals needed to ensure the continued existence of a species throughout its geographic range.

### Required Monitoring:

On monitoring of R6 sensitive and Survey and Manage plant species and habitats, along with native plant species, will occur to evaluate the effectiveness of management activities.

## 3.10 Range

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Range Resource Report by L. D. McFetridge (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

### 3.10.1 Methodology

The resource elements, indicators, and measures used to analyze and compare potential effects of the Mission Restoration on range resources are shown in Figure 98. Indicators and measures address the purpose and need and key internal issues raised during project planning.

Figure 98. Range Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Forage Availability	Understory Forage Production	Acres of forest canopy opened, improved cattle distribution	Key issue: Proposed thinning treatments will effect cattle grazing	LRMP
		Acres of soil disturbance		

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Meeting Riparian Management Objectives	Changes in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas	Miles of road changes that limit access to riparian areas	Key issue: Proposed thinning treatments will effect cattle grazing	LRMP S/G, ARCS S/G, Lookout Mt. AMP, Libby and Middle Methow W.A.
		Acres of commercial harvest within or adjacent to riparian reserves		
Reduced Range Management Access	Reduced Cattle Access to Transitory Range	Miles of access lost	Key Issue: Proposed transportation changes will negatively affect range management access	LRMP
	Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment	Miles of access lost	Key Issue: Proposed transportation changes will negatively affect range management access	LRMP

*Resource Indicator: Understory Forage Production*

This analysis will consider the impacts of thinning treatments on understory forage production. Acres of forest canopy opened and acres of soil disturbance will be compared to existing conditions as described in the Affected Environment section. Thinning treatments would open the canopy and create a long term increase in forage production and soil disturbance caused by the thinning and soil treatment activities would create a short term reduction in forage.

*Resource Indicator: Change in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas*

This analysis will consider the effects of proposed forest restoration activities on cattle access to riparian areas. Road system changes that would remove portions of road from riparian reserves would reduce access to the affected stream segments. The combination of opening the dense forest canopy and decommissioning roads leading to the riparian areas would change livestock access. Miles of road changes that reduce access to riparian areas and acres of proposed harvest within and adjacent to the riparian reserves will be compared to existing conditions.

*Resource Indicator: Miles of accessible roads within grazing allotment (cattle access to Transitory Range).*

The effects of the proposed transportation changes on cattle access to foraging areas within transitory range will be analyzed. The proposed decommissioning of roads may limit cattle travel and decrease proper grazing distribution. Miles of road proposed for decommissioning will be compared to the existing condition as described in the Affected Environment section.

*Resource Indicator: Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment (range management access)*

The effects of the proposed transportation changes to range management access on open roads will be analyzed. The primary concern would be directed at those roads proposed for conversion to ML1 (closed) or decommissioned, where range management access would be inhibited or prohibited, relative to current conditions. Miles of road changes that reduce range management access will be compared to existing conditions in the Affected Environment section.

Open roads with a ML2 or greater meet the minimum vehicular range management access needs within the MRP Analysis Area. Typically ML3 roads would be needed for large semi-trucks with trailers used to haul livestock. However, some ML2 roads would provide this access. ML1 (closed) roads can meet the minimum access needs for some range management activities (i.e., improvement maintenance and livestock management) but access is limited to ATV, OHV, horse, or foot travel. Often, access is very limited on ML1 roads due to impassible barricades, washouts, and debris; the access becomes prohibitive without costly clearing of down trees and other debris; even to provide ATV access.

### **3.10.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

#### Type of Impact

- Adverse: Soil disturbance would reduce forage productions. Thinning treatments would increase access to riparian areas. Transportation changes would reduce range management access.
- Beneficial: The opening of the forest canopy would increase forage production. Transportation changes would lead to a decrease in access to riparian areas. There is no benefit to range management access.

#### Duration of Impact

- Short-term: Immediately after soil disturbance and during thinning treatments
- Long-term: Up to approximately 20 years for soil disturbance and permanently for road changes.

#### Intensity of Impact

- None: No impacts
- Negligible: Soil impacts would only affect the foliage with no impacts to the roots. The forest canopy would not be opened enough for any measurable effect to forage

production. A change in riparian or range management access that would be so small that it would not be of any measurable consequence.

- Minor: Some soil impacts causing damage to both the foliage and roots but no plant mortality is expected. The opening of the forest canopy would be apparent with a measurable increase in forage production but with no noticeable benefit to cattle distribution. A change in riparian access that would be small and localized and with no increased risk of not meeting riparian management objectives. A change in range management access that would be small but with some reduction in cattle distribution and management efficiency.
- Moderate: Soil impacts cause some plant mortality with damage to both foliage and roots. The opening of the forest canopy would increase forage production enough to improve cattle distribution. A change in riparian access that would be measurable and less localized. A change in range management access that would have a noticeable reduction in cattle distribution and range management efficiency.
- Major: Soil impacts would cause irreversible damage the roots of the plant causing mortality. The opening of the forest canopy opening would increase cattle distribution as much as possible. A noticeable change in riparian access that would be measurable with an increased risk of not meeting riparian management objectives. A change in range management access that would severely impact management of the grazing allotment.

### 3.10.3 Affected Environment

Figure 99. Range Resource Indicators and Measures for the Existing Condition

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3 (Units)
Forage Availability	Increase in Understory Forage Production	Acres of forest canopy opened	0 acres
		Acres of soil disturbance	0 acres
Meeting Riparian Management Objectives	Changes in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas	Miles of road changes that limit access to riparian areas	0 miles
		Acres of proposed harvest within or adjacent to Riparian Reserves	0 acres
Reduced Range Management Access	Reduced Cattle Access to Transitory Range	Miles of access lost	0 miles
	Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment	Miles of access lost	0 miles

*Resource Indicator: Forage Availability – Understory Forage Production*

Much of the lands within the project area are forested and do not provide a substantial amount of forage for livestock. The overstory composition of many of the forest stands have produced a dense canopy with low understory vegetation production. The majority of forage is in open conifer stands, old clear cuts, south facing slopes, meadows, and areas along roads. The primary forage type within the allotment is transitory range (a temporary increase in available forage due to past timber harvest). Much of the rangeland within the allotment is dominated by pinegrass under a conifer overstory. Most of the timbered areas support shrubs and grasses for forage in varying quantities depending on canopy closure.

Livestock use levels on understory forage

Allotment inspections, resource condition assessments, and mid and end of season monitoring are conducted on the allotment included in the project area each year.

The Lookout Mountain allotments has many designated monitoring areas (DMAs) across the allotments for monitoring forage utilization. Forage (grass) utilization standards are 45 percent in upland understory environments (pinegrass/Idaho fescue) and 55 percent in upland grasslands (bluebunch wheatgrass). Upland forage within the project area is meeting Forest Plan (USDA & USDI 1994, 1995, 2007; USDA Forest Service 1989) utilization standards with the exception of a few localized high use areas that may exceed 60 percent utilization. All DMAs within the project area have been meeting allowable use standards (allowable level of forage use) over the past 10 years with few exceptions.

Grazing allotment within the project area

A large portion of the Lookout Mountain grazing allotment is located within the Analysis Area. The permitted use on the allotment is currently meeting Forest Plan standards (USDA & USDI 1994, 1995, 2007; USDA Forest Service 1989) and is in balance with the current level of road access and forage availability. The permitted use in the allotment is displayed in Figure 100.

**Figure 100. Permitted Cattle Use in the Analysis Area**

Size (acres)	Permitted use				Grazing System
	Number (cow/calf pair)	Season of Use	Head Months	AUMs*	
45,394	230	5/16 - 9/30	1127	1488	DRR*

\*AUM: Animal Units Months; DRR: Deferred/Rest Rotation

The Lookout Mountain allotment is the only allotment within the project boundary. It is currently managed under the direction of the 2013 Allotment Management Plan (AMP). This AMP implements the decision from the Libby, Little Bridge, Newby, and Poorman Allotment Environmental Assessment (LLBNP EA). The allotment consists of 45,394 acres and is located in the Buttermilk Creek, Newby Creek, Poorman Creek, Libby Creek, Alder Creek, and Twisp River drainages. The permit allows 230 cow/calf (c/c) pair to graze from May 16 through September 30 every year for a total of 1,488 Animal Unit Months (AUMs – the amount of forage

required by one mature cow [1,000 lb.] or its equivalent for one month). Nine of the fourteen pastures in the Lookout Mountain allotment fall within project area. Five pastures are in the Libby Creek drainage: Mission/Ben, Chicamun, Hornet, Elderberry, and Smith; four pastures are in the Buttermilk drainage: Shady, Buttermilk, and Scaffold; and the West pasture falls within the Twisp River drainage. The current grazing system is deferred rotation (withholding livestock to allow the forage to reach a certain stage of growth), except for the Chicamun, Hornet, and Smith pastures which are under a rest rotation (allowing rest for one year).

Roads within the project area were constructed in conjunction with intensive logging activity that started in the 1950s and were completed in the 1960s through the 1990s in conjunction with commercial timber harvest. The current grazing allotment boundaries were established in response to the development of these roads and the transitory range created by the opening of the canopy primarily through timber management which increased understory vegetation and subsequent forage for livestock (transitory range).

*Resource Indicator: Change in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas*

There are riparian areas on the Lookout Mountain allotment within the project area where past management (prior to 2010) may have adversely affected ESA listed fish. There are several areas that did not meet Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives (ACSO). The current Allotment Management Plan (AMP) is designed to improve resource conditions in these areas to eliminated impacts that retard or prevent attainment of the objectives. These riparian areas are Libby Creek, Buttermilk Creek, and East Fork Buttermilk Creek. It is a requirement of the AMP to meet allowable use in these riparian areas.

Within the project area, the Lookout Mountain allotments has designated monitoring areas (DMAs) for monitoring streambank alteration and Riparian shrub use and use on riparian grasses/sedges. The DMAs are chosen to be representative of a larger stream or meadow area or the most representative upland areas. The allowable use standard for livestock caused streambank alteration is not to exceed 20% current year alteration by livestock and limit allowable use on riparian shrubs to 40% utilization and riparian grasses to 45% utilization. All DMAs within the project area have been meeting allowable use standards over the past 10 years with few exceptions.

During summer, livestock tend to be attracted to riparian zones due to water availability; higher concentrations of nutritious, palatable forage; and, if trees or shrubs are part of the system, preferable thermal conditions (Leonard et al. 1997). Cattle generally prefer grasses and forbs to woody vegetation, at least when the herbaceous vegetation is green. Some degree of moderate use of palatable herbs (primarily grasses and sedges) can occur within the riparian area without undesirable browsing of riparian shrubs and without streambank damage (Hall and Bryant 1995). In riparian areas, livestock generally do not browse woody plants if they have a sufficient supply of palatable grass (Leonard et al. 1997). The opening of the canopy in thinning units adjacent to the riparian areas would increase understory forage production. As long as a sufficient level of palatable grass is available outside of the riparian area, as discussed further below, undesirable streambank damage and browsing of riparian shrubs is unlikely.

Many of the proposed thinning units are within pastures that are grazed in the early season (May-June). The forage type within these early season pastures is predominantly bluebunch wheatgrass on the open south facing slopes and pinegrass in conifer-dominated sites. In the early season the forage preference by cattle is for bluebunch wheatgrass over pinegrass. The cattle utilize the bunchgrass habitat while cool temperatures and moist soils keep the bunch grass green and palatable. The cattle will mostly be distributed in the upland bunchgrass habitat during the early season as the upland plants have similar or higher nutritional content than the riparian forage. Also there are more upland water sources and preferable thermal conditions for the cattle (Wyman et al. 2006). Cattle would utilize the pinegrass transitory forage within the harvest units to a much lesser extent and the existing riparian shrub densities would be maintained, because the early season timing of livestock use would favor upland forage within most of the harvest units.

*Resource Indicator: Miles of accessible roads within grazing allotment (cattle access to Transitory Range).*

The primary forage type within the Lookout Mountain allotment is transitory range, which are areas of temporary forage resulting from openings created by past timber harvest, prescribed fire, and wildfire. Roads serve as the dominant livestock travel paths to and from transitory range. A reduction in the road network will reduce or restrict access to transitory range.

All the roads within the project area fall exclusively within the Lookout Mountain grazing allotment. Roads are extremely important to the movement of cattle through the relatively steep rangeland within the project area. Currently, roads offer access to transitory range whereby routine and efficient travel paths have been established to guide livestock. Figure 101 displays the miles of roads that currently occur within the Lookout Mountain allotment. Much of the rangeland within the allotment is dominated by pinegrass under a conifer overstory. Miles of road changes that reduce access to transitory range will be compared to existing conditions.

**Figure 101. Current System Road Miles by Management Level in the Lookout Mountain Grazing Allotment**

MANAGEMENT LEVEL	MILES
1 - BASIC CUSTODIAL CARE (CLOSED)	62.81
2 - HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES	27.63
3 - SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CARS	25.02
4 - MODERATE DEGREE OF USER COMFORT	3.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>118.87</b>

*Resource Indicator: Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment (range management access)*

Currently there are a total of 56.06 miles of open roads within the Lookout Mountain allotment. These roads are providing needed access by both the Forest Service and permittee to administer and manage the allotment. The current level of access is sufficient to effectively and efficiently maintain structural improvements, place salt, move cattle on and off the allotment via

truck or stock trailer, and check on cattle distribution. It is common that permittees will look for cattle using motorized vehicles, then ride to gather cattle once found.

**Figure 102. Current Open Road Miles by Management Level in Lookout Mountain Grazing Allotment**

MANAGEMENT LEVEL	MILES
2 - HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES	27.63
3 - SUITABLE FOR PASSENGER CARS	25.02
4 - MODERATE DEGREE OF USER COMFORT	3.41
<b>Total</b>	<b>56.06</b>

### 3.10.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.10.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

The following proposed actions will not be considered further in this analysis because they would have no measurable effect on Range Resources: rock armoring; replacing undersized culverts or installing fish culverts; beaver habitat or coarse woody debris enhancement; or creating hardened fords.

#### 3.10.4.2 Alternative 1

##### 3.10.4.2.1 Effects

*Resource Indicator: Forage Availability – Understory Forage Production*

Forest stand canopy closure would continue and the availability of understory forage would decrease slowly. The no action could result in limiting livestock use patterns and distribution. Livestock use within the project area would be more concentrated as the transitory range forage production becomes more limited and would need to be adjusted through Annual Operating Instructions if Forest Plan allowable use standards were exceeded. A minor, long-term, adverse impact is expected.

*Resource Indicator: Change in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas*

As tree stand density increases and as snags fall and debris accumulates, there would be fewer openings and more limited access routes to riparian areas. Fuel loading would continue to increase and fire intensity would be expected to be high in the projects area. In the event of a wildfire, cattle access to the riparian area could increase, and post-fire vegetation could change to a more palatable forage type that would attract cattle, resulting in an increase in damage to streambanks from trampling and hedging of regenerated riparian shrub species. A minor to moderate, long-term, adverse impact is expected.

*Resource Indicators: Miles of accessible roads within grazing allotment (cattle access to Transitory Range) and miles of open roads within the grazing allotment (range management access)*

Range management road access levels would remain the same as they are currently unless modified by future, project level NEPA analysis. The transportation system would continue to provide for relatively efficient administration and permittee livestock management. Livestock



would continue to be able to access remote forage by using roads that are relatively free of obstacles. No beneficial or adverse impact is expected.

### 3.10.4.3 Alternative 2 and 3 – Proposed Action Effects Common to Both Action Alternatives or to Alternative 2 Only

With the exception of the transportation changes, the proposed project activities are identical between Alternatives 2 and 3 and the effects for both alternatives will be described together. The transportation changes will be discussed separately under Alternative 3.

#### 3.10.4.3.1 Effects

Figure 103 summarizes the resource indicators for Alternative 2 and Alternative 3, for non-transportation proposed actions only.

**Figure 103. Range Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 (non-transportation proposed actions only)**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2 (Units)
Forage Availability	Increase in Understory Forage Production	Acres of forest canopy opened	9941 acres
		Acres of soil disturbance	208
Meeting Riparian Management Objectives	Changes in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas	Miles of road changes that limit access to riparian areas	4.41
		Acres of commercial harvest within or adjacent to Riparian Reserves	52
Reduced Range Management Access	Reduced Cattle Access to Transitory Range	Miles of cattle access lost	29.02
	Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment	Miles of access lost	4.86

#### *Resource Indicator: Forage Availability – Understory Forage Production*

It is well-documented that thinning and/or removal of the forest component in dry forest ecosystems results in the stimulation of the associated understory vegetation (McConnell and Smith 1970; Riegel et al.1995; Naumburg and DeWald 1999). In general, the research indicates that productivity of understory vegetation is inversely related to tree density and directly proportional to the amount of solar radiation that reaches the understory vegetation.

Thinning treatments would open 9,941 acres of the conifer overstory and dense patches of young conifers in the understory within the Lookout Mountain allotment. This would allow

increased light levels to the understory as well as more soil resources available and reduced competition to understory species. Thinning and underburning activities usually reduce forage production only during implementation. Shortly after these activities (within a season), the understory species increase, producing transitory range for livestock as described and provided for in the LRMP. A long-term, moderate, beneficial impact is expected.

*Acres of Overstory and Understory Thinning Relative to the Grazing Area:* Only the pastures affected by the proposed action are analyzed and listed in Figure 104. Relative to the total grazing area, 25% is within thinning treatment units. The Mission and Shady pastures have the bulk of the thinning treatments (49%).

**Figure 104. Acres of Overstory and Understory Thinning Within the Grazing Area**

Pasture Units	Noncommercial Thin					Commercial Thin					Total	Total Pasture Acres
	Plantation Thin	LFR Thin out-side CTU*	Post & Pole Thin	Conifer Girdling for Aspen	Wet-land Thin	Aspen Thin	Dry Forest Restoration – Dwarf Mistletoe Thin	Dry Forest Restoration Thin	Moist Forest Thin	Variable Retention Regen Thin		
Ben	102	75						60			237	1637
Buttermilk	252	705	31			9		64	6		1067	3003
Chicamun								210			210	3013
Elderberry		209						250			459	963
Hornet	308	683				5		44	23		1063	3613
Mission	639	1535		32	7	54	152	310		59	2788	6153
Poorman		9									9	3932
Scaffold	56	599									655	3293
Shady	360	1226		39	15	92	132	199	41		2104	4951
Smith		1104	5					137			1246	4067
East		2									2	3746
West		101									101	1655
Total	1717	*6248	36	71	22	160	284	1274	70	59	9941	40026
*Outside	21	252						6			279	
Grand Total	1738	*6500	36	71	22	160	284	1280	70	59	10220	40026

\*Treatment area acres outside of the grazing area

There are a total of 1853 acres of commercial thinning units within the affected grazing allotment. The area of commercial harvest is small relative to the grazing area (5%; Figure 104). There would be 21% of the total affected pasture area within non-commercial thinning units and 25% within all thinning units. With the affected rangeland having 25% percent of the area within the thinning units, it is expected that there will be a long-term, moderate, beneficial impact to understory forage production. The short-term effect on the current available forage would be a slight reduction relative to the total available forage and the long-term effect of increase transitory forage would be expected to increase proportionally to the amount of acres treated that open the canopy. It is well-documented that thinning and/or removal of the forest component in dry forest ecosystems results in the stimulation of the associated understory

component (McConnell and Smith 1970; Riegel et al.1995; Naumburg and DeWald 1999). In general, the research indicates that productivity of understory vegetation is inversely related to tree density and directly proportional to the amount of solar radiation that reaches the understory vegetation. The same research indicates that increased productivity is positively correlated with larger trees and wider spacing. The effect of increased plant productivity is an increase in forage and browse that is available for grazing by permitted livestock. However, cattle would not graze more intensely in the newly created forage because it would have previously been overstocked forest stands with dense canopies where the cattle would have favored the open forest stands, south facing slopes, meadows, and areas along roads. Post project, they would continue to graze those areas in addition to the newly created forage. This transitory range would increase the amount of available forage within the grazing allotment and would improve livestock distribution. Under current stocking rates, the additional forage would distribute livestock use patterns more evenly reducing overall utilization levels across the grazing allotment. Additionally, with improved livestock distribution, it is expected that grazing would have a negligible effect on the rate and pattern of the understory vegetation response to a more open canopy and the basic productivity of the land would be protected for wildlife and other resources. Neither the current Lookout Mountain AMP nor this project would provide for an increase in livestock numbers. There will not be an increase in AUMs (Animal Unit Months) permitted to graze.

A total of 160 acres of commercial thinning and 71 acres of noncommercial thinning are proposed to promote the restoration of aspen stands. The recent grazing Allotment Management Plan revision Environmental Assessment (LLBNP EA 2011) analyzed the effects of cattle grazing on aspen which included all of the Mission planning area. The analysis found that most, if not all, of the aspen stands were utilized by cattle for grazing and loafing, but the grazing system [2011] appeared to be conducive to allowing aspen stands to regenerate through sucker sprouting. The stands appeared to be healthy and were limited more by conifer shading and disease than by ungulate browsing. Hadfield and Magelssen (2004) found that aspen stands on the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests were commonly browsed by cattle and deer, but not severe enough to prevent aspen sprouts from growing into larger stem sizes. Some of the stands they reviewed were in the Mission project area. Cattle are using these stands but do not appear to be detrimentally browsing the suckers to the point of preventing stand development. (Hadfield and Magelssen 2004; LLBNP EA 2011) As discussed above, thinning treatments would increase the productivity and distribution of understory vegetation. Grazing use levels across the project area are currently less than when the 2011 grazing analysis was completed and are meeting allowable use standards. It is expected that the relatively large scale thinning treatments would increase cattle distribution and further reduce cattle impacts to aspen stands.

*Effects of Underburning on Understory Forage Production:* There would be 6617 acres of underburning. Some of the areas within the Underburning units are not grazed due to slope and distance from water. Typically range greater than 30% slope, and more than ½ mile from water is not classified as capable range. As a result, the burns would have little effect on livestock distribution patterns within these areas. Within capable range, prescribed burning has long-term beneficial effects. Generally, understory species associated with dry forest plant communities in

the eastern Cascades are either tolerant of or enhanced by prescribed fire treatments, especially where understory vegetation diversity is low prior to treatment (Dodson et al. 2008, Agee 1993). Prescribed fire would have a positive effect on the overall vigor of the forage and would help maintain a more open structure in most of the timber stands within the analysis area, improving the potential to increase forage production in the understory. Where there is cattle accessibility, the improved forage would help draw cattle away from riparian areas. A minor, long-term, beneficial impact is expected.

*The Effect of Soil Disturbance on Understory Forage Production:* Winter operations are required in some units to minimize soil impacts unless the purchaser can present a plan of no more than 2% detrimental soil conditions per unit. Ground based winter harvest on frozen soils has shown to result in less detrimental soil disturbance as compared to summer harvest (Reeves et al. 2011). There would be virtually no soil disturbance that would be detrimental to understory forage under winter logging and a short-term, negligible to no adverse impact is expected. A total of 455 acres of soil treatments are proposed within the grazing units. The bulk of these treatments are in the bottom of Ben, Chicamun, and Elderberry canyons and in the bottom of Hornet Draw. These units are associated with the flat canyon bottoms where cattle commonly loaf. Forage production is generally low within the treatment units where the vegetation is conifer and shrub dominated and the forage tends to be patchy and in relatively small pockets. The bulk of the primary forage is on the toe slopes of the canyons above the valley bottoms. It is not expected that the treatments would result in a measureable short term reduction in forage production, however, where overstory thinning and soil treatments overlap, it is expected that there would be a long term increase in understory forage as the vegetation responds to improved soil structure and light levels. A negligible, short-term, adverse impact is expected.

**Figure 105. Acres of Soil Treatments by Pasture Units**

Pasture Units	Soil Treatment Acres
BEN	115.96
CHICAMUN	104.45
ELDERBERRY	92.15
HORNET	82.75
MISSION	15.31
SMITH	44.80
<i>Total</i>	<i>455.42</i>

*Resource Indicator: Change in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas*

When riparian areas lie within overstocked forest stands with dense canopies, cattle access may be limited by the physical barrier that the vegetation creates or cattle simply are not attracted the riparian area as it may offer little or no forage opportunities. Cattle will avoid these areas in favor of open forest stands, south facing slopes, meadows, and areas along roads. Opening forest stands within riparian reserves may increase cattle access to the riparian areas and may limit meeting Riparian Management Objectives. Conversely, opening forest stands in

the uplands outside of riparian reserves would increase available forage and would likely draw cattle away from the riparian area. Additionally, the roads leading to riparian areas can serve as efficient cattle travel paths and facilitate livestock access. Road system changes that would remove portions of road from riparian reserves would reduce access to the affected stream segments. The combination of opening the dense forest canopy and decommissioning roads leading to the riparian areas would change livestock access. A minor, short-term, adverse impact is expected.

There is currently a need to reduce the level of livestock use in some riparian areas within the project area. Approximately 52 acres of proposed Commercial harvest units lie within the outer edge of Riparian Reserves. In order to meet ACS Objectives, no-harvest buffers of 50 to 100 feet would be established along intermittent and fish bearing streams. Also about 60 percent of the harvest in Riparian Reserves would be done in the winter and occur over frozen ground. All harvest activities within Riparian Reserves would be done with the objective of attaining riparian management objectives and ensure that Forest Plan and ACS objectives are met. By attaining these objectives and meeting these standards and guidelines, it is expected that there would be a short-term, negligible, adverse impact.

Additionally, some of the riparian areas within the project area are intermittent headwater streams. Livestock would not be attracted to these areas for water, because these streams typically do not have surface water during the summer grazing season. Most of the perennial streams have dense populations of riparian shrubs that stabilize the banks and limit livestock access. Some of the perennial streams like Buttermilk and upper Libby creeks are high gradient, cascading, and boulder with very limited cattle access. Project design details and mitigation measures would help prevent additional livestock impacts to riparian areas.

The soil disturbed by project activities in harvest units adjacent to the perennial streams would be seeded with grasses. The seeding would be done to revegetate the disturbed soil to meet erosion control and invasive plant competition objectives and to restore disturbed soil to native plants (Design Features, Appendix D). The effect of the successful seeding of disturbed soil would be that the understory vegetation would be reestablished. As discussed above, the thinning treatments would increase the productivity and distribution of understory vegetation (including the reestablished vegetation) by increasing light levels to the understory and making more soil resources available, helping to draw cattle away from the riparian areas. All perennial streams would have a no-cut buffer zone from 50 to 100 feet or more. The accumulation of down, dead material in the buffer zone would impede cattle access. Large accumulations of down dead material have led to decreased access to riparian areas in other streams on Methow Valley Ranger District and continue to be a benefit in protecting the riparian habitat.

Opening the forest stands with the proposed commercial thinning treatments would increase available forage outside of riparian areas. The number of cattle that access riparian areas may decrease, because grazing distribution patterns would improve in the uplands. Even though the more open stands could allow easier access to riparian areas, no additional use of riparian areas is expected because cattle distribution would be improved and direct access to streams would be restricted by riparian vegetation along streams.

Water developments in the upland areas that lack water are often a key factor in reducing livestock concentrations in riparian areas (Wyman et al 2006). The permittee would continue to maintain the upland water developments. Range management practices such as riding; proper salting, and maintaining allotment fences would also reduce the potential for additional livestock impacts to riparian areas.

*Miles of road changes that limit or increase access to riparian areas:* During the hot summer months, cattle prefer the quality, diversity, and succulence of the vegetation found in riparian zones. Slopes less than 35% are preferred by cattle and when forage rich riparian zones are available at the bottom of narrow canyons, they are attractive to cattle and concentrate their activities when upland forage becomes rank or dry (Bryant 1982; Wyman et al. 2006). There are a total of 4.41 miles of road that currently provides cattle trailing access to riparian areas that would be decommissioned under Alternatives 2 and 3. Both action alternatives would have a similar effect in limiting cattle with the exception of the 4342-300 road in Alternative 3. In Alternative 3 all three miles of the 4342-300 road (Chicamun Canyon road) would be decommissioned but only the last .63 miles would be decommissioned in Alternative 2. Cattle currently concentrate travel on the Chicamun Canyon road to avoid more difficult movement through the vegetated off-road areas along the stream and typically only travel to the stream in the most accessible areas. Under Alternative 3, more cattle travel would shift off the altered Chicamun Canyon road surface and on to the more accessible areas between the road and the creek, which may be within the riparian area, resulting in an increase in cattle impacts. With the exception of the Chicamun Canyon road, Alternatives 2 and 3 would have similar trailing access to the riparian areas. The Range Resource report (McFetridge 2018) has additional information on riparian roads closures.

*Coarse Woody Debris (CWD) Enhancement:* The felling conifers into streams would not only help to restore fish habitat but an added benefit would be that the trees would help to limit cattle access to the stream; especially by restricting trailing up and down the stream. All of the streams proposed for CWD enhancement would benefit from less cattle access both as habitat protection and to reduce the potential of physical impact to fish.

*Effects of Ladder Fuels Reduction (specific to riparian areas):* Ladder Fuels Reduction (LFR) would not increase livestock access to riparian areas. Aquatic resources design criteria would not permit LFR anywhere inside Riparian Reserves (25 ft. buffer for intermittent and 50 ft. buffer for perennial streams). This would prevent LFR treatments from getting close enough to stream channels to create new openings to the riparian areas for cattle access with no impacts expected.

*Effects of Underburning:* The proposed action would reduce the fuel loading adjacent to riparian areas and within some Riparian Reserves. Approximately 272 acres of proposed fuels treatments lie within Riparian Reserves. All treatments within Riparian Reserves must not prevent the attainment of Aquatic Conservations Strategy Objectives. The design criteria would be no active lighting within 25 feet of intermittent streams and 100 feet of perennial streams with a resource objective of maintaining 95% survival of over story trees, 66% of the understory, and 50% of the ground cover. If these objectives cannot be met, the area would be excluded. The

effect of underburning would be that most of the riparian obligate shrub vegetation would remain intact.

There would be no dozer fireline and hand fireline will not be constructed within Riparian Reserves except for the purpose of controlling backing fire and outside of approximately 100 feet of a stream where needed to keep the fire out of the inner gorge. The construction of fireline would create cattle access paths along riparian areas but with the implementation of the design criteria, a short term, negligible, adverse impact is expected. Treatment of forest stands adjacent to riparian vegetation would reduce the severity of effects from wildfire. Proposed vegetation treatments that provide for the greatest potential to reduce the severity of wildfires and consequently sustain the dense riparian shrub community would best maintain the current limited cattle access.

The timing of the burning relating to scheduled grazing rotations could require in the intensity, timing and duration of livestock use within the affected pastures. These adjustments would be incorporated into annual operating instructions to meet resource protection standards.

### 3.10.4.4 Alternative 3 – Effects Unique to Alternative 3

#### 3.10.4.4.1 Effects

Alternative 3 includes additional road closures which would reduce range management access. A summary of these changes are in Figure 106.

**Figure 106. Range Resource Indicators and Measures for Proposed Actions Unique to Alternative 3.**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3
Meeting Riparian Management Objectives	Changes in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas	Miles of road changes that limit access to riparian areas	6.78 miles
Reduced Range Management Access	Reduced Cattle Access to Transitory Range	Miles of cattle access lost	51.82 miles
	Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment	Miles of access lost	21.58 miles

*Resource Indicator: Miles of accessible roads within grazing allotment (cattle access to Transitory Range).*

The implementation of either of the two action alternatives would result in less cattle access to foraging areas and reduce grazing distribution throughout the grazing allotment. Of the 134 total miles of road within the grazing allotments, approximately 31 miles would be decommissioned under Alternative 2 and 54 miles would be decommissioned under Alternative 3. (This does not include Temporary roads that would be decommissioned)

After road decommissioning, access on roads that previously provided routes to foraging areas through rough, steep, or densely forested terrain may be limited to the extent of making that forage unavailable. Not all the roads proposed for decommissioning currently provide access to foraging areas. Those roads to be decommissioned that are currently used extensively by cattle would be designed to provide cattle access by leaving a trail-space along the edge of the decommissioned road. These project design criteria would be applied to 1.6 miles under both action alternatives, reducing impact to livestock grazing. Overall, there would be a 22% reduction in roads available for livestock access to transitory range for Alternative 2 and a 39% reduction for Alternative 3. A long-term, minor to moderate, adverse impact is expected for Alternative 2 and a long-term, moderate to major, adverse impact is expected for Alternative 3.

*Resource Indicator: Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment (range management access)*

The primary concern would be directed at those roads proposed for conversion to ML1 (closed) or decommissioned, where range management access would be inhibited or prohibited, relative to current conditions. The District conferred with grazing allotment permittees to determine which roads are essential for continued range management. When such roads would be closed or decommissioned, design features would be incorporated to allow for continued access. Therefore, the current 57 miles of open road (ML 2-4) would be reduced to 52 miles for Alternative 2 and 35.4 miles for Alternative 3 (ML2-4 less 4.86 and 21.58 miles)

Design criteria for decommissioned roads was previously described. For road closures, Forest Service manual 7731 Road Operation describes that roads can be closed to the public yet used for administrative uses as ML2 Administrative Use roads. Existing and proposed ML1 roads needing ATV/UTV access for maintenance of stock tanks or other legitimate reasons would be converted to a ML2 Administrative Use designation. A total of 15.4 miles of road would be designated as ML2 Administrative Use roads for alternative 2 and 4.75 miles for alternative 3. Only the roads with proposed changes in maintenance levels that restrict range access are displayed in the following table. With these design criteria, the effects of the proposed road closures and decommissioning on range management would be greatly reduced with the effects of Alternative 3 having a much higher impact on reducing range management access than Alternative 2. It is expected that Alternative 2 would have a minor to moderate, long-term, adverse impact and Alternative 3 would have a moderate, long-term, adverse impact. Refer to Appendix B for a list of these roads and to the Range Resource Report (McFetridge 2018) for specific roads closing within grazing allotment.

There are roads where access is critical for fence and water development maintenance, livestock management, and administrative use. Figure 107 lists over 12 miles of roads that are proposed for decommissioning under Alternative 3 that are the most critical for allotment management and administration. The roughened surface of decommissioned roads greatly limits livestock trailing. Livestock would create new trails on the decommissioned road or create new off-road trails. Locating and gathering cattle would be more difficult. Administrative access and all management access would be limited to foot travel or limited horse travel which would greatly reduce the efficiency for livestock management and administration.



**Figure 107. Roads Critical for Allotment Management and Administration under Alternative 3**

Road Number	Miles
4300550	1.96
4300553	1.58
4300556	0.80
4300560	2.29
4300615	0.72
4300615	0.44
4300645	1.30
4340785	0.70
4342300	2.39
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.18</b>

#### 3.10.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects

##### *Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

This cumulative effects analysis considers effects of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the analysis area. The geographic boundary for this cumulative effects analysis is the entire analysis area boundary and the temporal boundary is from about 50 years in the past when the development of roads for timber harvest created transitory range and easy range management access to 10 years in the future, the period of time needed for grazing management to adjust to the proposed transportation changes.

##### *Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*

**Past Actions:** Roads were constructed in conjunction with intensive logging activity that started in the 1950s and ended in the 1990s. The current grazing allotment boundaries were established in response to the development of these roads and the transitory range created by timber harvest and opening of the canopy. Past prescribed burning and fire suppression activities have slightly increased livestock access to foraging areas with the creation of hand and dozer fire lines.

**Present Actions:** The implementation of the 2013 Lookout Mountain Allotment Management Plan (AMP) include actions such as new fence construction and more management flexibility built into the grazing strategies with requirements to meet riparian management objectives. Livestock numbers will remain consistent with the current AMP.

There would be weed control along roads and in some off road areas under the existing Integrated Weed Management decisions. See the Invasive Plant section for details.

Active fire suppression will continue in the project area because of its proximity to private lands and associated developments. Suppression activities have contributed to changing the natural fire cycle from frequent, low-intensity fires that kept the forest structure more open to much less

frequent fires that have allowed trees to become denser, which has reduced the quality and availability of transitory range.

Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions: Livestock grazing would continue. Range management techniques—such as riding, adjusting intensity, proper salting, and maintaining water developments and fences—would continue to help meet riparian objectives and to obtain a more uniform distribution of use on the allotments.

The implementation of the *Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Forestwide Site-Specific Invasive Species Treatment EIS* would increase the number of weed treatment options available and increase the area of infested lands that may be treated within the project area. Early detection, rapid response to newly discovered infestations would increase treatment effectiveness and reduce the potential for spread of new populations. This future action would help maintain a sustained yield of desirable forage plants and would reduce the spread of invasive plants from livestock grazing.

*Resource Element: Forage Availability*

Grazing and implementation of the 2013 Allotment Management Plan (AMP) would have a continued effect on understory vegetation but would not change forage availability. Noxious weed treatments would continue and would help to increase the amount of forage available to cattle.

*Resource Element: Meeting Riparian Management Objectives*

Grazing and implementation of the AMP would have a continued effect on riparian areas but would not result in a change to the resource indicators. Noxious weed treatments would continue and would help to restore native plant communities in riparian areas.

*Summary of Cumulative Impacts*

The cumulative effect of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions and the proposed thinning treatments and transportation changes in Alternatives 2 and 3 would have both adverse and beneficial impacts to Range Resources.

**Forage Availability - Understory Forage Production:** The continued implementation of the 2013 Lookout Mountain AMP, with grazing strategies designed to alternate the season of use to provide for proper pasture rest or deferment, would help to sustain understory forage production. With the implementation of the Invasive Treatment EIS, more weed management options would be available to control invasive plants in the conifer understory. Controlling weeds would allow the establishment and sustainability of desirable plants and reduce the potential of spread from livestock grazing. Active fire suppression, when successful in keeping fires small, would have a short-term benefit to the understory forage but a reduction in the long-term benefit of overstory removal which would increase understory vegetation. A long-term, moderate, beneficial, impact is expected

**Meeting Riparian Management Objectives:** The continued implementation of the 2013 Lookout Mountain AMP with riparian management requirements would help reduce impacts to riparian areas. Continued maintenance of fences constructed to eliminate cattle access to streams in

early season would have a major beneficial impact. With the implementation of the Invasive Treatment EIS, more weed management options would be available to control invasive plants in the uplands which would sustain or increase upland vegetation and help draw cattle away from riparian areas. Active fire suppression, when successful in keep the fires small, would reduce the potential for wildfire to consume the riparian vegetation creating more open cattle access. The suppression of fires will continue to limit the availability of long-term transitory range but will increase the likelihood that riparian areas will remain intact. A long-term, moderate, beneficial, impact is expected.

Reduced Range Management Access: The cumulative effect of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions would have a minor impact on range management access. A minor, long-term, adverse impact is expected.

### 3.10.4.5 Summary of Effects

Figure 108. Range Resource Indicators and Measures Summary for All Alternatives

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Forage Availability	Increase in Understory Forage Production	Acres of forest canopy opened	0 acres	9941 acres	9941 acres
		Acres of soil disturbance	0 acres	208	208
Meeting Riparian Management Objectives	Changes in openings or routes providing cattle access to riparian areas	Miles of road changes that limit access to riparian areas	0 miles	4.41	6.78
		Acres of commercial harvest within or adjacent to Riparian Reserves	0 acres	52	52
Reduced Range Management Access	Reduced Cattle Access to Transitory Range	Miles of cattle access lost	0 miles	29.02	51.82
	Miles of open roads within the grazing allotment	Miles of access lost	0 miles	4.86	21.58

*Forage Availability - Understory Forage Production:* Alternative 1 would continue the trend of closed canopy forest stands and the availability of understory forage would continue to decrease slowly limiting livestock use patterns and distribution. Livestock use within the project

area would be more concentrated in areas of open access and productive forage. Range management road access would remain relatively the same and access would continue to be provided for relatively efficient administration and permittee livestock management.

Alternative 2 and 3 would have a short-term decrease in available forage disturbed by ground-based harvest systems (2-3 years). In the long term (approximately 20 years), with implementation of design criteria and weed management, transitory forage production would increase, improving livestock distribution and reducing riparian impacts. Thinning treatments would produce over 9000 acres of transitory range by opening the conifer overstory as well as dense patches of young conifers in the understory. Transitory range would continue to fluctuate. As time passes, the increase in available transitory forage would be reduced as the tree canopy closes. Shrubs, herbs and grasses would become less abundant due to the corresponding increase in canopy cover and associated increased shading (McConnell and Smith 1970; Naumburg and DeWald 1999). The average transitory range duration for eastern Cascades forests is 20 to 30 years based on the need for follow-up thinning maintenance treatments (Agee 2006). The Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan states that forage values decrease as trees become re-established following regeneration cutting, and revert to pre-harvest levels in about 20 years (USDA Forest Service 1989).

*Meeting Riparian Management Objectives:* Alternative 1 would continue the trend of increased forest stand density and more large woody debris within the riparian areas resulting in fewer openings and more limited cattle access routes. Fuel loading would continue to increase with a higher risk of wildfire within the riparian areas leading to an increase in cattle access.

Alternatives 2 and 3 would have no-harvest buffers combined with winter logging along Riparian Reserves which would be beneficial in attaining riparian management objectives. The soil disturbed by project activities in harvest units adjacent to the perennial streams would be seeded with grasses. The seeding would be done to revegetate the disturbed soil to meet erosion control and invasive plant competition objectives and to restore disturbed soil to native plants (Design Features in Appendix D). The effect of the successful seeding of disturbed soil would be that the understory vegetation would be reestablished. The thinning treatments would increase the productivity and distribution of understory vegetation (including the reestablished vegetation) by increasing light levels to the understory and more soil resources available, which would help draw cattle away from perennial riparian areas. Opening the forest stands would increase available forage outside of riparian areas. The permittee would continue to maintain the upland water developments. Range management practices such as riding; proper salting, and maintaining allotment fences would also reduce the potential for additional livestock impacts to riparian areas.

Also under Alternative 2 and 3, road system changes that would remove portions of road from riparian reserves would reduce access to the affected stream segments. The combination of opening the dense forest canopy and decommissioning roads leading to the riparian areas would reduce livestock access to riparian areas with alternative 3 having the greatest benefit. Coarse Woody Debris Enhancement would have an added benefit of limiting cattle access to the stream. The design criteria for underburning would restrict active lighting near riparian areas

and sustain the riparian vegetation. Allotment management would continue to meet allowable use standards on the allotment and range management practices would continue to be implemented to meet riparian objectives.

*Reduced Range Management Access:* Under Alternative 1, the transportation system would continue to provide for relatively efficient administration and permittee livestock management. Livestock would continue to be able to access remote forage by using roads that are relatively free of obstacles.

Under Alternatives 2 and 3, range management access would decrease in the long term (approximately 20 years). With implementation of road closure and decommissioning designs to maintain OHV access, impacts to range management would be minimized. Livestock access to important forage would be maintained, and impacts of past road construction near riparian areas would be reversed through decommissioning. Alternative 3 would have the highest impact on reducing range management access. Management access would be reduced with the implementation of the action alternatives, but management adjustments would be made through the continued implementation of the Allotment Management Plan.

Proposed changes in road maintenance levels that would result in road closures or decommissioning would reduce the efficiency of administration and management but effective management would be retained by authorized OHV access on ML2- Administrative Use roads and travel access by horseback. Maintenance costs associated with the clearing of down trees and other debris on closed and decommissioned roads would further reduce management efficiency. However, the impact of the action alternatives would be a relatively low reduction in access across the allotment. It is expected that the implementation of Alternatives 2 and 3 would still provide for the effective management of the grazing allotments for the affected permittees and the District.

### **3.10.5 Consistency Statement**

Alternatives 2 and 3 would be compliant with the Okanogan National Forest Plan standards and guidelines for achieving range management objectives and Northwest Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for management in riparian areas. Management objectives would be met to protect rangeland resources and continue the management of the affected grazing Allotment while providing for forest health.

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to range, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8(b)(2) Multiple uses that contribute to local and regional economies in a sustainable manner. Up to 388 acres of proposed thinning would occur as a result of this amendment under

Alternatives 2 and 3 and cause a beneficial, long-term, moderate effect on sustainable range use because it would promote a more open stand structure and increase understory forage that would be available as transitory range. The additional forage would distribute livestock use patterns more evenly, reducing overall utilization levels across the grazing allotment. With improved livestock distribution, it is expected that grazing would have a negligible effect on the rate and pattern of the understory vegetation response to a more open canopy and the basic productivity of the land would be protected for wildlife and other resources.

### 3.11 Invasive Species

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Invasive Species Resource Report by L. D. McFetridge (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

#### 3.11.1 Methodology

The resource elements, indicators, and measures used to analyze and compare potential effects of the Mission Restoration on invasive species are shown in Figure 109. Indicators and measures address the purpose and need and key internal issues raised during project planning.

**Figure 109. Invasive Species Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Invasive Plant Spread	Spread of existing infestations	Acres of Invasive Plants within Treatment Units	Key Issue: Proposed project activities will effect invasive plants	USDA 2005a Goal 1 ONF LRMP S&G 12-1 USDA FS (2004) Element 3
		Miles of road infested with Invasive Plants affected by Proposed Road Changes		
Invasive Plant Prevention	Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations	Acres of soil disturbance	Key Issue: Proposed project activities will effect invasive plants	USDA 2005a Goal 2, Standard 1,2,3,7,8,13 ONF LRMP S&G 12-3 USDA FS (2004) Element 1
		Miles of road closures		

The Resource Indicators are the establishment of new introductions and the spread of existing infestations. The risk of noxious weed introduction and spread is estimated by assuming that prevention management will be implemented through the project design criteria and mitigation measures. The introduction and establishment of invasive plants is proportional to the area of disturbance and the spread of invasive plants is generally proportional to area of existing weeds

disturbed by project activities. For the purposes of this analysis, “disturbance” includes: 1) exposed mineral soil, 2) reduction of competing vegetation, and 3) increase of light levels through the opening of the canopy. For this project, thinning treatments, underburning, and transportation system changes would cause at least some level of disturbance.

**Gross Acres/Infested Acres:** Most of the acreages used in this analysis are *gross acres* where areas are delineated by the outer perimeter of the weed infestation and may contain large areas that are not currently occupied by weeds. Multiple species can occur on a site; therefore some overlap in total gross acres may occur. Infested Area acres are defined differently, by the canopy cover of the plants, excluding areas not infested (North American Weed Management Association 2014). Field data collected on the Methow Valley Ranger District has shown that the District infestation area is 6% (recorded in the Forest Service Natural Resource Information System) of the gross area and is typical for the weed populations within the project area.

*Resource Indicator: Spread of existing infestations*

Existing invasive plant population are susceptible to being spread by project activities and especially by project equipment. Acres of Invasive Plants within treatment units and miles of road infested with invasive plants affected by proposed road changes will be compared to the existing condition. Also changes in potential risk of spread of existing populations by general vehicle traffic will be compared for open and closed roads for each alternative as well as how the changes will effect treatment access.

*Resource Indicator: Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations*

Vehicles and transportation corridors are considered to be primary vectors for the movement of invasive plant species. Project activity units currently free of invasive plants would be susceptible to new weed infestations due to the current existence of invasive plants within the analysis area as well as Potential Invaders on adjacent Federal, State and private lands. Acres of soil disturbance and the miles of road to be closed will be compared to the existing condition.

### **3.11.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

#### Type of Impact

- Adverse: Increases invasive plant spread or introduces and establishes new infestations
- Beneficial: Reduces the potential for invasive plant spread and new introduction and establishment

#### Duration of Impact

- Short-term: Within the first growing season after project activities.
- Long-term: Up to approximately 20 years post-treatment.

#### Intensity of Impact

- None: No impact on invasive plant spread and new introduction and establishment
- Negligible: A change in invasive plant spread and new introduction and establishment would be so small that it would not be of any measurable consequence.

- Minor: A change in invasive plant spread and new introduction and establishment would be small and much localized.
- Moderate: A change in invasive plant spread and new introduction and establishment would be measurable and wider spread with some changes in the composition of desirable vegetation. The implementation of the design criteria would limit changes in composition of desirable vegetation.
- Major: A noticeable change in invasive plant spread and new introduction and establishment resulting in severe adverse impacts. Effects to invasive plants would be measurable, widespread, and longer term with substantial changes in the composition of the desirable vegetation beyond the expected prevention benefits of implementing the design criteria.

### 3.11.3 Affected Environment

Figure 110. Invasive Species Resource Indicators and Existing Conditions (Alternative 1)

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Invasive Plant Spread	Spread of existing infestations	Acres of Invasive Plants	243.13 acres
		Miles of road infested with Invasive Plants	62.38
Invasive Plant Prevention	Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations	Acres of soil disturbance	0 acres
		Miles of road closures	0 miles

*Resource Indicator: Spread of existing infestations*

Invasive plant populations within the project area are primarily associated with roads and the population densities are very low in the closed canopy understory of the proposed thinning treatment units. Weeds are also associated with old harvest activities as well as historic grazing. Few populations are present in undisturbed off-road areas where the highly competitive native plant communities impede the establishment of invasive plants.

Recent invasive plant inventories have occurred over most of the project area that were surveyed included known populations of noxious weeds, roads, areas of more recent disturbance and preferential habitats for invasive species. The Natural Resource Information System (NRIS) Database was used to determine approximate acreage of documented infestations.



Invasive plant populations in the project area fall into three primary categories. These categories are used to prioritize invasive species for inventory and treatment:

1. *Established Invaders* are those species whose population levels and distribution are such that seed production cannot be prevented – lowest priority.
2. *New Invaders* are invasive plant species that occur sporadically on the Forest and that may be controlled by preventing seed production and early treatment – highest priority.
3. *Potential Invaders* are invasive plants that occur on lands adjacent to the project area but have not been documented on lands administrated by the Forest; however, the potential for infestation is imminent.

Figure 111 lists new and potential invaders found within the Mission Restoration project area. Characteristics of these species are described in the Invasive Species Resource Report (McFetridge 2018). Characteristics of these species are described in Appendix A in the Invasive Species Resource Report project file.

**Figure 111. Established, New and Potential Invaders Within or Adjacent to the Project Area**

Established Invaders	New Invaders within project area	Potential Invaders
Bulbous bluegrass	Baby's Breath	Bohemian knotweed
Bull thistle	Common burdock	Common tansy
Canada thistle	Houndstongue	Dalmatian toadflax
Cheatgrass	Oxeye daisy	Kochia
Curly dock	St. Johnswort	Orange hawkweed
Dandelion	Sulfur cinquefoil	Russian knapweed
Diffuse knapweed	Whitetop	Scotch thistle
Common mullein		

Invasive plant information for the project area has been conducted through the Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest-wide Invasive Plant Final EIS analysis and through recent inventories.

**Figure 112. Invasive Plant Sites within the Mission Project Area**

Invasive Plant	Gross Acres	Number of Sites
Baby's breath	1.25	1
St. Johnswort	2.33	4
Diffuse knapweed	224	20
Houndstongue	2.14	1
Common burdock	0.25	1
Oxeye daisy	5.42	3
Sulphur cinquefoil	3.63	2
Whitetop	4.11	4
Total	243.13	36

**Established Invaders:** Seven Established Invaders occur throughout the project area: *Cirsium vulgare* (bull thistle), *Verbascum thapsus* (common mullein), *Centaurea diffusa* (diffuse knapweed), *Poa bulbosa* (bulbous bluegrass), *Taraxacum officinale* (dandelion), *Bromus tectorum* (cheatgrass), *Rumex crispus* (Curly dock), and to a lesser extent, *Cirsium arvense* (Canada thistle). The lower priority established invaders are fairly widespread within disturbed areas in the project area and are so extensive Forest wide that they are not generally inventoried or treated. The weed presence within the analysis area is primarily diffuse knapweed. Diffuse knapweed is the only Established Invader that has been inventoried and analyzed in this project, however not all populations have been mapped and the total gross acres are an estimate (see Figure 115 below). It has invaded the open off-road grasslands areas with some dense populations. Small patches may be found within the restoration treatment units, however populations are very low in the dense conifer understory due to its shade intolerance. Although well established locally, it is a state listed Class B noxious weed. It is not continuous; it occurs as scattered individuals and in some dense patches. Common mullein and bull thistle are less invasive and persistent than New Invaders. They quickly invade disturbed soil but generally do not out-compete most desirable vegetation and diminish over time. Similarly, Curly doc can dominate disturbed areas in the forest understory, but generally do not outcompete native vegetation. Dandelion is well-established on some of the roadsides and on closed roads. Cheatgrass is present in patches throughout the project area and there are a few small Canada thistle sites.

**New Invaders:** The highest priority New Invader species do occur within the project area but this area of the Methow Valley Ranger District is relatively free of New Invaders. Most of the new invader infestations within the project area are very small with populations less than 1 acre. There are only 19 acres of New Invaders within the project area. Sulfur cinquefoil is established in patches along roads in the lower Ben Canyon and Mission Pond area. There is a relatively large oxeye daisy population along the 300 road in lower Chicamun Canyon and smaller populations in upper Chicamun and lower Hornet Draw. There is only one known population of houndstongue in the project just east of Hornet Draw. This site it virtually eradicated but there are well established populations on private and DNR land in the lower Libby Creek area. Common Burdock, Whitetop, St. Johnswort, and Baby's breath make up just a few small patches.

**Potential Invaders:** Of the potential Invaders not yet on National Forest System land, Bohemian knotweed (more commonly called Japanese knotweed or Mexican Bamboo) is the most difficult to control. It has a high potential to infest the project area, because there is a well-established patch in the Lower Twisp River area and several well established patches in the mid Methow Valley. There are populations of Dalmatian toadflax on private land throughout the Methow Valley with the closet populations in the Gold Creek area. Kochia is prevalent along roadsides and waist areas in the valley bottom. There was a population of orange hawkweed on private land near the confluence of Buttermilk Creek and the Twisp River – current status is unknown. Russian knapweed can be found in patches in the valley bottom and Scotch thistle, although very invasive, is still very limited in its distribution in the Methow Valley. The project area is

relatively free of the New Invader weeds listed above, however there are relatively large populations of whitetop, houndstongue, and Baby’s breath on non-Forest land in the Lower Libby Creek area with a high potential to spread onto Forest land.

Integrated weed management will continue within the project area. No new herbicide treatment will be proposed with this project. All weed treatments within the Mission project area have been approved under the 2017 Forest-Wide Invasive Plant EIS and will continue to be treated with herbicide as needed. Bio control agents have been well established on diffuse knapweed in the Libby Creek area. The seed eating weevil, *Larinus minutus* continues to retard the knapweed populations with some rather dramatic reductions in density on some years. The knapweed populations swing depending on the weevil populations.

*Invasive Plant Infestations on Roads within the Mission Project Area:* Of the total 234 miles of road within the project area, approximately 62 miles are infested with invasive plants. These weed populations are mostly confined to the roadsides and with the exception of diffuse knapweed, generally occur in relatively small patches. Roadside populations may be dense in patches but are often very low with just a few scattered plants. Figure 113 shows the existing invasive plant presence on the current road by weed species.

**Figure 113. Miles of Road Infested with Invasive Plants**

Maintenance Level	Baby's breath	St. Johns wort	Diffuse knapweed	Oxeye daisy	Sulphur cinquefoil	White top	Total
1 - BASIC CARE (CLOSED)		0.06	20.55	0.07		0.07	20.75
2 - HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES		0.16	17.17	0.22	0.08	0.01	17.65
3 - SUITABLE FOR CARS	0.07		21.09		0.10		21.25
4 - MODERATE USER COMFORT			2.73				2.73
<i>Total</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>61.54</i>	<i>0.30</i>	<i>0.18</i>	<i>0.08</i>	<i>62.38</i>

*Resource Indicator: Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations*

Healthy native plant communities help preclude the establishment of invasive plants and pinegrass is the dominant competitive vegetation throughout the project area and provides good competition in deterring the establishment of new weed introductions and the spread of existing weed populations (Williams and Lillybridge 1983)

Roads are the primary vector to carry seed for new weed introductions. There are currently 56 miles of open road with an additional 15.7 mile of unauthorized road within the project area. The introduction of invasive plants would occur primarily on these open roads. Approximately 63 miles of closed road in the project area is not susceptible to movement of invasive plants by vehicle traffic.

### **3.11.4 Environmental Consequences**

#### **3.11.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail**

The following proposed actions will not be considered further in this analysis because they would have no measurable effect on Invasive Plants: beaver habitat or coarse woody debris enhancement.

#### **3.11.4.2 Alternative 1**

##### *3.11.4.2.1 Effects*

The No Action alternative would maintain the 56.1 miles of open roads, of which 41 miles are infested with invasive plants, and 62.8 miles of roads, of which 21 miles are infested with invasive plants. Refer to Figure 118 – Miles of Roads Infested with Invasive Plants by Alternative. As such, the No Action Alternative would have a higher potential for increasing the distribution (via vehicles) of invasive plants.

Invasive Plant introduction and spread by project vehicles and equipment would not occur. Ecological disturbance within the project area would increase due only to natural mechanisms (wind, water, wildlife, wildfire), on-going projects (cattle grazing), and public and administrative activity. With these mechanisms, introduction and spread rates would be dependent on natural conditions.

However, without this project, unnaturally high fuel levels would remain and the future condition would be expected to have a higher potential for severe wildfire. Fire is an important disturbance process in most ecosystems and usually favors early successional species. When noxious weeds are present, many native early seral species have been replaced or are out-competed by nonnative invasive species which can alter successional pathways and subsequent fires (Harrod and Reichard 2001).

In a wildfire, the creation of fire lines (whether by hand or dozer), helispots, and heliports removes competing vegetation, exposes mineral soil, and increases light levels. If the fire is large, then fire suppression resources may come from across the nation or from outside the United States, and may bring new weed propagules (seed or plant parts) with them. Fire fighters, fire equipment, dozers, trucks, and helicopters can all transport weed propagules to fire lines, helispots, and burned areas. The establishment of fire camps also disturbs soil. Weeds already existing in these camps can act as source populations for the introduction of new weed species into the burned areas (USDA Forest Service 2004b). In the event of a high-severity wildfire and subsequent suppression actions, the disturbance level and vehicle/equipment traffic level, with minimal mitigation, may far exceed the effect of the action alternatives under this project, and there would be a short to long-term, moderate, adverse impact on the spread and new introduction and establishment of invasive plants.

No temporary road construction, decommissioning, or road closures would occur. The current level of vehicle access would continue with the introduction and spread of weeds by road users occurring relative to the level of traffic.

### 3.11.4.3 Alternative 2 and 3 – Proposed Action Effects Common to Both Action Alternatives or to Alternative 2 Only

Proposed thinning, prescribed fire, and soil treatments are identical in Alternatives 2 and 3 therefore the effects for both alternatives will be described together under Alternatives 2 and 3. The effects of the transportation changes will be analyzed under Alternative 3.

#### 3.11.4.3.1 Effects

**Figure 114. Invasive Plants Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 2 and 3 (non-transportation changes only)**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 2
Invasive Plant Spread	Spread of existing infestations	Acres of Invasive Plants within Treatment Units	15.49 acres of New Invaders plus the Established Invader weeds
		Miles of road infested with Invasive Plants affected by Proposed Road Changes	62.36 miles
Invasive Plant Prevention	Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations	Acres of soil disturbance	61 acres – decommissioning (33.6 mi.) Up to 208 acres – commercial thinning
		Miles of road closures	34.8

#### *Resource Indicator: Spread of Existing Infestations*

Vehicles and transportation corridors are considered to be primary vectors for the movement of invasive plant species. Other vectors for spread include livestock, birds, insects, wildlife, wind and water. The introduction of nonnative plants can lead to substantial changes in the composition of the vegetation not only along road margins, but also, depending on dispersal abilities, may enable non-native plant species to spread into nearby habitats and beyond. The cascading ecological implication is further habitat loss (Bennett et al. 2011). As weeds are commonly associated with roads and old harvest activities, the potential effect of the Mission project on introduction and spread would be an increase of weeds on the road system and within areas of soil disturbance associated with the mission project activities. The risk of spread of New Invader weeds from existing populations is relatively low as there are only 19 acres within the project area. Because diffuse knapweed populations are very low in the dense conifer understory, there are few acres within the proposed thinning units, estimated to be much less than shown in Figure 115 below, and greater within the total project area.

**Figure 115. Invasive Plant Infestations within Mission Project Area and Specific Restoration Treatment Activities**

Invasive Plant	Acres within Project Area	Acres within Treatment Units	Treatment Unit Numbers	Treatment Activities	No. of Weed Sites
baby's breath	1.25	0	None		0
St. Johnswort	2.33	1.04	358	TSI, HP	2
			359	TSI, HP, UB	
			418	LFR, UB	
houndstongue	2.14	0	None		0
common burdock	.25	.25	411	LFR, HP	1
oxeye daisy	5.42	1.88	054, 057	DFR, LFR, MP, LP	2
sulphur cinquefoil	3.63	2.38	047	DFR, LFR, MP, LP	2
			048	DFR, LFR, UB, LP	
			407	LFR, UB	
whitetop	4.11	2.94	004	DFDMT, LFR, UB, LP	3
			063	DFR, LFR, UB, LP	
			361	TSI, HP, UB	
			405	LFR, UB	
<b>New Invader Weeds Total</b>	<b>19.13</b>	<b>8.49</b>			
diffuse knapweed	*>224	<*224	Within all Units	All activities	17
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>&gt;243</b>	<b>&lt;232</b>			<b>27</b>

\* Acres of diffuse knapweed were estimated by buffering roads where populations have been mapped (within a 30 ft. buffer). There are additional acres that have not been mapped.

Figure 116 displays miles of road currently infested with invasive plants, and, including diffuse knapweed, there would be 62 miles of the total 136 miles of road infested. Looking exclusively at New Invader weeds St. Johnswort and Sulfur cinquefoil make up the bulk of the miles, but with less than ½ mile of the total 136 miles of roads infested. In addition to the 61.5 miles of mapped populations of diffuse knapweed, it is assumed that it can be found on all roads but with some relatively long stretches without any plants, some stretches that are widely scattered, as well as some very dense patches.

**Figure 116. Alternative 2 and 3 Miles of Road Infested with Invasive Plants**

Maintenance Level	Baby's breath	St. Johnswort	Diffuse knapweed	Oxeye daisy	Sulphur cinquefoil	White top	Total Miles
1 - BASIC CARE (CLOSED)			4.97	0.02			4.99
2 - HIGH CLEARANCE VEHICLES		0.16	18.32		0.08	0.01	18.57
3 - SUITABLE FOR CARS	0.07		21.33		0.10		21.49
4 - MODERATE USER COMFORT			2.73				2.73
D - DECOMMISSION		0.06	9.68	0.08			9.82
ML2 Admin			4.51	0.22		0.03	4.76
<i>Total</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.21</i>	<i>61.55</i>	<i>0.32</i>	<i>0.18</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>62.36</i>

*Commercial Thinning, Noncommercial Thinning, including Ladder Fuels Reduction, Timber Stand Improvement, and Aspen Management Treatments:* The forest restoration treatments would create a more open forest canopy. More light would provide more favorable conditions for noxious weeds; however, desirable plants that have been suppressed by a dense canopy would also benefit from a more open canopy. It is expected that there would be a relatively low level of expansion, except in areas where light levels and soil disturbance have increased. These areas would have the highest potential for expansion of existing weeds and would have the potential for establishment of new weed introductions from seed spread. The overall weed cover would remain relatively low.

There would be a total of 1853 acres of commercial harvest. Summer ground-based harvest would cause soil disturbance associated primarily with landings and skid trails. The level of ground based soil disturbance for this project is estimated to be up to 10% of the unit area which would be approximately 208 acres (see Soils, section 3.4). However, winter operations are required in some units to minimize soil impacts unless the purchaser can present a plan of no more than 2% detrimental soil conditions per unit. Substantially less than 208 acres of soil disturbance would occur with winter logging. Ground based winter harvest on frozen soils has shown to result in less detrimental soil disturbance as compared to summer harvest (Reeves et al. 2011). The potential for new weed establishment and spread is greatly reduced as there is virtually no soil disturbance that would create suitable germination sites and spread of existing weeds would be very low as the seeds would be under the snow.

There would be 179 landings. Landing sites pose a greater risk of establishment and spread of invasive plants because the soil disturbance is concentrated within these sites. Potential landing sites that are infested with invasive plants classified as New Invaders would be prioritized for pretreatment by the Invasive Plants Specialist. Landing sites that have not been pretreated will be constructed away from areas infested with New Invader weeds. This mitigation will reduce the potential for spread.

Areas of heavily disturbed soils would be seeded, including landings and main skid trails. This would reduce soil erosion potential and area for weeds to become established. Seeding would

establish competitive species to help prevent the spread of existing populations, and introduction and establishment of new noxious weed species. Certified weed-free seed would be used to help prevent new populations and species of weeds from entering the project area.

The combination of design features to minimize ground disturbance during summer operations and optional winter logging over snow would greatly reduce soil disturbance and better maintain the cover and density of desirable competitive vegetation to prevent spread or establishment of new weed populations. The spread of existing infestations and the introduction and establishment of new infestations by commercial thinning treatments would be a short to long-term, minor, adverse impact.

It is expected that there would be short term, negligible, adverse impacts to invasive plants as a result of the detrimental soil effects from proposed noncommercial thinning activities based on past monitoring of noncommercial thinning activities. Noncommercial and ladder fuel thinning operations are conducted by hand crews working across the landscape, which causes little detrimental soil disturbance.

*Soil Treatments:* Soil restoration treatments would occur where detrimental soil compaction exceeds ONFLRMP standards. The soil restoration treatments overlap with some dense diffuse knapweed populations, primarily in Chicamun and Ben canyons. The dense populations are all in forest openings, typically associated with roadsides, with few to no knapweed plants in the forest understory. The dense patches are very obvious and all populations would be pretreated where present within soil restoration treatments areas. The plants would be treated prior to seed production and would greatly limit the potential of spread. It is not anticipated that the seeds in the soil seedbank would attach to the subsoiler. The seeds would slide past along with the soil. A negligible amount of soil would attach to the subsoiler. New germination created by the soil disturbance would be post treated. A short-term, negligible, adverse impact is expected.

*Prescribed Fire Treatments:* It is not expected that underburning would increase the abundance of existing weeds with the exception of small high severity burned spots. A short-term, negligible, adverse impact is expected. Prescribed fire can stimulate native vegetation growth and colonization by increasing the availability of nutrients, space, light and water. These same attributes can also encourage establishment of invasive plants that may be better suited to occupy niches in fire areas that have burned too severely for natives to resprout or recolonize. Post-fire recovery of native species is determined by colonizers that seed into disturbed areas and survivors that resprout following fires (Brooks and Pike 2001). The responses of plant communities to fire depend on a host of factors, including the frequency and severity of fire, season and spatial extent of burns, preburn vegetation occurrence (including non-natives) and phenology, site conditions (particularly moisture, available nutrients, light, and disturbance history); and postfire conditions, including weather and availability of seed from invasive plants (Zouhar et al. 2008).

Proposed thinning treatments would create slash piles which would be removed through burning. Both hand piling and machine piling would be used. Machine piles would be between 4' x 4' up to 8' x 8'. Machine piling the slash would result in soil disturbance however the largest piles are typically placed in the pre-existing disturbed soil areas within landings minimizing the



level of additional disturbance. Large slash pile burning concentrates the heat of the fire in a single location, causing greater disturbance to the soil and plants in the area of the pile. Pile locations would be seeded post-burning. A study of slash pile burning in ponderosa pine forests found that burning of larger slash piles nearly eliminated populations of viable seeds and generated scars with increased susceptibility to invasion of exotic plant species (Korb et al. 2004). Native seed was used in the study which found that at a minimum, the slash pile areas need to have seed amendments and that amending the slash pile scars with native seeds increased the cover of native forbs and grasses and reduced the cover of exotic weed species relative to untreated scars. In addition to seeding, potential landing sites that are infested with New Invader weeds would be a high priority for pretreatment under the 2017 Forest-Wide Invasive Plant FEIS. Landings that have not been pretreated would be constructed away from areas infested with New Invader weeds. Machine piling equipment would be cleaned prior to entering the project site. A short-term, moderate, adverse impact to invasive plants is expected where some of the established invader weeds like common mullein and bull thistle would increase in the burned areas of the larger slash piles but give way to natives after about 5 years.

Construction of the proposed 29.4 miles of hand fireline and 2.6 miles of machine fireline would increase the risk of weed spread and introduction. A short-term, negligible, adverse impacts is expected. To reduce the risk of spread, no dozer or hand line construction would occur within existing weed patches and existing roads and natural barriers will be utilized as firelines wherever possible to minimize soil disturbance. Hand lines would not be seeded as the line is usually not wide enough (up to 18 inches) to limit relatively rapid revegetation from existing native propagules. The dozer lines (3-5 feet wide) would predominately scrape off the above ground biomass with much of the perennial roots remaining in the soil for regeneration. The Fuels specialist and Botanist will determine whether spot seeding is necessary to restore the line to its pre-disturbance natural vegetation. New Invader populations near proposed containment lines will be identified on Burn Plan maps so that the populations can be avoided.

*Rock armoring, replacing undersized culverts or installing fish culverts, creating hardened fords:* The risk of introduction of new infestations or spread of existing infestations would be low as no ground disturbing equipment would be operated outside the limits of the road prism. If there is a need to work outside of the road prism for the culvert work, rock armoring, and hardened fords; these actions would require the cleaning of all heavy equipment prior to entering National Forest System Lands reducing the risk of new introduction and spread. A short-term, negligible, adverse impact is expected.

*Resource Indicator: Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations*

*Road Closures:* Alternative 2 would close 34.8 miles of road. Invasive plant treatment access and spread by vehicle traffic are affected by changes in road maintenance levels. Closing open roads to ML1 or ML2 Administrative Use status would reduce the potential for weed spread by vehicles. However, access for weed treatments would be more limited with a slight reduction in treatment efficacy. It is expected that a long-term, beneficial, minor impact would be expected by road closures for both alternatives. The reduced risk of spread by vehicles outweighs the more limited access for treatment.

*Road Decommissioning:* Alternatives 2 would disturb 33.6 of road by decommissioning (estimated 61 total acres of disturbance). This includes the decommissioning of 1.2 miles (9 segments) of temporary road. This temporary construction would intersect less than .1 miles of existing invasive plant populations, which is all diffuse knapweed. Diffuse Knapweed as well as other established invader weeds are present to some extent on all roads to be decommissioned. Other than the established invaders, the only new invader weeds are Oxeye daisy and St. Johnswort. Decommissioning may include blocking the entrance to a road or installing water bars; removing culverts, reestablishing drainages, removing unstable fills, pulling back road shoulders, and/or scattering slash on the roadbed; or completely eliminating the roadbed by restoring natural contours and slopes.

Decommissioning increases the risk of spread of existing populations and new introductions of weeds. Where weeds are established on the roadbeds, decommissioning activities may disturb dormant noxious weed seedbeds and increase weed densities. In a review of the benefits and impacts of road removal, Switalski et al. (2004) reported that decompacting the road surface loosens soil and increases infiltration capacity, improving the germination and growth of seeded plants. Switalski et al. (2004) looked specifically at road ripping and reported that while road ripping has been shown to increase the rate of revegetation, it may also create conditions conducive to weed invasion. Monitoring and preliminary research, however, suggest that ripping may actually reduce the risk of invasions, because native vegetation is able to out-compete weeds and because ripping eliminates vehicles as a primary vector for further invasions.

A study was conducted on the Kootenai National Forest regarding the effects of road decommissioning on intact vegetation and the effects of seeding after decommissioning. They had expected that the short-term disturbance associated with decommissioning would result in high rates of weed invasion. In contrast, non-native plants were present at less than 1% cover one year after decommissioning. Given the low levels of non-natives immediately after road decommissioning, this time period may be crucial for establishing native vegetation before non-natives have the opportunity to colonize (Grant et al. 2011). Design Criteria that would be required by the action alternatives would seed all road disturbance activities and would be effective in native plant establishment. Seeding in the same operational season that the roads are decommissioned would be most effective to meet erosion control and invasive plant competition objectives establishing desirable vegetation before non-natives have the opportunity to colonize.

Temporary roads: If soil BMPs/design criteria are followed, there would be sufficient ground cover to minimize soil erosion and promote native plant growth by seeding and slashing on the decommissioned surface (see soils section). Also, public access would not be permitted on temporary roads, so they would not function as dispersal corridors by non-project vehicles.

Off-road equipment would be brought in from areas outside the Forest that may have noxious weed infestations. The equipment may have mud or soil with noxious weed seed or plant parts attached. All off-road equipment would be cleaned prior to entering National Forest. Equipment cleaning would be effective in reducing the risk of invasive species introduction from this equipment.

With the implementation of the design criteria, the impacts of Alternative 2 would be reduced. A minor, short to long-term, adverse impact is expected for road decommissioning under Alternative 2.

### 3.11.4.4 Alternative 3 - Effects Unique to Alternative 3

#### 3.11.4.4.1 Effects

Alternative 3 has the same effects as Alternative 2 except for resource indicators related to transportation changes (see Figure 117).

**Figure 117. Invasive Plants Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 3 (transportation changes only).**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3
Invasive Plant Prevention	Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations	Acres of soil disturbance	102 acres – decommissioning (56.2 mi.)
		Miles of road closures	33.8 miles

#### *Resource Indicator: Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations*

In this section, the two resource indicators will be discussed together. Refer to Figure 116 above and Figure 118 below. Looking at the post project miles of road currently infested with invasive plants, including diffuse knapweed, there would be 62 miles of the total 134 miles of road. Looking exclusively at New Invader weeds St. Johnswort and Sulfur cinquefoil make up the bulk of the miles, but with less than ½ mile of the total 134 miles of roads infested. In addition to the 61.5 miles of mapped populations of diffuse knapweed, it is assumed that it can be found on all roads but with some relatively long stretches without any plants, some stretches that are widely scattered, as well as some very dense patches. Looking at miles of road proposed to be closed and decommissioned that have invasive plant populations, Alternative 3 would have over twice as many miles as Alternative 2. The no action alternative would have similar miles of infested open road but many more miles of closed road than the action alternatives. Invasive plant treatment access and spread by vehicle traffic are affected by changes in maintenance levels. Roads promote introduction and spread of invasive plants via three mechanisms: providing habitat by altering conditions; making invasion more likely by stressing or removing native species; and providing movement corridors (Trombulak and Frissell 2000).

*Road Closures:* Alternative 3 would close 33.8 miles of road. Invasive plant treatment access and spread by vehicle traffic are affected by changes in road maintenance levels. Closing open roads to ML1 or ML2 Administrative Use status would reduce the potential for weed spread by vehicles. However, access for weed treatments would be more limited with a slight reduction in treatment efficacy. It is expected that a long-term, beneficial, minor impact would be expected by road closures for both alternatives. The reduced risk of spread by vehicles outweighs the more limited access for treatment. For road closures, Alternative 3 would have the greatest benefit in reducing new introductions and spread of exiting infestations.

*Road Decommissioning:* Alternative 3 would disturb 56.2 miles of road by decommissioning (estimated 102 acres of total disturbance). This includes the decommissioning of 1.2 miles (9

segments) of temporary road. This temporary construction would intersect less than .1 miles of existing invasive plant populations, which is all diffuse knapweed. Diffuse Knapweed as well as other established invader weeds are present to some extent on all roads to be decommissioned. Other than the established invaders, the only new invader weeds are Oxeye daisy and St. Johnswort. Decommissioning may include blocking the entrance to a road or installing water bars; removing culverts, reestablishing drainages, removing unstable fills, pulling back road shoulders, and/or scattering slash on the roadbed; or completely eliminating the roadbed by restoring natural contours and slopes.

With the implementation of the design criteria, the impacts of both alternatives would be reduced. A moderate, short to long-term, adverse impact for Alternative 3. Alternative 3 would have the highest risk of introduction of new invasive plants and spread of existing infestations than Alternative 2 and a much higher risk than the no action alternative.

Temporary roads: If soil BMPs/design criteria are followed, there would be sufficient ground cover to minimize soil erosion and promote native plant growth by seeding and slashing on the decommissioned surface (see soils section). Also, public access would not be permitted on temporary roads, so they would not function as dispersal corridors by non-project vehicles.

#### *3.11.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects*

##### *Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

This cumulative effects analysis considers effects of past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions along with the effects of the Mission Restoration Project. The geographic boundary for this cumulative effects analysis is the entire Mission Analysis Area plus adjacent private land. The temporal boundary is the period of time from the past 50 years, since the bulk of the road system was developed, to 10 years in the future, the time in which the alternatives have the potential to affect invasive plant spread and establishment.

##### *Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*

*Past Actions:* In order to understand the contribution of past actions to the cumulative effects of the proposed action, this analysis relies on current environmental conditions as a proxy for the impacts of past action. This is because existing conditions reflect the aggregate impact of all prior human actions on natural events that have affected the environment and might contribute to cumulative effects.

*Present and Future Actions:* Integrated weed management (IWM) within the Mission Analysis Area under existing Forest-wide decisions (USDA-Forest Service 2017) would continue to reduce or eliminate New Invader weed infestations on roads. The combination of herbicide, manual, and cultural treatment would provide effective control of small populations. Treatments would be conducted by the DISTRICT Weed program with herbicide treatments authorized under the 2017 Forest-Wide Invasive Plant FEIS with provisions for an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR approach for treating new infestations. The 2005 Invasive Plant Management prevention standards that apply to all applicable forest projects and would reduce the rate of spread from 8-12% to about 5% (USDA-Forest Service 2005a). Although the rate of spread is slowed, spread is not entirely stopped.

The New Invader weed sites within the Mission Analysis Area would be prioritized and treated with herbicide as authorized by the existing IWM decisions. Not all weed sites would be treated. Priority sites that would be treated include weed populations on roads proposed for decommissioning and roads proposed for closure. Consequently, weed densities are currently being reduced or would be reduced along some roads before project implementation.

Potential Invaders on non-Forest lands listed in the existing condition section of this document could spread from outside the Mission Analysis Area along open roads from vehicular traffic to newly-disturbed closed or decommissioned roads. Some ongoing treatments are occurring on this populations, which are outside of the DISTRICT's influence.

Active fire suppression would continue in the Mission Analysis Area. Those fire suppression activities that include the use of the roads could transport New Invader seeds into and around the Mission Analysis Area. However, vehicle weed wash stations are often available and implemented and restoration work is completed on area of suppression disturbance.

All types of recreation would continue to be a source of weed introduction and spread within the Mission Analysis Area.

Cattle would continue to function as weed vectors for spread and introduction. It is likely that some of the New Invader populations were introduced by cattle within the Mission Analysis Area. Despite the relatively large number of cattle that are brought in from areas outside the Mission Analysis Area, extensive weed surveys in recent years have not detected any of the weed species listed as Potential Invaders and most invasive populations are along roads, not in the general forest where cattle graze.

The Motorized Travel Management Project would designate roads, trails and areas open for motorized vehicle use and close the remainder of the Forest to motorized use.

Road maintenance activities would continue to have the potential to spread weeds. Activities would include improvement of drainage structures, road surface shaping and grading, and ditch cleaning. In accordance with 2005 PNW ROD Standard #8, road blading and ditch cleaning in areas with high concentrations of invasive plants would be done in consultation with the District invasive plant specialists and would incorporate invasive plant prevention practices described in the Prevention and Management Strategy (USDA-Forest Service 2004) as a way to minimize the spread of weeds.

*Resource Indicator: Spread of existing infestations and Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations*

The cumulative effect of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions and the proposed thinning treatments and transportation changes in Alternatives 2 and 3 would have short term, adverse, negligible to minor impacts on invasive plants. Ongoing integrated weed management work would add to the design criteria to reduce the spread and new introductions of invasive plants within the project area. Implementation of the Invasive Species Treatment EIS would increase the number of weed treatment options available and increase the area of infested lands that may be treated within the Project area. Using the EDRR strategy on newly discovered infestations would increase treatment effectiveness and reduce the potential for

spread and establishment and of new populations. Active fire suppression would reduce the potential for large scale wildfire where the impacts of the suppression actions may far exceed the effect of the action alternatives under this project. The action alternatives would create more transitory range, potentially changing cattle distribution in the analysis area and increase access to invasive plant populations, however the large project area would lend to equal dispersal of cattle away from the existing populations. The Motorized Travel Management Project would reduce the miles of road accessible by motorized vehicles reducing the risk of introduction and spread of invasive plants. The Ongoing road maintenance activities would continue to have the potential to spread and introduce new infestations but combined with the ongoing weed treatments and the implementation of the Invasive Species Treatment EIS, the expected impacts would be short term and negligible.

Under Alternative 1 Invasive Plant introduction and spread by project vehicles and equipment would not occur, however densely stocked stands with multiple canopy layers would not be thinned resulting in unnaturally high fuel levels with a higher potential for severe wildfire. In the event of a wildfire, fire suppression activities and the disturbed burned area would have a greater potential for introduction of new invasive plants as well as spread of existing populations. The current level of vehicle access would continue with the introduction and spread of weeds by road users occurring relative to the level of traffic.

Alternatives 2 and 3 would result in more soil disturbance than no action and a higher risk of spread of noxious weed seed. Both alternatives would also increase the risk of introduction of new noxious weeds into the project area by vehicles and equipment and would create more soil disturbance than Alternative 1. However, implementation of the design features in conjunction with the Prevention and Management Strategy would reduce the risk of introduction and spread of noxious weeds. In addition, the action alternatives would reduce fuel levels more than no action, thereby reducing the risk of uncharacteristic high severity fire and the soil disturbance associated with fire effects and fire control.

Some of the proposed forest vegetation treatment units contain populations of invasive plants, but most of the populations are directly associated with roads and historical harvest activities. Few populations occur in undisturbed off-road areas. The spread of existing populations would be greatest in areas where harvest activities intersect roads and other historical disturbance (i.e., past timber harvest and grazing). The total acres of potential weed spread for all project activities is very small area relative to the total acres of forest restoration treatments.

Both action alternatives would reduce potential for spread in the long-term on closed and decommissioned roads by preventing vehicular access. The expected outcome would be a short-term increase in the abundance of Established Invaders and slight increases in the abundance of New Invaders. Alternative 3 would have more miles of decommissioning increasing the potential for new introduction and spread of weeds. In the long-term, with implementation of prevention strategies, mitigation measures, and on-going weed management, the rate of spread of weed populations would be reduced, and weed populations along closed and decommissioned roads in this project area would be reduced.

### 3.11.4.5 Summary of Effects

Under Alternative 1 Invasive Plant introduction and spread by project vehicles and equipment would not occur, however densely stocked stands with multiple canopy layers would not be thinned resulting in unnaturally high fuel levels with a higher potential for severe wildfire. In the event of a wildfire, fire suppression activities and the disturbed burned area would have a greater potential for introduction of new invasive plants as well as spread of existing populations. The current level of vehicle access would continue with the introduction and spread of weeds by road users occurring relative to the level of traffic.

Alternatives 2 and 3 would result in more soil disturbance than no action and a higher risk of spread of noxious weed seed. Both alternatives would also increase the risk of introduction of new noxious weeds into the project area by vehicles and equipment and would create more soil disturbance than Alternative 1. However, implementation of the design features in conjunction with the Prevention and Management Strategy would reduce the risk of introduction and spread of noxious weeds. In addition, the action alternatives would reduce fuel levels more than no action, thereby reducing the risk of uncharacteristic high severity fire and the soil disturbance associated with fire effects and fire control.

**Figure 118. Summary of Invasive Species Resource Indicators and Measure for All Alternatives**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Conditions (Alternative 1)	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Invasive Plant Spread	Spread of existing infestations	Acres of Invasive Plants within Treatment Units	243.13 acres of Established Invader weeds; <b>0 acres</b> of New Invader weeds	<b>15.49 acres</b> of New Invaders plus the Established Invader weeds	<b>15.49 acres</b> of New Invaders plus the Established Invader weeds
		Miles of road infested with Invasive Plants affected by Proposed Road Changes	62.38 miles	62.36 miles	62.36 miles
Invasive Plant Prevention	Introduction and Establishment of New Infestations	Acres of soil disturbance	0 acres	61 acres – decommissioning (33.6 mi.) Up to 208 acres – commercial thinning	102 acres – decommissioning (56.2 mi.) Up to 208 acres – commercial thinning
		Miles of road closures	0 miles	34.8 miles	33.8 miles

Some of the proposed forest vegetation treatment units contain populations of invasive plants, but most of the populations are directly associated with roads and historical harvest activities. Few populations occur in undisturbed off-road areas. The spread of existing populations would be greatest in areas where harvest activities intersect roads and other historical disturbance

(i.e., past timber harvest and grazing). The total acres of potential weed spread for all project activities is very small area relative to the total acres of forest restoration treatments.

Both action alternatives would reduce potential for spread in the long-term on closed and decommissioned roads by preventing vehicular access. The expected outcome would be a short-term increase in the abundance of Established Invaders and slight increases in the abundance of New Invaders. Alternative 3 would have more miles of decommissioning increasing the potential for new introduction and spread of weeds. In the long-term, with implementation of prevention strategies, mitigation measures, and on-going weed management, the rate of spread of weed populations would be reduced, and weed populations along closed and decommissioned roads in this project area would be reduced.

### **3.11.5 Consistency Statement**

Both Alternatives 2 and 3 are compliant with Executive Order 13112, the Forest Plan (USDA 1989) and the Northwest Forest Plan (USDA & USDI 1994) standards because they "... include required prevention strategy standards which would minimize the creation of conditions that favor invasive plant introduction, establishment and spread. Off-road equipment would be cleaned prior to entering the forest, and only weed free straw, mulch, gravel, fill, sand, or rock would be used. Native seed would be the first choice in re-vegetation in areas where the objective is to restore the site to the landscape setting, such as decommissioned roads. Non-native seed may be used to help prevent the establishment of invasive species, in permanently altered plant communities, and in situations where locally collected native seed is not available.

FSM 2080.2 is also followed because an Integrated Weed Management Approach is used through implementation of the existing Okanogan National Forest IWM decisions. Relevant parts of the Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests Weed Management and Prevention Strategy and Best Management Practices (USDA Forest Service 2001a), the Guide to Noxious Weed Prevention Practices (USDA Forest Service 2001b) supporting the February 3, 1999 Executive Order on Invasive Species, and the National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Invasive Species Management (USDA Forest Service 2004) are also included in design criteria.

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to invasive plants, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8(a)(1)(iv) System drivers including stressors such as invasive species. Thinning in up to 388 acres would occur under the amendment would create a more open forest canopy, allowing more light to reach the surface and creating an adverse, short-term, negligible impact on the potential spread of invasive plants. However, desirable plants that have been suppressed by a dense canopy would also benefit from a more open canopy. Thinning would decrease the risk of crown fire and the potential disturbance caused by the subsequent suppression actions, which in turn reduces the risk of new introduction and spread of invasive plants. Project design criteria



would minimize soil impacts that promote invasive species introduction and would maintain the cover and density of desirable competitive vegetation.

Because approximately half of the proposed thinning would occur in deer thermal cover, then up to half of the thinning area proposed under this amendment in Alternatives 2 and 3 would create a more open forest canopy. More light would provide more favorable conditions for invasive plants;

### 3.12 Recreation and Scenic Resources

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Recreation and Scenic Resources Report by E. Peterson (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

#### 3.12.1 Methodology

The following resource indicators and measures will be used to analyze effects to recreation and scenic resources from the proposed actions:

**Figure 119. Recreation and Scenic Resource Indicator and Measures for Assessing Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Scenic Quality	Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Level	Very High, High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low	No	LRMP
Recreational Access	Recreational access to and use of Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail  Winter Trail access on decommissioned portion of the 4300-200	Open or closed	Yes; P&N #7	Okanogan National Forest Travel Plan

*Resource Indicator: Visual Quality Objective Scenic Integrity Level*

The scenic quality will be assessed by determining the Scenic Integrity Level (high, moderate, or low) and Visual Quality Objective (retention, partial retention, modification) of each treatment area based on the length of viewing time, and deviations in the landscape character elements of form, line, color, texture, and pattern.

The project area is seen as foreground (views up to ½ mile distance) and middleground (views up to 4 miles distance) from several viewsheds and viewpoints. For scenic analysis on this project, they will be grouped into the following area:

*Buttermilk Creek Viewshed:* Forest Roads 43, 4340 and 4300-100, 4300-200, 4300-300, 4300-400, and 4300-500, Black Pine Lake Campground, Black Pine Meadow, Mission Pond, and private residences along the valley bottoms. Scenic integrity is the amount of human caused deviation in form, line, color, and texture of a landscape.

Scenic integrity serves as a frame of reference for measuring scenic integrity levels based on the valued attributes of the existing landscape character being viewed. The degrees of integrity vary from VERY HIGH to VERY LOW. The following table displays the 5 scenic integrity levels and conditions associated with each level.

**Figure 120. Scenic Integrity levels and conditions**

Scenic Integrity Level	Condition
VERY HIGH (Preservation VQO)	Unaltered
HIGH (Retention VQO)	Appears Unaltered
MODERATE (Partial Retention VQO)	Slightly Altered
LOW (Modification VQO)	Moderately Altered
VERY LOW (Maximum Modification)	Heavily Altered

*Resource Indicator: Recreational Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail*

Currently the bridge accessing the roads and trail to Scaffold Ridge is currently closed to motorized travel due to safety concerns and will remain closed pending bridge replacement. Therefore, the roads accessing Scaffold Ridge are closed to motorized travel because the bridge is not usable. Access to this area will be analyzed based on proposed changes to the transportation system that would close these roads regardless of bridge replacement, or decommission these roads.

The 4300-200 is currently open to all recreationalists. The road will be analyzed for trail access after the planned decommissioning of a portion of the road.

**3.12.2 Intensity Level Definitions**

The definitions below will be used to describe effects of the proposed action on this resource.

Type of Impact:

- Beneficial: Enhance visitor participation, visual quality, quality of visitor experience and/or service level.
- Adverse: Reduce visitor participation, degrades visual quality, quality of visitor experience, and/or service level.

Duration of Impact:

- Short-term: Temporary in nature, occurring primarily during the period when a fire or vegetation management activity would take place.
- Long-term: Permanent effect on the visitor experience or that effects are detectable for more than five years after proposed actions.

Intensity of Impact:

- Negligible: Imperceptible or undetectable effect upon visitors.
- Minor: Slightly detectable or localized effect on visitors. Limited to a relatively small area.
- Moderate: Readily apparent effects on visitors.
- Major: Substantial, highly noticeable effects and/or effects that would result in major limits on activities and/or results in a change of character of the landscape.

### 3.12.3 Affected Environment

The proposed action encompasses a popular recreational area on the Methow Valley Ranger District that surrounds the Buttermilk Creek drainage, up to Buttermilk Butte, the Mission Creek drainage, as well as the area south of the Twisp River. Black Pine Lake Campground is the only developed campground facility in the project area and receives at least 4,000 visitors a season, where visitors camp, fish, and swim in the lake, and hike and bike in the surrounding hillsides. The area is popular with snowmobilers in the winter season as Forest Service Roads #43, #4340, #4300-300, #4300-400 are groomed snowmobile routes. Numerous other non-groomed snowmobile routes are also in the area. The West Fork Buttermilk, East Fork Buttermilk, Scaffold Ridge, and Libby Lake Trailheads are within the project boundary. About 10% of the Lake Chelan – Sawtooth Wilderness and about 3% of the Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area are also inside the project boundary (See Figure 121). The project area contains 5534 acres of unroaded area, defined in this analysis as including NFS lands outside of wilderness that are more than one-half mile from an existing road. Figure 121 below shows the location of wilderness, IRA, and unroaded area in the project boundary with proposed treatments. The Mission Restoration Project area has a range of scenic integrity levels (conditions) from LOW to HIGH, *moderately altered* to *appear unaltered* based on vegetative characteristics.

*Resource Indicator: Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Level*

Existing scenic integrity levels meet the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for a natural appearing foreground viewed from the designated travel routes. Some areas allocated to MA-25, which has a VQO of Modification, also meet a higher scenic integrity level of Partial Retention to Retention (see Figure 122).

Figure 121. Inventoried roadless and unroaded areas in project area, with proposed treatments displayed.

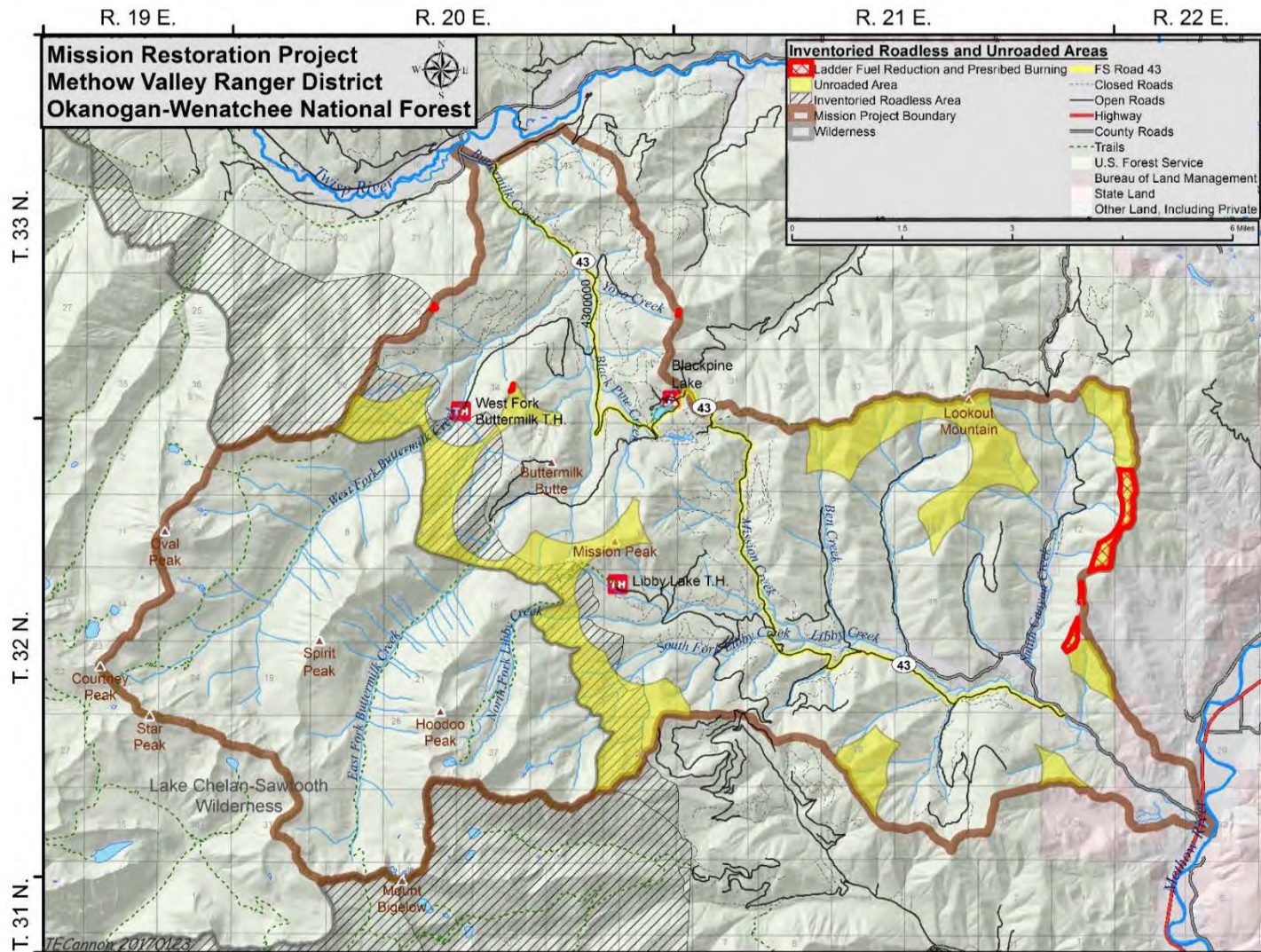
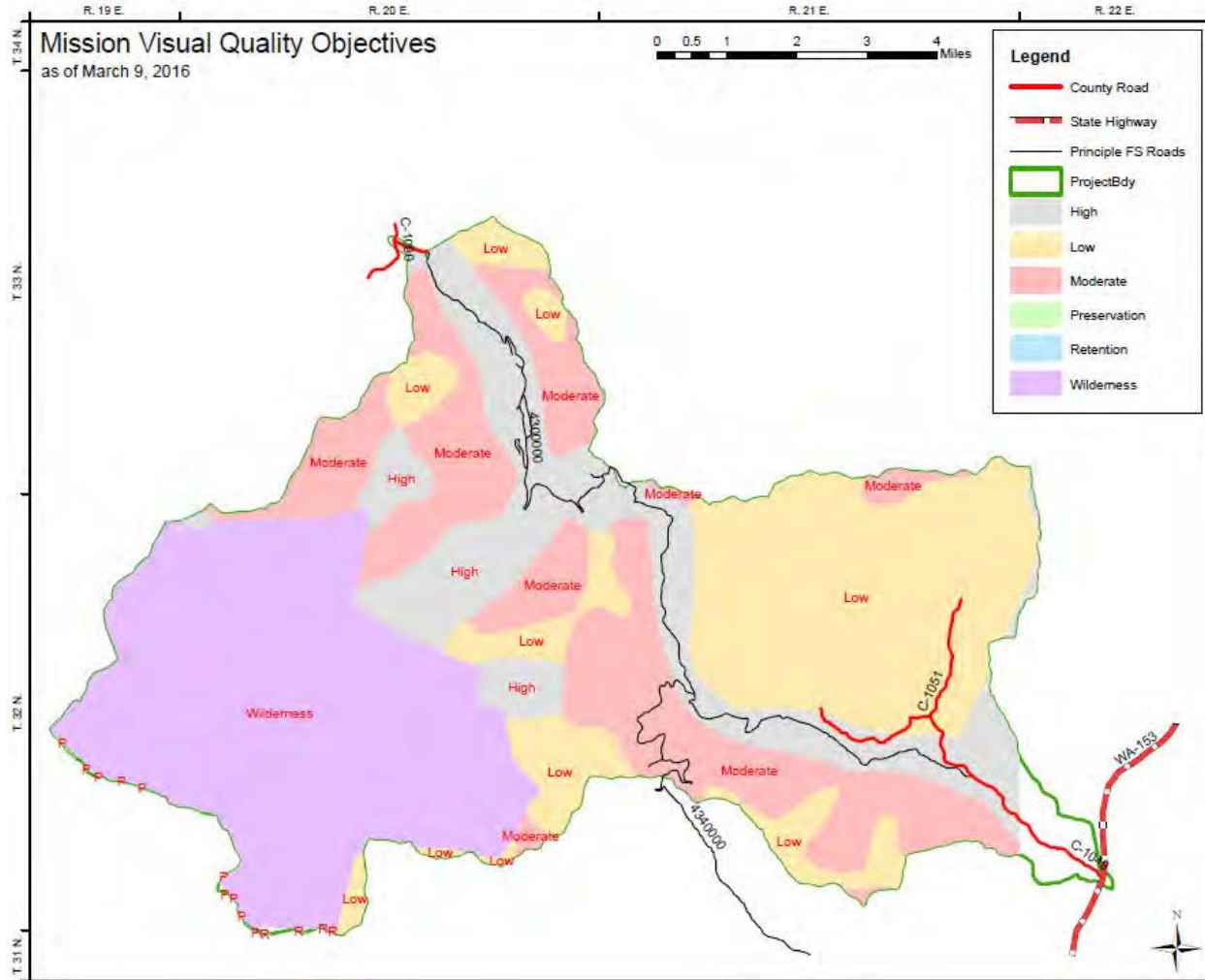


Figure 122. Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Level



The project area is seen as several dissected valley landforms as you travel up the #4300 road. Landmarks within the project area include Black Pine Lake and Black Pine Meadow, Mission Pond, Buttermilk Butte, and the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness peaks. There are a variety of viewing opportunities within the project area ranging from enclosed views of the road lined valley bottom to more open vista views of the surrounding landscape seen from higher vantage points of Forest Roads 43 and the 4300-400.

The landscape setting of the Buttermilk Creek and Mission Viewsheds are a highly to coarsely textured foreground and midground view from Forest Road 4300. The existing condition is natural appearing along the travel route incorporating variety with open grassy hillsides to the east. The open hillsides add form to the tree lined valley corridor with a distinct change in vegetative species. The landscape character is rural in nature along the valley bottom.

The existing MODERATE to HIGH scenic integrity levels areas with high fuel loadings have a high potential to result in a sudden change to the landscape character if a high-severity wildfire occurred that created a burned off area. The landscape character would dramatically change

from a green forested setting to an area dominated by the visual evidence of wildfire. Fire intensity patterns would probably range from low to moderate to high viewed in foreground and middleground from the Buttermilk road #4300, developed campground, and important travel routes off the 4300 road. The visual effects of a large scale wildfire would change the landscape character to a black, brown, and green interwoven landscape pattern. Wildfire visual characteristics would be visually dominant and evident for 5 to 10 years; snags would be created as a result of the wildfire. The snags would be dominant for at least 5 years, and then begin to fall and create a jackstraw effect along some trail and road corridors which would appear visually negative.

*Resource Indicator: Recreational Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail and Winter Trail access to the 4300-200.*

Currently the bridge accessing the roads and trail to Scaffold Ridge is closed to motorized travel because of safety concerns. The road accessing Scaffold Ridge has been designated “closed” because it is inaccessible to motorized traffic due to bridge concerns, not because a management decision to other resource concerns. Non-motorized recreationists (such as mountain bikers, hikers, and horseback riders) are able to use the bridge and roads to access the trail.

The 4300-200 is currently open to all recreationalists. The road will be analyzed for trail access after the planned decommissioning of a portion of the road.

**Figure 123. Scenic Resource Indicator and Measures for the Existing Condition**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Scenic Quality	Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Level	Very High, High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low	MODERATE to HIGH: Existing scenic integrity levels meet the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines
Recreational Access	Recreational access to and use of Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail	Access is open or closed. Trail maintenance occurs or does not occur.	Access is closed to motorized use because of bridge damage; area would be open to motorized recreation use pending bridge repair.

### 3.12.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.12.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

#### 3.12.4.2 Alternative 1- No Action

##### 3.12.4.2.1 Effects

*Resource Indicator: Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Level*

The effect on scenic quality with no action would be long-term, adverse, and moderate. By not managing the landscape overall and reducing the dense vegetation patterns through thinning and prescribed burning, the visual quality may not be maintained. Trees may succumb to drought, insect or diseases if they are stressed and over compete for water, sunlight, and other growing conditions. Large tree growth in the landscape, a dry series type, may be reduced. The landscape may become more unstable, and non-sustainable as a forest in this typically Northeast Cascade vegetative character type. This would detract from the high scenic quality setting in the viewsheds. By not treating the landscape either through thinning, commercial harvest, or prescribed fire, any benefits to visual quality would not be realized.

*Resource Indicator: Recreational Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail and Winter Trail access to the 4300-200.*

Currently the bridge is out accessing the roads and trail to Scaffold Ridge. Alternative 1 would keep the roads in place but they would remain closed to motorized access *until the bridge has been repaired.*

Currently the 4300-200 is not decommissioned. Alternative 1 would not change the status of the road.

### 3.12.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3

Both the Recreation Resource and the Scenic Resource would not be affected by coarse woody debris enhancement, soil restoration, rock armoring, hardened fords, or beaver habitat enhancement because these activities would not inhibit recreational access, enjoyment of the area, or visual quality. Culvert replacement would only be a short term closure of roads for recreational access, but would not affect the access long term. The scenic resource would not be affected by culvert replacement. For these reasons, the effects from Alternatives 2 and 3 will be the same for Scenic Integrity and snowmobile access and are analyzed as such.

Alternative 3 includes additional road decommissioning and road closing which will have an effect on recreational access indicators and will be analyzed separately.

#### 3.12.4.3.1 Effects

**Figure 124. Recreational and Scenic Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternatives 2 and 3**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Scenic Quality	Visual Quality Objectives Scenic Integrity Level	Very High, High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low	49 Units and 16 partial units in High 50 units and 29 partial units in Moderate 28 units and 10 partial units in Low
<b>Alternative 2 Only</b>			

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Recreational Access	Recreational access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail  Winter Trail access on decommissioned portion of the 4300-200	Access is open or closed. Trail maintenance occurs or does not occur.	Open for motorized and non-motorized recreational access pending bridge repair.  A 4 foot wide section of trail for winter-only access will be maintained on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.

*Resource Indicator: Visual Quality Objectives Scenic Integrity Level*

The proposed actions of Alternatives 2 and 3 would have long-term, beneficial, moderate effects and would meet the established visual quality objective of Partial Retention along the foreground of the Buttermilk Creek viewshed. Landscape character changes would be seen as a range of thinned stands of trees to a more open forested canopy character. Managing dense vegetation and prescribed burning in some riparian areas would enhance scenic quality in the long term by revitalizing riparian vegetation.

Overall, the rest of the project area would meet a range of Visual Quality Objectives from Retention to Partial Retention to Modification. Post project scenic integrity levels would be higher than Forest Plan standards in some places which would benefit scenic resources.

Areas where ground based logging would occur would show evidence of skid trails, temporary road construction, and landings. Scenic quality would need to be maintained around campgrounds, trails and other routes used for year round recreation. The immediate foreground (up to 300') is the sensitive zone, shade retention objectives would be important for maintaining the trails winter use. The following routes have a higher sensitivity being managed as recreation routes for authorized routes: Use irregular clumping and feathering of unit edges to avoid introducing dominating lines that could result from creating small patch openings.

*Resource Indicator: Recreational Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail and Winter-Only Trail access on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200. (Alternative 2 only)*

Alternative 2 would allow for recreational access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail by keeping the roads in place and open for motorized access pending the repair of the access bridge. The effects of this alternative on recreational access would be long-term, beneficial, and moderate.

**3.12.4.4 Alternative 3**

*3.12.4.4.1 Effects*

This alternative proposes to decommission the Forest Service Roads 4300-550 and 4300-560 to Scaffold Ridge. Currently the bridge is out accessing the roads and trail to Scaffold Ridge. Closing or decommissioning these roads would need to be done in a way to allow non-motorized recreational access to the Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail. Barriers installed on the roads which will be open for non-motorized or non-motor vehicle use would be designed so they do not pose a hazard.



Winter-only trail access for snowmobilers and snowshoers will be accommodated by leaving a 4 foot wide trail intact after the decommissioning of a portion of the 4300-200. This trail will be added to the District’s Trail system as a “Winter-Only” trail and will be maintained as such.

**Figure 125. Recreational and Scenic Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternative 3**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternative 3
Scenic Quality	Visual Quality Objectives Scenic Integrity Level	Very High, High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low	49 Units and 16 partial units in High 50 units and 29 partial units in Moderate 28 units and 10 partial units in Low
Trail Access	Recreational access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail  Winter Trail access on decommissioned portion of the 4300-200	Access is open or closed. Trail maintenance occurs or does not occur.	Unmaintained route open for stock access. No further trail maintenance would occur.  A 4 foot wide section of trail for winter-only access will be maintained on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.

*Resource Indicator: Recreational Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail and Winter-Only Trail access on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.*

This alternative would decommission the primary access road to the trail but would be decommissioned in a way to allow non-motorized access on an unmaintained route. The route would not be maintained as a system trail, and would likely become impassable over time without regular maintenance. As the bridge continues to decay without planned replacement, access to this area may become more limited because of the hazardous creek crossing. This would have long-term, adverse, and moderate effects on recreational access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail.

*Winter-only trail access for snowmobilers and snowshoers will be accommodated by leaving a 4 foot wide trail intact after the decommissioning of a portion of the 4300-200. This trail will be added to the District’s Trail system as a “Winter-Only” trail and will be maintained as such.*

**3.12.4.4.2 Cumulative Effects**

**Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis:** The spatial boundary for analyzing the cumulative effects to the scenic integrity levels and recreation users in the viewsheds is the project area boundary.

The temporal boundary is from the time of implementation of this project to 10 years into the future, the time span when effects from this project have either ceased or become similar to the background.

**Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis:** In addition to those past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions listed in Chapter 3, vegetation management and hazard tree reduction in the Black Pine Lake Campground will be

ongoing activities that coincide with the Mission Restoration project. As no project activities are proposed within the Black Pine Lake Campground, there are no cumulative effects anticipated for this recreational project. There would be no long-term effect on snowmobiling opportunities in the analysis area with implementation of the Proposed Action. All existing groomed snowmobile routes would continue to be groomed in the future.

**Figure 126. Resource Indicators and Measures for Cumulative Effects**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3	Past, Present, and Future Actions	Cumulative Impacts
Scenic Quality	Visual Quality Objectives Scenic Integrity Level	Very High, High, Moderate, Low, or Very Low	49 Units and 16 partial units in High 50 units and 29 partial units in Moderate 28 units and 10 partial units in Low	Short term disruptions in the Scenic views – retention and partial retention of the views will be retained.	No foreseeable cumulative effects.
Recreational Access	Recreational access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail	Access is open or closed. Trail maintenance occurs or does not occur	Open for recreational access pending bridge repair*	Overall – no long term changes or opportunities	No foreseeable cumulative effects.
Recreational Access	Winter access trail on FS Road 4300-200	Access is open or closed. Trail maintenance occurs or does not occur	Open for non-motorized access via trail along decommissioned road+ A 4 foot wide section of trail for winter-only access will be maintained on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.	Overall – no long term major changes or opportunities	No foreseeable cumulative effects

\*For Alternative 2 only; +For Alternative 3 only

*Resource Indicator: Visual Quality Objectives Scenic Integrity Level*

Hazard tree reduction and vegetation management in the Black Pine Lake Campground is ongoing.

Other past, ongoing and reasonably foreseeable future actions listed at the beginning of Chapter 3 of the EA do not cumulative interact with visual impacts from the Mission Restoration project.

*Resource Indicator: Recreational Access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail and Winter-Only Trail access on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.*

Alternative 2 would allow for motorized vehicle access to the Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail after bridge repair is completed, which may increase visitor use and recreational access to the area. More recreational visitors will more than likely be drawn to the trail, but not in any substantial numbers. Trail maintenance would resume once motorized access is re-established by repairing the bridge.

Winter-only trail access for snowmobilers and snowshoers will be accommodated by leaving a 4 foot wide trail intact after the decommissioning of a portion of the 4300-200. This trail will be added to the District's Trail system as a "Winter-Only" trail and will be maintained as such. Winter activities will continue on the 4300-200 road as it has in the past and present.

## **Conclusion**

Alternatives 2 and 3 would protect and maintain the values of scenery and recreation in the Black Pine Lake area. Activities would be designed to blend with the natural terrain in the foreground, and middle ground of the scenic view shed and as time passes, the treatments mosaic patterns will be less noticeable.

Recreational access to designated trails will be reinstated or maintained but Alternative 2 would allow for motorized access to Scaffold Ridge/Oval Peak Trail, whereas Alternative 3 would only allow stock access. Alternative 3 may have a minor impact of the amount of recreational use in the project area. A Winter-only access trail for snowmobilers and snowshoers will be accommodated by leaving a 4 foot wide trail intact after the decommissioning of a portion of the 4300-200 in both Alternatives 2 and 3.

Temporary closures of road access due to culvert replacements will occur, but only be of a short term duration.

### **3.12.5 Consistency Statement**

#### **Compliance with LRMP and Other Relevant Laws, Regulations, Policies and Plans**

##### **Land and Resource Management Plan**

The project would comply with all applicable Forest Plan standards and guidelines, as described below.

- 10-1: Management activities shall be designed to blend, to the extent practicable, with the natural terrain to achieve aesthetics or other resource objectives consistent with the visual

quality objectives for the Management Area. **Overall, the project would meet a High scenic integrity objective and Retention visual quality objective in the viewshed foreground.**

- 17-6: There will be no snow plowing from Dec. 1 - April 1 on FSR 43 from the junction with FSR 4300-300 and the junction with FSR 4340. No snow plowing or winter haul will be allowed on this segment of road (see Recreation Design Criteria in Appendix D).
- MA4-8A – The visual quality objective is retention. **Alternative 2 and 3 would meet the visual quality objective of retention.**
- MA4-8B – Semi-primitive non-motorized recreation opportunities shall be provided during summer and fall seasons. Semi-primitive motorized recreation opportunities should be provided during winter and spring seasons, but may be restricted to designated routes or areas. **Alternative 3, if mitigated for trail access on the 4300-550 and 4300-560 roads would create no long term loss of recreational opportunities.**
- MA5-8A - The visual quality objective is retention. **Alternatives 2 and 3 would meet the established visual quality objective of Retention along the foreground of Black Pine Lake and the Buttermilk Creek (4300) road corridor.**
- MA5-8B – The visual quality objective is partial retention. **Overall, the rest of the project area would meet a range of Visual Quality Objectives from Retention to Partial Retention to Modification.**
- MA5-8C – Roaded natural recreation opportunities shall be provided. **To assure public safety on narrow and slick roads, roads used for winter haul will be closed to public use during haul and will effect, in the short-term, recreation opportunities. No long term loss of recreational opportunities are anticipated.**

#### **Required Monitoring:**

Only ongoing general monitoring would take place.

### **3.13 Air Quality**

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Air Quality Resources Report by M. Trebon (2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

### 3.13.1 Methodology

Air quality resources will use the resource indicator and measures are displayed in Figure 127.

Figure 127. Air Quality Resource Indicators and Measures

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMPs, etc.)?
Air quality impacts	Particulate matter emissions	Particulate matter at 2.5 microns, measured as micrograms per cubic meter $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (PM2.5)	Key issue: Prescribed burning will negatively affect air quality.	USEPA 2016
		Particulate matter at 10 microns, measured as micrograms per cubic meter $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (PM210)		

*Resource Indicator: Particulate Matter at 2.5 microns and 10 microns*

This analysis will consider the impacts of prescribed burning on airsheds within and near the project area that are most likely to be affected by PM, including nearby Class I airsheds (Figure 128). For the discussion of current air quality, past monitoring data from the air quality monitor closest to the project area (in Twisp, WA, four miles to the northeast of the project boundary) will be used to establish past impacts of sources of PM on air quality. Particulate matter (PM) that would be created by proposed prescribed burning will be determined by modeling expected emissions from proposed prescribed fire treatments with CONSUME 3.0 (Ottmar et al. 2005). Projected fuel loadings created by proposed thinning projects is from selected photo series (Maxwell and Ward 1976; Ottmar et al. 1998). Modeling scenarios use average environmental conditions and expected fuel loading present during four prescribed burning scenarios: underburning (including maintenance burning conducted approximately 10-15 years after the initial prescribed fire treatment), hand-pile burning, machine-pile burning, and landing-pile burning. A detailed description of modeling methods, data, and results are available in the project record.

Figure 128. Airsheds Within and Near Project Area

Airsheds In & Near Project Area	Type of Airshed	Direction from Analysis Area	Distance from Analysis Area
Methow Valley outside of towns	Populated Area	Within & adjacent	Within & adjacent
Carlton	Town	East	1 mile
Methow	Town	Southeast	7 miles

<b>Airsheds In &amp; Near Project Area</b>	<b>Type of Airshed</b>	<b>Direction from Analysis Area</b>	<b>Distance from Analysis Area</b>
Pateros	Town	Southeast	13 miles
Twisp	Town	East	4 miles
Winthrop	Town	North	11 miles
North Cascades National Park	Class I	Northwest	16 miles
Glacier Peak Wilderness	Class I	West	7 miles
Pasayten Wilderness	Class I	North	24 miles
Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness	Class II	Within & adjacent	Within & adjacent

### 3.13.2 Intensity Level Definitions

Type of Impact:

- Adverse: Increases emissions or raises potential pollutant concentrations
- Beneficial: Reduces emissions or lowers potential pollutant concentrations

Duration of Impact:

- Short-term: For prescribed fires, the length of time it takes for smoke to dissipate from a single prescribed burn in the project area (up to three days); for wildfires, the length of time it takes for smoke to dissipate from uncontrolled burning in the project area during periods of inadequate ventilation (up to two weeks).
- Long-term: Time periods longer than three consecutive days (for prescribed burning) or two weeks (for wildfires).

Intensity of Impact:

- None: No impacts
- Negligible: Particulate matter production occurs and smoke is visible, but does not affect sensitive groups or the general public as defined by Washington Department of Ecology (WA DOE 2013b) or the general public; or reduction in wildfire burned area as a result of previous treatments is less than 50 acres.
- Minor: Particulate matter production may cause air quality to be moderate (ibid); or reduction in wildfire burned area as a result of previous treatments is less than 51-250 acres.
- Moderate: Particulate matter production may cause air quality to be unhealthy for sensitive groups; or reduction in wildfire burned area as a result of previous treatments is 251-1000 acres.

- Major: Particulate matter production may cause air quality to be unhealthy to very unhealthy for sensitive groups (ibid) and the general public; or reduction in wildfire burned area as a result of previous treatments is greater than 1000 acres.

### 3.13.3 Affected Environment

This analysis addresses the issue of potential air quality impacts from actions proposed by this project. Air quality impacts are generally short-lived, and at the time of this analysis, the Twisp monitor did not show any PM2.5 and PM10 concentrations (August 2016). Levels of these criteria pollutants do not currently violate primary or secondary NAAQS. Given the transitory nature of air quality impacts and the current lack of particulate matter, the affected air quality environment will be described further using anecdotal evidence and past monitoring. Figure 129 displays the current levels of PM2.5 and PM10 for the existing condition.

**Figure 129. Air Quality Resource Indicators and Measures for the Existing Condition**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Air quality impacts	Particulate Matter emissions	Tons of Particulate matter at 2.5 microns (PM2.5)	0
		Tons of Particulate matter at 10 microns (PM10)	0

*Resource Indicator: Particulate Matter emissions*

PM emissions from wildfires have degraded air quality even before European settlement in the Methow Valley in the late 1800s. Natural and human-caused fire regularly created smoke that limited visibility and introduced pollutants into the air (USDA Forest Service 1997a). Panoramic photographs taken from various peaks around the Methow Valley, Pasayten Wilderness, and Okanogan Valley in the 1920s show landscapes obscured by haze. Records from local lookout towers over past decades describe multiple occasions when smoke from local and distant wildfires frequently settled into the airsheds around the project area for long periods of time. This anecdotal evidence supports the likelihood that wildfires have caused short-term, adverse, negligible, to major impacts on air quality.

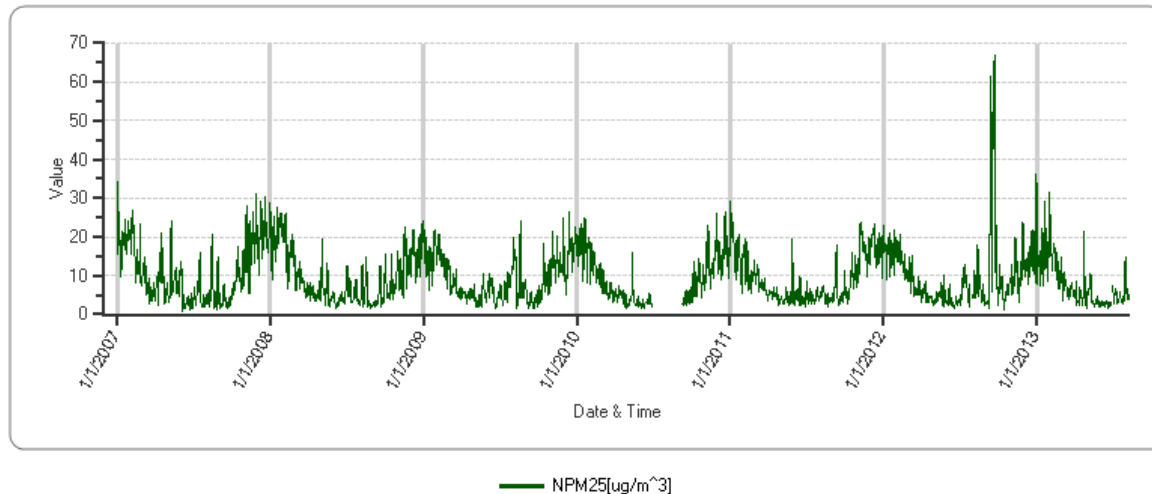
Smoke levels and resulting PM declined across the Columbia Basin as fire was excluded from forests, particularly after the start of organized fire suppression in the 1930s (ibid). In the past 25 years, however, PM emissions have increased as wildfires burned more frequently over larger areas for longer periods across the Western United States and Canada. The 1994 wildfires near Wenatchee, Washington, for example, produced 24-hour concentrations of PM that exceeded federal health standards by twice the limit and lasted for several days (ibid). Anecdotal evidence indicates that the 2003 Farewell Fire and 2006 Tripod Fire in the Methow Valley produced air quality problems for residents of the Okanogan and Methow valleys similar to those experienced in 1994. Wildfires in Eastern Washington during September 2012 adversely affected air quality in the interior Columbia River basin by producing smoke that created hazardous air quality conditions for more than eight days (WA DOE 2012). Routine inversions in Eastern Washington increase the impact of smoke on ambient air quality during

these wildfire events. PM emissions are projected to increase as wildfire season lengthens (Westerling et al. 2006; Liu et al. 2010; Climate Central 2012; Jolly et al. 2015).

Air quality impacts from prescribed burning are generally negligible because they are short-term and produce low quantities of PM compared to wildfires. Figure 130 shows monthly average PM2.5 levels in Twisp, WA as recorded by the Washington State Department of Ecology air quality monitor from 2006-2013. Short-term spikes in PM2.5 occurred occasionally when prescribed burning was conducted (roughly April to early June and October to early November). Higher levels of PM2.5 concentrations lasted for longer periods in fall and winter months, likely caused by smoke from local wood-burning stoves during periods of stagnant air. Spikes in PM2.5 occurring during summer months correspond with heavy wildfire activity in the Methow and Okanogan Valleys and beyond, including Canada. The only reading on this chart that exceeded the NAAQS for PM2.5 happened when the 24-hour average levels of PM2.5 exceeded 35  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  in late summer/fall of 2012. These emissions were caused by local wildfires in the Methow Valley area that emitted uncontrolled amounts of smoke, followed by periods of stagnant air. As wildfires were brought under control, fuels burned out, and air movement increased, levels of PM2.5 dropped off sharply. Episodes like these demonstrate that wildfires have more potential than any other air pollution source in the country for rapidly exposing the public to extremely high short-term PM2.5 fine particulate concentrations (Ottmar, personal communication).

**Figure 130. Monthly Average PM2.5 Levels in Twisp from December 2006 through July 2013**

Site:Twisp-Glover St Periodic:12/1/2006 12:00 AM - 8/9/2013 12:00 AM Report Type:AVG



### 3.13.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.13.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

The following proposed actions will not be considered further in this analysis because they would have no measurable effect on air quality: thinning; soil restoration; opening, closing, or decommissioning roads; rock armoring; replacing undersized culverts or installing fish culverts; beaver habitat or coarse woody debris enhancement; or creating hardened fords.



### 3.13.4.2 Alternative 1

#### 3.13.4.2.1 Effects

If proposed prescribed fire treatments did not occur, the airsheds in and around the project area would not be affected by emissions from prescribed fire treatments originating in the project area. Nearby prescribed fire treatments would create short-term, adverse, negligible impacts on air quality, while wildfires in and near the project area would produce smoke that created short-term to long-term, adverse, negligible to moderate impacts on air quality depending on the amount of PM produced, current air quality, and existing ventilation conditions. Without proposed thinning and fuel reduction treatments, there would be no opportunities to reduce smoke quantity and limit the volume of smoke created by wildfires. As surface, ladder, and canopy fuel loads continue to increase over time in the project area, fires would likely burn more intensely, with more fuel consumption, longer smoldering, and higher levels of pollutants expelled into the air (Ottmar, personal communication). Increased smoke production burning during common summertime inversions would increase the likelihood of creating a longer-lasting impact on air quality and a higher chance of negatively impacting human health and visibility.

### 3.13.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3

Prescribed fire activities proposed in this project are identical in Alternatives 2 and 3, therefore the effects for both alternatives will be described together.

#### 3.13.4.3.1 Effects

**Figure 131. Air Quality Resource Indicators and Measures for Alternatives 2 and 3**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Air Quality	Particulate Matter	Tons of Particulate matter at 2.5 microns (PM2.5/)	1877 tons
		Tons of Particulate matter at 10 microns (PM10)	2025 tons

#### *Resource Indicator: Particulate Matter*

Figure 131 summarizes PM that would be created by proposed prescribed burning activities in Alternatives 2 and 3. Prescribed burning would cause short-term, adverse, negligible to minor impacts on air quality and human health because the PM it produces may affect air quality for sensitive individuals such as children and the elderly, and the general public, as well as visibility (USEPA 2008). Prescribed fire treatments would help create long-term, beneficial, negligible to moderate impacts on air quality because by reducing fire severity in treated areas, less vegetation would be consumed and contribute to PM production during wildfires (Schaaf 1996). Recent thinning and prescribed fire treatments elsewhere on the district helped limit air quality impacts caused by wildfires because they reduced fuel loading and created safer direct suppression opportunities, thereby reducing fire intensity, fire growth, and related PM emissions in some areas of the Tripod, Leecher Mtn, Carlton Complex, Little Bridge Creek, and Twisp River wildfires. (Trebon 2006; Trebon & Johnson 2014). Given the frequent occurrence of ignition through lightning alone, the environmental conditions that annually support wildfire

spread, and the availability of fuels to burn, future wildfires in and around the project area are certain. Wildfires generally produce two to four times more smoke per acre than prescribed fires because of drier weather and higher fuel consumption during the less-efficient smoldering stage, with no way to control where the smoke goes or when it will occur. Smoldering that occurs during wildfires produces about twice as much PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> when compared to a prescribed fire (NWCG 2001; Ottmar, personal communication).

While smoke from neither prescribed fire nor wildfire is good for humans, prescribed fires proposed in this project would provide opportunities to reduce the volume of PM produced and control the direction and timing of smoke flow. Prescribed fire prescriptions would require conditions when fuels would be consumed more efficiently and produce less smoke. In applying prescribed fire, the dry forest landscape in the project area would act more like its historical fire-adapted ecosystem. The potential release of emissions during any wildland fire in the project area would be substantially reduced following implementation of the prescribed fire treatments described in the proposed action. Mechanical and prescribed fire fuels treatments would reduce fuels and reduce the likelihood of high-severity fires in treatment areas, allowing for opportunities to control fires at smaller size and minimizing long-term air quality impacts. PM<sub>10</sub> production from wildfires would be reduced considerably where prescribed fire treatments are applied. Prescribed fires would be planned for periods when smoke would disperse quickly and avoid sensitive airsheds, further reducing their impacts on air quality in comparison to wildfires that create unpredictable volumes of PM during periods of stagnant air movement.

The design criterion for Air Quality (see Appendix D), would help limit human health and visibility impacts from PM and help ensure that PM production does not exceed NAAQS. These criterion would provide for public notification of potential impacts and actions to take to limit exposure. PM production during any single ignition would be restricted by the acres burned, which depends on fuel and ventilation conditions inherent number of personnel available and funding. Local experience shows that ground crews can generally ignite up to 150 acres per day by hand, while aerial ignition accomplishes about 200 to 650 acres per day. Average yearly funding for prescribed fire activities generally allows for up to 1500 acres per year of underburning and 800 acres of pile burning, which is generally spread over multiple areas on the district. PM emissions created by this project would be dispersed over several days during each spring and fall burn season (generally April – early June and mid-September – early November) over about 15 years, with time allowed for smoke dispersal between completion of one underburn project and initiation of the next one.

Smoke drifting towards populated areas with no indications of atmospheric mixing would trigger mitigation measures such as terminating or reducing ignition in that area until atmospheric mixing improved. These measures have been used successfully on the Methow Valley Ranger District over the past fifteen or more years of prescribed burning and are moderately to highly effective in reducing potential impacts to air quality.

Figure 132 displays the amounts of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> that would be created by each type of prescribed fire treatment. Modeling over-predicts emissions for underburns because it assumes a uniform fuel loading across the entire unit and that units are fully blackened; however, fuel loading varies across units and underburning usually creates a mosaic of about 75% burned

and 25% unburned areas on average within the unit boundary. In 6658 acres of underburn treatment units outside of Variable Retention Thinning units, the initial prescribed fire treatment would be followed up in approximately 10-12 years with a maintenance underburn that would create less PM than the initial prescribed fire treatment because the fuel loading during this treatment would be less than during the original treatment.

**Figure 132 Particulate Matter Emissions by Proposed Prescribed Burning by Treatment Type**

<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Amount Proposed</b>	<b>Tons PM2.5 per Acre or Landing</b>	<b>Total Tons PM2.5</b>	<b>Tons PM10 per Acre or Landing</b>	<b>Total Tons PM10</b>
Underburn (Initial treatment)	6617 acres	0.22	1456	0.24	1588
Underburn (Maintenance treatment)	6658 acres	.05	330	.05	330
Burn hand piles	2900 acres	0.01	29	0.01	29
Burn machine piles	702 acres	0.02	14	0.03	21
Burn landing piles	179 landings	0.27	48	0.32	57
		<b>Total:</b>	<i>1877 tons</i>		<i>2025 tons</i>

*Effects on Class I Airsheds*

Prescribed burning may have short-term, negligible, adverse impacts on the nearest Class I airsheds (the Pasayten or Glacier Peak Wildernesses or North Cascades National Park), but these impacts would be limited because of the distance between these areas and proposed burn units in this project. Ignitions would be planned for times when upper-atmospheric ventilation conditions would be able to dissipate and mix smoke created by prescribed burning in this project. Impacts to Class I airsheds would further be limited by regulations in the SIP. Class II airsheds such as the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness have the same regulatory requirements for protection as airsheds outside of wilderness.

*3.13.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects*

*Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

The spatial boundary for cumulative effects on air quality is defined by the airsheds listed in Figure 128 because these are the areas where PM produced by prescribed burning proposed in this project is most likely to affect air quality and visibility. The temporal boundary for cumulative effects on air quality is three days, the amount of time it takes for the majority of smoke from a prescribed burn activity to fully dissipate during and after ignition on the first day, with potential overnight settling the one to two nights after ignition.

*Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Activities Relevant to Cumulative Effects Analysis*  
 There are no adverse impacts from past or current prescribed burning activities or burning done by the general public (woodstoves and debris piles) within the Methow Valley drainage at the time of this analysis. Planned prescribed fire activities that will affect air quality in the airsheds listed in Figure 128 include prescribed burning planned on National Forest lands north and west of Winthrop, WA and east of Twisp, WA; and on nearby state and federal lands managed by other entities, along with burning conducted by the general public (woodstoves and debris pile burning). The exact amount of PM created by these activities and the cumulative impact of PM is unknown because the timing and extent of prescribed burning conducted by all land management entities and the general public is unknown, but the cumulative impact of these activities is generally short-term, adverse, negligible to minor effects. Any smoke drifting or settling in the Methow Valley area from prescribed burning activities would dissipate completely within one to three days with no lingering evidence, although ongoing smoke production from woodstove use may continue to produce PM.

*Resource Indicator: Particulate Matter*

The general public may create PM at the same time and place as prescribed fire activities proposed in this project, and the extent may affect the airsheds listed in Figure 128. PM created by the general public may be readily detectable and localized, and usually disperses later in the day as temperatures warm. Adverse PM concentrations, when combined with unfavorable ventilation conditions, would cause Forest Service personnel to delay further ignitions until conditions improved. The cumulative impact of PM would be negligible due to implementation of design criteria and mitigation measures and conformance with existing standards and guidelines on proposed prescribed fire activities.

The cumulative effect of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions and the prescribed burning proposed in Alternatives 2 and 3 on air quality would include short-term, adverse, negligible to minor impacts because it produces PM that may affect human health and visibility. Cumulative effects also include long-term, beneficial, negligible to moderate impacts brought because treatments reduced wildfire severity and/or acres burned, thereby limiting PM production.

**3.13.4.4 Summary of Effects**

The summary of existing conditions and the effects of Alternatives 2 and 3 are displayed in Figure 133.

**Figure 133. Air Quality Resource Indicators and Measures for All Alternatives**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)	Alternatives 2 and 3
Air quality impacts	Particulate Matter emissions	Tons of Particulate matter at 2.5 microns (PM2.5)	0	1877 tons
		Tons of Particulate matter at 10 microns (PM10)	0	2025 tons

### 3.13.5 Consistency Statement

#### *Okanogan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan*

Implementing the proposed action would be consistent with the goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines of the Forest Plan as follows:

Forest-wide Standard & Guideline 14-1: Management activities within the Forest shall be planned to maintain air quality at a level adequate for the protection and use of the National Forest resources, and which also meet or exceed the applicable Federal and State standards. Following the state SIP and monitoring air quality before, during, and after ignitions would meet this standard by restricting burning to periods when weather conditions promote adequate smoke ventilation, or taking actions to limit or cease prescribed fire operations when air quality may be adversely impacted..

Forest-wide Standard & Guideline 14-2: The Forest shall demonstrate reasonable progress in reducing total suspended particulate (TSP) emissions from prescribed burning by using efficient means of slash disposal (such as hand-piling or machine-piling) wherever feasible. Implementing Alternatives 2 or 3 would meet this standard because both alternatives specify use of hand- or machine-piling where these treatments are efficient and feasible.

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to air quality, the following substantive provision would be affected by the proposed amendment:

#### 219.8(a)(2)(i) Air quality.

Thinning as a result of this amendment would have an adverse, short-term, negligible to minor effect on air quality because it would create debris on 388 acres that would be treated by prescribed burning, which would create smoke containing particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) that may affect air quality as described in this section. Prescribed burning would primarily include a mix of hand-pile, machine-pile, and underburning, each of which emit different levels of PM. Of these methods, underburning emits the most particulate matter (0.22 tons/acre of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and 0.24 tons/acre of PM<sub>10</sub>). If all 388 acres of thinning debris created by this amendment were underburned, this activity would create 85.4 tons of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and 93.1 tons of PM<sub>10</sub> over a period of several years of prescribed burning. Implementing any single prescribed burn may affect air quality for sensitive individuals and the general public, as well as visibility (USEPA 2008). Prescribed fire treatments on areas treated as a result of this amendment would help create long-term, beneficial, negligible to moderate impacts on air quality because by reducing fire severity in treated areas, less vegetation would be consumed and contribute to PM production during wildfires (Schaaf, 1996). Recent thinning and prescribed fire treatments elsewhere on the district helped limit air quality impacts caused by wildfires because they reduced fuel loading and created safer direct suppression opportunities, thereby reducing fire

intensity, fire growth, and related PM emissions in some areas of the Tripod, Leecher Mtn, Carlton Complex, Little Bridge Creek, and Twisp River wildfires. (Trebon 2006, Trebon & Johnson 2014). Given the frequency of ignition by lightning, the environmental conditions that annually support wildfire spread, and the availability of fuels to burn, future wildfires in and around the project area are certain. Wildfires generally produce two to four times more particulate matter per acre than prescribed fires because of drier weather and higher fuel consumption during the less-efficient smoldering stage, with no way to control where the smoke goes or when it will occur. Smoldering that occurs during wildfires produces about twice as much PM10 and PM2.5 when compared to a prescribed fire (NWCG 2001; Ottmar, personal communication, 02/10/2004).

While smoke from neither prescribed fire nor wildfire is good for humans, prescribed fires to treat slash created by this amendment would provide opportunities to reduce the volume of PM produced and control the direction and timing of smoke flow. Prescribed fire prescriptions would require conditions when fuels would be consumed more efficiently and produce less smoke. In applying prescribed fire, the dry forest landscape in the project area would act more like its historical fire-adapted ecosystem. The potential release of emissions during any wildland fire in the project area would be substantially reduced following implementation of the prescribed fire treatments described in the proposed action. Mechanical and prescribed fire fuels treatments would reduce fuels and reduce the likelihood of high-severity fires in treatment areas, allowing for opportunities to control fires at smaller size and minimizing long-term air quality impacts. PM10 production from wildfires would be reduced considerably where prescribed fire treatments are applied. Prescribed fires would be planned for periods when smoke would disperse quickly and avoid sensitive airsheds, further reducing their impacts on air quality in comparison to wildfires that create unpredictable volumes of PM during periods of stagnant air movement.

Design criteria for Air Quality would help limit human health and visibility impacts from PM created by prescribed fire conducted to treat slash created by the proposed amendment, and would help ensure that PM production does not exceed NAAQS. Smoke drifting towards populated areas with no indications of atmospheric mixing would trigger the mitigation measure described above such as terminating or reducing ignition in that area until atmospheric mixing improved. These measures have been used successfully on the Methow Valley Ranger District over at least the past fifteen years of prescribed burning and are moderately to highly effective in reducing potential impacts to air quality.

#### *Forest Service Manual Direction*

Implementing the proposed action would be consistent with Forest Service Manual direction because this analysis integrates air resource management objectives into planning and management activities proposed by the Mission Restoration Project. Prescribed fire projects would be implemented in the most cost-effective manner that provides for the safety of personnel and the public while meeting resource objectives.

### Required Monitoring:

Air quality monitoring is required by the SIP and the Prescribed Fire Planning and Interagency Implementation Procedures Guide (NSCG 2014) before and during implementation to assess current air quality, during ignition to assess effectiveness of ventilation and movement, and after prescribed burning during the patrol phase to assess ongoing air quality impacts. Monitoring may include recording PM at established monitors in Twisp and Winthrop; assessing strength and quality of ventilation during ignition; and evaluating visibility on roads. No additional air quality monitoring would be required as part of this proposed action.

## 3.14 Economics

The section below summarizes existing condition information along with the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the Mission Restoration Project, as analyzed in the Mission Restoration Project Economic Resources Report by M. Isaak (2017) (amended by Nash 2018), available in the project record. Reference information is contained in the full specialist report.

### 3.14.1 Methodology

Figure 134 displays the resource indicators that have been used to analyze economic effects.

Figure 134. Economic Resource Indicators and Measures for Assessing Effects

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Used to address: P/N, or key issue?	Source (LRMP S/G; law or policy, BMP's, etc.)?
Viability	Residual value after timber sale related costs	Dollars	No	None

This analysis is performed by the use of different spreadsheets. These spreadsheets are: LogCost (provides stump to truck costs), HaulCost (provides Hauling costs), PQA (provides a value for saw log and non-saw log products), and TEA-R6 Econ (provides an overall viability of the project).

Data and other information was provided by field personnel, engineers, and the silviculturist to complete the above spreadsheets.

Costs for all projects are approximate and will need to be assessed during the implementation stage of this Environmental Analysis. Timber sale brush disposal treatment plan costs on the Methow Valley Ranger District typically average \$110 per acre as part of the timber sale. Essential reforestation collection (SAI-KV) agreement costs typically average \$800 per acre of regeneration harvest treatment. These costs are highly variable depending on acres burned, acres planted, acres of slashing for site preparation, site preparation for planting and natural regeneration, fireline construction costs, slash piling, planting and fuels inventories, burning, etc.

*Cost Efficiencies:* In the case with fuels treatments, whole landscapes are more efficiently treated than smaller blocks because natural fuel breaks or existing roads may be used for control lines and project planning per acre is reduced. When harvest units are not contiguous

with natural fuel treatment units, then costs associated with containment are much higher. A typical unit that has a road directly on the burn boundary may require only a fire line to be constructed and manned across one side of the unit if the adjacent stands are planned to have natural fuels treatments, and the whole area can be burned at the same time. Without contiguous landscape treatments containment costs can be two or three times higher, to the point that the timber sale may not have sufficient receipts to pay for the fuels treatment. Layout and implementation costs are also higher as the distance from an open road is increased. Note that portions of stands that are not likely to receive timber harvest treatments may still receive the ladder fuel reduction and underburn treatments, but the cost to implement those treatments may be higher due to steepness and longer distances from open roads.

*Non-Timber Sale Project Costs:* The proposed action requires a level of investment that may not be possible within current or expected levels of appropriations. In order to be as effective as possible within budget constraints, an implementation plan would be developed that prioritizes treatments. General guidelines have been developed that would be used to guide this prioritization process. The following three types of treatments have been identified as having the highest priority for implementation.

- Areas closest to the wildland-urban interface (WUI) and emergency egress routes.
- Strategically located treatment units, which because of their location would have a relatively greater effect on modifying fire behavior at the landscape scale.
- Treatments that could be implemented with little or no cost, or which generate funds which can be used to pay for other treatments.

The issue of strategic placement and timing of treatments to effect fire behavior at the landscape scale is the most critical of these in terms of budget constraints. As part of the implementation process, further analysis would be performed to identify the most effective sequence of implementation given budget expectations.

Costs for all projects, displayed in Figure 135 are approximate and will need to be assessed during the implementation stage of this Environmental Analysis.

**Figure 135. Potential Non-Timber Sale Project Costs (in millions).**

List of Non-Timber Sale Project Costs	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Plantation Thin, Wetland Thin, and Post & Pole Thin	0.96	0.96
LFR Thin including machine piling	0.02	0.02
Road Closing/ Decommissioning Projects	0.35	0.58
Beaver Habitat Enhancement	0.01	0.01
Rock Armoring	NA	0.12
Culvert upsizing for non-fish passage	0.12	0.12
Culvert upsizing for fish passage	0.64	0.64
Coarse Woody Debris Enhancement	0.01	0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>2.46</b>



### 3.14.2 Intensity Level Definitions

#### Type of Impact

- Beneficial: We propose a Timber Sale in which the monetary benefit is greater than the direct costs.
- Adverse: We propose a Timber Sale in which the monetary benefit is less than the direct costs.

#### Duration of Impact

- Short term: Occurring during the Timber Sale and associated project activities.
- Long term: 5 to 7 years post-project.

#### Intensity of Impact

- None: No impacts to Timber Sale Costs
- Negligible: Impacts to Timber Sale Costs are less than \$10,000 in monetary revenue that can be used to support Non-Timber Sale Projects.
- Minor: Impacts to Timber Sale Costs are between \$10,000 and \$100,000 in monetary revenue that can be used to support Non-Timber Sale Projects.
- Moderate: Impacts to Timber Sale Costs are between \$100,000 and \$350,000 in monetary revenue that can be used to support Non-Timber Sale Projects.
- Major: Impacts to Timber Sale Costs are more than \$350,000 in momentary revenue that can be used to support Non-Timber Sale Projects.

### 3.14.3 Affected Environment

The project area has 1,853 acres that have been identified for commercial timber harvest. The primary stand structure within the Project Area is Young Forest Multi- Story. There is approximately 8.1 Million Board Feet (MMBF), or 16,200 Hundred Cubic Feet (CCF) of harvestable timber. Without harvest and thinning treatments, these acres at an increased risk for disturbances (wildfires, insects, and disease).

**Figure 136. Economic Resource Indicators and Measures for the Existing Condition**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Existing Condition (Alternative 1)
Viability	Residual Value After Timber Sale Related Costs	Dollars	None (increased risk of loss)

### 3.14.4 Environmental Consequences

#### 3.14.4.1 Considered, but not Analyzed in Detail

The economic resources were considered but not analyzed in detail are displayed in Figure 137. Additional information about the potential impacts to these resources are discussed in the Mission Project Economic Resource Report (Isaak 2017) (amended by Nash 2018).

**Figure 137. Economic Resources Considered But Not Analyzed in Detail**

Resource	Examples	Rationale for Dismissing from Further Analysis
Benefits	Potential reduction of future fire suppression costs  Protection of non-market resource values, existing market value resources, and prior investments  Job creation  Cost/benefit ratio and present net value	While the costs of implementing many aspects of the proposed project can be expressed in monetary terms, the benefits are not as easily quantified and involve both market and non-market values.
Non-Timber Sale Costs	Plantation Thin, Wetland Thin, and Post & Pole Thin  LFR thinning  Road closing/decommissioning (Not along approved haul routes for the Timber Sale)  Rock Armoring  Beaver habitat enhancement/aquatic habitat improvements  Culvert replacement	Funding for the different non timber projects can come from a variety of different sources such as appropriations, stewardship receipts, or through partnerships with public and private collaborates. It is this funding uncertainty that will make it difficult to analyze into depth.

**3.14.4.2 Alternative 1**

*3.14.4.2.1 Effects*

Alternative 1 does not include any harvesting or selling Forest Products. The impact of Alternative 1 would be adverse, long-term, and minor because without continued treatments, previous investments and the gains that have been achieved are at an increased risk of loss through widespread uncharacteristic fire behavior, insects, and disease. Large-scale stand replacement fires, especially in areas where they are not characteristic of the inherent fire regime can cause substantial damage to both private and public resources. As discussed in the fire/fuels analysis, under the No Action Alternative, the area would continue to be at and increasing risk of widespread uncharacteristic fire behavior.

**3.14.4.3 Alternatives 2 and 3**

There are no differences in the proposed commercial harvest between Alternatives 2 and 3 so the economic effects of the timber sale will be the same and they will be analyzed together. Alternative 3 includes additional road closing/ decommissioning and rock armoring/hardened fords work. Cost estimation from the additional work can be found in Figure 135 but were not included in this analysis.

*3.14.4.3.1 Effects*

Alternatives 2 and 3 includes about 1,853 acres of proposed harvest treatments where commercially valuable timber would be removed as a byproduct of that treatment. The value of these marketable products can substantially reduce the overall costs of the project. The impact

of Alternatives 2 and 3 would be beneficial, long-term, and moderate because with treatments, monetary benefits can be used to fund restoration activities on the landscape.

**Figure 138. Economic Resource Indicators and Measures for the Proposed Action.**

Resource Element	Resource Indicator	Measure	Alternatives 2 and 3
Viability	Residual Value After Timber Sale Related Costs	Dollars	\$624,000

Ground based equipment could be used to log as much as 1,817 acres and the other 72 acres could be harvested by the use of a standing skyline system. This standing skyline system would be designed to achieve at least one end suspension of the harvested timber. Mobilization and logging costs for the ground based are estimated to be \$141/MBF and \$234.68/MBF for the skyline portion of the timber sale.

It is expected that approximately 8.1 MMBF (million board feet), or 16,200 CCF (hundred cubic feet) would be harvested by ground based and skyline based felling and yarding equipment. November 2017 log prices for delivered Douglas-fir are \$397.80/MBF, harvesting 7 to 23.9 inch DBH trees would generate \$3.22 million in timber value at the mill. After logging operations including :felling, skidding, processing, loading, required brush disposal, road maintenance, and required mitigation including: rock armoring, erosion control and reforestation (SAI- KV Collection Agreement costs on the planned 59 acres of Variable Retention Regeneration harvest would be an estimated \$47,200), there would remain approximately \$624,000 that could be used to supplement or support other planned projects.

Some commercial sized trees, up to 14 inches DBH, would be fell in areas inaccessible to logging equipment in order to meet landscape fuel objectives. These trees would not be available for harvest or firewood. Because these steep and/or unroaded area are marginally suitable for timber management, it is not likely that the removal of these trees from the stands would reduce the future timber value for the project area.

#### *3.14.4.3.2 Cumulative Effects*

There are no cumulative effects related to the financial aspects of the project since costs and benefits are shown over a multi-year basis.

#### *Forest Plan Amendment Effects on Substantive Provisions*

To meet Purpose and Needs #2, #3, #4 and #6 identified in Chapter 1 of the EA, vegetation management through thinning would reduce deer winter range cover below Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Plan Standard and Guidelines MA14-6A and MA26-6A, requiring a project-specific amendment. The 2012 Planning Rule as amended (36 CFR 219) requires consideration of how such an amendment would affect substantive provisions identified in the Planning Rule. With respect to economics, the following substantive provisions would be affected by the proposed amendment:

219.8(b)(1) Social, cultural, and economic conditions; and 219.8 (b) (3) Multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner. Commercial and noncommercial thinning that would occur on 388 acres as a result of this amendment, and associated prescribed fire activities that would treat the slash created by thinning, would have a beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effect on economic conditions relevant to the area influenced by this project because it would result in local and regional employment opportunities and merchantable timber for processing at regional mills. Since the amendment would affect up to 21 percent of the proposed commercial thinning units, the employment opportunities and volume of timber would be approximately the same percentage of the employment opportunities and volume for all proposed commercial thinning, or 1.7mbf in volume and 22 FTE jobs (Mason, Bruce and Girard et al 2012). To the extent that thinning provided by this amendment occurs as noncommercial thinning, the timber volume would be reduced and the number of FTE jobs would increase.

#### **3.14.4.4 Summary of Effects**

It appears that this Timber Sale would be viable and have a moderate impact that could potentially contribute \$624,000 to Non-Timber Sale Projects.

### **3.15 Other Required Disclosures**

#### **3.15.1 Social Groups, Civil Rights, and Environmental Issues**

Civil Rights would not be affected by the Mission Restoration project. The project includes timber sale purchaser work, Forest Service contracted work, and Forest Service employee-accomplished work. Under Executive Order 11246 companies with Federal, contracts or subcontracts are prohibited from job discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The U. S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination in its employment practices based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital and family status.

Executive Order 12898 (59 Fed, Reg. 7629, 1994) directs Federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations. No minority communities are located adjacent to the planning area. Timber sale haul routes would likely to pass through the small towns of Carlton, Twisp, and Winthrop, which contain low-income communities. Because the route, on Highway 20, receives regular local, tourist and commercial traffic, the effects on traffic and noise would not be noticeable.

The effects of the proposed action on civil rights and low income or minority communities would be minimal. Employment would be created through both timber sale and service contracts, and contractors/subcontractors are prohibited from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. Some contracts for this project may be offered under Small Business Administration authorities, which could result in positive employment benefits to minority populations.

The proposed action would not have disparate effects on any consumers, minority groups, women, civil rights, or social/ethnic groups. All contracts would meet Equal Employment Opportunity requirements.

### **3.15.2 Floodplains and Wetlands**

No impacts to designated floodplains are projected. Hand-thinning of small conifers is proposed in designated wetlands around Mission Pond and Blackpine Meadows to reduce conifer encroachment with the beneficial impact of sustaining wetland habitat. Project activities would occur in some Riparian Reserves; effects are described in the forest vegetation, water resources, and botany sections of this chapter. Floodplains and wetlands would be protected through project design details and mitigation measures listed in Appendix D, which conform to Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

### **3.15.3 Prime Farm, Range and Forest Land**

The proposed action complies with the Federal Regulations for prime land. Lands within the project area do not qualify as “prime” forest land. Effects to forestland are described earlier in this chapter. The Mission Restoration analysis area does not contain any prime rangeland or prime farm land, therefore, none of the alternatives would have any effect on prime rangeland and farmland.

### **3.15.4 Climate Change, Greenhouse Gases and Carbon Sequestration**

This proposed action would affect 10,220 acres of forest by thinning smaller trees from the stand, retaining an estimated residual stand of about 70 percent of the original stand by crown cover where understory thinning alone occurred, and 50 – 60 percent of the original stand by crown cover where overstory thinning occurred. This scope and degree of change would be minor relative to the amount of forested land in the Pacific Northwest region as a whole. Climate change is a global phenomenon because major greenhouse gasses (GHG) mix well throughout the planet’s lower atmosphere (IPCC 2013). Considering emissions of GHG in 2010 was estimated at  $49 \pm 4.5$  gigatonnes<sup>1</sup> globally (IPCC 2014) and 6.9 gigatonnes nationally (US EPA, 2015), a project of this magnitude makes an infinitesimal contribution to overall emissions. Therefore, at the global and national scales, this proposed action’s direct and indirect contribution to greenhouse gasses and climate change would be negligible. Because the direct and indirect effects would be negligible, the proposed action’s contribution to cumulative effects on global greenhouse gasses and climate change would also be negligible.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has summarized the contributions to climate change of global human activity sectors in its Fifth Assessment Report (IPCC 2014). In 2010, anthropogenic (human-caused) contributors to greenhouse gas emissions came from several sectors:

- Industry, transportation, and building – 41%
- Energy production – 35%
- Agriculture – 12%.

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<sup>1</sup> A gigatonne is one billion metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>; equal to about 2.2 trillion pounds.

- Forestry and other land uses – 12%

There is agreement that the forestry sector contribution has declined over the last decade (IPCC, 2014; Smith et al., 2014; FAOSTAT, 2013). The main activity in this sector associated with GHG emissions is deforestation, which is defined as removal of all trees, most notably the conversion of forest and grassland into agricultural land or developed landscapes (IPCC 2000).

This restoration project does not fall within any of these main contributors of greenhouse gas emissions. Forested land will not be converted into a developed or agricultural condition. In fact, forest stands are being retained and thinned to maintain a vigorous condition that supports trees, and sequesters carbon long-term. US forests sequestered 757.1 megatonnes<sup>2</sup> of carbon dioxide after accounting for emissions from fires and soils in 2010 (US EPA, 2015). However there is growing concern over the impacts of climate change on US forests and their current status as a carbon sink. There is strong evidence of a relationship between increasing temperatures and large tree mortality events in forests of the western US. There is widespread recognition that climate change is increasing the size and frequency of droughts, fires, and insect/disease outbreaks, which will have major effect on these forests' role in the carbon cycle (Joyce et al. 2014).

The project is in line with the suggested practice of reducing forest disturbance effects found in the National Climate Assessment for public and private forests (Joyce et al. 2014). Here specifically, the project proposes to thin forests to maintain or restore vegetation stand structure and growth patterns to increase resistance to insect mortality, wildfire, and drought. The release of carbon associated with this project is justified given the overall change in condition increases forest resistance to release of much greater quantities of carbon from wildfire, drought, insects/disease, or a combination of these disturbance types (Millar et al. 2007). This project falls within the types of options presented by the IPCC for minimizing the impacts of climate change on forest carbon, and represents a potential synergy between adaptation measures and mitigation. Actions such as those proposed in this project that are aimed at enhancing forest resilience to climate change by reducing the potential for large-scale, disturbances such as wildfire also prevents release of GHG and enhances carbon stocks (Smith et al. 2014). The residual vegetation composition would maintain or increase biomass production over the long-term (i.e. decades).

Timber management projects can influence carbon dioxide sequestration in four main ways: (1) by increasing new forests (afforestation), (2) by avoiding their damage or destruction (avoided deforestation), (3) by manipulating existing forest cover (managed forests), and (4) through transferring carbon from the live biomass to the harvested wood product carbon pool. Land-use changes, specifically deforestation and regrowth, are by far the biggest factors on a global scale in forests' role as sources or sinks of carbon dioxide, respectively (IPCC, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2000). Projects like the proposed action that create forests or improve forest conditions and capacity to grow trees are positive factors in carbon sequestration.

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<sup>2</sup> A megatonne is one million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>; equal to about 2.2 billion pounds.

### **3.15.5 Potential Conflicts with Plans or Policies or other Jurisdictions**

Actions proposed under this project would occur solely on NFS lands that are under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. Required consultation with regulatory agencies is underway. Proposed treatments would be consistent with management direction, laws, and policies as described in Chapter 3 and resource specialist reports.

### **3.15.6 Public Health and Safety**

There would be limited health and safety hazards to Forest Service Employees, permittees, and the general public from the project. None are unusual or unique to this project. Recreationists, nearby residents, and permittees could be exposed to smoke during prescribed fire operations. All burning would be done under Washington State Smoke Management Requirements, and would maintain air quality within federal Clean Air Act standards. Proposed treatments would use design criteria, monitoring, and mitigation to maintain Clean Water Act standards. Recreationists and residents could encounter logging traffic. Most logging roads, except main haul routes (4300 and 4300-4340), will remain closed to the general public to minimize traffic conflicts and impacts to wildlife. Warning signs regarding logging traffic would be posted at the beginning of the Libby Creek and Buttermilk Roads and any Forest Service roads where public access is not restricted and logging traffic is expected. Log hauling and heavy equipment moving during weekends and holidays is prohibited, without prior approval from the Forest Service, beginning Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend and also during the general rifle deer hunting season. In order to address public safety concerns associated with reduced traction and the narrowing of drivable road surface area, Forest Service roads used during winter for commercial haul would be closed to public use when commercial hauling operations are underway except that needed to access private property. Commercial haul traffic on county roads is consistent with the uses for which these roads are intended. County and state roads are under the jurisdiction of county and state governments. Nuisance dust from logging traffic on Forest Service roads is expected to be minimal due to planned dust abatement on the portions of FS roads that pass through private inholdings on the lower part of Libby Creek drainage. However, there may be some nuisance dust from logging traffic on the unpaved portion of County Road 1049 (Libby Creek Road) and 1051 (Smith Canyon Road), depending on Okanogan County road maintenance activity. The safety of the area would be beneficially improved for recreationists and wildland firefighters by the reduction of fuels creating safe escape routes, safer, more direct fire suppression conditions, and an increased ability to protect private homes and structures in the area.

### **3.15.7 Energy Requirements and Conservation Potential of Alternatives**

In relation to national and global petroleum reserves, the energy consumption associated with the proposed action would be minor. Fossil fuels used during the operation and transportation phases of the Mission Restoration project would result in an irreversible resource commitment of fossil fuel resources. Energy consumption associated with this project would be negligible at the local, regional, or national scale.

### **3.15.8 American Indian Treaty Rights**

No American Indian Treaty Rights would be affected by the Mission Restoration Project. The Tribal governments for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation and the

Yakama Nation were contacted during government to government consultation; no concerns about the project were raised by either tribal government.

### **3.15.9 Wilderness, Inventoried Roadless Areas, and Unroaded Areas**

Approximately 10% (15,770 acres) of the Lake Chelan-Sawtooth Wilderness area lies within the southwestern part of the project area. No activities are proposed within the wilderness boundary as part of the Mission Restoration project. Approximately 3% (3300 acres) of the Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA) is located in the southwestern portion of the planning area. Approximately two acres of underburning are proposed in the IRA as part of a larger landscape treatment unit (See Figure 121). Approximately 900 feet of hand fireline would be constructed in the IRA as part of this treatment. No trees would be felled and no roads would be constructed in the IRA. Of the amount of the unroaded area outside of wilderness and IRA within the project boundary, 1% (177 acres) would be treated by proposed understory ladder fuel reduction thinning and prescribed fire in Libby Creek. Two miles of hand fireline would be built to facilitate underburning (Figure 121). No effective alternative to this action was found that would allow for effective and safe treatment of fuels in treatment unit 404. A detailed rationale for why this is action needed in the Sawtooth IRA is included in the analysis file. Because no trees are felled and no roads are being constructed, no further documentation of compliance with the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is required.

Treatments proposed in the IRA and unroaded area are designed to restore desired low ranges of crown fire risk and to reduce wildfire hazards in a priority WUI treatment area as designated by the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. These proposed actions would not degrade the quality of the IRA or unroaded area, or change the potential of these areas to be considered for wilderness designation in the future. The project would have minor impacts on the untrammelled quality of wilderness character in the IRA and unroaded areas, with minor, localized impacts. There would be no impacts to the undeveloped or natural qualities since there would be no roads constructed. There would not be any impacts to the opportunities for solitude or primitive or unconfined recreation because these portions of the project area are not currently offering these opportunities due to their close proximity to private land and open roads.

### **3.15.10 Wild and Scenic Rivers**

There are no designated Wild and Scenic Rivers within or near Mission Restoration Project planning area. The Twisp River is eligible for Wild and Scenic designation approximately two miles upstream from the project boundary, but this area would not be affected by the project.

### **3.15.11 Heritage Resources**

A cultural resource survey was completed in 2016 under supervision of the project archaeologist (Hunter 2016). The survey met the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (36 CFR 800). The desired future condition for cultural resources is to protect eligible cultural resources from management activities by making reasonable efforts to avoid adverse impacts to the resources (USDA Forest Service 1989). The activities proposed in this project meets this desired condition by avoiding known eligible sites. No sites or isolates eligible for the National Register of Historic Places were discovered within proposed treatment areas. Design criterion provide for the assessment and protection (as needed) for any sites or isolates discovered during project implementation. The Washington



State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation concurred with the Determination of “No Historic Properties Affected” on September 29, 2016. All of the alternatives proposed in the Mission Restoration project would comply with federal laws. The Okanogan National Forest Plan tiers to these laws with no additional standards, therefore the proposed action alternatives meet Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines for Cultural Resources (Okanogan Forest Plan, Pages 4-36 to 4-38). With the completion of the cultural resources inventory per Section 106 of the NHPA and under the terms of the 1997 Programmatic Agreement with Washington SHPO and by providing the interdisciplinary team with appropriate input as per NEPA, all relevant laws and regulations have been met.

### **3.16 Substantive Provisions Affected by Proposed Amendment**

As discussed previously in this EA, the Forest Service has identified a need to amend the 1989 Okanogan Forest Plan to better reflect current conditions and scientific understanding regarding necessary vegetation management within the Mission Restoration project area. Based on the direction provided in 36 CFR 219, the Responsible Official must determine the appropriate scope and scale of forest plan amendments and apply those provisions of 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 that directly apply to the proposed amendments. In the following section, the provisions of 36 CFR 219.8 through 219.11 that are affected by thinning on 388 acres of deer winter range cover, as the proposed amendment would allow, are briefly identified and discussed. Effects are further described in resource sections referenced after each provision.

**219.8(a)(1)(ii) Contributions of the plan area to ecological conditions within the broader landscape influenced by the plan area.** Thinning would have beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on ecological conditions within the broader landscape because it would open up the forest canopy and result in an increase in forage available to mule deer and other animals, which would contribute to the sustainability of migratory mule deer populations present in the greater Methow Valley (Final EA at p. 228).

**219.8 (a)(1)(iv) System drivers such as wildland fire, invasive species, and climate change, and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the plan area to adapt to change; (v) Wildland fire and opportunities to restore fire-adapted ecosystems; and (vi) Opportunities for landscape scale restoration.** Thinning would create an adverse, short-term, negligible effect on system drivers such as invasive species because thinning would create a more open forest canopy, allowing more light to reach the surface and providing favorable conditions for the spread of invasive species (Final EA at p. 295).

Thinning would have beneficial, short to long-term, minor to moderate effect on wildland fire, climate change, and the ability of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems to adapt to change because it would create forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to experience low-severity fire behavior and are more similar to historical and predicted future conditions. These conditions would be less vulnerable to effects of climate change such as increased warming and drying during the summer months (Final EA at p.136, 173-174).

**219.8(a)(2)(i) Air quality.** Thinning would have an adverse, short-term, negligible to minor effect on air quality because it would create slash that would be treated by prescribed burning, which would create particulate matter. Thinning would also contribute to a beneficial, long-term, negligible to moderate effect on air quality because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would reduce the likelihood of high fire severity during wildfires, resulting in less vegetation consumed and less particulate matter produced (Final EA at p. 316-317).

**219.8(a)(2)(ii) Soils and soil productivity.** Thinning would have adverse, short-term, minor effect on soils because equipment used during commercial thinning operations, would cause soil compaction and displacement on some areas thinned under this amendment. Thinning would also create beneficial, long-term, moderate effects on soil productivity because it would leave a variety of organic matter on the site that would help maintain site productivity, protect the soil surface from raindrop impact, dissipate energy of overland flow, bind soil particles together, and dampen soil temperature extremes and daily fluxes. (Final at p. 100-101).

**219.8(a)(2)(iii) Water quality.** Thinning as provided by the amendment would have an adverse, short-term, negligible impact on water quality because some thinning would result in commercial haul on forest roads that may contribute sediment to streams and impact water quality. Thinning would also contribute to beneficial, short to long-term, minor to moderate effects on water quality because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to water quality (Final EA at p. 81-82).

**219.8(a)(3) Riparian areas.** Thinning as provided by the amendment would have beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on streams because thinning in some areas would promote hardwoods, providing more suitable beaver food and habitat and increasing opportunities for successful beaver re-introduction as conducted by Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WA DFW). Successful beaver reintroduction would promote water storage and longer stream flow (Final EA at p. 82).

**219.8(b)(1) Social, cultural, and economic conditions.** Thinning as provided by the amendment would have beneficial, short-term, minor to moderate effects on social conditions by reducing fire hazards in the wildland urban interface (WUI) and along major access routes in the project area (FS Roads 43 and 4340). These actions would reduce risk from wildfires and provide more suppression opportunities, contributing to increased sustainability of local communities in the WUI (Final EA at p. 173). Thinning would also contribute to a beneficial, short-term, minor effect on economic conditions because thinning and prescribed burning would provide employment opportunities and merchantable timber for processing at regional mills (Final EA at p. 323).

**219.8(b)(3) Multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner.** Thinning as provided by the amendment would have a beneficial, long-term, moderate effect on range because thinning in deer winter range cover would promote more open stand structure and increase in forage that would be available as transitory range

(Final EA at p. 274). Thinning would also contribute to a beneficial, short-term, minor effect on multiple uses that contribute to local, regional, and national economies in a sustainable manner because, as mentioned above, thinning would provide employment opportunities and merchantable timber for processing at regional mills (Final EA at p. 323).

**219.9(a)(1) Ecosystem integrity.** Thinning as provided by the amendment would have a beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effect on terrestrial ecosystems because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments in deer winter range cover would contribute to the sustainability of thermal cover and other vegetation on the landscape by promoting low-intensity wildfire behavior with less canopy fire. Treatments would maintain and restore stand structure, composition, and arrangement that would be less susceptible to stand-replacing wildfires that could extensively damage and reduce vegetation (including thermal cover) on the landscape (Final EA at p. 228).

Thinning would also have a beneficial, short to long-term, minor to moderate effect on terrestrial ecosystems by creating forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns similar to historic conditions. In doing so, thinning would help maintain or restore ecosystem characteristics similar to historical conditions that are more conducive to low-severity wildfire and less vulnerable to insect and disease outbreak, which would help maintain the desired ecosystem on the landscape to maintain the sustainability of the landscape (Final EA at p. 136-137).

**219.9(a)(2)(i) Key characteristics associated with terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem types.**

Thinning as provided by the amendment would have an adverse, short-term, negligible impact on key characteristics associated with aquatic ecosystems because, as discussed in 219.8(a)(2)(iii), it would result in some commercial haul on forest roads that may contribute sediment to streams and impact water quality. Thinning would also have a beneficial, long-term, minor to moderate effects on water quality, a key characteristics associated with aquatic ecosystems, because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to water quality. (Final EA at p. 81-82).

Thinning would have beneficial, long-term, moderate effects on key characteristics associated with terrestrial ecosystem types by increasing community heterogeneity and species diversity (Final EA at p. 255).

Thinning would have an adverse, minor, long-term effect on snag habitat used by cavity excavators and other species due to minor loss of snags that are felled as hazard trees in units. This would be countered by a beneficial, long-term, minor effect on snag habitat as thinning would contribute to acceleration of growth of large trees which will become large snags. Thinning would also have a beneficial, short-term, minor effect on forage available for mule deer by opening up the tree canopy and allowing more sunlight and precipitation to reach the ground, resulting in more vegetation that provides more browse for deer. Increases in forage levels contribute to greater chance for winter survival. With respect to habitat connectivity, thinning

would cause forested stands to be more open as a result of thinning, resulting in an adverse, short- to medium-term, minor effect on connectivity for species that prefer more closed habitat, and a beneficial, short- to medium-term, minor effect on connectivity for species that prefer more open habitat. (Final EA at p. 229).

**219.9(a)(2)(iii) Diversity of native tree species.** Thinning would have a beneficial, long-term, moderate effect on the diversity of native tree species because it would promote aspen health and vigor by removing competing conifer encroachment that suppresses aspen sprouts and overtops and kills the aspen overstory though vegetative competition for lights and soil resources (Shepperd et al., 2001a; Jones et al., 2005) (Final EA at p. 255).

**219.9(b)(1) Additional species-specific plan components.**

The following Threatened or Endangered species are present and/or have habitat in the project area; the effects described apply only to the thinning that would occur as a result of the amendment:

Wolves and grizzly bear: Thinning would cause an adverse, short-term, negligible effect because thinning may temporarily displace prey species (deer) and reduce cover for prey species in some areas, although adequate cover would remain. Thinning would not degrade habitat for these species. Thinning would cause a beneficial, short- to long-term, minor effect to grizzly bears because thinning would open up forested stands and encourage growth of forage for prey species (deer) (Final EA at p. 229).

Northern spotted owl: Of the nesting, roosting, and foraging (NRF) habitat that lies within deer winter range cover, 23 acres would be slightly degraded, but not downgraded by commercial thinning. Thinning would cause an adverse, short- to medium-term, minor effects on suitable NRF habitat because thinning would degrade habitat by reducing canopy cover. Thinning would cause beneficial, long-term, moderate effects for NRF because thinning and associated prescribed fire activities would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to these species and their habitat. In addition, thinning would promote habitat with large trees suitable for spotted owl. (Final EA at p. 229-230).

Designated Critical Habitat for Lynx: Beneficial, short to medium-term, minor effect on critical habitat for lynx because thinning would reduce forested stand density and encourage growth of forage for prey species (snowshoe hare) (Final EA at p. 229).

Spring Chinook, summer steelhead, and bull trout: Thinning as allowed by the amendment would have an adverse, short-term, negligible effect on habitat for these species because log haul traffic associated with commercial thinning would cross streams on roads and contribute some sediment to streams. Thinning would have beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on habitat used by these species because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks

and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to these habitats (Final EA at p.82).

The following Region 6 Regional Forester Sensitive Species are present in the Mission project area:

Gray flycatcher: Thinning would cause an adverse, short-term, minor effect on habitat because of disturbance from thinning activities, a temporary increase in open road density, and minor shrub loss. Thinning would create a beneficial, long-term, moderate effect on habitat for this species because thinning would contribute to increased availability and quality of shrub habitat (Final EA at p.230).

White-headed woodpecker: Thinning would cause an adverse, short to long-term, minor effect on snag habitat because some snags that are considered hazardous trees would be felled during commercial thinning operations; and beneficial, long-term, minor effects on snag habitat because post-thinning prescribed fire operations would create snags, and thinning would contribute to the growth of larger trees that would eventually become larger snags. (Final EA at p.230).

Western gray squirrel: Thinning would cause an adverse, short-term, minor effect on habitat because thinning would reduce arboreal travel opportunities or nests; vehicle traffic associated with activities increase the potential for mortality; and fungi foods would be less abundant; and a beneficial, long-term, minor effects because thinning would increase food resources, and, along with associated prescribed fire treatments, would help protect habitat from effects of uncharacteristic wildfire. (Final EA at p.230-231).

Northern Goshawk: Thinning would cause adverse, short- to long-term, minor effects on habitat because thinning would reduce canopy closure, thereby reducing suitable nesting habitat; and would result in the loss of some prey that use snags that may be felled as hazard trees. Thinning would cause beneficial, short- to long-term, minor effects on habitat because thinning would create more open stands with more diverse vegetation structure, with an increase in prey availability and diversity. Noncommercial thinning in the understory tree layer would reduce understory density and reduce the risk of wildfire and insect activity which could destroy nests and post-fledgling areas. Thinning would also accelerate growth of larger trees used for habitat. (Final EA at p.231).

West-slope cutthroat and interior redband rainbow trout: Thinning as allowed by the amendment would have an adverse, short-term, negligible effect on habitat for these species because log haul traffic associated with commercial thinning would cross streams on roads and contribute sediment to streams. Thinning would have beneficial, short- to long-term, minor to moderate effects on habitat used by these species because thinning and associated prescribed fire treatments would develop forest vegetation structure, overstory and understory species composition, and spatial patterns that are more likely to withstand insect and disease outbreaks and would be more likely to experience low-severity wildfire behavior and effects with reduced impacts to these habitats. (Final EA at p.82).

# Chapter 4: List of Agencies and Persons Consulted

The Forest Service consulted the following individuals, Federal, state and local agencies and tribes during the development of this environmental assessment. Details regarding public involvement and collaboration are included in Chapter 1 of this document.

## 4.1 Agencies

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – National Marine Fisheries Service  
Washington State Historic Preservation Office  
Washington State Natural Heritage Program  
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Washington Department of Natural Resources

## 4.2 Tribes and Local Government

Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation  
Yakama Nation  
Okanogan County Commissioners

## 4.3 Individuals that Commented

*Note: the following list contains names of those who commented during the scoping period. The final EA will contain the list of those who commented during the 30-day comment periods following the release of the preliminary and revised preliminary EAs.*

Dick Artley  
Avedvan Yana  
Marjorie Barker  
Gus Bekker, El Sendero Backcountry Ski and Snowshoe Club  
Ted. E. Bear  
Denise Boggs, Conservation Congress  
Ronda Bradeen  
James and Gail Brennan  
Clare Bresnahan  
Donna (Pema) Bresnahan, Libby Creek Watershed Association

Perry Bresnahan  
Karen Capuder  
Theresa Casagram  
David Chavey-Reynaud  
Paul Christen  
Alea Christiansen  
Carol Christiansen  
Jon Christiansen  
Miranda Christiansen  
Derek Churchill  
Elizabeth Clawson  
Lee Cobert  
Maggie Coon, Methow Valley Citizens Council  
Joanne Cooper  
Kitty Craig, The Wilderness Society  
Susan Crampton  
Rocklynn Culp  
Brian dePlace, Methow Valley Citizens Council  
Surya DiModica  
William DiModica  
Steve Dixon  
Rosalee Dotson  
Marlene FirthAndy Floyd  
Marla Fox, Wildearth Guardians  
Chris Frue  
Michael Garrity, Alliance for the Wild Rockies  
Ross Gilliland  
David Gottlieb  
Olga Gottlieb     Nava Gross  
Laura Gunnip  
Daniel H Russell  
Holly Hall  
Jim Hammer  
Tom Hammond, North Cascades Conservation Council  
Julie Hentrich  
Nick Hershenow     Steve Hirsch  
Kathleen Hirschstein  
Katherine Hollis, The Mountaineers  
Dave Hopkins and Susan Spier  
Andrea Imler, Washington Trails Association  
Laird J. Lucas, Advocates for the West  
Mike Jauregui  
Don Johnson, Libby Creek Watershed Association  
Julie Johnson

Pat Jones  
Jeff Juel, Sierra Club Upper Columbia River Group  
Todd Kammers  
Broehe Karpenko  
Robert Kendall  
Kristen Kirkby  
Daniel Kirkpatrick  
Galen Kirkpatrick  
Bryan Kolk  
Yvonne Kraus, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance  
Carla Lange  
Larson Geoffery  
Rachel Macmorran  
JoAnn Metzler  
Peter Miliczky  
Peter Morrison, Craig Olson and Stephen Ralph, Pacific Biodiversity  
Jerry Moss  
Rachel Nesvig  
Judy Northcott-Walters  
David Notter  
Patricia Notter  
Nancy O'Neil Tom Partin, American Forest Resource Council  
Chloe Prendergast  
Susan PrichardTerry Rabourn  
Richard and Valerie Rapport  
Bob Rivard, Buttermilk Firewise Community  
Harry Romberg, Washington Chapter of the Sierra Club  
Barry Rosenberg  
Paul Ruprecht, Western Watershed Project  
Eve Russell  
Patricia Sloan  
Xavier Sonnerat  
Isabelle Spohn  
Craig Stahl, Methow Valley Snowmobile Association Tom Stahl and Patricia Michl  
Lindsey Swope, Emma Liles, and Victor Liles, Skaltitude Retreat  
Dave and Ann Tate  
Robert Thomas  
Bernard & Diane Thurlow  
Seth Tompkins Tom Uniak, Washington Wild  
Unknown (illegible)  
Lynx Vilden  
Jon Vresacker Betty Wagoner  
Bryan Ward  
Paul Ward and Lloyd McGee, North Central Washington Forest Health Collaborative



Jen Watkins and George Wooten, Conservation Northwest  
Bill White  
Jeff WilliamsKen Willis  
Marlies Wirerenga, WildEarth Guardians

## Appendix A: Proposed Thinning and Prescribed Fire Treatments

This appendix contains parameters and prescriptions applicable to proposed commercial and non-commercial thinning treatments and prescribed fire treatments in the Mission Restoration project area. Proposed thinning and prescribed fire treatment units are displayed in Appendix F. Figure 139 lists the thinning prescription names in alphabetical order, summarizing the thinning and prescribed fire treatments and their relationship to the project’s purpose and needs. A more detailed description of each thinning prescription follows.

**Figure 139. Mission Thinning and Prescribed Fire Prescription Summary**

Thinning Prescription	Thinning Prescription Summary	Prescribed Fire Prescription <sup>1</sup>	Total Acres	Purpose
Aspen Release Thin (ASPEN) (commercial)	Thin conifers up to 24" DBH with mechanized equipment. Thin remaining trees ≤8" DBH with chainsaws. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'	MP: 0 ac UB: 135 ac HP: 25 ac Landings: 16	160 ac	P&N#3: Vegetation Composition & Structure  P&N #5: Sensitive Plants & Unique Habitats.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release aspen from conifer encroachment.</li> <li>• Stimulate &amp; diversify development of aspen.</li> </ul>
Conifer Girdling for Aspen Restoration (CGAR) (Noncommercial)	Thin conifers ≤10" DBH in 15 – 30' circles around aspen trees with chainsaw. Girdle conifers 10 – 21" DBH with chainsaws.	HP: 47 ac UB: 24 ac	71 ac	P&N #5: Sensitive Plants & Unique habitats  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Release aspen from conifer encroachment.</li> <li>• Stimulate &amp; diversify development of aspen.</li> </ul>
Dry Forest Restoration Thin (DFR) (commercial)	Thin conifers up to 24" DBH with mechanized equipment. Thin remaining trees ≤8" DBH with chainsaws. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'.	MP: 463 ac UB: 817 ac Landings: 128	1280 ac	P&N #1: Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration  P&N #3: Vegetation Composition & Structure  P&N #4: Wildlife Habitat  P&N#6: Wildfire Hazard in WUI  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restore structure, composition, and pattern of conifers in frequent fire interval forests. Accelerate growth of and protection of larger trees. Increase stream flow.</li> </ul>

Thinning Prescription	Thinning Prescription Summary	Prescribed Fire Prescription <sup>1</sup>	Total Acres	Purpose
Dry Forest Restoration – Dwarf Mistletoe Thin (DFDMT) (commercial)	Thin conifers up to 24" DBH with mechanized equipment. Thin remaining trees $\leq$ 8" DBH with chainsaws. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'.	MP: 87 ac UB: 197 ac Landings: 28	284 ac	P&N #3: Vegetation Composition & Structure.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore structure, composition, and pattern of conifers in frequent fire interval forests. Reduce Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection. Accelerate growth of and protection of large trees.</li> </ul>
Ladder Fuel Reduction Thin (LFR) (Noncommercial)	Thin conifers $\leq$ 8" DBH with chainsaws. Thinning would occur in 15 – 30' circles around trees >8" DBH. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'. No felling of trees within IRA (see figure 121).	HP: 1154 ac UB: 5346 ac	6500 ac. outside of commercial thin units	P&N #3: Vegetation Composition & Structure P&N #4: Wildlife Habitat P&N #6: Wildfire Hazard in WUI  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restore stand structure, composition, and pattern in frequent-fire return interval forests.</li> <li>Accelerate growth of and protect larger trees.</li> <li>Reduce risk of crown fire initiation.</li> <li>Increase public/firefighter safety and suppression options.</li> </ul>
Moist Forest Thin (MFT) (commercial)	Thin conifers up to 24" DBH with mechanized equipment. Thin remaining trees $\leq$ 8" DBH with chainsaws. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'.	MP: 67 ac UB: 3 ac Landings: 7	70 ac	P&N #3: Vegetation Composition & Structure (Units 26 & 27 = 36 acres) P&N #4: Wildlife Habitat (Units 1 & 65 = 34 acres)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain large trees and structural diversity. Accelerate development of large trees in dense multi-story (NSO) habitat. Reduce risk of crown fire initiation in NSO habitat.</li> </ul>
Plantation Thin (TSI) (Noncommercial)	Thin conifers up to 8" DBH <sup>4</sup> with a chainsaw. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'	HP: 1653 ac HP & UB: 660 ac MP & UB: 85 ac	1738 ac	P&N #3: Vegetation Composition & Structure; P&N #4: Wildlife Habitat  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce stand density. Accelerate growth of larger trees. (Promote early seral species while maintaining species diversity).</li> </ul>

Thinning Prescription	Thinning Prescription Summary	Prescribed Fire Prescription <sup>1</sup>	Total Acres	Purpose
Post and Pole Thin (PP) (Noncommercial)	Thin conifers up to 13" DBH with chainsaws; remove trees by hand (no mechanized equipment – personal use). Thin conifers greater than 2' tall and ≤8" DBH with chainsaws. Thinning would occur in 15 – 30' circles around trees >8" DBH. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'.	UB: 36 ac	36 ac	P&N #3 Vegetation Composition & Structure
Variable Retention Regeneration (VRR) (commercial)	Harvest conifers up to 24" DBH with mechanized equipment. Fell remaining undesirable trees up to 8" DBH with whip felling. Prune remaining conifers up to 6'. Replant post-prescribed fire treatment	UB: 59 ac	59 ac	P&N #3: Vegetation Composition & structure.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote early seral species and regenerate a new cohort of trees in the majority of the unit while maintain components of structural diversity.</li> </ul>
Wetland Thin (WT) (Noncommercial)	Thin conifers up to 8" DBH with chainsaws in Black Pine Meadows and Mission Pond	HP:22 ac	22 ac	P&N #4: Wildlife Habitat. P&N #5: Sensitive Plants & Unique Habitats.  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce conifer encroachment in wetlands.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> AC = acres; HP = Hand pile and burn piles; UB = Underburn; MP = Machine pile and burn piles; DBH = Diameter at Breast Height

## Commercial Thinning Parameters and Prescriptions

### General Commercial Thinning Parameters

Proposed commercial harvest treatments would follow the following parameters:

1. Conifers 7 to 9 inches DBH (merchantable diameters for Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine respectively) up to 24 inches diameter at breast height (DBH) would be harvested with the following provisions (except in Riparian reserves as noted below):
  - a. All trees greater than 24 inches DBH would be retained
  - b. Trees 21 inches DBH and larger with an estimated age of 150 years or greater (based on tree appearance criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be retained.
  - c. Trees 21 to 24 inches DBH with an estimated age of less than 150 years would occasionally be harvested to release a larger (more preferred species) tree, reduce dwarf mistletoe infection, or reduce conifer encroachment in aspen stands (except in areas with field verified old forest multistory structure located in unit 21) when consistent with treatment objectives.

- d. Thin conifers from below retaining trees among the largest, most vigorous, and most preferred conifer species present to meet treatment objectives.
  - e. Conifer species preference for retention, unless specified otherwise, is as follows in descending order: ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir (based on fire and insect resiliency).
  - f. Remove all Douglas-fir, subalpine fir and Engelmann spruce less than 21 inches DBH within 50 feet of the last indication of infected trees within root disease pockets.
2. Target numbers and preferred species of leave trees would be applied to site conditions within the harvest unit and would vary based on available merchantable timber volume and plant association group and would be reduced based on root disease and dwarf mistletoe levels. Dominant prescriptions are identified in Figure 141.
  3. Conifers less than merchantable diameter which exceed desired tree density levels and are not needed to meet resource management objectives also would be removed at the time of logging if favorable market conditions exist.
  4. Conifers less than merchantable diameter remaining following harvest which exceed desired tree density levels and are not needed to meet resource management objectives would be felled in a ladder fuel reduction treatment (see Ladder Fuel Reduction thin description below for specifications). Conifers felled post-harvest would be made available for firewood gathering where consistent with fuels management and stand treatment objectives and the current firewood policy.
  5. Harvest treatments when conducted in Riparian Reserves would occur to benefit and restore aquatic resources. Regeneration harvest would not occur in Riparian Reserves. All trees 18 inches DBH and larger would be retained in Riparian Reserves.
  6. Harvest treatments in Riparian Reserves located in harvest units 53 - 57 would be conducted as follows to meet aquatic resource management objectives:
    - a. Twenty to 30 conifers per acre on average would be retained in accordance with the Dry Forest Restoration Thin treatment criteria (described below) to reduce conifer competition with existing deciduous vegetation and promote the establishment of additional deciduous trees and shrubs.
    - b. Harvest would occur an additional 25 feet closer to intermittent stream channels than standard harvest buffer design features described for the project. Ground based harvest equipment would be restricted from operating in the additional 25 feet wide treatment area.
    - c. Riparian Reserve conifers located between intermittent streams and the boundaries of harvest units 53 - 57 would be hand-felled toward the stream to add coarse woody debris into the channel or girdled to retain an average live conifer stocking level of the largest 20 to 30 trees per acre to reduce conifer competition with existing deciduous vegetation and promote the establishment of additional deciduous trees and shrubs. No commercial harvest would occur in this zone.
  7. Harvest treatments would not include the removal of snags, although some may be felled for safety reasons and left on site.

## **Commercial Thinning Prescriptions**

### **Aspen Release (Aspen)** (8 units/ 160 acres total)

Conifers of merchantable diameter would be harvested to release existing aspen trees from conifer encroachment and promote the establishment of aspen and other hardwood regeneration. This treatment would be applied to reduce conifer competition for sunlight and soil moisture, improve the vigor of existing aspen trees, and stimulate sprouting of new aspen stems where conifers have invaded or are shading out aspen clones.

Conifer removal for aspen release treatment would be implemented within existing aspen clones (defined as five or more healthy aspen trees greater than or equal to five feet tall located within a 15 foot radius) and a 50 foot wide buffer located adjacent to aspen clone perimeters. Desired treatment objectives include 10 percent or less canopy closure contributed by conifers following treatment within aspen stands and the adjacent buffer (Shepherd, et al. 2006; Swanson, et al. 2010). Implementation of this objective would be achieved by retaining a maximum stocking level of approximately ten merchantable sized conifers per acre following treatment within aspen stands and the buffer. Ponderosa pine is the preferred conifer species to retain within aspen stands and the adjacent buffer. Douglas-fir and subalpine fir are the least preferred conifer species to retain within aspen stands and the adjacent buffer. The largest conifers of the most preferred species present would be favored for retention. Conifers would be retained in clumps when possible to attain conifer canopy closure objectives. Live defective conifers with favorable characteristics for wildlife habitat would be retained within and adjacent to aspen stands. Douglas-fir and subalpine fir 21 to 24 inches DBH with an estimated age of less than 150 years (based on criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be harvested where needed to achieve desired conifer stocking levels except in areas with field verified old forest multistory structure located in unite 21. All conifers larger than 24 inches DBH and 21 to 24 inches DBH with an estimated age of 150 or more years would be retained in aspen clones and the adjacent buffers even if conifer stocking exceeds the desired maximum retention level. No aspen or other deciduous broadleaf trees would be harvested.

Conifer stands within aspen release treatment unit boundaries which are located outside of aspen clones and more than 50 feet away from aspen clone perimeters would be treated with the Dry Forest Restoration Thin (DFR) or Dry Forest Thin with Dwarf Mistletoe Reduction (DFDMT) harvest treatments, which are described below, depending on existing stand conditions.

Non-merchantable conifers remaining following harvest would be felled in aspen clones and adjacent 50 foot wide buffers to reduce competition with existing aspen stems and promote expansion of aspen clones.

### **Dry Forest Restoration Thin (DFR)** (49 units/ 1,280 acres total)

Conifers of merchantable diameter would be harvested to maintain and restore elements of historic forest stand structures including tree density, large and old trees, species composition, and spatial patterns (including tree clumps, individual trees, and canopy openings) to increase stand and landscape resiliency to natural disturbances including forest insect attacks, tree diseases, and wildfires. Desired residual tree density, species composition, and spatial patterns within stands are derived from data collected in reference stands located in the eastern Washington Cascades (Nature Conservancy et al. 2016; Ohlson and Schellhaas. 2002; Ohlson 1996) and previously implemented projects on the Methow Valley Ranger District. This treatment would be applied primarily in densely stocked mixed conifer species or ponderosa

pine stands with single or multiple canopy layers (stem exclusion closed canopy, young forest multistory, or understory re-initiation stand structures) and sufficient numbers of healthy trees in the upper canopy layer to achieve desired density, species composition, and spatial pattern of residual trees. The majority of trees in stands with this proposed treatment are less than 150 years old and large (> 25 inches DBH) and old trees ( $\geq$  150 years) may be nonexistent to relatively abundant. Dwarf mistletoe and root disease may be present in individual trees or small pockets and are not widespread throughout treated stands.

Figure 140 displays the desired range of post-harvest tree density levels of residual merchantable sized conifers and 5 inch DBH or larger aspen trees for proposed dry forest restoration thin harvest units. Anticipated tree mortality caused by post-harvest fuels treatments would be taken into consideration during development of timber marking guidelines to achieve desired live tree density levels. Plant association groups in the Mission analysis area are described in the *Field Guide for Forested Plant Associations of the Wenatchee National Forest* (Lillybridge, et al. 1995). Target numbers of trees to remain will vary within harvest units based on plant association group and would be reduced based on root disease and the presence of dwarf mistletoe.

**Figure 140. Mission Desired Tree Stocking Levels in Dry Forest Restoration Thin Harvest Units**

Plant Association Group(s)	Approximate average number of trees per acre retained
Hot-dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir	20 - 30
Warm-dry and warm-mesic Douglas-fir	30 - 50
Cool-dry Douglas-fir and subalpine fir	40 - 50

The desired spatial pattern or horizontal arrangement of residual trees within stands can best be described in terms of individual trees, tree clumps, and canopy openings (Churchill et al. 2014; Larson and Churchill 2012; Larson et al. 2012). A clump of trees is defined as two or more trees in close enough proximity that a portion of their crowns are interlocking. Approximately 65 percent of residual trees in dry forest restoration thin harvest units would be retained in clumps of various size with a spacing of 20 feet or less between leave tree boles. A leave tree is considered part of a clump if the bole of the tree is located 20 feet or less horizontal distance from at least one other leave tree bole. Approximately 35 percent of residual trees would be retained as individual trees located more than 20 feet away from all other leave trees. To promote an irregular distribution of residual trees, average tree stocking and clump target levels would be achieved over the entire area of a treatment unit rather than on every acre. Canopy openings would be comprised of those areas where the distance between residual tree boles is greater than 3 times the maximum “clumped” tree distance (60 feet). Canopy openings, generally expected to be one third acre in size or less, would occur on approximately 20 percent of treatment areas.

Generally, the largest and most vigorous conifers (with regard to height, bole diameter and live crown volume) of the most preferred species present in a given area would be retained to achieve the target or desired stocking levels and spatial pattern of residual trees. All trees

greater than 24 inches DBH would be retained. All trees 21 inches DBH and larger with an estimated age of 150 years or greater (based on criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be retained and vigorous trees would be released from competition with adjacent younger and smaller trees. Live defective trees and dying trees would be retained as needed to provide cavity dependent habitat. Complex patches which include large snags, live defective trees, large and old trees, or large dwarf mistletoe infected trees would be retained. No aspen or other deciduous broadleaf trees would be harvested. Aspen clones one quarter acre and larger in (includes adult trees and suckers) size included within dry forest restoration thin harvest units would receive the previously described Aspen Release (Aspen) harvest treatment (see Aspen Release description below for specifications). Aspen trees of at least 5 inches DBH would count towards individual and clump targets.

**Dry Forest Restoration Thin with Dwarf Mistletoe Reduction (DFDMT)** (10 units/ 284 acres total)

This treatment is similar to the previously described dry forest restoration thin treatment with an emphasis on reducing Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection levels in treated stands. This treatment would be applied in mixed conifer species stands comprised primarily of trees less than 150 years old with sufficient healthy ponderosa pines, Douglas-firs, and other conifer species to achieve desired density levels in the majority of the stand and moderate to high levels of Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection in other portions of the stand. These stands typically have multiple canopy layers including areas with densely stocked trees, openings, and widely spaced trees. Large (> 25 inches DBH) and old ( $\geq$  150 years) Douglas-fir and ponderosa pines may be present in some stands.

The Dry Forest Restoration Thin harvest treatment would be applied throughout areas that are adequately stocked with vigorous and disease-free trees to meet density, species composition, and spatial pattern treatment objectives. Young and mature trees (with an estimated age of less than 150 years) 20 inches DBH and smaller infected with dwarf mistletoe would be harvested throughout treatment units to achieve dry forest restoration thin tree retention objectives (including heterogeneous spatial patterning of residual trees) and reduce the proportion of infected trees in treated stands. Vigorous trees with low infection levels (dwarf mistletoe infection ratings generally of 2 or less; Hawksworth 1977) would be retained where needed to achieve tree retention objectives. Infected trees 21 to 24 inches DBH with an estimated age of less than 150 years would be harvested on a case by case basis consistent with stand treatment objectives. All trees 21 inches DBH and larger with an estimated age of 150 or more years (based on criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be retained and vigorous trees not infected with dwarf mistletoe would be released from competition with adjacent younger trees. Aspen clones one quarter acre and larger in size included within dry forest restoration thin harvest units would receive the previously described Aspen Release (Aspen) harvest treatment.

Treatment objectives include reducing future susceptibility to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe infection in treated stands. This includes shifting trees species composition towards ponderosa pine and other conifer species that are not susceptible to Douglas-fir dwarf mistletoe and confining infections in residual trees where possible. Infected trees 21 inches DBH and larger would be retained as isolated individuals or discrete clumps with the removal of smaller Douglas-firs located within 50 feet to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe (Schmitt 1997). Removal of suppressed, diseased or dwarf mistletoe susceptible trees may result in post-harvest conifer stocking levels up to approximately 25 percent less than the respective dry forest restoration thin (DFR) desired residual tree stocking numbers displayed above. Canopy



openings larger than two acres created by harvest and post-harvest fuels treatments would be assessed to determine if reforestation with pines or other non-susceptible species is needed to meet treatment objectives.

**Moist Forest Thin (MFT)** (4 units/ 70 acres total)

Conifers of merchantable diameter would be harvested to maintain or promote the development of large trees and multistory stand structure in two stands totaling an estimated 38 acres (units 1 and 65) currently providing or with potential to provide northern spotted owl habitat. This treatment would be applied primarily in densely stocked mixed conifer stands with multiple canopy layers (young forest multistory stand structure) where the majority of trees are less than 150 years old and large and old trees are present in the overstory canopy layer. Treatment objectives include retaining multistory stand structure while reducing stand density to 60% or greater canopy closure with variable thinning from below to remove smaller subordinate trees which are competing with larger trees present in treated stands. All trees 18 inches DBH and larger would be retained. Areas comprised primarily of trees less than 18 inches DBH would be thinned to retain vigorous trees, reduce but not necessarily eliminate dwarf mistletoe infection, and provide growing space for residual trees to develop into larger trees. The preferred spatial pattern for tree retention would include approximately 70% or greater of trees retained in clumps of variable size comprised primarily of Douglas-firs and 30% or less individual trees. Vigorous old ponderosa pine trees 21 inches DBH and larger with an estimated age of 150 years or greater (based on criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be treated with release felling to remove trees less than 18 inches DBH with crowns located within the pine tree canopy dripline. Trees growing within the canopy dripline of declining pines (less than 30% live crown ratio) 21 inches DBH and larger would be retained to promote clump development around future snag recruits. Complex patches which include large snags, live defective trees, large and old trees, or large dwarf mistletoe infected trees would be retained. Canopy openings created by tree removal would be limited to one quarter acre and smaller in size.

Conifers of merchantable diameter would be harvested to reduce subalpine fir/Engelmann spruce forest cover and promote Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine forest cover in two stands totaling an estimated 37 acres (units 26 and 27). This treatment would be applied in mesic and dry mixed conifer stands stocked with subalpine fir, Engelmann spruce, Douglas-fir, and lodgepole pine trees in multiple canopy layers (young forest multistory stand structure). Portions of these stands have experienced lodgepole pine mortality caused by mountain pine beetle attacks. With the exception of subalpine fir, the largest and most vigorous conifers (with regard to height, bole diameter and live crown volume) of the most preferred species present would be retained in clumps of various sizes to achieve the target or desired residual stocking level of approximately 40 to 50 trees per acre. Tree species retention preference in descending order is Douglas-fir followed by ponderosa pine, Engelmann spruce and lodgepole pine. Standing dead and down lodgepole pines in excess of snag and large woody debris retention objectives would be removed for firewood or other forest products. All trees greater than 24 inches DBH and all trees 21 inches DBH and larger with an estimated age of 150 years or greater (based on criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be retained. Live defective trees and dying trees would be retained as needed to provide cavity dependent habitat. Complex patches which include large snags, live defective trees, large and old trees, or large dwarf mistletoe infected trees would be retained. No aspen or other deciduous broadleaf trees would be harvested. Aspen clones one quarter acre and larger in size included within harvest units 26

and 27 would receive the Aspen Release (Aspen) harvest treatment previously described in this document.

**Variable Retention Regeneration (VRR)** (2 units/ 59 acres total)

Conifers of merchantable diameter would be harvested to simulate mixed to high severity fire, regenerate a new cohort of early seral tree species, and consolidate and increase the patch size of adjacent early seral forest vegetation while retaining forest patches, tree clumps, and individual trees for structural and biological diversity. All trees larger than 24 inches DBH and all trees 21 to 24 inches DBH with an estimated age of 150 years and older (based on criteria described in Van Pelt 2008) would be retained. This treatment would be applied primarily in stands with multiple canopy layers (young forest multistory stand structure), dwarf mistletoe in the overstory and understory canopy layers, and where a high proportion of trees have poor crowns, disease, or other conditions that would prevent the development of stand structures comprised of large ponderosa pines or Douglas-firs.

Variable retention regeneration (VRR) treatment objectives would include retention of at least 15 percent of the forested area associated with each treatment unit. Seventy percent of the area retained would be comprised of forest patches 0.5 to 2.5 acres in size and 30 percent of the area retained would be comprised of individual trees and tree clumps less than 0.5 acres in size. Retention patches, individual trees, and clumps would include the largest, oldest, decadent or leaning trees, and hard snags present in each treatment unit (USDA and USDI. 1994). Vigorous ponderosa pines and disease free Douglas-firs would be the preferred trees for retention as individual trees and tree clumps after the previously listed retention criteria are satisfied.

Following harvest, whip felling would occur with chainsaws to remove all remaining diseased, damaged, or suppressed conifers eight DBH and smaller would be felled to prepare the site for prescribed burning and reforestation. Reforestation would be accomplished by planting ponderosa pine seedlings grown from locally adapted seed to ensure prompt establishment of ponderosa pine regeneration, natural seeding of other conifer species, and suckering of aspen stems from clones within regeneration harvest units. Conifer seedlings would be planted in microsites associated with tree stumps, down logs, and other shade providing woody debris at an approximate rate of 150 seedlings per acre with an estimated survival rate of 70 percent. Regeneration establishment would be monitored following planting and certified within five years of harvest completion. The minimum acceptable stocking level for reforestation certification is 100 vigorous conifer seedlings per acre.

**Non-Commercial Thinning Prescriptions**

**Conifer Girdling for Aspen Restoration (CGAR)** (9 units/ 71 acres total)

Non-commercial thinning and girdling treatment of conifers to release existing aspen trees from conifer encroachment and promote the establishment of aspen and other hardwood regeneration. This treatment would be applied to reduce conifer competition for sunlight and soil moisture, improve the vigor of existing aspen clones, and stimulate sprouting of new aspen stems where conifers have invaded or are shading out aspen stands.

Conifer thinning and girdling for aspen restoration would be implemented within existing aspen clones (defined as five or more healthy aspen trees greater than or equal to five feet tall located within a 15 foot radius) and in a 50 foot wide buffer located adjacent to aspen clone perimeters. Desired treatment objectives include 10 percent or less canopy closure contributed by conifers

following treatment within aspen clones and the adjacent buffer (Shepherd, et al. 2006; Swanson, et al. 2010). Implementation of this objective would be achieved by retaining a maximum stocking level of approximately ten conifers per acre larger than 10 inches DBH following treatment within aspen clones and the buffer. Conifers 10 inches DBH and smaller would be felled with chainsaws (no ground disturbing mechanized equipment) to reduce conifer encroachment. Conifers larger than 10 inches DBH and less than 21 inches DBH would be girdled with chainsaws and left standing to attain desired conifer canopy closure treatment objectives. All conifers 21 inches DBH and larger would be retained in aspen clones and the adjacent buffers even if conifer stocking exceeds the desired maximum retention level. No aspen or other deciduous broadleaf trees would be harvested.

**Ladder Fuel Reduction Thin (LFR)** (39 units/ 6,500 acres total)

Non-commercial thinning treatment of young conifers to break up the vertical continuity of fuels from the forest floor (surface fuel) to the overstory canopy layer, reduce competition with larger conifers, and to reduce conifer competition with aspen trees. Conifers less than or equal to eight inches DBH and greater than two feet tall infected with dwarf mistletoe or located within 15 to 30 feet of conifers larger than 8 inches DBH or vigorous aspen trees greater than five feet tall would be felled with chainsaws (no ground disturbing mechanized equipment). Branches on live conifers remaining after thinning would be pruned to a height of six feet from ground level to further reduce fuel ladders from the ground to the tree canopy layer. No aspen or other broadleaf deciduous trees would be felled.

**Post and Pole Thin (PP)** (2 units/ 36 acres total)

Conifers less than 13 inches DBH located within 200 feet of roads open to the public would be felled with chainsaws and removed without ground disturbing mechanized equipment to provide posts and poles for personal use. This treatment would be applied in densely stocked mixed conifer stands comprised of Douglas-fir, lodgepole pine, and ponderosa pine trees with multiple canopy layers (young forest multistory and understory re-initiation stand structures) where ladder fuel reduction thinning and post thinning prescribed fire treatments would also be applied (see Ladder Fuel Reduction thin description below for specifications). Lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir trees less than 13 inches DBH would be removed to reduce competition with larger trees and create small canopy openings (generally one acre and smaller in size).

**Young Plantation Thin (TSI)** (63 units/ 1,738 acres total)

Non-commercial thinning treatment of young conifer plantations established in previous regeneration harvest treatment areas to maintain existing overstory trees, accelerate the growth of residual trees, and reduce disease levels of residual trees. Conifers eight inches DBH and smaller would be felled with chainsaws (no ground disturbing mechanized equipment) to achieve the following desired residual tree stocking levels:

1. 120-150 trees per acre in treatment units with existing road access and slopes generally less than 35%.
2. 80-110 trees per acre in treatment units without road access or slopes generally exceeding 35%.

Trees among the largest and most vigorous conifer species present would be retained. Early seral conifers would be preferred for retention; however retention of conifer species diversity is desired. Thinning treatment would promote variable residual tree spacing and understory

vegetation diversity. Openings or areas with few residual conifers generally one third acre and smaller in size would be created on up to 30% of a treatment unit. Conifers (eight inches DBH and smaller) growing within 30 feet horizontal distance of vigorous overstory conifers (generally 16 inches DBH and larger) or dwarf mistletoe infected overstory trees would be felled to maintain overstory trees or to reduce the spread of dwarf mistletoe into susceptible understory trees. Conifers located within 20 feet of vigorous aspen trees greater than 5 feet tall would be felled. No aspen or other broadleaf deciduous trees would be felled.

### **Wetland Thin (WT)** (2 units/ 22 acres total)

Non-commercial thinning treatment of young conifers growing in wetlands located in Blackpine Meadows and around the perimeter of Mission Pond. Conifers 10 inches DBH and smaller would be felled with chainsaws (no ground disturbing mechanized equipment) to reduce conifer encroachment on wetland vegetation. No aspen or other broadleaf deciduous trees would be felled.

## **Summary of Proposed Thinning and Prescribed Fire Treatments**

### *Thinning Treatment Summary*

The treatments described in this section applies to both Alternatives 2 and 3.

- Non-commercial understory-only thinning treatments (TSI, LFR outside of commercial units and Wetland Thin) 8260 acres.
- Non-commercial overstory thinning with non-commercial understory treatments (PP, CGAR): 107 acres.
- Commercial overstory thinning with non-commercial understory treatments (includes post-harvest ladder fuel reduction or whip fell thinning): 1853 acres.
  - **Total thinning treatments: 10,220 acres.**

### *Prescribed Fire Treatment Summary*

- Hand piling and pile burning: 2900 acres. Hand piling and pile burning on 660 acres would be followed up by underburning.
- Machine piling and pile burning: 702 acres. All of these are in harvest units except for 85 acres in two Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) units. Machine piling and pile burning in these 85 acres would be followed by underburning.
- Underburning: 6617 acres. Of these, 660 acres would be treated first with hand piling and pile burning.
- Landings: 179 landings (about 0.1 acres (66' X 66') each).
- Maintenance underburning of previously treated areas: 6658 acres of units where underburning would occur would be evaluated for maintenance underburning about 10-15 years after the initial burn treatment. This total excludes 59 acres underburned after Variable Retention thinning prescription because these acres would have seedlings planted post-harvest that would be vulnerable to prescribed fire treatment at that time.

### *Prescribed Fire Treatment Descriptions*

1. Prescribed fires would be ignited by hand using equipment such as drip torches, fusees, propane torches; or aurally using a helicopter with a sphere machine or helitorch.

2. Machine piling (MP) would occur between spring and fall as needed by picking up materials off the ground with equipment such as an excavator with bucket/thumb. Piles would be between 4' X 4' up to 8' X 8' depending on distance from tree boles and drip lines. Slash mats would be required for machinery as described in the Appendix D. No machine piling would be allowed in Riparian Reserves except in two units as specified in Appendix D.
3. Initial underburn treatments would occur within approximately 1 – 3 years after the initial thinning treatment (depending on weather, funding, and smoke approval). Units where underburning is proposed would be evaluated within 10-15 years of the initial prescribed fire treatment and considered for maintenance underburning at that time. Internal resource review of maintenance burning would occur before implementation to assure consideration of any subsequent changes in site conditions and compliance with law or policy.
4. Fireline associated with underburning includes approximately 29.4 miles of hand fireline and 2.6 miles of machine fireline (created with an excavator or dozer with 3 – 5' blade/shovel).
5. Adaptive Management strategies for prescribed burning include:
  - a. Firewood collection would be encouraged where landing piles and scattered thinning debris are accessible from open roads, and where consistent with current firewood regulations. This activity would reduce emissions from prescribed burning and applies to approximately 179 gross acres on landings and any thinning units adjacent to open roads. Firewood collection would not be allowed from machine piles or hand piles. Chipping would be allowed when economically feasible where debris is collected at landings or accessible within approximately 50' from existing open roads. Chipped debris would be widely scattered on forest floor. This activity would reduce emissions from prescribed burning and applies to approximately 395 gross acres in 13 units. Biochar production from landing piles has been analyzed as an alternative to landing slash pile burning. Debris from thinning would be hand-piled and piles burned in some units as a substitute for underburning if underburning is curtailed by smoke emission restrictions. Where machine piling is proposed, if debris is too light for machine piling but still in need of fuel reduction, then debris would be hand-piled and piles burned. This would allow treatment of debris by alternative means if underburning were curtailed or machine piling unnecessary. This applies to 6,192 gross acres in 55 units.
  - c. Debris from thinning would be machine-piled and piles burned in some units as a substitute for underburning in mechanical thinning units if underburning is curtailed by smoke emission restrictions. This would allow treatment of debris by alternative means if underburning were curtailed. Applicable to 1153 gross acres in 53 units.

Figure 141. Dominant Vegetation treatments by unit, as described above. Thinning treatment abbreviations are described in Figure 139.

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
001	MFT	LFR	MP	LP	UB	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	8
001	MFT	LFR	UB	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	3
002	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	52
003	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	17
004	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	29
005	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	11
006	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	39
007	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	24
008	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	12
009	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	23
010	None	LFR	UB	LP	MP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	25
011	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Combi	Buttermilk	44
012	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	41
013	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	28
014	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	HP	Any	Cable	Buttermilk	11
015	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	12
015	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	2
016	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	9
019	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	20
019	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	2
020	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	11

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
020	DFDMT	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	1
021	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	12
021	Aspen	LFR	HP	LP	None	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	7
022	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	10
023	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	26
024	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	22
024	Aspen	LFR	HP	LP	None	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	18
025	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	10
026	MFT	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	22
027	MFT	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	14
028	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	8
029	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	12
030	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	21
031	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	19
032	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	13
033	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	4
034	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Cable	Libby	12
035	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	8
035	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	15
036	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	9
036	None	LFR	HP	None	None	Any	N/A	Libby	23

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
037	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	9
038	DFDMT	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	86
038	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	15
039	VRR	Whip	UB	None	None	Any	Ground	Libby	33
040	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	49
041	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	72
042	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	17
043	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	4
044	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	22
045	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	28
046	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	12
047	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	12
048	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	44
049	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	9
050	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	None	Any	Ground	Libby	21
050	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	14
051	VRR	Whip	UB	None	None	Any	Ground	Libby	26
053	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	19
054	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	82
055	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	50
056	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	56



Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
057	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	19
058	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Winter	Ground	Libby	77
058	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	71
058	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Winter	Ground	Libby	17
059	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Winter	Ground	Libby	8
060	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Winter	Ground	Libby	9
061	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Cable	Libby	39
061	None	LFR	UB			N/A	N/A	Libby	15
062	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	16
063	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Winter	Ground	Libby	77
063	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Winter	Ground	Libby	34
064	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Winter	Ground	Libby	15
065	MFT	LFR	MP	LP	None	Winter	Ground	Libby	23
066	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	5
067	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	21
068	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	7
069	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	HP	Any	Ground	Libby	16
071	Aspen	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	5
072	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	12
073	DFDMT	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	11
074	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	10

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
075	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	11
075	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	None	Any	Ground	Libby	2
076	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	13
077	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	12
078	DFR	LFR	MP	LP	UB	Any	Ground	Libby	6
079	DFR	LFR	UB	LP	MP	Any	Ground	Libby	5
300	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	13
300	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	4
301	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	32
302	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	8
303	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	12
303	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	1
304	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	5
305	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	21
306	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	11
307	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	15
308	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	14
309	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	69
310	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	21
311	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	36
312	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	30

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
313	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	20
314	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	30
315	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	34
316	None	TSI	HP	None	UB	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	15
317	None	TSI	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	17
318	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	35
319	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	4
320	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	29
321	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	35
322	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	23
323	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	38
324	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	11
325	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	11
326	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	49
327	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	6
328	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	27
329	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	31
330	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	35
331	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	32
332	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	14
333	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	36

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
334	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	25
335	None	TSI	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	22
336	None	TSI	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	54
337	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	27
338	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	17
339	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	11
340	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	18
341	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	12
342	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	28
343	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	17
344	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	23
345	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	28
346	None	TSI	MP	UB	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	58
347	None	TSI	MP	UB	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	27
347	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	10
348	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	42
349	None	TSI	HP	UB	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	5
350	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	36
351	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	12
352	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	15
353	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	9

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
354	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	18
355	None	TSI	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	43
356	None	TSI	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	43
357	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	40
358	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	31
359	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	136
359	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	18
361	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	22
362	None	TSI	HP	UB	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	52
363	None	TSI	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	15
400	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Twisp River	163
402A	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	3
402B	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	9
403	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	80
404	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	605
405	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	479
406	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	1129
407	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	88
408	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	56
409	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	29
410	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	822

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
411	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	356
412	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	5
413	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	697
414	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	6
415	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	32
416	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	164
417	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	27
418	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	512
419	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	108
420	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	19
421	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	120
422	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	331
423	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	28
424	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	158
425	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	21
426	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	133
427	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	22
429	None	WT	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	7
430	None	WT	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	15
431	None	LFR	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	61
432	None	LFR	HP	None	CHIP	N/A	N/A	Libby	4

Unit	Dominant Overstory Thinning Prescription	Understory Thinning Prescription	Primary Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Follow-up Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Adaptive Management Prescribed Fire Prescription*	Operating Season	Logging System	Sub-watershed	Acres**
433	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	80
434	None	LFR	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	46
500	CGAR	Aspen_UST	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Libby	9
501A	CGAR	Aspen_UST	HP	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	1
501B	CGAR	Aspen_UST	HP	None	N/A	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	6
501C	CGAR	Aspen_UST	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	5
502	CGAR	Aspen_UST	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	19
503	CGAR	Aspen_UST	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	12
504A	CGAR	Aspen_UST	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	3
504B	CGAR	Aspen_UST	UB	None	HP	N/A	N/A	Libby	2
505	CGAR	Aspen_UST	HP	None	None	N/A	N/A	Buttermilk	14
600	PP	LFR	UB	None	HP	Any	N/A	Buttermilk	31
601	PP	LFR	UB	None	HP	Any	N/A	Libby	5
602	DFR	LFR	UB	None	HP	Any	Ground	Buttermilk	15

*\*Prescribed fire abbreviations are as follows: MP- machine pile and burn piles; HP- hand pile and burn piles; LP- landing pile and burn pile; UB- underburning; CHIP- chipping of material. \*\* acres and treatment units shown on figure 141 are estimated – final boundary locations and acres will be determined during implementation based on topography, stand type and actual locations of roads and streams. The intent is to reduce stocking and fuel levels using harvest treatment wherever appropriate. Harvest unit layout resulting in over 10% of the acres outside of displayed boundaries will require additional analysis before advertisement of the timber sale or stewardship. No implementation of treatment units outside the areas proposed for vegetation or fuels management would be acceptable.*

# Appendix B: Transportation Definitions and Proposed Changes

This appendix contains definitions of road types used in this analysis and proposed action.

## Road Type Definitions

This analysis places roads on National Forest System lands into five categories:

### 1. Forest System Road (FSR)

Also more formally known as a 'National Forest System Road'. A forest road other than any road which has been authorized by a legally documented right-of-way held by a state, county, or local public road authority (36 CFR 212.1). Note that a Forest Road is a road wholly or partly within or adjacent to and serving the National Forest System Lands (NFSL) that the United States Forest Service (USFS) determines is necessary for the protection, administration, and utilization of the NFSL and the use and development of its resources (36 CFR 212.1).

NOTE: Only Forest System Roads have designated maintenance levels. The other roads (non-system, unauthorized, public and temporary) are not maintained by the USFS and thus do not have USFS maintenance levels assigned. Expected maintenance conditions should be identified in the road authorization, operating plan, or maintenance agreement associated with non-system, public or temporary roads. Maintenance levels (ML) of these roads include ML1 (closed) and ML2 – 4 (open to some level of use). ML2 Administrative roads are open for specific administrative uses only, such as those needed for management of a permit (i.e. water development or fence maintenance).

### 2. Non-System Road

These are roads on the forest that are authorized by a legally documented right-of-way and are not needed by the USFS to manage the forest. These roads stay on the landscape for indefinite periods of time and thus do not meet the definition of a temporary road. Examples include utility access roads and private drive-ways. The authorized entity is responsible for all construction, operation, and decommissioning costs of these roads. The USFS cannot expend system road maintenance funds on non-system roads.

### 3. Unauthorized Road

A road that is not a FSR, Public Road, Non-System Road or Temporary Road. There are five options to deal with unauthorized roads on NFSL:

- Convert to a Forest System Road
- Convert to a Non-System Road
- Convert to a Forest System Trail
- Use as a temporary road and decommission at the end of the project
- Decommission

### 4. Temporary Road

A road necessary for emergency operations or authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization that is not a forest road and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas. (36 CFR 212.1) Note that these roads are on the landscape for a relatively short and defined period of time and are associated with a specific project or mining plan of operations. Examples include timber sale roads, mining access roads,



abandoned mine reclamation access roads, etc. Temporary roads are typically not open to the public.

#### 5. Public Road

A road that is not an FSR but instead is under the jurisdiction of the State, County or other public entity. This road may cross NFSL but is not the Forest Service's responsibility to maintain. It has some historic right-of-way or other authorization and is generally open to the public. The USFS may be able to use system road maintenance funds on these County roads if there is an active cooperative agreement with the associated County.

### **Closing or Decommissioning Roads**

The IDT completed a thorough travel analysis prior to recommending decommissioning of roads in Alternative 2. One consideration in this process was whether there may be potential need for future access to an area accessed by a road; in these cases, it would be better to store the road in ML-1 closed condition rather than decommission it. Storing a road in ML-1 closed status is done to reduce environmental impacts of the road and is accomplished by excluding all over-the-ground motorized vehicular use and improving hydrologic conditions disrupted by construction of the road prism. It may still be used for wheeled non-motorized traffic or motorized over-the-snow traffic. Note that all motorized over-the-snow traffic will be assessed and regulated in Travel Management planning subpart C. Placing a road in ML-1 status is not intended to discourage people from using the road on foot, nor is it intended to make the road completely disappear.

The techniques used to place a road in ML-1 status or to decommission a road are tailored to fit the site conditions on each particular segment of road, and can range from scarifying the road surface a few inches deep to encourage grass growth and installing water bars to de-compacting the road bed, scattering large-woody-debris, removing culverts, and partial fill pull back. Engineering staff work with Hydrology and Soils specialists to determine the appropriate techniques to be used on each road segment. The process of converting a road from an ML-2 thru 5 status to storing it in ML-1 condition consists of the following steps:

1. Determining that the road is not needed in the near term for access but may be needed in the more distant future for access.
2. Determine if the road is encumbered by any easements, special use permits, or other authorizations.
3. Engineering and district specialists develop a closure plan that addresses relevant environmental, recreation, and transportation needs on the road.
4. If the road has any encumbrances in item #2 ensure any potential impacts are addressed in the closure plan developed in #3 and communicated to all affected parties.
5. Complete the NEPA planning process. There is no CE category for this action so it must be accomplished in an EA or EIS.

### **Timber Sale and Forest Restoration Project Temporary Road Management**

Timber sale temporary road construction, maintenance, and decommissioning is the responsibility of the Timber Sale Administrator (TSA) under the guidance of the Forest Service Representative (FSR). If a TSA needs advice when dealing with the layout, construction, maintenance, or decommissioning of a temporary road, Engineering will make a qualified engineer available to assist. This assistance does not constitute designing a temporary road.

## Proposed Road Treatments

Figure 142 displays proposed the maintenance level (ML) of each road in the project area during harvest and post-project in Alternatives 2 and 3. With Alternative 2, the bridge over West Fork Buttermilk Creek, on road 4300550, would be replaced in a manner following best management practices. This replacement would occur at a future date when adequate funds become available. Some roads are proposed for decommissioning in such a way as to provide for continued use by stock to help facilitate their movement on existing paths. A 4 foot wide section of trail for winter-only access would be maintained on the decommissioned portion of the 4300-200.

Figure 142. Alternatives 2 and 3 Road Status

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300000	7.09	3	3	3	3	3	Y
4300000	3.41	4	4	4	4	4	Y
4300000	5.25	3	3	3	3	3	Y
4300025	0.40	1	1	D	1	D	
4300025	0.10	1	1	1	1	1	
4300030	0.98	1	1	1	1	1	
4300030	0.14	1	1	1	1	1	
4300030	0.15	1	1	D	1	D	
4300050	1.61	2	2	2	2	1	
4300050	0.84	2	2	2	2	1	Y
4300050	0.88	2	2	2	2	1	Y
4300055	0.21	1	1	D	1	D	
4300057	0.13	1	1	1	1	D	
4300057	0.11	1	2	1	2	D	Y
4300060	0.34	1	1	1	1	1	
4300065	1.29	2	2	2	2	1	
4300070	0.69	1	2	D <sup>1</sup>	2	D <sup>1</sup>	Y
4300070	0.07	1	2	1	2	D	Y
4300075	0.39	1	1	1	1	D	
4300075	0.30	1	1	D	1	D	
4300100	0.93	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4300100	1.35	2	2	2	2	2	
4300101	0.19	1	1	D	1	D	

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300103	0.20	1	1	D	1	D	
4300105	0.33	1	1	D <sup>1</sup>	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4300120	0.10	2	2	D	2	D	
4300120	0.76	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4300120	0.08	2	2	2	2	2	
4300121	0.27	1	2	1	2	D	Y
4300121	0.19	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300121	0.14	1	1	D	1	D	
4300122	0.81	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300122	0.06	1	1	1	1	1	
4300123	0.28	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300123	0.04	1	1	1	1	1	
4300124	0.23	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300125	0.23	1	1	D	1	D	
4300130	1.38	1	1	D	1	D	
4300145	0.36	1	1	1	1	D	
4300145	0.25	1	1	D	1	D	
4300146	0.76	1	1	1	1	D	
4300150	2.11	2	2	2	2	1	
4300150	0.19	2	2	2	2	1	Y
4300152	0.10	1	1	D <sup>1</sup>	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4300157	0.15	2	2	D	2	D	
4300175	0.27	2	2	D	2	D	
4300180	0.40	1	1	D	1	D	
4300180	0.29	1	1	1	1	1	
4300182	0.62	1	1	D	1	D	
4300185	1.89	1	1	1	1	1	
4300185	0.84	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300187	0.18	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300189	0.20	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300189	0.10	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300200	0.38	1	2	2A	2	2A	Y

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300200	0.16	1	1	D <sup>1</sup>	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4300200	0.33	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4300200	0.10	1	2A	2A	2A	2A	
4300215	0.59	1	2A	2A	2A	2A	
4300215	0.34	1	1	1	1	1	
4300220	1.02	1	2A	2A	1	D	
4300223	0.44	1	1	1	1	1	
4300225	0.61	1	1	1	1	1	
4300225	0.06	1	1	D	1	D	
4300390	0.54	3	3	3	3	3	
4300400	2.80	2	2	2	2	2	
4300400	1.80	3	3	3	3	3	
4300417	0.16	1	1	D	1	D	
4300440	0.13	1	1	D	1	D	
4300450	0.10	1	1	1	1	D	
4300475	0.89	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300475	0.49	1	1	D	1	D	
4300476	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4300477	0.48	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300477	0.11	1	1	D	1	D	
4300477	0.05	1	1	1	1	1	
4300479	0.36	1	1	1	1	1	
4300479	0.12	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300480	0.87	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300480	0.58	1	1	1	1	1	
4300485	0.57	1	1	1	1	1	
4300500	2.08	3	3	3	3	3	
4300500	0.76	3	3	3	3	3	Y
4300515	1.61	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300525	0.47	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300530	0.80	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4300530	0.54	2	2	1	2	1	

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300530	0.25	1	1	1	1	1	
4300550	1.96	1	1	2	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4300550	1.27	1	2A	2A	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4300552	0.23	1	1	D	1	D	
4300553	1.58	1	1	1	1	D	
4300554	0.23	1	2A	2A	2A	2A	
4300554	0.20	1	1	D	1	D	
4300554	0.05	1	1	D	1	D	
4300555	0.93	1	1	1	1	D	
4300556	0.80	2	2	2A	2	D	
4300556	0.59	2	2	1	2	D	
4300558	0.55	1	1	1	1	D	
4300560	2.29	1	1	2	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4300600	1.15	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4300610	0.80	1	2	2A	2	2A	Y
4300615	0.44	1	2	2A	2	D	Y
4300615	0.72	1	2	1	2	D	Y
4300635	0.82	1	1	1	1	1	
4300635	0.30	1	2A	2A	1	1	
4300635	0.30	1	2	2A	2	1	Y
4300637	0.28	1	1	D	1	D	
4300639	0.26	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300639	0.21	1	1	D	1	D	
4300645	1.30	1	2A	2A	1	D	
4300648	0.35	1	1	D	1	D	
4300648	0.09	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300650	1.08	1	2A	2A	2A	2A	
4300650	0.21	1	1	D	1	D	
4300650	0.12	1	2	2A	2	2A	Y
4300700	1.12	1	1	D	1	D	
4300710	0.34	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300710	0.10	1	2	1	2	1	Y

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300710	0.18	1	1	D	1	D	
4300720	0.18	1	1	D	1	D	
4300800	0.68	2	2	2	2	2	
4300800	0.01	2	2	1	2	1	
4300810	0.45	1	1	1	1	1	
4300825	0.38	1	1	1	1	1	
4300825	1.10	1	1	1	1	1	
4300830	0.48	1	1	1	1	1	
4300832	0.23	1	1	1	1	1	
4300850	0.28	1	1	1	1	1	
4300856	0.75	1	1	1	1	1	
4300857	0.34	1	1	1	1	1	
4340000	2.74	3	3	3	3	3	
4340000	1.17	3	3	3	3	3	Y
4340527	0.03	1	1	1	1	1	
4340675	0.16	2	2	2	2	2	
4340679	0.06	2	2	2	2	2	
4340680	0.52	1	1	D	1	D	
4340685	0.42	1	1	D	1	D	
4340685	0.06	1	1	2	1	2	
4340700	2.42	3	3	3	3	3	Y
4340700	1.74	1	1	1	1	D	
4340700	0.18	3	3	3	3	3	
4340710	0.32	2	2	D	2	D	Y
4340715	0.53	1	1	D	1	D	
4340715	1.20	1	2A	2A	2A	2A	
4340717	0.19	1	1	1	1	1	
4340719	0.15	1	1	D	1	D	
4340725	0.22	1	1	D	1	D	
4340727	0.22	1	1	D	1	D	
4340730	0.07	1	1	1	1	1	
4340730	0.03	1	1	1	1	1	

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4340740	1.11	1	1	D	1	D	
4340742	0.43	1	1	D	1	D	
4340744	0.07	1	1	D	1	D	
4340750	0.64	3	3	3	3	3	
4340750	0.37	3	3	3	3	3	Y
4340755	0.26	1	1	D	1	D	
4340756	0.11	1	1	D	1	D	
4340757	0.24	2	2	D	2	D	
4340775	0.49	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4340775	1.70	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4340777	0.31	1	1	1	1	1	
4340778	0.08	1	1	2	1	2	
4340778	0.21	1	1	D	1	D	
4340779	0.28	1	2	D	1	D	Y
4340782	0.24	1	1	D	1	D	
4340783	0.05	1	1	D	1	D	
4340785	0.83	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4340785	0.57	1	2	2A	2	D	Y
4340785	0.72	1	2	1	2	D	Y
4340785	0.20	1	1	1	1	D	
4340788	0.37	1	2	1	2	D	Y
4340790	0.18	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4340801	0.51	1	1	D	1	D	
4340803	0.37	2	2	D	2	D	
4342100	0.50	1	1	D <sup>1</sup>	1	D <sup>1</sup>	
4342100	1.58	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4342100	0.23	2	2	2	2	2	
4342102	0.30	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4342200	1.73	2	2	2	2	1	Y
4342200	1.49	2	2	1	2	1	Y
4342200	0.15	2	2	D	2	D	
4342300	2.39	2	2	2A	2	D	Y

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4342300	0.42	2	2	D	2	D	
4342300	0.21	2	2	D	2	D	Y
4300000_U50	0.44	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300000_U69	0.18	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300000-10.01L-1	0.14	1	1	D	1	D	
4300000-12.55R-1	0.12	1	1	D	1	D	
4300000-12.96L-1	0.07	1	1	D	1	D	
4300000-13.28R-1	0.11	1	1	D	1	D	
4300000-13.36R-1	0.07	1	1	D	1	D	
4300000-13.88L-1	0.11	1	1	D	1	D	
4300000-14.10R-1	0.26	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300000-9.46R-1	0.17	2	2	3	2	3	
4300050-0.85R-1	0.25	1	1	D	1	D	
4300050-1.76L-1	0.47	1	1	1	1	1	
4300050-1.76L-1	0.20	1	2	1	2	1	Y
4300050-2.45R-1	0.12	1	1	D	1	D	
4300050-2.55R-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4300057-0.2-1	0.29	1	1	1	1	D	
4300065-0.24L-1	0.55	1	1	D	1	D	
4300065-1.06L-1	0.33	1	1	D	1	D	
4300070-0.90-1	0.40	1	1	D	1	D	
4300070-0.90-2	0.20	1	1	D	1	D	
4300100-0.18L-1	0.12	1	1	D	1	D	
4300103-0.19-1	0.09	1	1	D	1	D	
4300123-0.26L-1	0.12	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4300150-1.22L-1	0.39	1	1	1	1	D	
4300185-1.23L-1	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4300185-1.82R-1	0.71	1	1	1	1	1	
4300185-1.82R-2	0.11	1	1	D	1	D	
4300185-1.82R-3	0.28	1	1	D	1	D	
4300185-1.88R-1	0.18	1	1	D	1	D	
4300220-0.03R-1	0.11	1	1	D	1	D	



Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300220-0.30L-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4300220-0.69L-1	0.07	1	1	D	1	D	
4300225-0.48L-1	0.13	1	1	D	1	D	
4300390-0.41L-1	0.09	2	2	3	2	3	
4300390-0.63R-1	0.12	2	2	2	2	2	
4300390-0.63R-1	0.10	2	2	2	2	2	Y
4300400-0.53L-1	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4300400-0.78L-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4300400-1.96L-1	0.01	1	1	D	1	D	
4300400-2.52R-1	0.04	1	1	D	1	D	
4300400-4.20L-1	0.29	1	1	D	1	D	
4300475-0.75R-1	0.11	1	1	1	1	1	
4300475-0.75R-2	0.02	1	1	D	1	D	
4300475-0.75R-3	0.04	1	1	D	1	D	
4300475-1.42L-1	0.41	1	1	D	1	D	
4300477-0.25L-1	0.02	1	1	D	1	D	
4300479-0.27R-1	0.13	1	1	D	1	D	
4300500-0.13L-1	0.10	1	1	D	1	D	
4300500-1.36R-1	0.09	1	1	D	1	D	
4300530-0.8R-1	0.46	1	1	D	1	D	
4300550-2.26R-1	0.04	1	1	D	1	D	
4300550-2.67R-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4300553-1.41R-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4300555-0.16R-1	0.04	1	1	D	1	D	
4300560-0.51L-1	0.02	1	1	D	1	D	
4300560-1.50L-1	0.07	1	1	D	1	D	
4300560-2.07R-1	0.10	1	1	D	1	D	
4300560-2.26R-1	0.06	1	1	D	1	D	
4300560-2.47-1	0.18	1	1	D <sup>1</sup>	1	D	
4300615-0.36R-1	0.24	1	1	D	1	D	
4300615-0.80L-1	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4300635-0.82R-1	0.04	1	1	D	1	D	

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4300645-1.17R-1	0.24	1	2A	2A	2A	2A	
4300645-1.17R-3	0.00	1	1	D	1	D	
4300648-0.10L-1	0.38	1	1	D	1	D	
4300648-0.10L-2	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4300700-0.51L-1	0.14	1	1	D	1	D	
4300800-5.12R-1	0.02	1	1	1	1	1	
4300825-0.18L-1	0.11	1	1	1	1	1	
4300825-0.18L-2	0.07	1	1	1	1	1	
4300825-0.95R-1	0.18	1	1	1	1	1	
4300857-0.13L-1	0.03	1	1	1	1	1	
4340000-10.89L-1	0.22	1	1	D	1	D	
4340000-11.93L-1	0.06	1	1	D	1	D	
4340000-11.93L-2	0.33	1	1	D	1	D	
4340000-5.50L-1	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4340000-5.50L-2	0.12	1	1	D	1	D	
4340000-9.92L-1	0.05	1	1	D	1	D	
4340675-0.68R-1	0.08	1	1	1	1	1	
4340680-0.03R-1	0.16	1	1	D	1	D	
4340700-4.40R-1	0.14	1	1	D	1	D	
4340715-0.94R-1	0.16	1	1	D	1	D	
4340719-0.10-1	0.06	1	1	D	1	D	
4340740-0.60R-1	0.09	1	1	D	1	D	
4340750-0.49R-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4340750-0.71R-1	0.09	1	1	D	1	D	
4340775-1.53R-1	0.03	1	1	D	1	D	
4340785-1.51R-1	0.36	1	1	D	1	D	
4340788-0.10R-1	0.11	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4340803-0.08L-1	0.02	1	1	D	1	D	
4342100-1.57R-1	0.13	2	2	2	2	D	
4342102-0.01R-1	0.26	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4342102-0.18L-1	0.45	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4342102-0.18L-1	0.05	1	1	D	1	D	

Route Number	Segment Length (miles)	Current ML	Alt2 During Harvest ML	Alt 2 Post Project ML <sup>1</sup>	Alt3 During Harvest ML	Alt 3 Post Project ML	Haul Route
4342102-0.18L-2	0.05	1	1	D	1	D	
4342200 UB1	0.12	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4342200-0.53R-1	0.08	1	1	D	1	D	
4342200-1.38R-1	0.04	1	1	D	1	D	
4342200-1.54R-1	0.01	1	1	D	1	D	
4342200-1.70L-1	0.01	1	1	D	1	D	
4342200-1.77R-1	0.00	1	1	D	1	D	
4342300 UB1	0.17	1	1	D	1	D	
4342300-0.49L-1	0.14	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4342300-0.74R-1	0.28	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4342300-1.00R-2	0.39	1	2	D	2	D	Y
4345200-2.28R-1	0.05	1	1	1	1	1	
C-1051-1.78L-1	0.12	1	1	D	1	D	
Temp_Rd_3	0.26	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_4	0.02	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_5	0.02	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_10	0.09	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_11	0.11	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_14	0.04	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_15	0.13	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_16	0.32	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y
Temp_Rd_20	0.19	TEMP	2	D	2	D	Y

<sup>1</sup>Decommission in such a way as to provide for passage of stock.

# Appendix C: Proposed Soil, Road, Stream, and Beaver Habitat Treatments

This appendix contains parameters and prescriptions applicable to proposed soil restoration, culvert replacement, coarse woody debris (CWD) habitat enhancement, beaver habitat enhancement, rock armoring, and hardened ford treatments in the Mission Restoration project area. Proposed treatment areas are displayed in Appendix F.

## Proposed Soils Treatments

Soil restoration treatments described in Figure 143 would occur in both Alternatives 2 and 3 in areas within proposed soil treatment units where detrimental soil compaction exceeds Forest Plan standards. Some areas within the total acreage of proposed treatment units would not be treated because the soil compaction does not exceed standards or is an existing system road. Biochar production from landing piles would occur as an adaptive management strategy to burning landing slash piles where economically feasible.

Figure 143. Soil Restoration Treatments

Treatment Type	Treatment Name	Method	Amount	Purpose
Soil Restoration	Subsoil	Break up compacted soil while maintaining soil horizons & leaving subsurface roots and rocks in place.	Portions of 468 acres	P&N #2  Restore soil-related processes and functions where past management practices have created detrimental effects.
Biochar Production	Chipping or on-site Biochar Production	The production of chips for removal from the site and/or possible on-site production of Biochar would be considered. If it does not seem feasible, the piles would be burned as part of brush disposal post project.	Landings on open roads or that can be accessed from open roads.	P&N #2.  An alternative to burning landing piles, thereby reducing particulate matter production. If produced on-site, provides a method of restoring the soil structure around landings.

## Proposed Culvert, Stream Crossing, CWD, and Beaver Habitat Treatments

The proposed treatments described below would occur in Alternatives 2 and/or 3 as noted in Figure 144. Six locations have been identified where roads that would be used for summer haul routes cross perennial streams; rock armoring would occur in these locations in in Alternative 2. In Alternative 3, rock armoring would occur in these same locations plus 27 additional locations where roads cross streams.

**Figure 144. Road, Stream, and Beaver Habitat Treatments**

Treatment Name	Treatment	Purpose	Amount	Alternative
Fish Culverts	Where full or partial fish barriers exist on fish bearing streams, replace the culverts with an appropriately sized pipe.	P&N #1 (Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration)  Remove fish barriers in some streams	8 culverts	2, 3
Undersized Culverts	Where undersized fishless stream culverts are impacting channel morphology and increasing the risk of culvert failure, replace the culvert with an appropriately sized (100-year flow capacity) pipe.	P&N #1 (Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration)  P&N #7 (Transportation System)  Reduce the risk of road failures & the resulting sediment delivery to streams.	15 culverts	2, 3
Beaver Habitat Enhancement	Pound posts across the channel. Cut small amounts of shrubs/small trees to weave around posts. Install cattle exclusion fences around 3 beaver sites.	P&N #1 (Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration)  Increase sites available for beaver release in connection with current beaver relocation program, with resulting increase in water storage capacity.	34.6 acres in 8 sites	2, 3
Coarse Woody Debris (CWD) Enhancement	Fell live or dead conifers ≤ 21" DBH into streams.	P&N #1 (Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration)  Restore depleted levels of CWD in streams for fish habitat.	8.2 miles in 4 stream segments	2, 3
Rock Armoring	Where ML2 & ML3 roads cross streams with approaches >3% slope, put 1 ¼" minus rock, 6" deep on the road surface where the road slopes towards the channel, for a distance up to 300'.	P&N 1 (Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration)  Reduces the surface erosion of fine sediment into streams.	Alt 2: 6 stream crossings  Alt 3: 33 stream crossings	2,3

Treatment Name	Treatment	Purpose	Amount	Alternative
Hardened Fords	Construct rocked open fords on ML2 crossings over small, intermittent and perennial streams in low gradient areas with shallow road fills.	<p>P&amp;N #1 (Hydrologic and Aquatic Restoration)</p> <p>(P&amp;N #7 (Transportation System))</p> <p>Reduce the risk of road failures associated with heavier storm flows predicted with future climate change scenarios. Reduce the risk of sediment delivery to streams from road failures.</p>	4 stream crossings	3

## Appendix D: Design Features, Best Management Practices, Mitigation, and Monitoring

Figure 145 displays the design features, best management practices, mitigation measures, and monitoring applicable to this project. These features are generally listed by the benefitting resource, though in some instances are combined under one resource to avoid duplication in multiple locations. Applying these design criterion would require some level of assessment, inspection, or monitoring by resource staff before, during, and/or after implementation (as indicated by the column “Monitoring” in Figure 145 ). Further details on monitoring methods is available in resource specialist reports in the project file. Where Design Criteria from specialist reports were similar, they were combined in Figure 145 under the resource area most applicable. Design criteria numbers in individual specialist report are different than the numbers listed below in Figure 145.

**Figure 145. Design Features**

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
<i>Visual Quality</i>					
1	Visual Quality Objectives for retention or partial retention is required in MA-5 and MA-17. Monitor treatment design to manage the foreground of the travel route of FSR 4300 and Black Pine Lake Campground to minimize the visual impact of project activities. Repeating form, line, color, texture, pattern, and scale common to the valued landscape character being viewed is the most effective way to maintain scenic integrity in the High and Moderate Visual Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Levels.	Retains natural form, line, color, texture, and pattern on the landscape.	Y	Moderate - High	Not compliant with the LRMP S&G- 10-1, MA5-20A & C and MA5-8B. Degradation of the Visual Quality Objectives of management Area 5 and Management Area 17 of the LMRP.
2	Methods used to control prescribed burns should not dominate naturally established form, line, color, and texture of the area in MA-5 and MA-17 viewsheds. Use vegetation screens or diminishing stark dozer or firelines along hillsides in the viewshed to retain the scenic integrity of the High or Moderate Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Levels.	Reduces visual impact of fireline in Buttermilk Creek road corridor (FSR 4300) and Blackpine Lake Campground viewsheds.	Y	Moderate - High	Not compliant with the LRMP, S&G – 5-19C & MA5-8B. Degradation of the Visual Quality Objectives of Management Area 5 of the LRMP.
3	Minimize visual impacts of landings sites in the FSR 4300 corridor. When possible, locate landings out of the	Retain the scenic integrity of the High or	Y	Moderate - High	Not compliant with the LRMP, S&G- 10-1 & 3. Degradation of

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	immediate foreground (or seen area) in MA-5 Retention allocation areas, or screen as much as possible where vegetation is available and consistent with fuel treatment objectives, or use existing landings where they exist and seed after project is complete.	Moderate Quality Objective (VQO) Scenic Integrity Levels by minimizing the scenic impact of landings.			the Visual Quality Objectives of Management Area 5 of the LMRP.
<i>Fire Management</i>					
4	Underburns may extend beyond planned burn boundaries to utilize a nearby road, cow trail, ridge line, or skid trail if doing so creates safer holding conditions and/or minimizes ground disturbance from fireline construction. Coordination with resource specialists would occur during burn planning to assure that required surveys are completed as necessary.	Minimizes hazards to burn crews, increase holding options, and minimize ground-disturbing fireline construction.		Moderate - High	Increased safety risk for burn personnel; increased risk of escape; increased impacts from fireline construction.
5	<p>Fireline would utilize erosion control measures during construction and rehabilitation. Waterbars would be constructed when the fireline is created using Best Management Practices (BMPs) soils erosion slope designations. Use Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) wherever feasible and defensible to reduce soil and vegetation disturbance, especially in Riparian Reserves.</p> <p>No hand fireline construction would occur within existing New Invader invasive plant patches. Populations near proposed containment lines would be identified on Burn Plan maps.</p> <p>In Riparian Reserves (RR), hand fireline may be constructed within 100 feet of a stream if the line is located outside/above the defined inner gorge. Fireline that runs perpendicular to the stream channel should be kept to a minimum and rehabilitated within the same year. No machine fireline would be constructed in RRs. During machine fireline construction, surface vegetation would be scraped away, while minimizing damage to live root crowns of native grasses and shrubs. This would allow for rapid post-burning recovery of the fireline, with residual</p>	Minimize soil and vegetation disturbance. Restore firelines to reduce erosion, inhibit invasive plant spread, minimize movement of wood, and inhibit use by the public for motorized and non-motorized recreation. Limit impact of fireline in RRs. Prevent excessive compaction and ground disturbance from machinery in RRs.	Y (rehabilitation needs)	Moderate - High	Increased soil erosion, invasive plant spread, and visual impacts. Increased soil disturbance and surface erosion in Riparian Reserves.



Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<p>intact roots helping prevent soil displacement and reducing the potential for invasive plant introduction, establishment, and spread.</p> <p>Post-burn fireline rehabilitation needs would be reviewed by soils, botany, and/or invasive species staff and fuels staff. If seeding is necessary, firelines would be seeded using native species vegetation. Some small trees (generally &lt; 10" DBH) and some down logs may be cut and/or moved along the fireline to prevent undesirable fire spread but no material would be removed from the site.</p> <p>Where accessible from existing roads or trails, firelines would be rehabilitated using methods that prevent public use of firelines as hiking, biking, motorcycle, and/or ATV/UTV routes, as well as preventing use by stock to access riparian areas.</p>				
6	Resource Specialists would be given a timely opportunity to review burn plans and contracts before implementation.	Ensures that design criteria and mitigation measures are included in contracts and burn plans.		High	Burn plans may not meet NEPA intent thus causing undesired resource impacts.
7	Only one side of Mission Creek would be underburned in any given year (either 410 and its inclusive units, or 406/416 and their inclusive units).	To minimize the potential for sediment impacts to aquatic habitat	Y	High	Potential impacts to aquatic habitat.
<i>Invasive Species</i>					
8	Prescribed fire treatments would exclude shrub steppe habitat unless including these locations minimizes the amount of soil disturbance from fireline construction and decreases escape risk.	Minimizes the potential for invasive plant spread, particularly cheatgrass ( <i>Bromus tectorum</i> ).		Moderate	The potential spread of invasive plants, particularly cheat grass. May be increased.
9	Areas of heavily disturbed soils (including landings, main skid trails, decommissioned temporary roads, and constructed road cut and fill slopes) would be reseeded. The Rangeland Management Specialists, Invasive Plant Specialist, and Botany Specialist would determine the appropriate seed mix, application rates, locations and time	Restores disturbed soil to native plants and prevent spread of invasive plants.	Y	Moderate	The spread of invasive plants would be increased. Soil erosion would be increased.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<p>of seeding to meet erosion control and invasive plant competition objectives.</p> <p>Native seed would be the first choice in revegetation in areas where the objective is to restore the site to the landscape setting, such as decommissioned roads. Non-native seed may be used to help prevent the establishment of invasive species, in permanently altered plant communities, and in situations where locally collected native seed is not available (USDA Forest Service 2005). Use of non-native seed should be considered an interim non-persistent measure designed to aid the re-establishment of native plants (an example of this is the use of tiller radishes).</p>				
10	Project actions that would operate outside the limits of the road prism require the cleaning of all heavy equipment (bulldozers, skidders, graders, backhoes, etc.) prior to entering National Forest System lands.	Minimizes the spread of invasive plant seeds from heavy equipment.	Y	Moderate	The spread of invasive plants would be increased.
11	Qualified Forest Service staff would inspect active gravel, fill, sand stockpiles, quarries, and borrow material for invasive plants before use and transport of the materials. Only gravel, fill, sand, and rock that is judged to be weed free by the qualified inspector would be used. Treat or require treatment of infested sources before any use.	Ensures that weed-free gravel, fill, sand, and rock would be used.	Y	Moderate	The potential spread of invasive seeds from gravel, fill, sand, and rock may be increased.
12	All known New Invader sites and areas with dense diffuse knapweed infestations in the project area and along access roads would be identified on the Timber Sale Area Map. Potential landing sites that are infested with dense diffuse knapweed or invasive plants classified as New Invaders would be prioritized for pre-treatment by the Invasive Plant Specialist. Landings would be constructed away from areas infested with New Invader weeds that have not been pretreated or on areas with dense diffuse knapweed populations.	Minimizes the spread of New Invaders and diffuse knapweed when developing landing sites.	Y	Moderate	The potential spread of invasive plants may be increased.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
13	Road blading, brushing, and ditch cleaning in areas with high concentrations of invasive plants would be conducted in consultation with the District Invasive Plant Specialists, incorporating invasive plant prevention measures as appropriate.	Avoids spreading invasive plants with road reconstruction and maintenance.	Y	Moderate	The potential spread of invasive plants may be increased.
14	Pretreat dense knapweed populations where present within soil restoration treatments units in order to prevent seed production.	Avoids spreading invasive plants with soil restoration treatments.	Y	High	Seed bearing plants may be spread into infested areas.
<i>Range</i>					
15	Existing structural Range improvements (fences, gates, water troughs) would be protected under thinning and prescribed fire activities. No trees would be cut that are incorporated into the fence line. Known fences that are cut in order to facilitate logging operations would be repaired to preexisting condition by the purchaser. All fences and water troughs within the timber sale/treatment area boundary would be identified on the Timber Sale, thinning contract, or burn plan maps. Extra care should be taken to locate improvements during treatment activities occurring in the winter due to limited visibility because of the accumulation of snow. Existing improvements would have a 10' area surrounding the improvements cleared of slash produced by harvest or post-harvest activities.	Protects range structural improvements while implementing thinning and prescribed fire treatments.	Y	Moderate	Existing structural range improvements may be damaged.
16	Contracts would require that specific gates would remain closed during work and non-work hours if and when project activities occur within a pasture when authorized cattle use is occurring. The range specialist would work with the FS contract administrators to identify when there is a need to keep specific gates closed.	Maintains cattle in authorized grazing areas.	Y	Moderate	Cattle may not be maintained within authorized areas and stray cattle may contribute to resource damage.
17	Road segments identified to be decommissioned that are necessary for cattle trailing or designated as stock driveways would be decommissioned in such a way that does not preclude travel by cattle and horses, but access	Maintains cattle access.		Moderate	Movement and gathering of cattle by Range Permittees would be much more difficult. A new trail/route would need to

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	by ATV's/UTV's would be prevented. The Range Permit would be modified to assign required maintenance of these pathways to the permittee. See Appendix B for list of these roads.				be built outside of the road prism creating additional soil disturbance.
18	Some roads would be closed in such a way to accommodate ATV/UTV access for maintenance of stock tanks and other legitimate reasons, and provide for use by cows and horses. An approximate 5-foot wide portion of the original road may be preserved to provide this access. ATV/UTV access would be authorized for administrative use only on roads identified in proposed transportation changes in Alternatives 2 and 3, and using methods including, but not limited to, those described in Appendix B. See Appendix B for list of these roads and methods of closure and/or decommissioning.	Provides for road closure but allows administrative use per Forest Service Manual 7731 Road Operation (roads can be closed to public use, yet used for administrative uses). Minimizes impacts of road use while allowing required administrative use by USFS personnel, contractors, or permittees while in the performance of required management responsibilities.	Y	High	Not compliant with the LRMP S&Gs, current decision for the grazing AMPs, current direction for management of Invasive Species, or 36 CFR 212.5, subpart A – Administration of the Forest Transportation System. Permittees and Forest Service would lose motorized access, reducing range management efficiency.
<i>Botany and Sensitive Plants</i>					
19	Where Region 6 Sensitive and Survey and Manage plants occur or are suspected to occur in harvest, thinning, and underburn units, maintain shading sufficient to protect the plant's micro-site conditions. In most cases, the equipment buffer zone for Riparian Reserves would be adequate. The District Botanist would assess the need for additional protection of sensitive sites during unit layout.  All ground disturbing activities, including aquatic and beaver habitat enhancements within occupied Region 6 Sensitive and Survey and Manage plant habitats would be coordinated with the District Botanist. Maps and descriptions of specific avoidance areas would be provided for Units 16 and 503, and aquatic and beaver	Minimizes disturbance and maintain sufficient shading to protect Region 6 Sensitive and Survey and Manage microsite conditions	Y	Moderate	Existing Region 6 Sensitive and Survey and Manage plants and micro-site conditions would not be protected, which could lead to a loss of vigor, populations and species

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	enhancement activities where Region 6 Sensitive species occur.				
20	<p>In units with an Aspen Release prescription, conifer canopy closure would not exceed 10% following treatment. This would be accomplished by retaining, on an average, a maximum of 10 conifer stems per acre larger than 10" DBH following harvest treatment including the adjacent areas located within 50' of treated aspen tree stand perimeters. The minimum patch size of aspen stands considered for this treatment would have five or more healthy aspen that are at least, 5' tall and are within a 15' radius of each other.</p> <p>The largest conifers would be retained in aspen stands, including trees 21" DBH and larger and defective trees most favorable for wildlife. Douglas-fir and subalpine fir 21 – 24" DBH with an estimated age of less than 150 years would be harvested where needed to achieve desired conifer stocking levels.</p>	Provides for reduction of conifer canopy closure in units with an Aspen Release prescription for overstory thinning to limit conifer competition with aspen and other deciduous trees and provide trees favorable for wildlife.	Y	Moderate	Competing conifers would suppress aspen overstory trees, and suppress growth of aspen suckers. Conifers would compete strongly with aspen for soil moisture, sunlight and nutrients.
21	<p>In noncommercial thinning units, thinning to limit conifer competition on aspen would be considered in existing aspen stands with five or more healthy aspen, 5' tall, in a 15' radius and in a 50' wide buffer located adjacent to aspen stand perimeters, within unit boundaries.</p> <p>Desired treatment objectives include 10 percent or less canopy closure contributed by conifers following treatment within aspen stands and the adjacent buffer.</p> <p>Leave a maximum stocking level of approximately ten conifers per acre larger than 10" DBH following treatment within aspen stands and the buffer.</p> <p>Conifers 10" DBH, and smaller would be felled with chainsaws (no ground disturbing mechanized equipment) to reduce conifer encroachment.</p>	<p>Provides for non-commercial thinning and girdling treatment of conifers to release existing aspen trees from conifer encroachment and promote the establishment of aspen and other hardwood regeneration.</p> <p>Reduces conifer competition for sunlight and soil moisture, improves the vigor of existing aspen clones, and stimulates sprouting of new aspen stems where conifers have</p>	Y	Moderate	Competing conifers would suppress aspen overstory trees, and suppress growth of aspen suckers. Conifers would compete strongly for soil moisture, sunlight, and nutrients with aspen.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	Conifers larger than 10" DBH and less than 21" DBH would be girdled with chainsaws and left standing to attain desired conifer canopy closure treatment objectives. All conifers 21" DBH, and larger, would be retained in aspen stands and the adjacent buffers, even if conifer stocking exceeds the desired maximum retention level.	invaded or are shading out aspen stands.			
22	Underburn treatments would retain 90% of existing coarse woody debris less than 6 inches in diameter in and around Region 6 Sensitive and Survey and Manage plant habitats.	Limits cattle access to Sensitive and Survey and Manage plant habitats.	Y	Moderate	Cattle access may become easier in R6 Sensitive and Survey and Manage plant habitats, causing trampling and browsing of plants.
23	Limited piling and burning will be allowed in aspen stands greater than ¼ acre (100' X 100') that occur within harvest units. Debris from this project will be piled 6' from existing aspen trees 6" dbh or greater, and will not exceed 8 feet in diameter (intent is to reduce damage to the roots when burning occurs). Residual slash will not exceed 10 tons per acre. The area burned within an aspen stand will not exceed 15% of the stand area.	Minimizes soil compaction and disturbance in aspen stands.	Y	Moderate	Soil compaction in aspen stands could decrease water uptake to aspen and plants within aspen stands. Plants and aspen roots could be damaged by mechanized equipment and pile burning during implementation that could lead to decreased vigor and health.
24	Within certain harvest and aspen release units and aquatic enhancement activities, <i>Botrychium</i> populations would be flagged, identified and avoided by directional felling, equipment exclusion zones, or other skidding restrictions would be used.  Underburning in one unit should occur at a time when soils within the population are saturated in order to limit fire spread into the population (coordinate with District Botanist to get more information about the one unit mentioned above).  Refer to internal Botany Design Criteria in Project File for site-specific design criteria.	Prevents impacts to botanical resources in units with known locations of Sensitive plants.	Y	Moderate	Populations of <i>Botrychium</i> may be lost to management actions.
<i>Vegetation Management</i>					

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
25	During thinning operations, retain five to ten suitable breeding partners within 120 feet of genetic select trees. Suitable breeding partners include vigorous, disease-free, well-formed, and cone producing trees 12" DBH and larger which are the same species as the select tree.	Provides breeding partners for genetic select trees, which require pollen from nearby trees of the same species to produce cone crops with viable seed. Suitable breeding partners possess desirable, heritable traits which may be passed on through pollen to seed produced by genetic select trees. When available, seed produced by select trees is preferred to grow seedlings for tree planting in reforestation projects on the Ranger District.	Y	Moderate	Cone crops and viable seed production of genetic select trees may be reduced by inadequate pollination. Genetic quality of seedlings produced from select tree seed may be diminished.
26	Avoid mechanical damage to the boles, live branches, and terminal leaders of designated residual trees during harvest and young plantation thinning operations.	Increases long-term retention and growth of residual trees that are intended to remain post-treatment.	Y	High	Vegetation management treatment objectives may not be fully accomplished.
27	Protect boles, crowns, and roots of genetic select trees from damage during harvest and prescribed fire treatment operations.	Increases retention of genetic select trees. Damage to boles, crowns, and roots is detrimental to the survival, growth, and long-term viability of genetic select trees.	Y	High	Damage leading to the mortality or reduced seed production of a select tree represents a lost opportunity for genetically diverse seed collection to support reforestation projects.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
28	<p>Discourage livestock grazing in regeneration harvest units for a period of three to five years following tree planting with the following measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid placing salt blocks in or adjacent to tree planting units.</li> <li>• Avoid seeding grass species that would encourage grazing (forage mix) in or adjacent to tree planting units.</li> </ul>	Increases survival and growth of seedlings by reducing potential damage from livestock trampling. Minimizes livestock damage to stocking plot markers needed for required survival and stocking level monitoring that occur post-planting for three to five years.	Y	Moderate	Seedling establishment may be detrimentally affected and desired tree stocking levels may not be promptly attained following planting.
29	Areas with inadequate first year planting survival or third year stocking levels would be assessed and replanted as needed to ensure that minimum acceptable tree stocking levels of approximately 100 trees per acre, on average, are attained.	Ensure regeneration of trees in desired species and structure.	Y	High	Regeneration of desired tree species and structure may not occur and be corrected.
30	<p>Individual openings created by harvest or plantation thinning or prescribed fire outside of regeneration harvest units would not exceed these limitations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Dry Forest Restoration Thin units: a maximum of one acre.</li> <li>• In Aspen Release and Dry Forest Thin with Dwarf Mistletoe Reduction units: maximum of 1 acre in the visual foreground, 2 acres in all other areas.</li> <li>• In Moist Forest units: maximum of one-quarter acre.</li> <li>• Total openings created by thinning or prescribed burning in any of these units would not exceed 5% of the total unit size.</li> </ul> <p>In units with only ladder fuel reduction understory thinning, openings created by thinning or prescribed fire would not exceed 10% of the total unit size. Individual created opening sizes would be limited to:</p>	Limits openings in the forest canopy created by timber harvest in Dry Forest Restoration Thin, Dry Forest Thin with Mistletoe Reduction, and Aspen Release treatment units. Limits openings in the forest canopy created by timber harvest in Moist Forest Thin treatment units 1 and 65. Minimize openings in the forest canopy where visual foreground concerns exist.	Y	High	Forest canopy openings may exceed desirable levels in visual foreground and other areas. In units 1 and 65, Forest canopy openings may exceed desirable levels for Northern Spotted Owl habitat. Openings in forest canopy may exceed desirable levels in visual foreground and other areas.



Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One acre (approximately 200' X 200') in the visual foreground.</li> <li>Five acres (approximately 470' X 470') in all other areas.</li> </ul> <p>One acre is approximately 200' x 200'; two acres is approximately 300' x 300'.</p>				
31	During prescribed burning, treatments would be designed to retain all genetic trees, and at least 90 percent of other live trees and snags greater than 20" DBH (Wright et al. 2003). This would be measured on a per-burn-unit basis. Slash accumulations around these trees would be no deeper than one (1) foot within an 8 foot radius of the bole to reduce cambium heating and scorch during prescribed fire underburn treatments.	Minimize mortality of all genetic trees and snags, and live conifer trees > 20 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH)	Y	Moderate - High	Loss of genetic and large structure trees.
32	In regeneration units where post-harvest tree planting would occur, planting survival exams would be conducted by the district silviculturist or their designee following existing protocols to assess the survival of planted seedlings and natural regeneration.	Ensure that regeneration of trees occurred as planned in regeneration units.	Y	High	Regeneration of desired tree species and structure may not occur and be corrected.
33	Before implementation of reforestation or prescribed fire treatments, thinning units would be monitored by district silviculturist or designee to evaluate accomplishment of silvicultural treatment objectives and confirm planned treatment needs.	Ensure that post-thinning treatments are modified as needed based on results of thinning to accomplish project vegetation and fuels treatment objectives.	Y	Moderate – High	Site preparation prior to tree planting may have limitations. Retention objectives in post-thinning stand structure may be incompatible with prescribed fire.
34	Within Dry Forest leave the most fire and insect resilient tree species when possible (in order of preference - ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, Engelmann spruce, lodgepole pine, and subalpine fir)	To restore historic stand species compositions that provide for resilience to insect attack, wildfire and future prescribed fire (USDA Forest Service, 2012a)	Y	High	Potential of Higher stand mortality that may reduce gains made in restoring historic landscape patterns

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
<i>Recreation</i>					
35	<p>Log Haul would be prohibited on weekends from Friday 6 p.m. until Monday 2 a.m., and Federal Holidays unless approved by recreation staff and the sales administrator.</p> <p>In order to reduce conflict with winter recreation, FSR road 4340 and the portion of FSR 4300 between the intersection of FSR 4340 and FSR 4300-300 will be summer hauled. This is to provide for public safety on a narrow road with few turn outs,</p> <p>In order to address public safety concerns associated with reduced traction and the narrowing of drivable road surface area when winter hauling takes place, public access will be restricted on all Forest Service roads used for winter logging traffic associated with the Mission project except that needed to access private property.</p> <p>Warning signs regarding logging traffic would be posted at the beginning of the Libby Creek and Buttermilk Roads and any Forest Service roads where public access is not restricted and logging traffic is expected.</p>	Reduces potential conflicts between haul traffic and local residential/forest visitor traffic on weekends and holidays.	Y	Moderate	Reduced safety for the recreating public and contractors working on the project.
36	Winter logging operations shall be coordinated with winter sports activities to the extent possible. Provide an allowance of alternative routes during winter logging.	Minimizes impacts on snowmobile access.		Low - Moderate	Public concerns on being able to snowmobile in the area during harvest operations.
37	4300-200 road portion that is decommissioned will become a 4 foot wide winter-only trail and added to the District trail system as such.	Maintaining winter recreational trail access		High	No winter recreation available on FSR 4300-200
38	Decommissioning of the 4300-550, and 4300-560 roads, but maintaining trail access	Recreational access to Scaffold Ridge and the Scaffold Peak/Oval Peak Trail is desirable		High	Maintaining recreational access to Scaffold Peak/Oval Peak trail
<i>Soils</i>					

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
39	<p>Soil under machine piles in harvest and fuels treatment units would be seeded after burning if post-burn inspection indicates that vegetative recovery is unlikely. Rehabilitation of hand and machine burn piles (not including landing piles) following prescribed burning treatments may include seeding, use of coarse woody debris if bare soil is exposed, weed treatment, etc. The need for rehabilitation would be assessed post-burn by staff from fuels, soils, and/or botany/invasive plant resource areas.</p> <p>Soil damaged by burning debris in landing piles in harvested units would be mechanically rehabilitated and revegetated with certified weed-free seed. Damage determinations would be made according to guidelines established by the Soil Scientist. Seeding on landings would be done after pile burning. Seeding and rehabilitation under the burn pile footprint would occur post-burning by District fuels, botany, or invasive plant staff. Seeding need determinations would be made according to guidelines established by the Soils Scientist, District Botanist, and/or Invasive Weeds Coordinator.</p> <p>De-compact landings on summer harvest units on a case-by-case basis as needed, seed and place woody debris on landings. Slash would be placed over 65 – 70% of the landing surface up to a depth of 2 – 3 inches (approximately 22 – 25 tons/acre).</p>	<p>Minimizes invasive weed colonization of burn piles and soil erosion as needed following burning. Prevents soil erosion and support vegetation recovery. Reduces compaction from treatments.</p>	Y	Moderate	<p>Not compliant with National and Region 6 Soil Standards. Reduction of soil productivity.</p>
40	<p>Ground based logging operations outside of winter operating season would occur over a slash mat and restoration activities would be performed following implementation in order to ensure compliance with Regional and Forest Plan soil Standards. Restoration activities could include: seeding or planting skid trails; coarse woody debris placement on skid trails (placed over 65 – 70% of the skid trail surface to a depth of 2 – 3", about 22 – 25 tons/acre; slash and coarse woody debris on the skid trail would be compacted so that it is in contact with the soil surface; litter, duff, soil, and woody debris</p>	<p>Avoids disturbing soils while not impacting winter recreation (Treatment units 1-4, 6-16, 19-24, 26-46, and 48-52).</p>	Y	High	<p>Reduction of soil productivity and Region 6 soil standards.</p>

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	displaced from the trail would be placed on the skid trail). Other possible restoration activities: tilling or subsoiling (could be applied on a site specific basis but may not be feasible with soil types found in the project area); spreading forest litter or topsoil over skid trails.				
41	Logging over a slash mat would occur under the following conditions: there is enough slash to consistently keep ~ 6 inches of slash over 65 – 70% of the footprint of the skidder and following treatment there would be 2 – 3 inches of slash left on skid trails.	Provides for effective use of slash mats to mitigate soil concerns	Y	High	Reduction of soil productivity and Region 6 soil standards.
42	After use, temp roads will be decompacted, recontoured, seeded, have slash scattered on surface, and entrance blocked.	Minimize soil impacts of temp roads		High	Reduction of soil productivity and R6 soil standards
43	Monitor specified units to ensure they meet Regional Soil Quality Standards and Forest Plan Standards post-treatment. Units shall not exceed 20% detrimental soil disturbance post-project.	Monitor to assess effectiveness of design criteria and assess need for further soil restoration	Y	Moderate-High	Soil BMP Effectiveness
44	Winter operations are required in treatment units 47, 53-60, and 62-65 to minimize soil impacts unless the purchaser can present an Operating Plan that allows for no more than 2% detrimental soil compaction conditions per unit. An alternative Operating Plan from winter harvest conditions must be approved by the soil scientist before operations can begin. The snow depth, distribution, and air temperature conditions must be such that ground-based operations maintain the following combination of snow depth and frozen soils conditions under the wheels or tracks/treads of equipment at all times.  Winter soil specifications are: Require 8 inches compacted snow or a combination of compacted snow and hard, frozen ground equaling 8 inches. Prior to approval of winter logging operations, an assessment of suitable snow and soil conditions would be conducted by the North Zone Soil Scientist (or the Timber Sale Administrator following an initial site visit with a Soil	Limits detrimental soil compaction and displacement and provides an alternative to limitations and requirements of summer operations (over snow harvest).	Y	Moderate	Maintenance of some snowmobile routes for winter users. Public concerns on being able to snowmobile in the area throughout the winter.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<p>Scientist). Periodic assessments would be conducted during the winter operating period, especially during warming trends.</p> <p>Overnight temperatures should drop to 25° F, or lower, and afternoon temperatures should stay below 35°F to maintain frozen conditions. Afternoon temperatures can exceed 35°F for short periods if previous night time temperatures are below 20°F.</p> <p>If skid trails begin thawing and show signs of rutting and water runoff, relocate main skid trails to suitable snow and frozen soil conditions.</p>				
45	<p>Active soil restoration measures would be used as needed on detrimentally compacted soils in treatment units where greater than 15% of the area has been affected such as landings, portions of multiple-pass skid trails that converge into landings, portions and other segments that incur heavy compaction. Decompaction may be done with an excavator or other equipment approved by the Soil Scientist and/or Timber Sale Administrator. Post-treatment assessment and confirmation of active restoration needs would be made by a Forest Service Soil Scientist during harvest activities.</p>	<p>Reduces the level of detrimental soil disturbance and restore compacted and displaced soils toward more desirable conditions.</p>	Y	High	<p>Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.</p>
46	<p>Waterbars would be installed on fireline during construction, and on skid trails with bare soil or very thin vegetative cover at the end of harvest operations or prior to entering into seasonal shutdowns or periods of extended inactivity (see waterbar construction diagram in Appendix B of the Soil Resource report). Timely completion of waterbars would divert runoff from seasonal rain or snow fall. Construct to a minimum of 1.5 to 2 feet in height (2 feet high on the steeper skid trails), and a minimum depth of 18 inches, without using pushed-up soils. Some variation in waterbar size may occur but they must be large enough to function properly. Install at a 45 degree angle to either the left or right of the trail to disperse water on the down slope or lower side of the trail.</p>	<p>Mitigates erosion risk by using waterbars and ensure waterbar effectiveness.</p>	Y	Moderate – High	<p>Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.</p>

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	A herringbone pattern of alternating water bars may be necessary on steeper slopes. Driving on or damaging waterbars with heavy equipment would be avoided to minimize the potential for failure. If damage occurs, waterbars would be repaired to bring them back up to the minimum design height. % slope and spacing: 2 – 10% slope = 150' spacing. 11 – 20% slope = 120' spacing. 21 – 34% slope = 90' spacing. > 35% slope = 80' spacing.				
47	Place woody debris on skid trails where necessary. Site factors that would indicate a need for woody debris include, but are not limited to, continuous grades, water concentrating topography, proximity to wet or riparian areas, and ground disturbance that bares soil.	Limits erosion and sediment delivery	Y	Moderate – High	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.
48	Tractor skidder/forwarder operations would be confined to slopes that are 35%, or less, except pitches of 150 feet, or less, on steeper ground. No side hill travel of skidder/forwarder equipment would take place on these steeper pitches to avoid excess soil damage. Machinery would be excluded from any areas with extended pitches greater than 150 feet that exceed 35 percent. Operation on short, steep pitches would only occur if adequate ground vegetation is present.	Avoids excess skidder damage.	Y	High	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.
49	Summer harvesting operations would be conducted during periods of sufficient and not excessive soil moisture, as assessed by a Soils Scientist and Timber Sale Administrator, to provide adequate soil stability (See Appendix A of the Soil Resource Report in the administrative record). The following requirements apply to summer logging operations and are intended to maintain the level of detrimental soil disturbance within harvest units to 15 percent or less: Single-pass felling equipment trails would be located a minimum of 40 feet apart.  Designated skid trails would be used for all ground based logging. Skid trails from prior harvest would be used to the maximum extent possible except where skid trails are	Provides adequate soil stability. Minimizes soil disturbance from skidding.	Y	Moderate – High	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<p>located on slopes 35%, or greater. Slash would be applied on skid trails to extent feasible to operate equipment on.</p> <p>Multiple-pass skidding equipment trails would be designated and approved by the Timber Sale Administrator prior to operations and would be located a minimum of 100 feet apart except where they converge at landings, unless approved by the Soil Scientist and Timber Sale Administrator. Scatter slash on the first 100' of skid trail entrances, including where skid trails access landings.</p>				
50	<p>When determining landing locations, the Timber Sale Administrator shall consider that use of existing sites, especially those currently causing resource damage, would provide for immediate mitigation and post-use rehabilitation of landing locations and associated roads/skid-trails within the constraints of timber harvest contract administration.</p>	<p>Rehabilitates previous disturbance.</p>		<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.</p>
51	<p>Temporary stream crossing will be designed to handle expected flows during life of use and will be installed to minimize disturbance to stream banks and channel with material placed there removed following use of the crossing and placed in a stable location to prevent sediment from entering the stream. Erosion control measures will be in place during and after use of the crossing.</p>	<p>Minimize impacts of temp road stream crossings</p>		<p>High</p>	<p>Reduction of soil productivity and R6 soil standards</p>

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
52	<p>Hand and machine piles may be up to 6 - 8 feet in diameter to localize areas of soil disturbance to less than approximately 50 square feet. Pile burning should occur when soils are moist to minimize duff consumption and high-severity burn impacts on soils. Where feasible, build piles where soil disturbance already exists (i.e. on old landings, roads, or skid trails) to prevent new areas of detrimental soil disturbance.</p> <p>In aspen overstory thin units, a slash mat of at least six inches in depth would be used during operations. A maximum of 2 ft. of slash can be left on skid trails, anything over that amount will be piled and burned. No machine piling will be allowed in aspen overstory thin units. Operations need to be conducted during times of low soil moisture, generally by mid-July. See Appendix A of Soil Report for soil moisture operability table.</p> <p>Where possible, use Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) to reduce soil and vegetation disturbance.</p>	<p>Minimize detrimental soil disturbance (DSD) created by machine piling and burning and speed the recovery time for vegetation establishment.</p> <p>Reduce soil and vegetation disturbance</p>	Y	<p>Moderate – High</p> <p>High</p>	<p>Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.</p> <p>Used in sensitive areas (wetland/riparian zones)</p>
53	<p>Keep units under Region 6 detrimental soil disturbance measures and reduces bare soil post-project by recontouring slash where material is readily available. Seed and block entrance to skid trails and temporary roads. After prescribed burning, desired outcome includes retention of organic matter across at least 80% of the unit within a burn unit within 2 years following treatment implementation. Machine and hand-pile burning should be done during times of high soil moisture when post-burn conditions would result in no more than 20% bare soils (excluding natural conditions) within 2 years following treatment implementation.</p>	<p>Minimize detrimental soil disturbance (DSD), speed recovery of soil, limit unauthorized motor vehicle access. Retains organic matter to protect the soil from rain splash impacts, erosion, soil moisture holding capacity, and solar surface heating (especially on south-facing slopes).</p>	Y	Moderate – High	Units may go above Region 6 DSD standards and have excessive erosion. Reduction of soil productivity.
54	<p>Make handpiles 6-8 ft in diameter, burn with some soil moisture, burn on old landings/roads where feasible</p>	<p>Minimize DSD and speed the recovery time for veg establishment</p>	N		Will keep units under R6 DSD measures, reduces bare soil



Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
55	Fuels and botany staff will assess fireline to determine if spot seeding is necessary to restore the line to its pre-disturbance natural vegetation. If seeding is required, emphasis will be on establishing native vegetation. Some small trees (generally < 10" dbh) and some down logs may be cut and/or moved along the fireline to prevent undesirable fire spread but no material will be removed from the site. Fireline rehab will include methods that prevent public use as hiking trails, bike routes, motorcycle routes, etc.	Restore firelines to reduce erosion, minimize movement of wood, inhibit use for recreation		Moderate	Reduction of soil productivity and R6 soil standards
56	During skyline harvest, full suspension whenever possible and partial suspension is required	Minimizes detrimental soil disturbance, erosion, and speed recovery time for vegetation establishment.	Y	Moderate – High	Units may go above Region 6 DSD standards and have excessive erosion and invasive plant colonization.
57	<p>Machine piling within harvest units would be done when fuel loading is in excess of 10 tons per acre and accomplished by piling debris (i.e. using an excavator or grapple-piler), not by pushing debris with bladed equipment.</p> <p>Machine-piling equipment would use existing skid trails, whenever possible, and make single passes to collect debris that is reachable from skid trails. Machinery would operate on slash whenever possible and should operate in linear passes to avoid soil displacement from turning. No new detrimental soil disturbance would occur from machine-piling and burning.</p> <p>Leave coarse woody material on site in all forested portions of units at the following post-treatment rates as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warm/dry ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir habitat types: 5-10 tons/acre</li> <li>• Cool dry and Cool/Moist Douglas-fir habitat types: 10-20 tons/acre</li> <li>• Cool lodgepole pine &amp; subalpine fir habitat types: 8-24 tons/acre.</li> </ul>	Minimizes new detrimental soil disturbance from machine piling equipment. Meets coarse woody debris objectives.	Y	Moderate – High	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	In all zones, mechanically scarred trees would be left standing to provide wood recruitment.  Where total debris up to 9" in diameter is <10 tons/acre, no machine piling would occur to help retain wood for soil productivity.				
58	Livestock entry into unburned units would be regulated by the Range Specialist implementing the grazing allotment Annual Operating Instructions.	Prevents soil erosion and weed invasion and promote vegetation recovery.	Y	High	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.
59	Coarse Woody Material (CWM) larger than 15" in diameter would not be intentionally ignited during lighting operations. Fire may creep into CWM and combust various pieces.	Provides for coarse woody debris retention during prescribed fire activities.	Y	Moderate	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.
60	Leave debris from thinning through one winter after cutting to allow for initial decomposition and nutrient leaching.	Provides for nutrients to enhance soil.		High	Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.
61	Where possible, separate limbs from tops at processing sites to provide material for biochar and to reduce burn pile sizes.	Provides material for biochar.		Moderate	Would not be able to use slash material for biochar production to return nutrients to the soil.
62	Proposed sub-soiling would occur on native soil surfaces and would not impact any road prism in the project area. No equipment would be allowed on riparian soils. If riparian soils needs treated, it would be accomplished using the extent of the equipment boom. Identified weed infestations would be avoided and/or treated by the District Invasive Weeds Specialist before sub-soiling treatments. Upon completion of sub-soiling activities, the Soil Scientist and District Botanist would assess the need for native plant seeding.	Maintains existing road prisms; minimizes impacts on riparian soils and the spread of invasive weeds; provides for re-seeding as necessary.	Y	Moderate	Roads could be impacted, weeds spread, and native plant colonization may be reduced.
<i>Air Quality</i>					
63	Coordinate burning activities through compliance with the current Washington State Smoke Implementation Plan (SIP).	Provides for smoke approval and the means to coordinate ignitions,		Moderate - High	Non-compliance with SIP. Public parties may be adversely effected by impacts

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
		consider current and potential air quality impacts. Helps schedule burns for periods of good air ventilation, minimizing air quality impacts to local communities and Class I airsheds.			from smoke. Additional restrictions may be placed on fuels treatments utilizing burning.
64	Target burning for periods of favorable ventilation conditions of adequate length for ignition. Evaluate smoke dispersal conditions before, during, and after ignition. Monitor smoke impacts on air quality during and after ignition. Document air quality impacts from prescribed burning using monitors in Twisp or Winthrop, photographs, and/or records of comments & complaints.	Gives local, site-specific evaluation of air quality conditions that may be missed during smoke approval process. Provides potential trigger to stop further ignitions if possible. Helps assess, analyze, and address air quality issues.	Y	Moderate – High	Non-compliance with agency direction. Ignition may occur or continue when air quality impacts are increasing and ventilation conditions are unfavorable or deteriorating with an increased potential for air quality impacts. Subjective determinations on air quality impacts.
65	Notify the public of prescribed fire activities and recommended actions to reduce impacts, using applicable contacts and methods listed in the current District Prescribed Fire Public Information Plan. Burn planners would contact residents adjacent to burn unit boundaries during the planning process and include them in burn notification process as requested.	Notifies the public of plans for burning to provide awareness of prescribed fire activities and opportunity to minimize or avoid air quality impacts.		Moderate – High	Non-compliance with agency direction. Public has little time to prepare for potential health and visual impacts of prescribed fire smoke.
66	If smoke from prescribed burning impacts visibility on local roads, implement the current District Traffic Visibility Guide.	Reduces risks associated with reduced visibility caused by smoke from prescribed burning.	Y	Moderate – High	Non-compliance with agency direction. Increased risk to drivers using roads with limited visibility near prescribed burn units.
67	Minimize smoke emissions by allowing public firewood collection for one year after commercial and ladder fuel reduction thinning treatments have been completed except where biomass is proposed for use commercially or debris is inaccessible by motorized vehicles. Except for landing piles, firewood collection would not be allowed	Reduces emissions through firewood collection, biomass utilization, chipping, and other fuels treatment methods where feasible.		Low – Moderate	Slight increase in emissions during prescribed burning. Public not able to gather firewood from debris piles.

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	where slash is hand- or machine-piled. All firewood gathering must be consistent with current forest firewood policy. Where cost-effective and feasible, chip debris from thinning activities or remove through biomass utilization or other means if consistent with effects analyzed for this project.	Provide firewood opportunities for the public.			
68	If ignition is underway and ventilation conditions deteriorate with no potential for improvement during the burn period, or if ignition is delayed to periods with unfavorable conditions, cease ignition at the earliest and safest opportunity.	Limit particulate matter impacts to air quality during prolonged periods of poor ventilation that occur after ignition begins with no potential for improvement.	Y	Moderate	Potential increased and prolonged levels of particulate matter may impact human health.
<i>Cultural Resources and Historic Properties</i>					
69	Activities would avoid eligible and unevaluated cultural resources. Burn plans and contracts would contain clauses allowing the Forest Service to modify or cancel portions of the operations to protect known and newly discovered cultural resources. If cultural resources are discovered as a result of project activity, all work in the vicinity of the discovery would cease until assessment by a cultural resource specialist.	Protects cultural and heritage resources.	Y	High	Adverse effects to cultural resources.
<i>Transportation</i>					
70	Temporary roads would be constructed to minimal standards necessary for safe use and decommissioned/rehabilitated following completion of harvest activities. Rehab activities shall include decompaction, recontouring, slashing (as materials are available), and seeding to speed recovery of soil and blocking entrances to prevent unauthorized OHV use. These actions would occur as soon as access is no longer needed, preferably in the same season of use.	Minimizes soil impacts from temporary roads and temporary road stream crossings.	Y	Moderate - High	Not compliant with the LRMP S&Gs for soils. Reduction of soil productivity and failure to meet Region 6 soil standards.

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	Temporary stream crossings would be designed to handle expected flows during the life of use and would be installed to minimize disturbance to stream banks and channels with material placed there removed following use of the channel and crossing and placed in a stable location to prevent sediment from entering the stream. Erosion control measures would be in place during and after use of the crossing.				
71	Stream crossings would be decommissioned by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>dewatering the site or isolating it from flowing waters to prevent delivery of sediment to watercourses in accordance with the WDFW/FS MOU;</li> <li>excavating the fill and restoring slopes and stream channels to mimic the natural stream channel and banks and restore the natural valley configuration;</li> <li>placing and shaping excavated material into cutbanks near the crossing in such a way that sediment-laden runoff can be confined;</li> <li>and/or placing large woody material and/or large rocks, as necessary, for streambed and downstream of the crossing removal.</li> </ul>	Ensures road decommissioning at stream crossings provide a natural hydrology.	Y	High	Failure to comply with BMPs, Federal & State laws, or meet with the MOU agreement between the WDFW and the Forest Service
72	Closing roads (changing to Maintenance Level 1) may include these activities: blading and shaping the road surface to restore proper cross-slope, reinstalling drain dips and installing waterbars, spreading slash or debris over the road surface, and/or placing an effective restriction device. Specific activities would be evaluated by engineering staff or their designee.	Ensures appropriate level of road closure (ML 1) activities.	Y	High	Not compliant with the LRMP
	Forest Service manual 7731 Road Operation describes that roads can be closed to the public yet used for administrative uses. For this Transportation analysis such roads will be closed in such a way to accommodate ATV/UTV access for maintenance of stock tanks or other legitimate reasons and be closed in such a way that does	Provide administrative access on closed or decommissioned roads		High	Not compliant with the LRMP S&Gs, current ROD or FONSI for the grazing AMPs, current ROD for Invasives management or the 36 CFR 212.5 subpart A-

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	not preclude travel by cows and horses An approximate 5-foot wide portion of the original road may be preserved to provide this access and dips and waterbars would be created as appropriate to facilitate road drainage. ATV/UTV access would be authorized for administrative use only on roads identified in Appendix B – Proposed Transportation Plan of the Engineering Specialist Report. Road closure methods described in the preceding section may be used. Such roads serve as a practical approach to reduce environmental impacts while maintaining minimal, yet required administrative use by either USFS personnel, contractors or permittees while in the performance of required management responsibilities.				Administration of the Forest Transportation System
73	Road maintenance chemicals (i.e. lignin, magnesium chloride, calcium chloride, de-icing salts, etc.) would not be applied to road surfaces.	Prevent contamination of streams from road chemicals treatments.		High	Chemical contamination of surface water. Sensitive fish mortality
74	Roads placed in ML-1 (closed) status would have culverts removed unless engineering staff or their designee determine the factors listed below. If circumstances arise, and a culvert needs to be retained on a ML1 road, resource specialists need to be consulted including the hydrologist and fish biologist at a minimum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• culverts were recently installed and adequately designed to pass a 100-year storm event and any expected debris;</li> <li>• the culvert is in good condition and has a very deep fill;</li> <li>• culvert is on a loop road with potential need for fire egress; the road is below a recently burned area.</li> </ul> (culverts will be removed as funding becomes available)	Defines the circumstances when a culvert would not be removed from a road for long-term closures.	Y	High	Compliance with the Aquatic BMPs, BAs
75	Roads identified for decommissioning need to be evaluated by the project hydrologist, soil scientist and (fish biologist if needed). Engineers will be consulted as needed for special circumstances that are outside the bounds of normal decommissioning protocol. Evaluation	Ensures site-specific evaluation and application of appropriate level of road	Y	High	Would not comply with Aquatic BMPs

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	would include existing drainage structures, slope stability of fill and cut slopes, signs of erosion, adequacy of vegetation, etc. If no issues are identified that need to be addressed, further decommissioning activities would not occur and road records would be changed to indicate the road segment is decommissioned.	decommissioning activities.			
76	Snow plowing would include water drainage outlets appropriately spaced, constructed and maintained in the dike of snow or berm caused by snow removal operations. Water drainage holes would be placed to obtain surface drainage without discharging on erodible fills. Typically, snow removal would be conducted in such a way as to keep the blade a minimum of 2 inches above the road surface.	Facilitates logging operations and safe use, and identifies the usable travel way.	Y	Moderate	Log trucks would not be able to access area or haul resources out of area.
77	Where culvert replacement and/or Aquatic Organism Passage installations occur, design stream culverts for a 100-year storm event and any associated debris. Follow the WDFW/Region 6 Forest Service MOU Design Criteria for instream work (WDFW & USDA 2012).	Makes roads more resilient to failure and minimize impacts to fish and their habitat		High	Roads at high risk of failure that can lead to excessive impacts to fish habitat.
78	Roads scheduled for closure would be monitored prior to October 1 <sup>st</sup> each year that closures are scheduled to ensure that the work is completed and that the drainage facilities are adequate and self-maintaining.	Ensures roads are treated to prevent impacts of weather and runoff.	Y	High	Inadequate road closures may leave roads at high risk for failure that may adversely impact habitat and increase repair and maintenance costs.
79	Besides the standard dust abatement that is applied to protect the surface of haul routes from logging traffic, dust abatement will be applied, when conditions warrant, to the portions FS Roads 4300-100, 4300-200, 4300-300 and 4300 that pass through private land holdings. This is to reduce nuisance dust to local residents.	Reduces nuisance dust to local residents during harvest operations.	Y	High	Dust during harvest operations could cause a nuisance to local residents.
<i>Wildlife</i>					
80	In harvest units, retain complex patches, clumps, and canopy gaps and snags in accordance with the Forest Restoration Strategy	Provides cover, diversity, connectivity, and a variety of food resources.	Y	High	Reduction in diversity across the landscape, ability of some

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
					species to disperse across the area and fewer food sources.
81	During post-harvest ladder fuel reduction thinning, retain complex patches, clumps, and gaps and snags retained in the harvest units.	Provides cover, diversity, connectivity and variety of food resources	Y	High	Reduction in diversity across the landscape, ability of some species to disperse across the area, and fewer food sources.
82	During ladder fuel reduction thinning outside of harvest units, retain clumps of un-thinned patches of trees from 0.1 to multiple acres.	Provides cover, diversity, connectivity, and variety of food resources.	Y	High	Reduction in diversity across the landscape, ability of some species to disperse across the area, and fewer food sources.
83	Limit diameter of large trees cut in stands providing NRF habitat (commercial thin units 1 and 65) to 21" DBH. Retain snags and defective trees. Maintain canopy closure of 60%, and create no openings greater than ¼ acre. Maintain groups of large trees, including large Douglas-fir in proximity to large pines and clumps of large trees with canopy interaction sufficient to provide habitat elements for owls.  In NRF stands, where LFR treatment would occur (units 1, 65, 403, 406, 407, 410, 418, 419, 420, 421, 423), maintain canopy closure of 60%, and create no openings greater than ¼ acre.	Balances the reduction of competition on large trees with retaining large trees and canopy closures in NRF stands. Canopy closures and medium/large trees would be reduced but stands would become better NRF in the future, and risk of high severity wildfire reduced. In NRF stands where LFR treatment would occur, maintains habitat status as NRF	Y	High	Habitat would be degraded or downgraded to dispersal or no habitat.
84	Implementation of all activities would be restricted from March 1 to August 1 in un-surveyed areas where adequate Nesting-Roosting-Foraging habitat is present. Refer to wildlife biologist's project file for locations.	Reduce potential for disturbance to spotted owls.	Y	High	Disturbance to spotted owls may occur.
85	If goshawk nests are found prior to contract award, nest stands and post-fledgling areas (PFAs) would be delineated and managed by retaining high canopy	Protects active nest and fledgling areas. Reduce potential for disturbance to nesting goshawks.	Y	High	Reduction in suitable habitat which could result in reduced carrying capacity for sensitive



Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<p>closures, diversity of stand structures, and large overstory trees. Refer to wildlife biologist's project file for locations.</p> <p>If goshawk nest is found after contract award, major project activities such as thinning and underburning should be avoided from the onset of nesting until the young are fledged (mid-August).</p>				species. Potential disturbance to nesting goshawk and young
86	Treatments would not occur near active goshawk nest stands and PFAs from March 1 through August 15. Refer to wildlife biologist's project file for locations. These locations would be shown on the Sale Area Map.	Reduces disturbance to goshawks.	Y	High	Potential for nest abandonment by adult goshawks, and subsequent loss of young of a sensitive species.
87	<p>Avoid disturbance of western gray squirrels between March 1 and August 31 within 400' of natal nests. Refer to wildlife biologist's project file for locations.</p> <p>Retain denser forest in riparian areas and in clumps and patches across the landscape for western gray squirrels. In harvest and ladder fuel reduction thinning units, retain groups of trees with interlocking canopies and more open areas to balance fungal and mast crop production. Provide stringers of trees with interlocking crowns between natal nest sites, forage areas, and water for western gray squirrels.</p> <p>During thinning operations, if western gray squirrel natal nests are found, buffer with a 50-foot no-cut zone and retain at least 50% canopy closure within 350 feet of the nest.</p>	<p>Reduces the potential for nest abandonment</p> <p>Facilitates arboreal travel to reduce predation by ground-based predators. Provide a variety of food sources. Protects nest sites and reduces potential of mortality to young.</p>	Y	High	Increased mortality of a sensitive species and reduced variety of foods. Potential disturbance to nesting gray squirrels and young.
88	In ladder fuel reduction thinning units, retain areas of dense multistoried canopy cover across 20% of the fuels treatment footprint in patches from 0.1 acre to multiple acres for mule deer.	Provides thermal and hiding cover for mule deer.	Y	High	Reduced diversity, connectivity, and food resources across the landscape for deer and other wildlife species.
<i>Aquatic and Hydrologic</i>					

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
89	For any thinning within ephemeral draws: No buffer required. Do not skid up-down low point of draws; minimize/mitigate crossings. Avoid new landings or any piles directly within low point of draws.	Prevents compaction of ephemeral draws and forcing sub-surface flow to the surface	Y	High	Reduced base flows in fish bearing streams, which reduces fish habitat quality.
90	Where commercial harvest occurs near intermittent streams, operations would occur in winter or, if outside of winter, no equipment would be allowed in Riparian Reserves (RR). The following buffers apply to commercial harvest operations in these areas; no commercial harvest would occur within these buffers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buffer stream channel 50 feet on 0-10% slopes.</li> <li>• Buffer stream channel 70 feet on 11-25% slopes.</li> <li>• Buffer stream channel 90 feet on 26-35% slopes.</li> </ul> Where commercial harvest occurs near perennial streams, ponds, lakes, and wetlands, operations would occur in winter or, if outside of winter, no equipment would be allowed in Riparian Reserves (RR). Buffer stream channel, lake, wetland, or pond by 100 feet.	Minimizes soil disturbance, surface erosion, and stream sedimentation. Protect stream temperatures by avoiding new openings in inner RRs, provide sediment filtration, as well as other resource functions.	Y	Moderate-High	High ground disturbance, surface erosion, and stream sedimentation. Reduced shade on perennial streams and increased stream temperature. Reduction in fish habitat quality.
91	In commercial thinning units 1, 8, 9, 13, 19, 22, and 24, machinery may operate in RRs over frozen ground during winter operations; if operating outside of winter, equipment would not enter RRs except where harvest would occur to an existing road and be at least 100 feet from a stream.	Limits machine use in Riparian Reserves	Y	High	Increased soil disturbance including compaction, rutting, and potential sediment delivery to streams
92	Landings in Riparian Reserves (RRs): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New landings would not be constructed within RRs unless other practicable locations outside the RR (first priority) or existing landings inside the Riparian Reserve (2nd priority) are not available. The Timber Sale Administrator shall weigh the relative ground disturbance area considering skid distance, landing size, slope of landing area, slope and vegetated cover condition of riparian buffer strip, and other</li> </ul>	Minimizes soil disturbance, surface erosion, and stream sedimentation. Protects shade on perennial streams	Y	Moderate-High	High ground disturbance, surface erosion, and stream sedimentation. Collectively, this reduced fish habitat quality.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	<p>factors. There may be cases where total number of landings within RRs is not the best metric for reducing impacts via ground disturbance within RRs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Areas would not be approved for landing in an RR if mean site slope exceeds 5%; if the riparian buffer strip is not well-vegetated or is in a disturbed condition; or if the site is located downslope of a road that forms the unit boundary in the RR.</li> <li>• Organic debris would be placed along margins of landings as needed to prevent erosion.</li> <li>• Landings in RRs would have suitable erosion control measures such as silt fences or other retention tools installed before construction of the landing. These measures would remain in place during harvest operations. Landings within RRs would be scarified, seeded, and scattered with organic debris after harvest activities are complete.</li> <li>• The Timber Sale Administrator shall weigh the relative ground disturbance area considering skid distance, landing size, slope of landing area, slope and vegetated cover condition of riparian buffer strip, and other factors. There may be cases where total number of landings within RRs is not the best metric for reducing impacts via ground disturbance within RRs.</li> </ul>				
93	<p>The Timber Sale Administrator or other authorized personnel shall consider the requirement to place slash in drainage features to provide additional sediment trapping/filtration function. These locations may include natural drainage swales in the unit or below the road, ditch lines where anticipated flows would not put the roadway prism at risk of failure, skid trails, etc.</p>	<p>Filters and traps sediment.</p>	Y	Moderate	<p>Increased soil disturbance and surface erosion.</p>

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
94	No more than 20% of any 6th field sub-watershed would be burned in any single year (Beche et al.2005).	Limits cumulative impacts of prescribed fire on RR resources.	Y	Moderate	Burning more than 20% of a watershed per year can lead to increased fire effects on aquatic and riparian resources.
95	During harvest operations outside of winter, perennial stream crossings would be armored by applying rock to the running surface of road segments on summer haul routes with a grade greater than 3% that could potentially deliver sediment at the stream crossing. This treatment would be applied to perennial stream crossings and intermittent stream crossings within 300 feet of a perennial stream. All locations would be subject to field verification as needed by engineering staff with input from aquatic or hydrologic specialists as appropriate. See map in Appendix F for locations of proposed locations where rock armoring may occur.	Reduces road-related sediment.	Y	High	Increased surface erosion
96	<p>Noncommercial thinning (ladder fuel reduction, pre-commercial thinning, etc.) would use these stream channel buffers in RRs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intermittent Streams: 25-foot no-treatment buffer or inner gorge (&gt;35%), whichever is greater.</li> <li>• Perennial Streams: 50-foot no-treatment buffer or inner gorge (&gt;35%), whichever is greater.</li> </ul> <p>Ladder fuel thinning in unit 400 will be limited to trees under 50 feet within the Riparian Reserve. The project fish biologist or hydrologist will establish this zone width and boundaries.</p>	Maintains understory instream-wood recruitment and shade along perennial streams	Y	High	Reduced wood recruitment and increased stream temperatures
97	<p>Hand or Machine Piling: Minimize machine crossings of ephemeral draws; cross at perpendicular angle; do not use low point of ephemeral draws as a travel way for equipment. Avoid hand or machine piles directly within the low point of draws.</p> <p>Machine piling is permitted in outer 50' edge of the 150' RRs in units 022 and 347; as an Adaptive Management Strategy, it may also be used in outer edge of RRs in units</p>	Avoids removing ground cover and prevents surface erosion	Y	High	Increases risk of surface flows and sedimentation of streams downslope

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	019, 064, and 066 if the original proposed treatments are not selected. Not permitted anywhere where mesic riparian vegetation dominates.				
98	<p>For all activities in Riparian Reserves, retain 95% of overstory trees, ~66% of understory/shrub layer, and 50% of existing ground cover/organic material on surface.</p> <p>Underburning in intermittent RRs may use active lighting up to 25 feet from the channel, and underburning in perennial or wetland RRs may use active lighting up to 100 feet from the channel; this would provide for low-intensity fire behavior. Creeping fire beyond the active ignition zone is acceptable.</p> <p>Trees 18 inches DBH and larger would be retained in Riparian Reserves.</p> <p>Wetlands would be excluded from burning.</p>	<p>Increases ability to provide for low-intensity fire behavior in RRs. Avoids removing ground cover and prevent surface erosion. Limits disturbance of burning on wetlands.</p>	Y	High	<p>Increases risk of surface flows and sedimentation of streams. Noncompliance with NWFP ACS Objectives</p>
99	<p>During prescribed fire treatments, fire effects within the RRs would be closely monitored. If fire effects becomes unfavorable within RR's, Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) would be utilized to suppress fire as long as safety of personnel is assured.</p> <p>If prescribed fire in RRs is not meeting RR prescribed fire objectives, ignition may continue if needed to bring the unit to a reasonable safe holding feature, then further ignition in RRs would cease until aquatics, hydrology, and/or soils staff can assess effects and determine need for mitigating measures to reduce erosion and sedimentation potential from the site. Mitigation may include scattering coarse woody debris, spreading weed free hay, installing straw waddles, etc. Application of these measures would be determined according to anticipated resources at risk, burn severity observed, and other factors.</p>	<p>Minimizes soil disturbance, canopy removal, and mortality of deciduous species in RRs</p>	Y	Moderate	<p>Increased soil disturbance and potential sediment delivery to streams</p>

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
100	During prescribed fire operations, surfactants and foams in water would not be used within 100 feet of the edge of wetted channels, lakes or wetlands. Engines which have had surfactant in their tanks must use an auxiliary pump to fill.	Avoids contamination of surface water with surfactants.	Y	High	Chemical contamination of surface water. Sensitive fish mortality
101	<p>Water drafting sites for dust abatement, road compacting or prescribed fire use would occur at drafting locations in the project area designated by hydrology and/or aquatic resources staff.</p> <p>The location, pumping rate, and duration of water withdrawals shall be designed to minimize aquatic impacts. Limit water withdrawals to 10 percent of stream flow or less at the point of withdrawal. The water level at the withdrawal site should not be lowered noticeably or the pumping rate should be reduced.</p> <p>Screen mesh openings for all intake screens shall not exceed 3/32 inch (2.38 mm) for woven wire or perforated plate screens, or 0.0689 inch (1.75 mm) for profile wire screens, with a minimum 27% open area. The screened intake would consist of enough surface area to ensure that the velocity through the screen is less than 0.4 feet per second. Screen maintenance would be adequate to prevent injury or entrapment of juvenile fish and the screen would remain in place whenever water is withdrawn from the stream through the pump intake.</p> <p>The following locations are proposed as approved drafting sites: Libby Creek at FSR 4300 road, near intersection with County road - mile post 0.06 (prior to Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>), Libby Creek at FSR4300100 - mile post 0.45 (prior to Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>), South Fork Libby Creek- FSR4300 - mile post 5.18 (prior to July 15<sup>th</sup>), and North Fork Libby Creek at FSR 4300 - mile post 5.5 (prior to July 15<sup>th</sup>). In the Buttermilk drainage there are only two approved sites. This is Buttermilk Creek at FSR 4300500 – mile post 0.12 (prior to Aug. 1<sup>st</sup>), and Black Pine Campground (as long as drafting is done occasionally and does not conflict with</p>	Prevent fish taken into water pumps. Minimize reductions in stream flow during base flows	Y	Moderate-High	Noncompliance with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife MOU with the Region 6 Forest Service for projects occurring in waters of the State of Washington. Reduced habitat quality for fish.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
	recreational use). Any location in the Methow and Twisp River are acceptable. Other approved sites must be used after cut-off dates.				
102	OHVs used for administrative purposes would not leave existing roadways within Riparian Reserves.	Limit impacts of administrative use of motor vehicles in RRs		High	Increased soil disturbance and potential sediment delivery to streams
103	Identify wetlands in units before operations to ensure that activities are consistent with applicable design criteria that implement Riparian Management Objectives.	Ensure activities in wetlands are consistent with ACS objectives.	Y	High	Noncompliance with NWFP ACS Objectives
104	All danger tree mitigation taking place within the Riparian Reserve would be done without off-road use of heavy equipment. Trees would be left on site when needed to meet coarse woody debris objectives. Any yarding would be done in a manner which does not cause soil or riparian vegetation damage, which may include winter conditions (snow/frozen ground).	Avoid soil or riparian damage.	Y	High	Noncompliance with NWFP ACS Objectives
105	For all operations using heavy machinery, equipment, or gas-powered tools, measures would be in place to contain accidental spills of hazardous materials and petroleum products. Any fuels cans for pumps, etc. would be refilled outside of RRs or on a road and pumps would be placed on absorbent cloth to capture any leaks or spills. Helicopters would only use existing landings and all refueling sites would be outside RRs.	Prevent drainage to streams from leaks or spills of hazardous materials and petroleum products.	Y	High	Chemical contamination of surface water. Sensitive fish mortality
106	Coarse woody debris enhancement treatments would follow the WDFW/Region 6 Forest Service MOU Design Criteria for instream work (WDFW & USDA 2012).	Complies with ESA and Clean Water Act laws by minimizing impacts to aquatic and riparian resources. Follows Conservation Measures for Fish Passage Culvert and Bridge Projects described in the 2014 FWS and NMFS Washington State Fish	Y	High	Potential impacts to aquatic habitat and possible non-compliance with ESA and Clean Water Act laws.

Number	Design Feature	Why Necessary	Monitoring Necessary?	Efficacy	Consequence of Not Applying
		Passage and Habitat Enhancement Restoration Programmatic Consultation Biological Opinions.			
107	The proposed bridge over WF Buttermilk Creek shall have channel widths that are designed using the culvert criteria PDC 21a-i under the ARBO II Programmatic Biological Opinion. No pile driving within the wetted channel. This opinion does not cover bridges that require pile driving within a wetted stream channels. Primary structural elements must be concrete, metal, fiberglass, or untreated timber. Concrete must be sufficiently cured or dried before coming into contact with stream flow. Riprap must not be placed within the bankfull width of the stream. Riprap may only be placed below bankfull height when necessary for protection of abutments and pilings. However, the amount and placement of riprap should not constrict the bankfull flow. See the design criteria under the Conservation Measures for Fish Passage Culvert and Bridge Projects described in the 2014 FWS and NMFS Washington State Fish Passage and Habitat Enhancement Restoration Programmatic Consultation Biological Opinions for more details (FWS No.: 13410-2008-FWS # F-0209 & NMFS Tracking No.: 2008/03598).	To avoid adverse chemical impacts to threatened and endangered fish species.	N	High	Unnecessary adverse impacts to sensitive fish species.
<i>Other</i>					
108	No tree or snag felling within the Sawtooth Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA)._	Not permitted	N	High	



## Appendix E: Literature Cited

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# Appendix F: Project Maps

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Figure 146. Project area vicinity map including sub-watersheds.

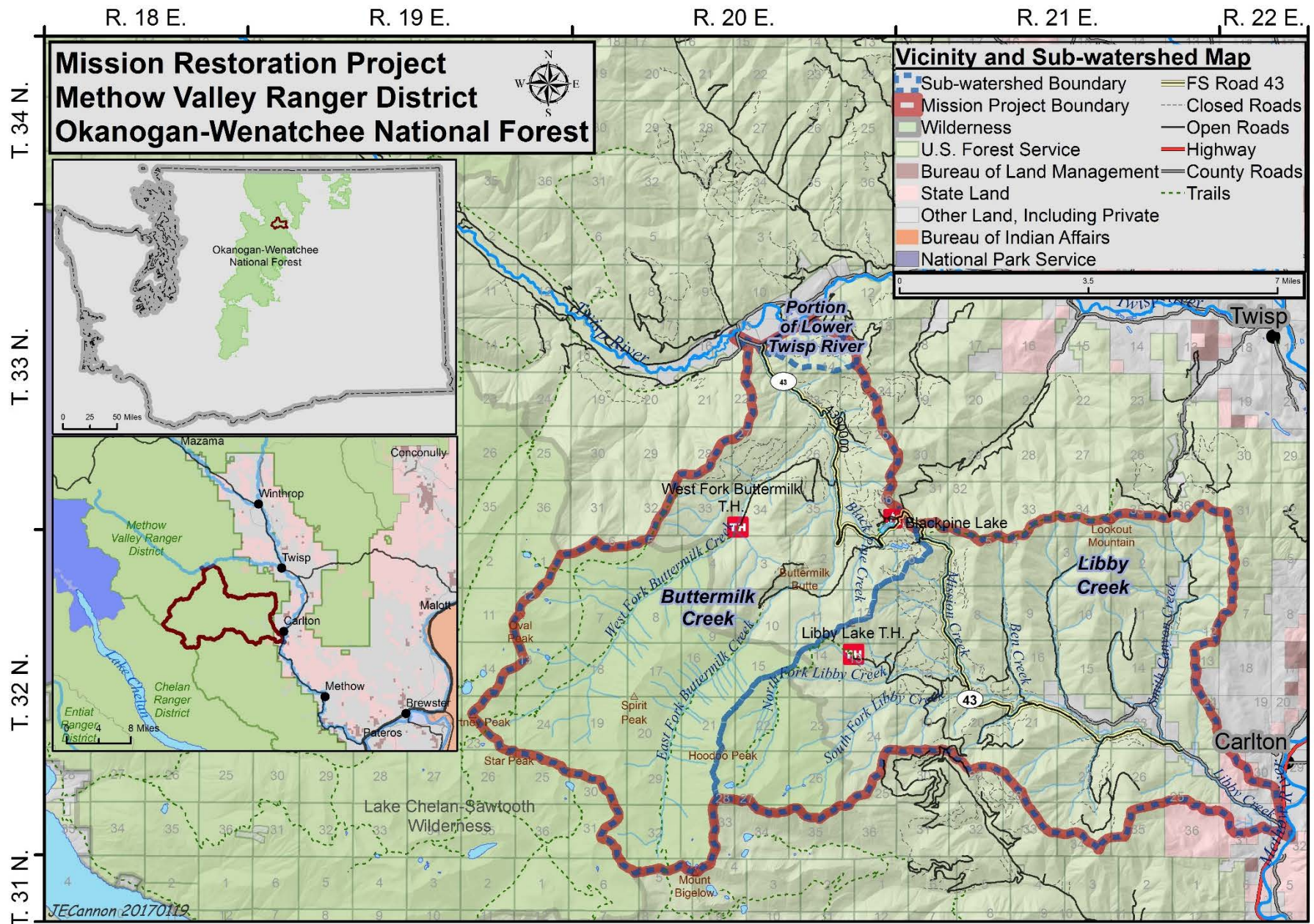


Figure 147. Management areas within the project area

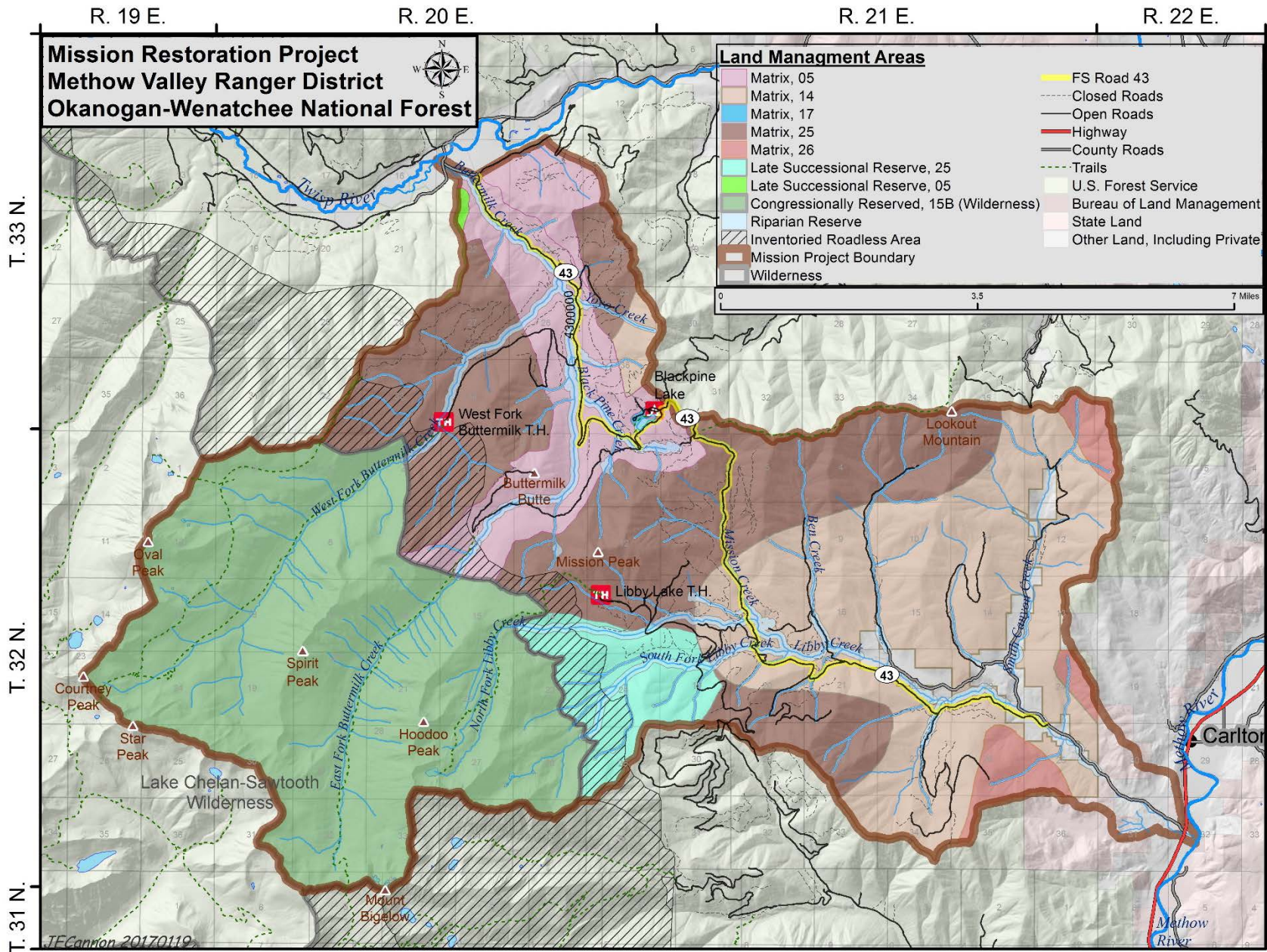


Figure 148. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments for both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3: entire project area.

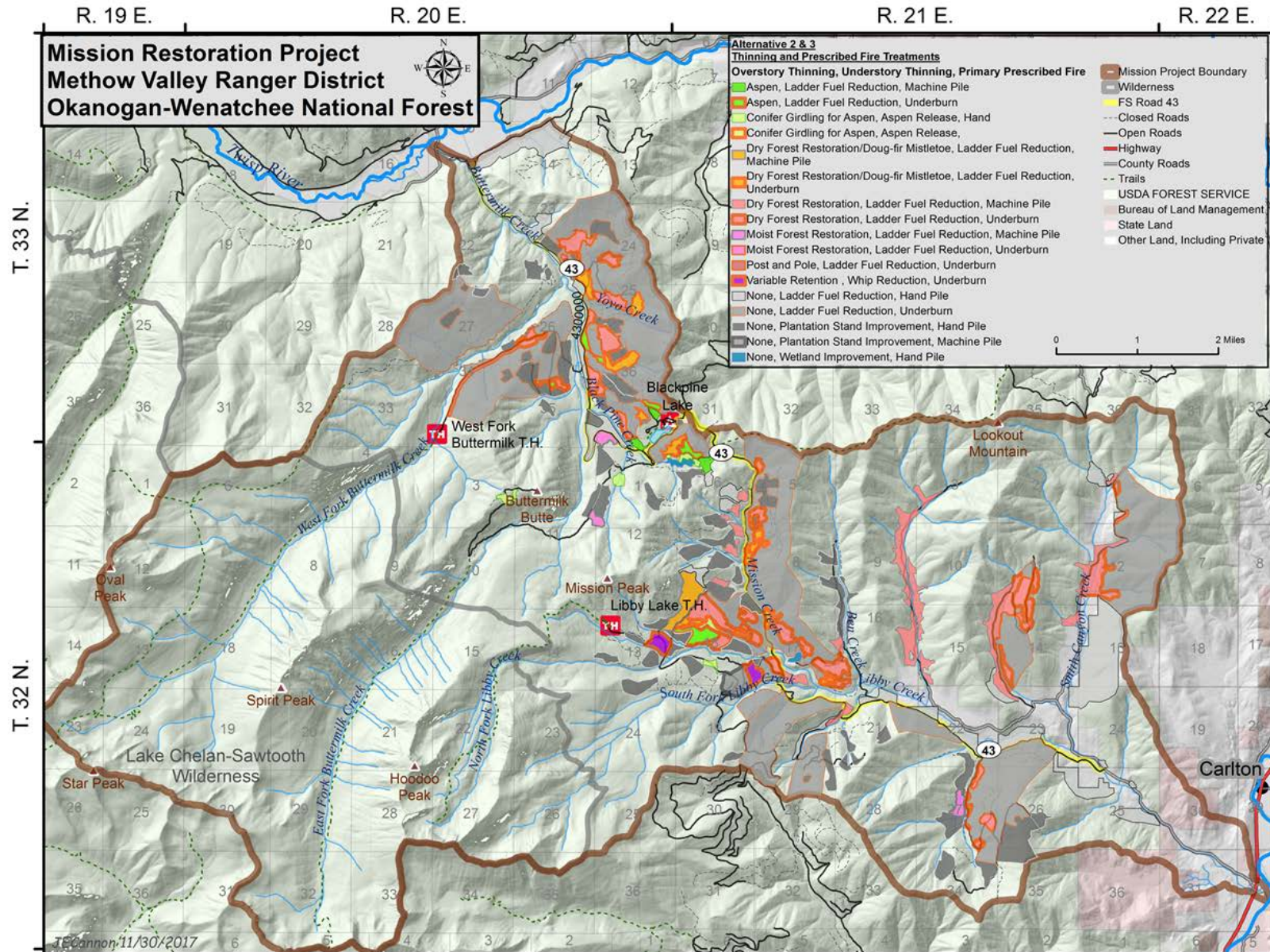


Figure 149. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments for both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3: west part of project area.

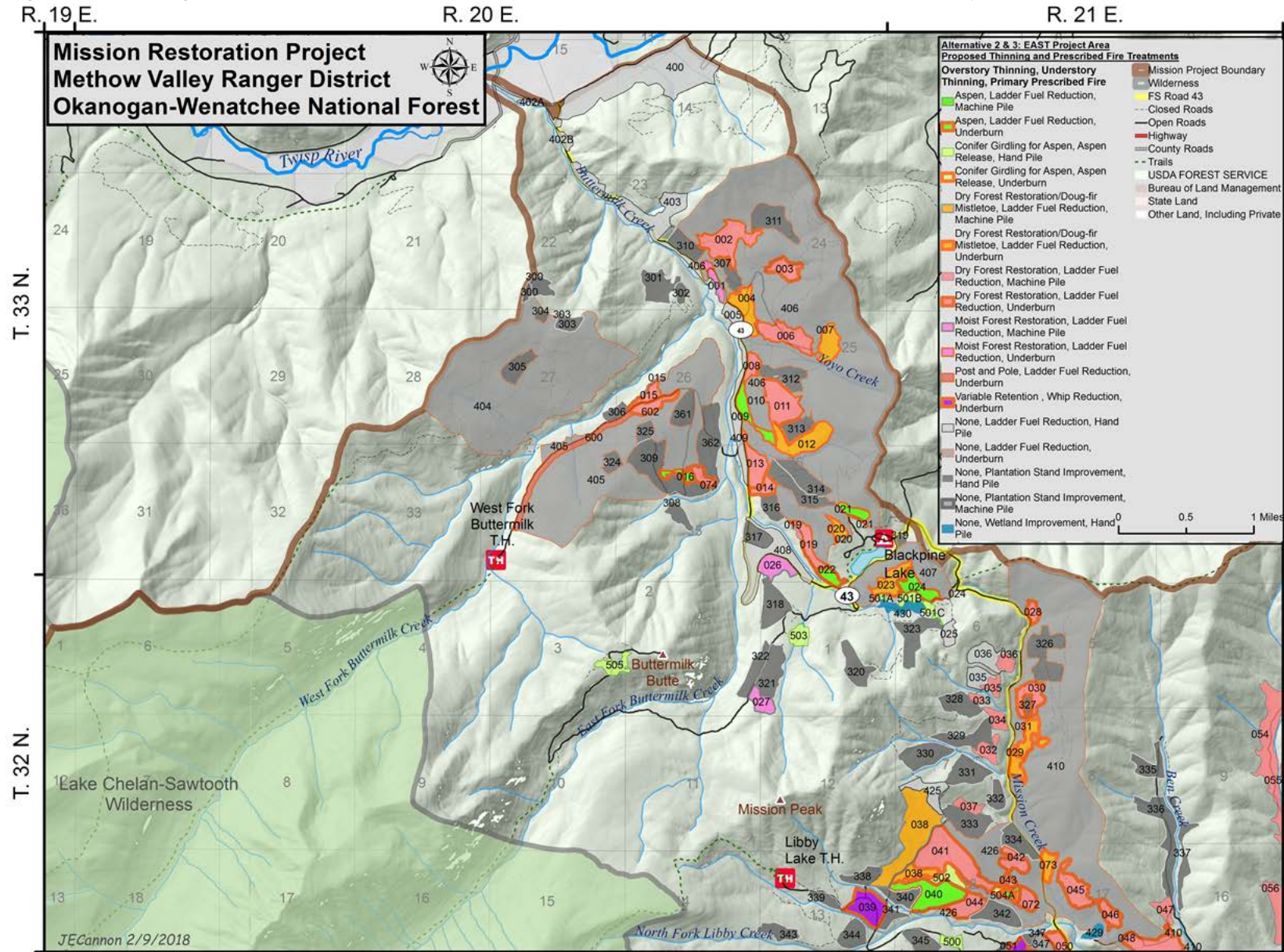


Figure 150. Thinning and prescribed fire treatments for both Alternative 2 and Alternative 3: east part of project area.

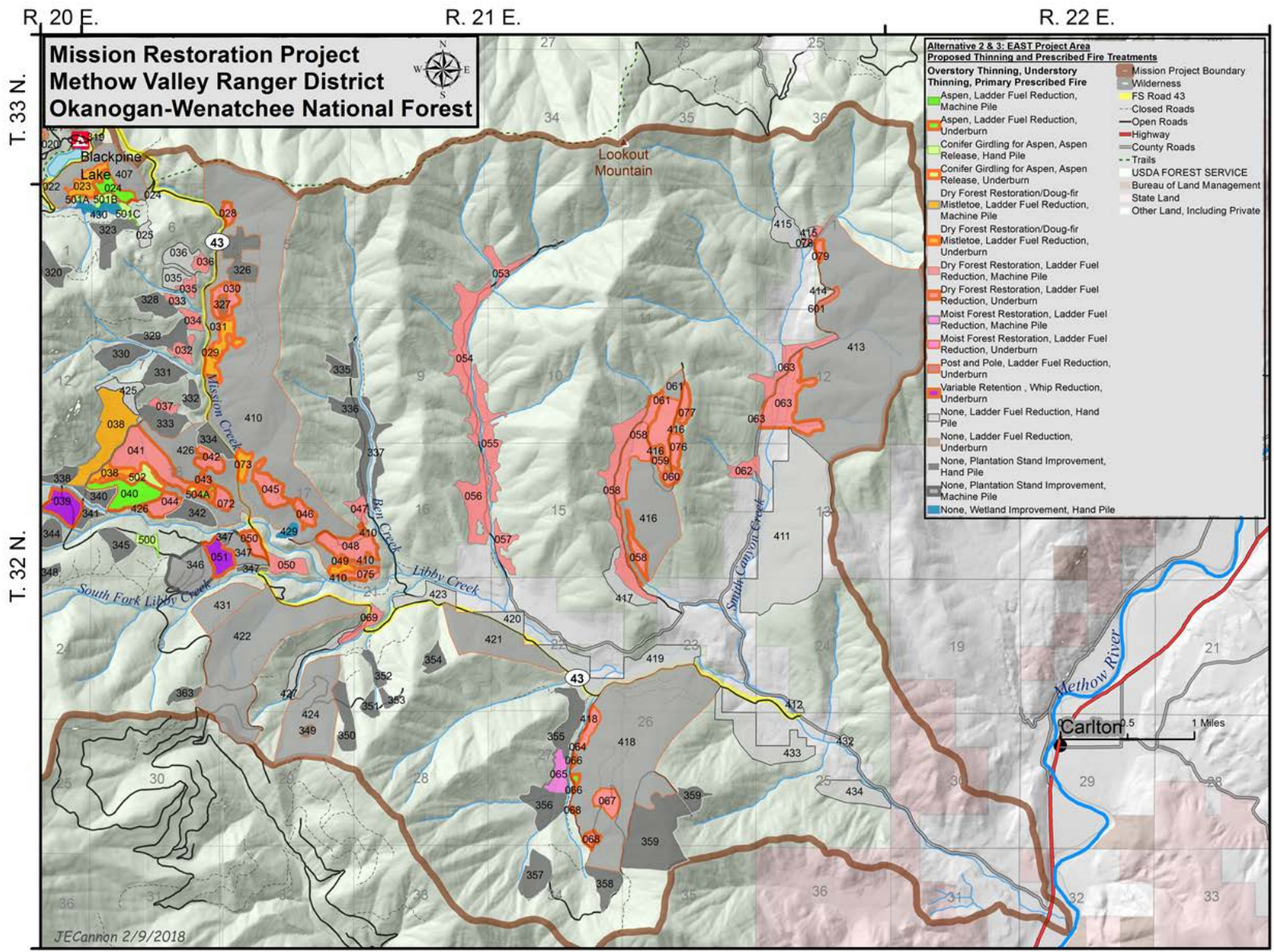


Figure 151. Alternative 2 proposed transportation changes: entire project area.

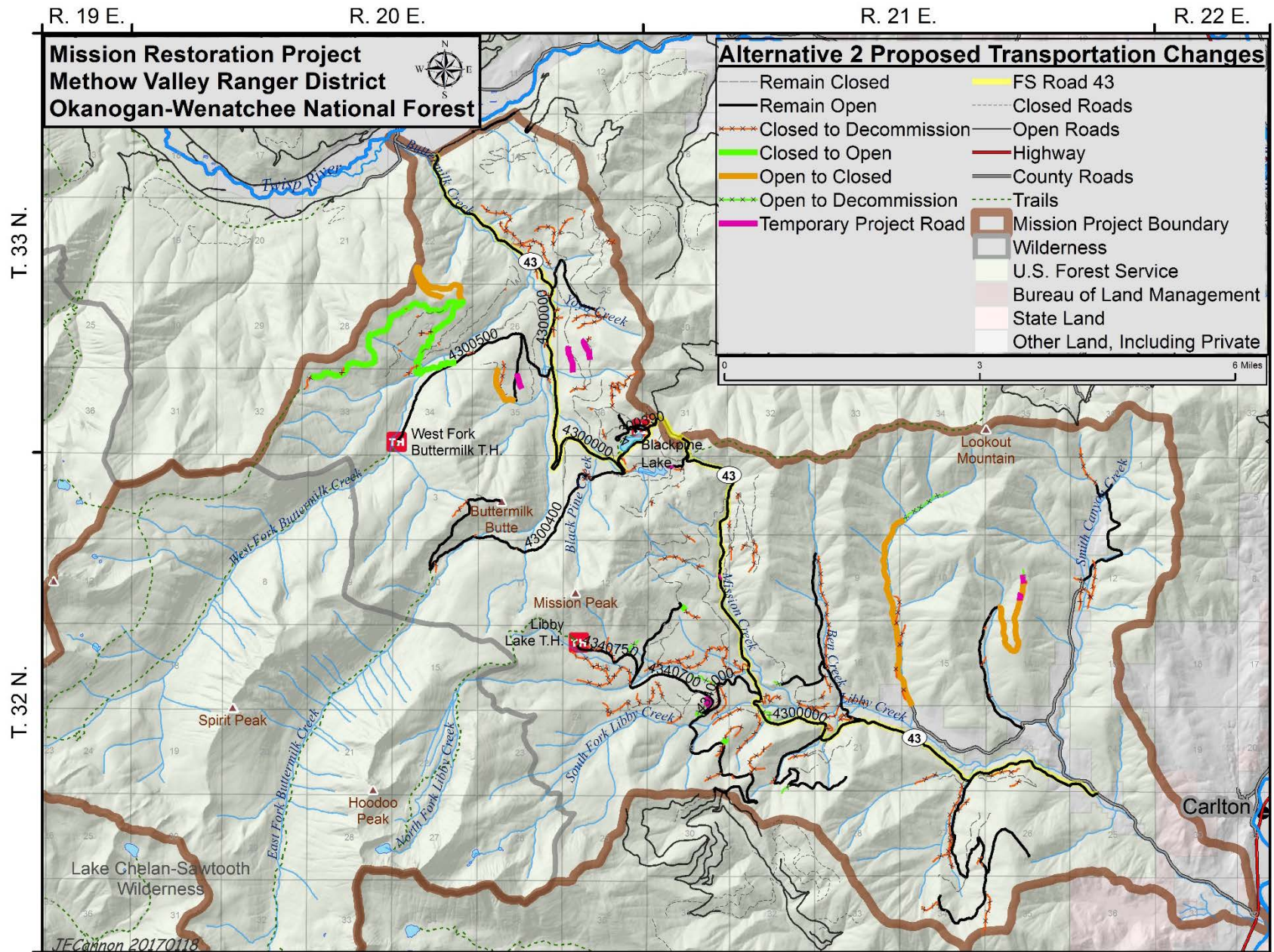




Figure 152. Alternative 2 proposed transportation changes: west part of project area.

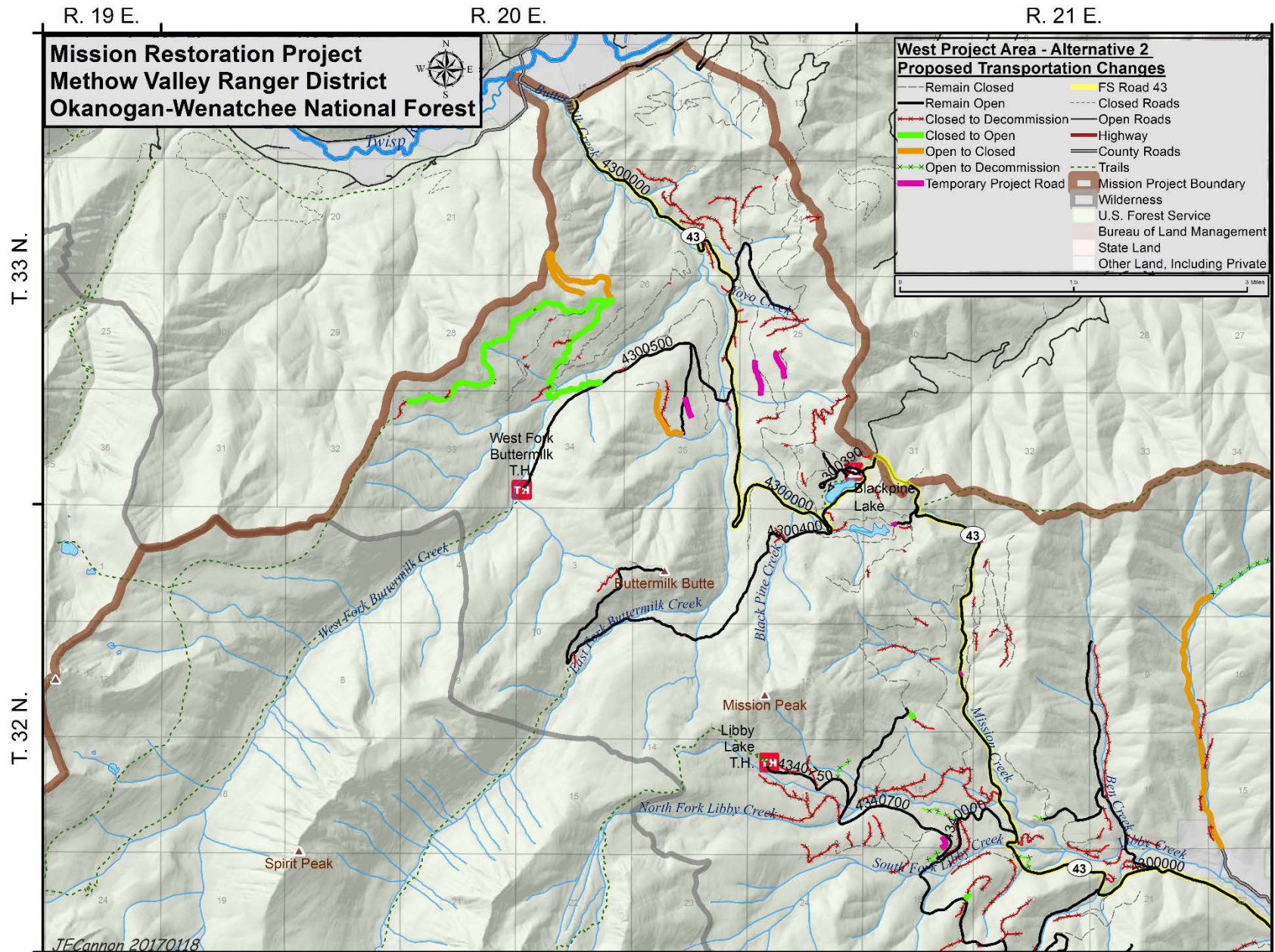


Figure 153. Alternative 2 proposed transportation changes: east part of project area.

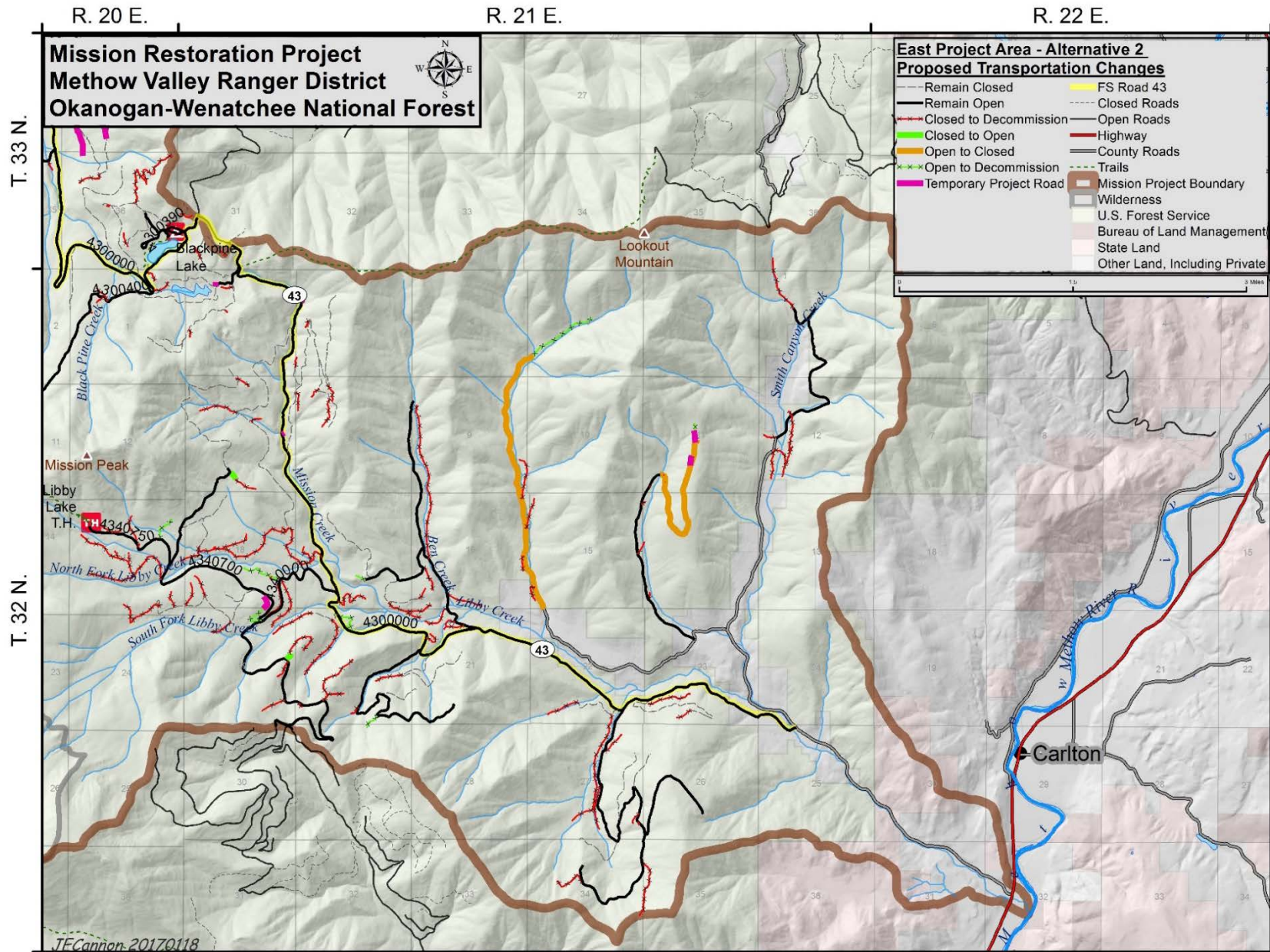


Figure 154. Alternative 3 proposed transportation changes: entire project area.

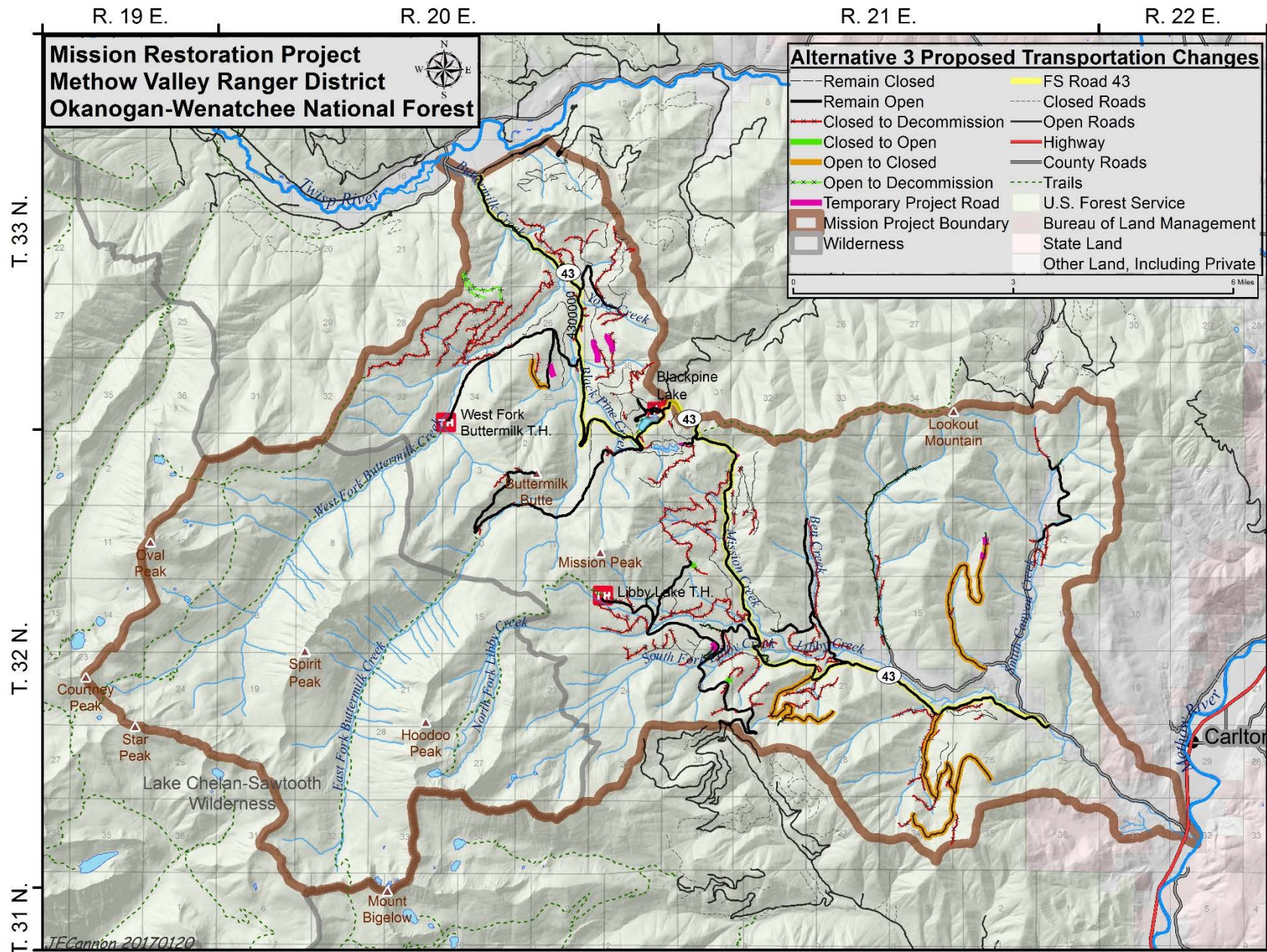


Figure 155. Alternative 3 proposed transportation changes: west part of project area.

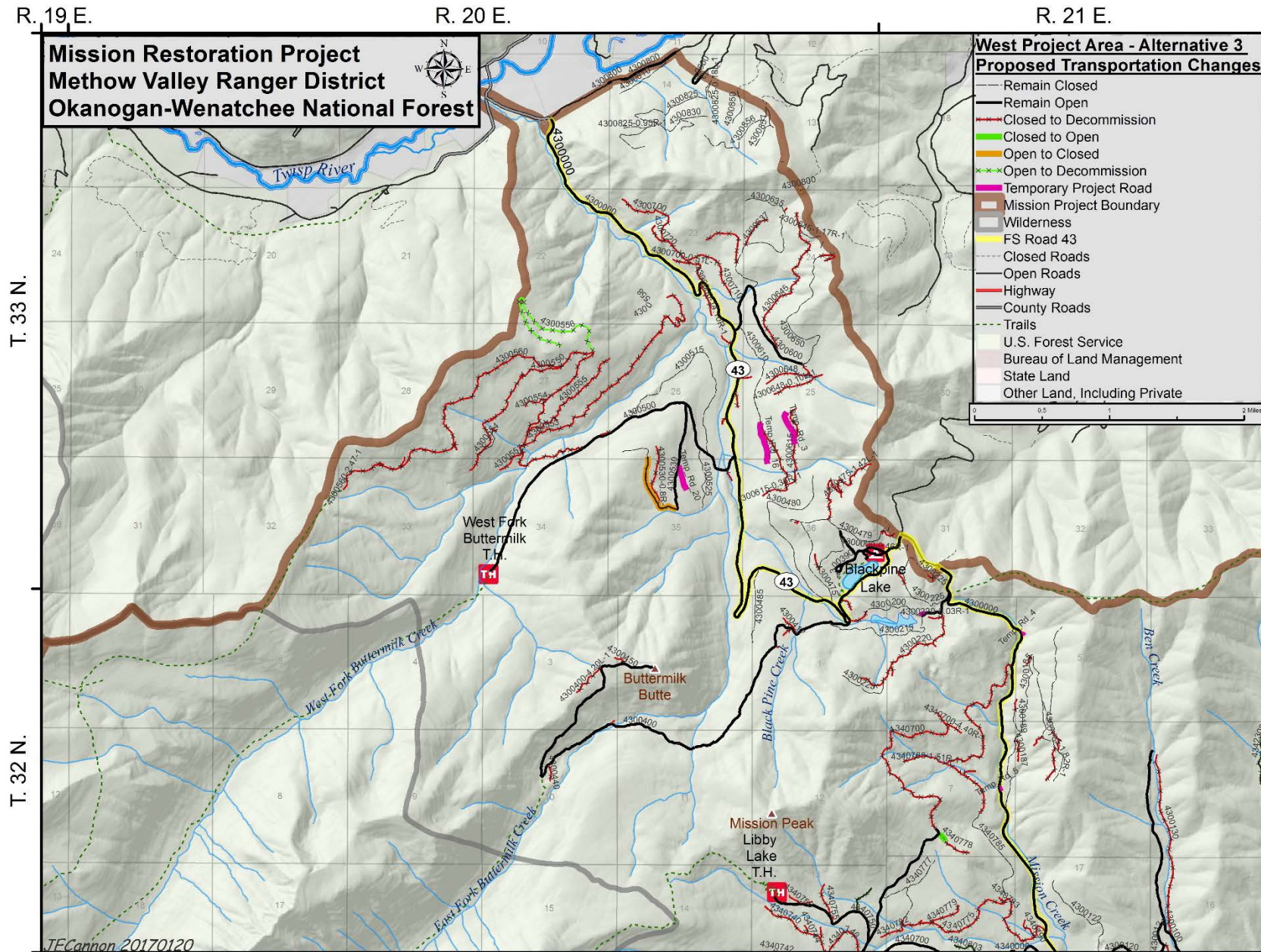


Figure 156. Alternative 3 proposed transportation changes: east part of project area.

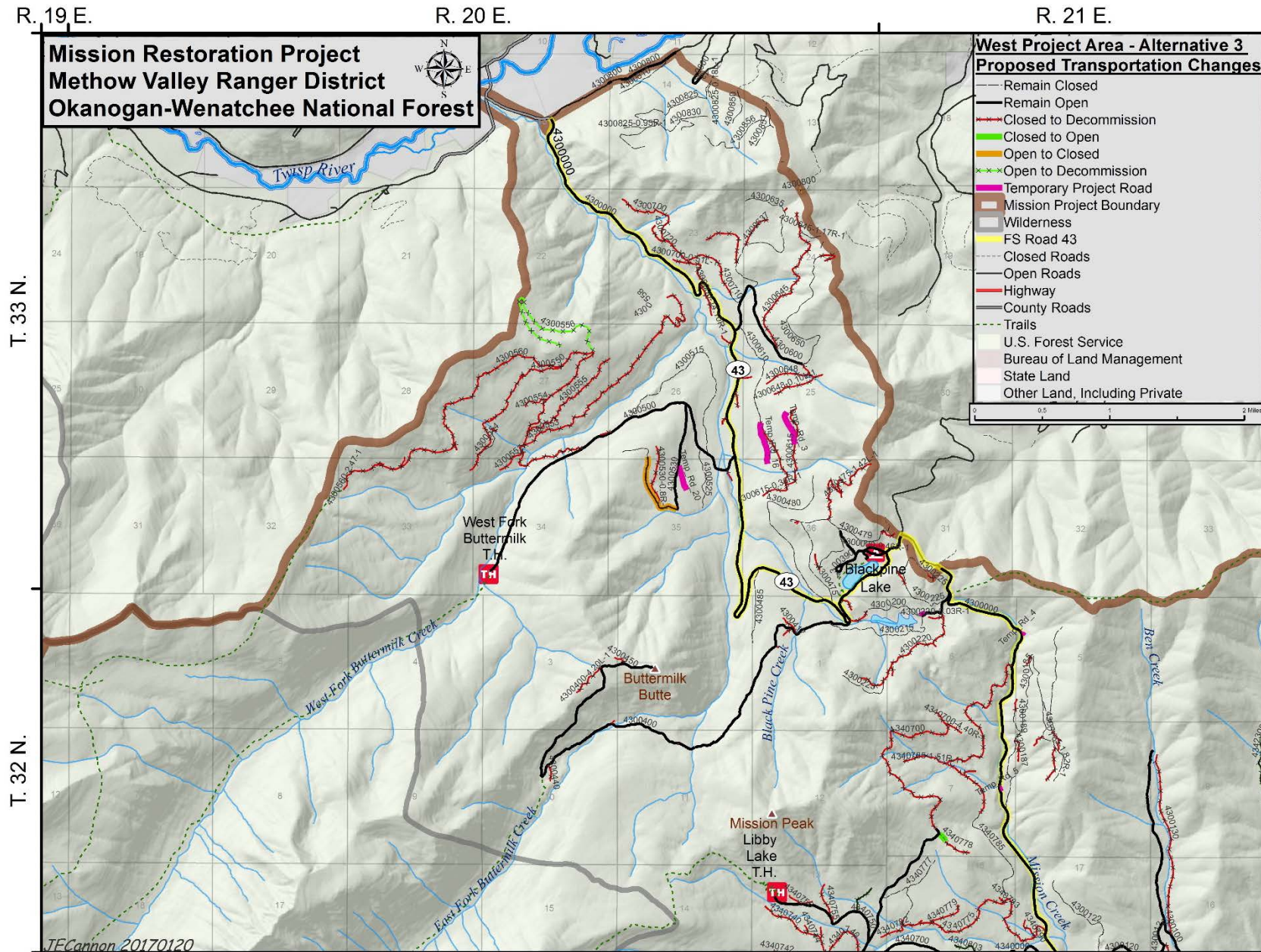


Figure 157. Soil and aquatic restoration treatments: entire project area.

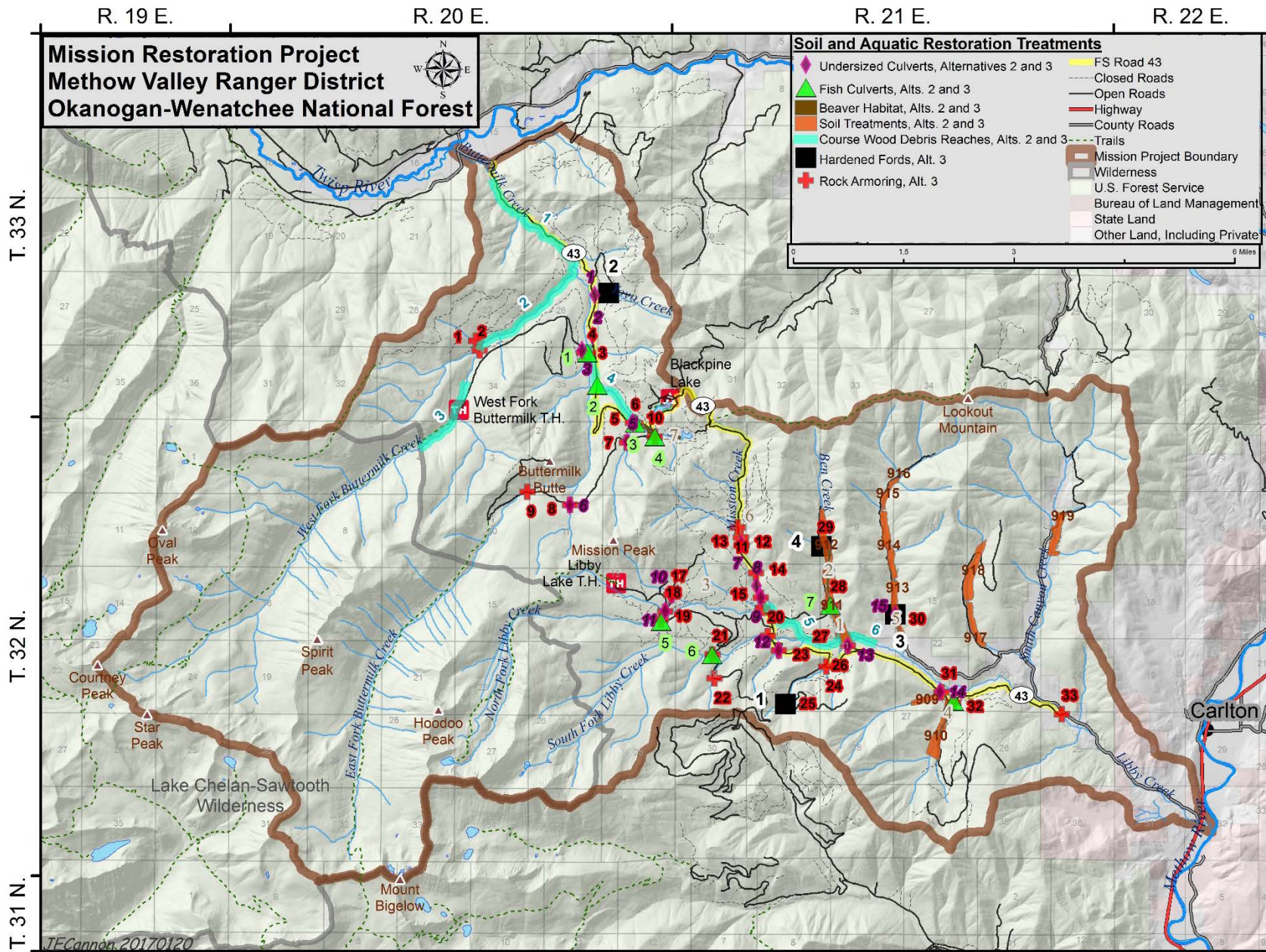


Figure 158. Soil and aquatic restoration treatments: west part of project area.

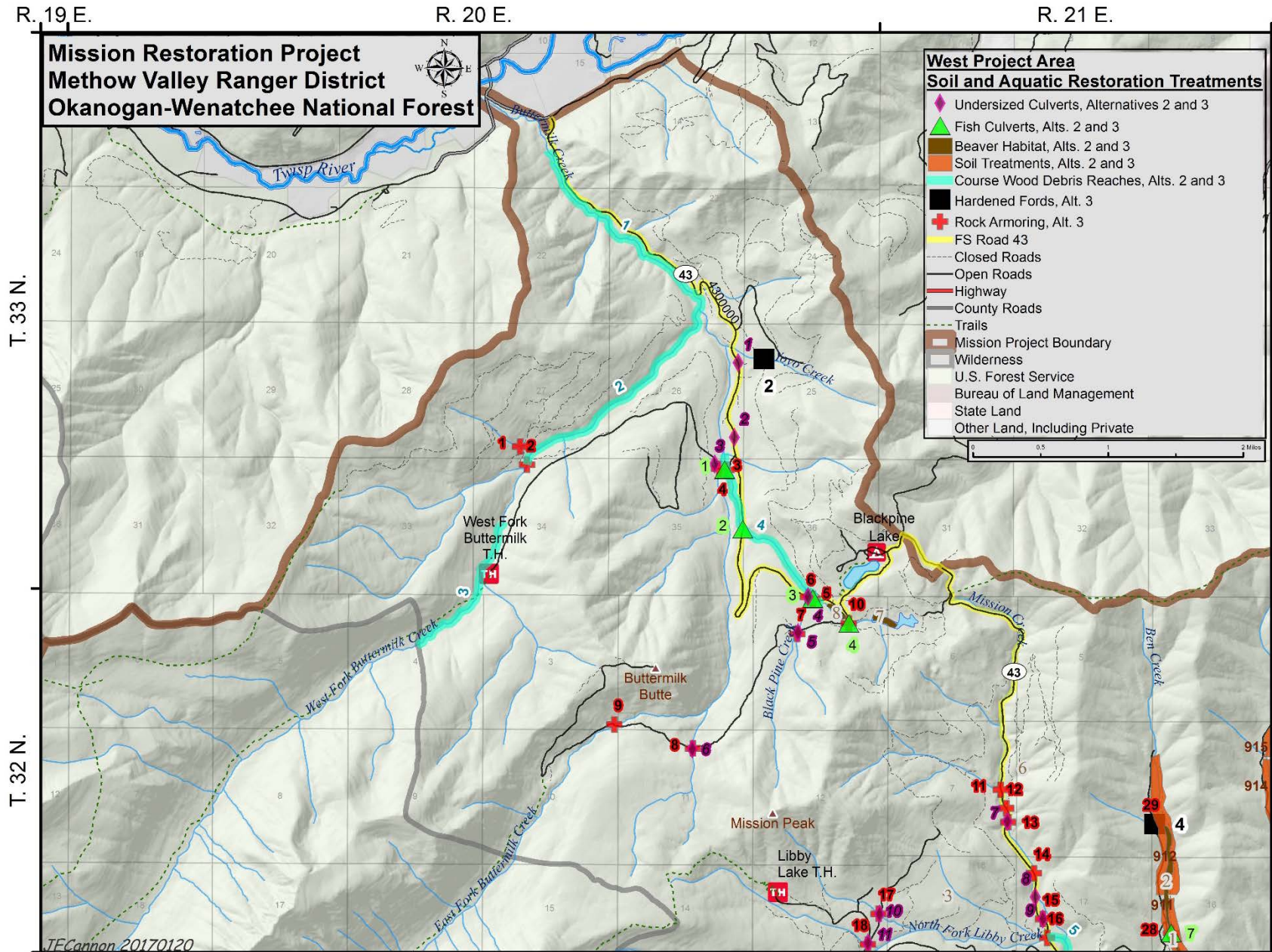
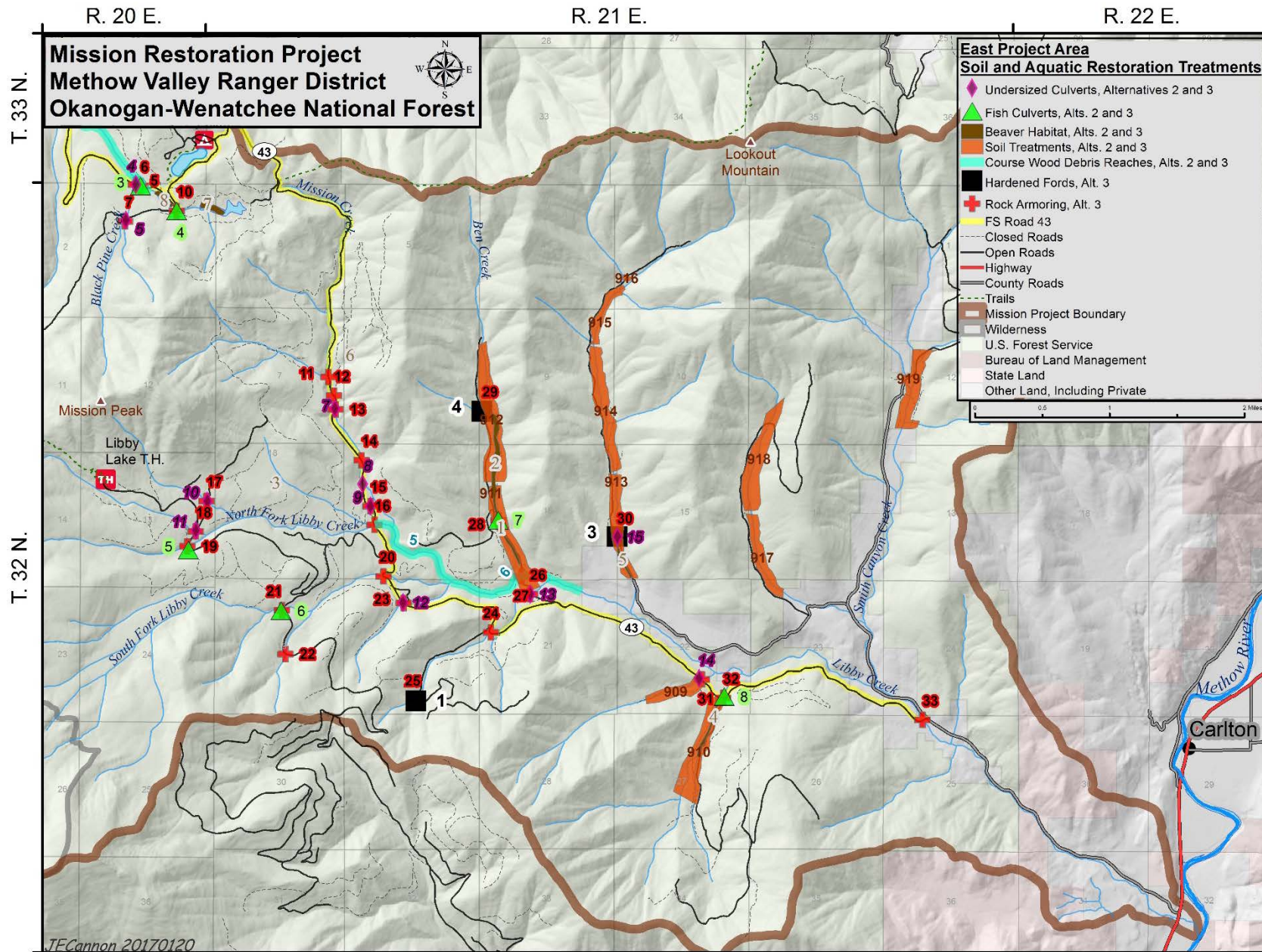


Figure 159. Soil and aquatic restoration treatments: east part of project area.





# Appendix G: Regulatory Framework

## Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines

Figure 160 describes the primary Forest Plan Standard and Guidelines. Appendix I and Appendix H of the Okanogan LRMP discuss the Visual Management System and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.

Figure 160. Primary Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines within Project Area

Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines	
2-14	In streamside management units class IV streams (intermittent streams), management activities shall not deteriorate water quality below current Washington State water quality standards for downstream SMU class I, II, and III streams. Water quality changes in class IV streams may involve some short-term temperature and turbidity increases.
3-1	Maintain or enhance biological, chemical, and physical qualities of Forest fish habitats.
3-2	Rehabilitate fish habitats where past management activities have adversely affected their ability to support fish populations. Those fish habitats identified as having impacts from management activities shall be managed to show an upward trend with at least a 5% increase in conditions per year until objectives for the habitat are met.
3-3	Sediment in fishery streams shall be maintained at levels low enough to support good reproductive success of fish populations as well as adequate instream food production by indigenous aquatic communities to support those populations. Fines measured as $\leq 1.00$ mm in spawning areas (pool tail outs and glides) should be maintained at less than 20% as the area weighted average.
3-5	Provide an average of at least 20 pieces of large wood per 1,000 lineal feet of stream channel on fish bearing streams to provide for aquatic needs. Class I & II streams-minimum length 35 feet and average diameter of 12" with at least 20% over 20"; and Class III streams – diameter of 12" but minimum length is based on one and a half times the channel width.
3-6	Manage riparian vegetation to provide sufficient trees near the stream channel to act as a source of large woody debris for future instream fish habitat needs.
3-7	Channel disturbing activities should be conducted at minimum flow, or outside of critical spawning and incubation periods.
3-8	Structures such as bridges, culverts, and dams, placed in fish bearing streams shall be designed to allow upstream and downstream passage of both adult and juvenile fish. During construction utilize special installations (i.e. sediment traps, settling ponds, coffer dams, riprap, etc.) to keep sediment from reaching the stream.
5-1	No scheduled or non-scheduled timber harvest or firewood collection shall be permitted in mixed conifer old growth stands.
5-3	Sufficient stands that have potential to develop old growth characteristics be identified as replacement old growth to provide for 5% of suitable forest land acres in an old growth condition in perpetuity.
6-1	Manage to provide a minimum of 30 percent cover (15 percent thermal/15percent hiding) on deer summer range. Block sizes for summer thermal cover should range from 20 to 100 acres; and for hiding cover, from 5 to 40 acres. Cover should be spatially distributed across the landscape.

Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines	
6-5	Dead tree habitat shall be managed to maintain primary excavator populations to at least 60% of their biological potential. In the lodgepole pine working group, where existing tree size prevents meeting the guidelines, patches containing the largest dead trees and replacement green trees shall be retained and distributed in the treatment unit to approach populations meeting 60% of their biological potential.
6-6	In riparian areas and old growth stands, dead tree habitat shall be managed to maintain primary excavator populations at 100 percent of their biological potential.
6-11	Raptor nest sites should be protected. Depending on the individual situation and the biological needs of the species, a primary zone extending up to 500' from the nest site (750' from goshawk nest sites) should be managed to provide raptor habitat. In some areas a secondary restricted activity zone may be necessary outside the primary zone; during the active nest season (through August) one-quarter mile from the nest. When a nest site has not been occupied by a pair for five consecutive years, the site may be managed according to the direction of the management area. Nests located after the project contract has been purchased will not be considered under this guideline.
6-12	For raptor nests located during contract activities, to the extent practicable, the following should apply: a) accipiters – major project activities (i.e. road construction, logging) within one-quarter mile of active accipiter nests should be avoided from the onset of nesting until the young are fledged (mid-August); b) other raptors – nest trees and four to five adjacent large trees (required for fledgling) should be protected during the active nesting season –the onset of nest construction until the young are fledged (mid-August); these trees may be harvested following current year nesting activities. Major activities (i.e. road construction, logging) should be postponed within 750' of the nest tree during incubation and until initial brooding are completed or until the young birds have established thermoregulation.
6-13	Drainages containing hardwoods shall be managed to perpetuate hardwoods as a stand component during early conifer seral stages. Hardwoods shall be perpetuated in associations where it is the climax forest community. After regeneration treatments, discourage livestock browsing for at least two growing seasons.
6-17	Threatened and endangered species shall be managed according to recovery plans. Coordinate management with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife.
6-18	Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shall be initiated when threatened or endangered species may be affected by resource proposals.
6-19	Sensitive plants and animals should be protected.
7-2	Inventory all areas where ground disturbing activities are planned in order to discover all reasonable locatable cultural resources, and in accordance with an Inventory Plan, as specified in the Programmatic Memorandum of Agreement between Region 6 and the Washington State Historic Preservation Office.
7-5	Protect eligible cultural resources from management activities by making reasonable efforts to avoid adverse impacts to the resources or develop a procedure to conserve the values through proper scientific methods or study.
10-1	Management activities shall be designed to blend, to the extent practicable, with the natural terrain to achieve aesthetics or other resource objectives consistent with the visual quality objectives for management.
10-3	Exceptions to Management Area visual quality objectives shall be limited to the immediate surroundings of the stand, recreation attraction, or feature of concern and result in a small number of acres.
12-1	Control noxious weeds to the extent practical.

<b>Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines</b>	
12-2	New infestations of noxious weeds should be the first priority for eradication.
12-3	Emphasis on noxious weed control shall be on the prevention of infestations, especially into unroaded areas and wilderness.
13-2	All activities shall comply with State requirements for protection of waters in the State of Washington (Washington Administrative Code, Chapters 173-201 and 202) through planning, application, and monitoring of BMPs in conformance with the Clean Water Act regulations, and Federal guidance issued.
13-3	In cooperation with Washington State, the Forest shall use the following process: 1) Select and design BMPs based on site-specific conditions, technical, economic, and institutional feasibility, and the water quality standards for those waters potentially impacted; 2) Implement and enforce BMPs; 3) Monitor to ensure that practices are correctly applied as designed; 4) Monitor to determine the effectiveness of practices in meeting design expectations and in attaining water quality standards; 5) Evaluate monitoring results and mitigate where necessary to minimize impacts from activities where BMPs do not perform as expected; and 6) Adjust BMP design standards and application when it is found that beneficial uses are not being protected and water quality standards are not being achieved to the desired level. Evaluate the appropriateness of water quality criteria for reasonably assuring protection of beneficial uses. Consider recommending adjustment of water quality standards.
13-9	Reduce soil displacement. Ground yarding systems should not be used on sustained slopes in excess of 35 percent.
13-10	Ground yarding systems shall be restricted to meet Regional guidelines for soil compaction, displacement, and puddling. No more than 15 percent of the area shall be in a puddled, displaced, or compacted condition following completion of management activities.
14-1	Management activities within the Forest shall be planned to maintain air quality at a level adequate for the protection and use of the National Forest resources, and which also meet or exceed the applicable Federal and State standards.
14-2	The Forest shall demonstrate reasonable progress in reducing total suspended particulates (TSP) emissions from prescribed burning.
19-4	Prescribed fire (planned and unplanned ignitions) may be used as a management tool to meet Management Area goals.
19-6	Cost effective fuel treatment methods shall be used to achieve management goals. The desired fuel profile and fuel treatments necessary to achieve that profile shall be determined. Treatment methods shall be selected based upon appropriate analysis, which includes long-term site productivity considerations, for all management activities or where natural fuel accumulations create a fuel profile that poses an unacceptable impediment to current or future protection and management.
19-7	Woody debris shall be left on the forest floor for wildlife habitat, long-term site productivity, soil fertility, and, where necessary, for microsite protection and seed. A sufficient amount of this debris shall be uncharred to provide for terrestrial wildlife, long-term soil productivity, and other purposes.
19-8	Treatment of natural fuels shall be prohibited in identified old growth stands.
19-9	In stands managed as future old growth, fuels treatment including prescribed fire shall provide for the retention of all key components of old growth.
20-14	Commercial thinnings shall be from below.

<b>Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines</b>	
20-15	Intermediate (thinning) harvests should not intensify existing insect or disease problems, and should reduce the impact of damaging agents in the future stand.
20-26	Where planting is prescribed, site preparation should be completed within two years following harvest. Firewood availability should be considered in site preparation planning.
20-28	To the extent practicable, management should foster stands with mixed species composition.
20-30	Range management practices should promote rapid reforestation of harvested areas.
20-31	Grass, forb, and shrub seeding should comply with the resource goals of the Management Areas.
20-34	Precommercial thinning from below shall be the preferred method of stocking control. Prescribed fire may be used where it is the most cost effective for achieving the growth and resource goals of the management area.
20-35	All precommercial thinning and stand improvement activities should be designed to minimize the spread of disease, or the conditions favorable for injurious forest insects.
20-41	Forest openings created by the application of even-age harvest cutting methods shall be limited to a maximum of 40 acres.
20-44	A harvested area of commercial forest land shall be no longer considered a created opening for silvicultural purposes when stocking surveys indicate prescribe tree stocking that is at least 4 ½ feet high, or otherwise determined by the goals of Management Areas, and free to grow.
20-49	To the extent practicable, fuel treatments following precommercial thinning and commercial thinning should minimize damage to residual stems. Crop tree stocking shall not be reduced below prescribed minimum levels by fuel treatments.
<b>Standards and Guidelines by Management Area</b>	
<b>Management Area 5</b> (LRMP, page 4-65 to 4-69): Provide opportunities for recreation and viewing scenery in a roaded natural setting with a visual quality objective of retention or partial retention.	
MA5-6A	Percent of deer winter range by Deer Cover Objectives - ≥ 30% Snow Intercept Thermal Cover (SIT); ≥ 10% Winter Thermal Cover (WT); and ≥ 20% Hiding (H)
MA5-6D	Minimum cover amounts shall be 30% (15% hiding cover and 15% summer thermal cover) of the gross Management Area and well distributed.
MA5-8A	The visual quality objective (VQO) is retention where the sensitivity level is 1.
MA5-8B	The visual quality objective is partial retention based on variety class and sensitivity level.
MA5-8C	Roaded natural recreation opportunities shall be provided.
MA5-11A	Manage commercial livestock to reduce conflicts with recreationists.
MA5-11B	Eighty-five percent of the annual available browse on winter range shall be for wildlife and 15 percent for domestic livestock.

<b>Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines</b>	
MA5-17A	Arterial and collector roads should be reconstructed and/or operated and maintained to encourage use by recreationists in highway vehicles. Concurrent use by recreationists and commercial hauling, shall be acceptable.
MA5-17B	Generally, local roads should be reconstructed and maintained to: 1) encourage highway vehicle access to developed recreation sites (e.g. campgrounds and trailheads); 2) encourage high clearance vehicle and discourage passenger cars on other roads. During commercial hauling activities public access should be discouraged. Low standard local roads may be designated open to ATV or ORV use and highway vehicles shall be eliminated on these routes.
MA5-17C	To limit wildlife disturbance, local road density shall be limited to three miles of road open to motorized use (not including snow machines) per square mile of discrete individual Management Area.
MA5-17D	Local roads may be constructed to meet Management Area goals for additional public recreation needed or to satisfy other multiple use needs. Transportation plans shall consider future entries.
MA5-17E	On deer winter range, access for motorized vehicles shall be prohibited December 1 through March 31 except for designated through routes. Winter haul may be permitted provided the goals of the Management Area are met.
MA5-19C	Use of prescribed fire should meet the visual objective within three years of application (VQO – High).
MA5-19D	Recreation, visual, and wildlife values shall be key considerations in determining overall fuel treatment level and methods.
MA5-20A	Timber activities shall be designed to maintain or enhance roaded natural recreation opportunities and to provide a vegetative condition that meets the visual quality objective in perpetuity.
MA5-20H	A created opening for visual quality management purposes is defined as an area where dominant trees are less than 20 feet tall.
MA5-20I	Sanitation and salvage harvest shall be allowed on a case by case basis to protect the stand.
MA5-20J	Pre-commercial thinning may be prescribed to meet the goals of the Management Area.
<b>Management Area 14</b> (LRMP, page 4-83 to 4-85): Provide a diversity of wildlife habitat, including deer winter range, while growing and producing merchantable wood fiber.	
MA14-6A	Percent of deer winter range by Deer Cover Objectives: $\geq 25\%$ Snow Intercept Thermal Cover (SIT), $\geq 5\%$ Winter Thermal Cover (WT), and $\geq 15\%$ Hiding Cover (H).
MA14-6B	Where natural vegetation is not present to support optimal cover amounts, manage existing vegetation to approach cover objectives on a sustained basis. Where potential is not present as a result of previous management activities, manage to attain these percentages.
MA14-6C	Minimum cover amounts shall be 40% (20% hiding and 20% summer thermal cover) on the gross Management Area and well distributed.
MA14-8A	The visual quality objective is modification in all sensitivity level 1 road and trail corridors, and maximum modification in all other areas.
MA14-8B	Roaded modified recreation opportunities should be provided.

<b>Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines</b>	
MA14-11A	Eighty-five percent of the annual available browse on winter range shall be for wildlife and 15 percent for domestic livestock.
MA14-17A	To limit wildlife disturbance, road density shall be limited to two miles of road open to motorized use per square mile of discreet individual Management Area. Exceptions to this road density may be permitted provided they meet the goals of the Management Area.
MA14-17B	Access by motorized vehicles shall be prohibited on deer winter range, December through March, except for designated through routes. Winter haul may be permitted provided the goals of the Management Area are met.
MA14-17D	On local roads, public access shall be discouraged or prohibited during commercial hauling. High clearance vehicles should be accepted during post sale activities.
MA14-19C	Treat fuels to reduce the risk of wildfire to acceptable levels. Prescribe a level of fuel treatment to protect timber stands, wildlife values, and other resources from unacceptable losses caused by wildfire.
MA14-19D	Place fire tolerant stands on a prescribed burning schedule, where cost effective, to meet management goals.
MA14-19F	Stands where uneven-aged management is applied shall be generally free of serious pathogens such as root rots and dwarf mistletoe.
MA14-20A	Scheduled and non-scheduled timber harvest shall be designed to perpetuate wildlife habitat and to address current habitat needs.
MA14-20B	To the extent practicable, firewood use of slash generated by logging and other silvicultural activities shall be encouraged.
MA14-20G	Operating season for logging and post-sale operations shall be restricted where necessary to protect roads, soil, water, and wildlife resources. To protect fawning (June) and deer during winters (December through March), the operating season shall be decided on a case by case basis in fawning areas and deer winter range.
<b>Management Area 15B</b> (LRMP, pages 4-91 to 4-97): Maintain a predominately unmodified primitive environment within designated wilderness with a variety of trail opportunities. Standard and guidelines are not included for this area since no proposed activities in this project are within the wilderness.	
<b>Management Area 17</b> (LRMP, pages 4-98 & 4-99): Provide a variety of developed recreation opportunities in a road setting. This MA covers the Blackpine Lake Campground.	
MA17-8A	The visual quality objective ranges from retention to modification.
MA17-8B	Roaded natural, roaded modified, rural, and urban recreation opportunities shall be provided based on the management emphasis of the surrounding area
MA17-8D	Vegetation management plans shall be completed for all sites. Vegetation management includes tree removal, thinning, planting, and other cultural activities necessary to maintain or enhance the recreation resource, including snag management for interpretive purposes or wildlife habitat.
MA17-11A	Dominant livestock grazing should generally be excluded from developed recreation sites, but may be allowed where compatible with site objectives.

<b>Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines</b>	
MA17-17A	Roads within the developed site shall be reconstructed, constructed and/or operated and maintained to encourage highway vehicles and to a level commensurate with the design level of the site.
MA17-19C	Fuels shall be treated to meet visual and recreation objectives and to eliminate, to the maximum extent possible, the probability of a wildfire that will damage the recreation resource.
<b>Management Area 25</b> (LRMP, pages 4-103 to 4-106): Intensively manage the timber and range resources using both even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural practices. Manage to achieve a high present net value and a high level of timber and range outputs while protecting the basic productivity of the land and providing for the high production of wildlife, recreation opportunities, and other resources.	
MA25-6A	Minimum cover amounts shall be 30% (15% hiding cover and 15% summer thermal cover) of the gross Management Area acreage and well distributed.
MA25-8A	The visual quality objective is modification in all sensitivity level 1 road and trail corridors, and maximum modification in all other areas.
MA25-8B	Roaded modified recreation opportunities should be provided.
MA25-11A	Specific allotments and portions of allotments that will be intensively managed for transitory range shall be identified.
MA25-11C	Maintain improvements on suitable rangelands.
MA25-17A	The transportation system should be adequate for logging, post-sale activities and protection, and coordinated with the needs of range and other resources.
MA25-17B	Long-term local roads for timber access shall be planned, constructed, maintained, and operated to be economically efficient. During commercial hauling activities, public access shall be discouraged or prohibited.
MA25-17C	To limit wildlife disturbance, local road density shall be limited to three miles of road open to motorized use (not including snow machines) per square mile of discrete individual Management Area.
MA25-19B	Limit destructive burned acreage.
MA25-19C	Treat fuels to reduce risk of wildfire to acceptable levels while maintaining long-term site productivity.
MA25-19D	Prescribe a level of treatment for natural and activity created fuels to protect timber stands and other resources from unacceptable losses caused by wildfire.
MA25-19E	Place fire tolerant stands on a prescribed burning schedule where cost effective to meet management and objectives.
MA25-19F	Stands with a high level of dwarf mistletoe or root rot shall receive the highest priority for silvicultural treatment.
MA25-19G	Stands where uneven-aged management is applied shall be generally free of serious pathogens such as root rots and dwarf mistletoe.
MA25-20A	To the extent practicable, firewood use of slash generated by logging and other silvicultural activities shall be encouraged.

<b>Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines</b>	
MA25-20B	Where intensive transitory range management is practiced, crown closure should be maintained at less than 50 percent for at least half of the rotation, and even-age silviculture shall be applied.
MA25-20F	Uneven-aged or even-aged management may be practiced in the Moist Productive, Dry Productive, and low Productive Working Groups.
MA25-20J	Stocking control and other timber stand improvements shall be applied when necessary to meet resource goals of the management area.
<b>Management Area 26</b> (LRMP, pages 4-107 to 4-109): Manage deer winter range and fawning habitats to provide conditions which can sustain optimal numbers of deer indefinitely, without degrading habitat characteristics such as forage, cover, and soil.	
MA26-6A	Percent of deer winter range by Deer Cover Objectives: $\geq 30\%$ Snow Intercept Thermal Cover (SIT), $\geq 10\%$ Winter Thermal Cover (WT), and $\geq 20\%$ Hiding (H).
MA26-6B	Where natural vegetation is not present to support optimal cover amounts, manage existing vegetation to approach cover objectives on a sustained basis. Where potential is not present as a result of previous management activities, manage to attain these percentages.
MA26-6C	Cavity nester habitat shall be managed to provide at least 80% of potential woodpecker population size.
MA26-8A	The visual quality objective is modification in all sensitivity level 1 road and trail corridors, and maximum modification in all other areas.
MA26-11A	Livestock grazing shall be allowed as long as wildlife habitat values are maintained or increased.
MA26-11B	Eighty-five percent of annual available browse on winter range shall be for wildlife and 15 percent for domestic livestock.
MA26-17A	On local roads, public access shall be discouraged or prohibited during periods of commercial hauling.
MA26-17B	To limit wildlife disturbance, road density shall be limited to one mile of road open to motorized use per square mile of discrete individual Management Area. Exceptions to this road density may be permitted provided they meet the goals of the management area.
MA26-17C	Access by motorized vehicles shall be prohibited December through March, except for designated through routes. Winter haul may be permitted provided the goals of the management area are met. Access through fawning areas by motorized vehicles shall be prohibited in June, except where designated open.
MA26-19B	Limit acres burned by habitat damaging wildfires.
MA26-19C	Fuels treatment, including the use of prescribed fire, shall provide, where practicable, for the retention and/or enhancement of key wildlife.
MA26-19E	Stands where uneven-aged management is applied shall be generally free of serious pathogens such as root rots and dwarf mistletoe.
MA26-20A	Scheduled and non-scheduled timber harvests shall be designed to perpetuate deer habitat and to address current habitat needs.



Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines	
MA26-20B	Encourage the use of slash generated by logging and other silvicultural activities for firewood to the extent practicable, and eliminate or prohibit such use where necessary to meet the goals of this Management Area
MA26-20C	Uneven-aged or even-aged management may be practiced in the Moist Productive, Dry Productive, and low Productive Working Groups
MA26-20E	A created opening for wildlife management purposes is an area where dominant conifer regeneration is less than six feet tall following clearcutting, seed tree harvest, or overstory removal cutting.
Ma26-20J	To protect deer during winter, operations shall be prohibited December through March except east of the Okanogan River. Logging and post-sale operations shall be limited to protect fawning during June.

## NWFP Standards and Guidelines

Figure 161 lists the management areas and standards and guidelines designated by the NWFP for the project area.

Figure 161. NWFP Management Areas and Standards and Guidelines

Management Area	Standard & Guideline
LSR	<p>*Stands and vegetation management of any kind, including prescribed burning, is considered a silvicultural treatment.</p> <p>* East of the Cascade Mountains, silvicultural treatment is allowed to reduce the risk of large-scale disturbance that can eliminate spotted owl habitat.</p> <p>* Silvicultural activities aimed at reducing risk shall focus on younger stands with the objective of accelerating the development of late successional conditions making the future stand less susceptible to natural disturbances.</p> <p>* Fuels management in LSRs will use minimum impact suppression methods in accordance with guidelines for reducing risks of large scale disturbances.</p> <p>* Non-silvicultural activities that are neutral or beneficial to the creation and maintenance of late-successional habitat are allowed.</p>
LSR	<p>Late Successional Reserve land allocation: Northern Species – in general nonnative species (plant and animal) should not be introduced in [LSRs]. . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate impacts of nonnative species (plant and animal) currently existing within reserves, and develop plans and recommendations for eliminating or controlling nonnative species that are inconsistent with [LSR] objectives.</li> <li>• Partial harvests should follow the same guidelines but modified to reflect timing of stand development; etc.</li> </ul>

Management Area	Standard & Guideline
Matrix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retain coarse woody debris that is already on the ground during logging and other land management activities and providing a renewable supply of large down logs well distributed across the landscape; regeneration harvests must maintain a minimum of 120 lineal feet of logs per acre greater than, or equal to 16" diameter and 16' long.</li> <li>• Other than thinning treatments in young stands, at least 15% of the area associated with each cutting unit will be retained, mostly in 0.5 to 2.5, or more, acre patches including the largest, oldest live trees, decadent or leaning trees, and hard snags occurring in the unit.</li> <li>• Patches should be retained indefinitely.</li> <li>• Standards and guidelines for fire and fuels management in Matrix recommend that where this designation lies in the rural interface, fire management activities should be coordinated with local governments, agencies, and landowners during watershed analysis to identify additional factors which may affect hazard reduction goals.</li> </ul>
Riparian Reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) sets Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs) to be applied to Riparian Reserves (RRs).</li> <li>• Timber harvest is allowed where silvicultural practices are applied to acquire desired vegetation characteristics where needed to attain RMOs, as long as such practices do not retard attainment of RMOs, and avoids adverse effects on listed anadromous fish.</li> <li>• TM-1 Prohibit timber harvest, including fuelwood cutting, in Riparian Reserves, except as follows: Apply silvicultural practices for Riparian Reserves to control stocking, reestablish and manage stands, and acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives.</li> <li>• FM-1 Design fuel treatment strategies, practices, and activities to meet ACS objectives, and to minimize disturbance of riparian ground cover and vegetation. Strategies should recognize the role of fire in ecosystem function and identify those instances where fuels management activities could be damaging to long-term ecosystem function.</li> <li>• FM-4 Design prescribed burn projects and prescriptions to contribute to attainment of ACS objectives.</li> <li>• RF-2 For each existing or planned road, meet ACS objectives by: a) Minimizing road and landing locations in riparian reserves; b) Preparing road design criteria, elements, and standards that govern construction and reconstruction; c) Minimizing disruption of natural hydrologic flow paths, including diversion of streamflow and interception of surface and subsurface flow; and d) Avoiding wetlands entirely when constructing new roads.</li> <li>• RF-4 New culverts, bridges, and other stream crossings shall be constructed, and existing culverts, bridges, and other stream crossings determined to pose a substantial risk to riparian conditions will be improved to accommodate at least the 100-year flood, including associated bedload and debris.</li> <li>• RF-6 Provide and maintain fish passage at all road crossings of existing and potential fish-bearing streams.</li> <li>• Other: In Riparian Reserves, water drafting sites should be located and managed to minimize adverse effects on riparian habitat and water quality, as consistent with ACS objectives.</li> </ul>

### Forest Service Manual and Handbook Direction

**Forest Service Manual (FSM) and Handbook (FSH) Direction in FSM 7700 and FSH 7709** applies to the management and maintenance of roads.

**Forest Service Manual 2550** establishes the framework for sustaining soil quality and hydrologic function while providing goods and services outline in forest and grassland land management plans. The **Region 6 Supplement to FSM 2500** states that design new activities that do not exceed detrimental soil conditions on more than 20 percent of an activity area. In areas where more than 20 percent detrimental soil conditions exist from prior activities, the cumulative

detrimental effects from project implementation and restoration must, at a minimum, not exceed the conditions prior to the planned activity and should move toward a net improvement in soil quality.

**Forest Service Manual 2530 Watershed Management** This directive establishes the framework for sustaining water quality and hydrologic function while providing goods and services outlined in forest and grassland management plans.

**Forest Service Manual 2080.2** directs the Forest Service to use an integrated weed management (IWM) approach to control and contain the spread of noxious weeds on National Forest System (NFS) lands and from NFS lands to adjacent lands.

**Forest Service Handbook 2109.14 Pesticide Use and Coordination** provides additional guidance related to implementation of invasive plant management, and **Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2150 Pesticide Use and Coordination** provides policy guidance.

**Forest Service Manual 2403.2 and 1950.2 and the Okanogan National Forest Plan Implementation Guide** direct the Forest Service to conduct and document an economic analysis while meeting our purpose and need objectives in NEPA.

**Forest Service Manual 2580.3 – Air Resource Management Policy:** 1) Integrate air resource management objectives into all resource planning and management activities and 2) Use cost-effective methods of achieving resource management objectives.

**Forest Service Manual 5100 – Fire Management Policy:** Provides direction regarding fire management activities that are authorized and guided by multiple federal laws that are incorporated by reference (5101.1).

**Forest Service Manual Chapter 5140 – Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire:** This sub chapter of FSM 5100 provides direction on mitigating hazardous fuels and using fire to achieve desired landscape conditions and attain LRMP objectives.

### **Other Laws, Policy, and Guidance Applicable to the Mission Restoration Project**

**Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (1940), as amended (16 U.S.C. 688 [a]; 50 C.F.R. 22):** This Act protects bald and golden eagles. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines to advise landowners and land managers of when protective measures may be required to minimize effects to the species. These guidelines provide recommendations to avoid disturbance at nesting, communal roosting, and foraging areas, and suggest additional recommendations to benefit bald eagles.

**Canada Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS) (ILBT, 3<sup>rd</sup> Addition) [2000, August 2013]:** This strategy was developed to provide a consistent and effective approach to conserve Canada lynx on federal lands in the conterminous United.

**Clean Air Act (CAA) (42 U.S.C. 7401 – 7671Q)** created primary and secondary air quality standards to protect public health and welfare. Through the CAA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets primary and secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (40 CFR part 50) for specific criteria pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment.

**Clean Water Act (CWA),** as represented collectively by the **Water Quality Act of 1987 (PL100-4)**, the **Clean Water Act of 1977 (PL95-217)** and the **Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972** characterizes water pollution from forest land-use activities as “non-point source pollution”, and describes the use of best management practices (BMPs) as the most

effective means of preventing and controlling non-point source pollution. It also establishes state roles in water-resource classification, development of water quality standards, and identification of waters that are unlikely to comply with those standards.

**Congressional Rescission Act (Public Law 104-19, Section 504)** requires the Forest Service to identify all allotments on which a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is needed and to prepare and adhere to a schedule for conducting an assessment of grazing actions under NEPA. The Allotment Management Plan (AMP) for the Lookout Mountain grazing allotment, which is located within the project area, has been updated to reflect current management direction and to address resource concerns on the allotment.

**Endangered Species Act (ESA):** Section 7 (a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, requires federal agencies to review actions authorized, funded, or carried out by them, to ensure such actions do not jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species, or result in the destruction or adverse modification of listed critical habitat. ESA requires the Forest Service to manage for the recovery of threatened and endangered species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Forests are required to consult with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service or NMFS if a proposed activity may affect the population or habitat of a listed species. This includes any activities funded, authorized, or carried out by the agency.

**Executive Order (EO) 11990** (protection of wetlands) requires federal agencies to “minimize the destruction, loss, or degradation of wetland and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands. . .”

**Executive Order 11988** (protection of floodplains) requires federal agencies to “restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains . . .” and to “evaluate the potential effects of any actions it may take in a floodplain . . .”

**Executive Order 13186 Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds (2001)** directs agencies whose activities could have a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Fish and Wildlife Service to promote the conservation of migratory bird populations.

**Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2801 et seq.)** requires cooperation with state, local, and other federal agencies in the application and enforcement of all laws and regulations relating to management and control of noxious weeds (a summary of the act can be viewed at <http://ipl.unm.edu/cwl/fedbook.html>).

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act:** This Act is the primary law governing marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters. First passed in 1976, the Act fosters biological and economic sustainability of our nation’s marine fisheries out to 200 nautical miles from shore.

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA):** MBTA established an international framework for the protection and conservation of migratory birds. This Act makes it illegal, unless permitted by regulations, to pursue, hunt, take, capture, purchase, deliver for shipment, ship, cause to be carried by any means whatever, receive for shipment, transportation or carriage, or export, at any time, or in any manner, any migratory bird.

**National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA):** This Act reorganized, expanded, and otherwise amended the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resource Planning Act of 1974, which called for the management of renewable resources on National Forest System lands. The National Forest Management Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to assess forest lands,

develop a management program based on multiple-uses sustain-yield principles, and implement a resource management plan for each unit on the National Forest System. The act strengthens the references pertaining to suitability and compatibility of land areas, stressed the maintenance of productivity and the need to protect and improve the quality of soil and water resources, and avoids permanent impairment of productive capability of the land. It is the primary statute governing administration of National Forests.

**National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 470)**, as amended, is the foremost legislation that governs the means to identify, administrate, and preserve objects and landscapes significant to cultural and social heritage for the enrichment of future generations. Implementing regulations that clarify and expand upon the NHPA include **36 CFR 800 (Protection of Historic Properties)**, **36 CFR 63 (Determination of Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places)**, and **36 CFR 296 (Protection of Archaeological Resources)**. The Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Washington State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), signed a programmatic agreement (PA) regarding the management of cultural resources on National Forest System lands in 1997. The 1997 PA outlines specific procedures for the identification, evaluation, and protection of cultural resources during activities or projects conducted on NFS lands.

**Revised Recovery Plan for the Northern Spotted Owl (2011)**: This plan provides direction for forest management. Principles are focused on dry forest restoration treatments.

**Survey and Manage**: This document and analysis tiers to the Record of Decision for the Northwest Forest Plan and its subsequent January 2001 Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines. Pre-disturbance surveys are required for species designated as “survey and manage” in all land allocations, if a project within the range of the species would negatively affect the species’ habitat. The 2003 Botany Survey and Manage species list was used for this analysis (See Appendix B of the Botany Report in the analysis file for this project).

**Washington State Water Quality Standards** that are applicable to this project are **Washington Administrative Code, Title 173, (WAC 173-201A-600)**. The State of Washington has designated the streams draining NFS lands to the Columbia, Okanogan, and Methow River watersheds as “Anti-degradation Segments”. This indicates that the existing water quality is better than the established standards for the designated beneficial uses. Water quality is required by state regulation to be maintained at this level.

**Washington State Smoke Implementation Plan (SIP) (Washington DNR 1998)**: Prescribed burning activities conducted by the Forest Service, including those described in the proposed action, are classified as silvicultural burning. National Forests in Washington State are required to conduct prescribed burning under the current state SIP, regulated by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR staff grant or deny smoke approval following the SIP to limit impacts to primary and secondary NAAQS. The current SIP also contains provisions to avoid impacting Class 1 airsheds with smoke from prescribed burning.

**Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy** described in the **Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (USDOJ et al. 2001)** is implemented through **Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (USDA & USDOJ 2009)** and the **10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (USDA and USDOJ 2002; update 2006)**. Policies direct land managers to consider wildland fires as an essential ecological process and

natural change agent that will be incorporated into the Land and Resource Management Plan and project-level planning processes. At project-level planning (such as that underway in this project), policy directs that fire management activities (including vegetation treatments) focus on reducing hazardous fuels and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems using a planning and decision analysis processes that address current and anticipated conditions.

**Forest Service Watershed Condition Framework:** This framework started in 2011 to help implement priority forest restoration projects. The framework sets priorities and holds the Forest Service accountable for restoring national forests.

**Guide to Noxious Weed Prevention Practices (USDA-FS 2001b):** This guide provides a comprehensive directory of weed prevention practices for use in Forest Service planning and wildland resource management activities and operations.

**Methow Valley Ranger District Western Spruce Budworm Landscape Assessment (USDA 2012a)** was prepared to assess current and potential near term (3 – 10 years) implications of western spruce budworm (WSB) (*Choristoneura occidentalis*) outbreak on vegetation, fire and fuels, wildlife, and aquatic resources. The assessment identified potential management opportunities for consideration in project-scale planning which included focusing silvicultural and prescribed fire treatments in the dry-cover types to reduce susceptibility to western spruce budworm and reduce the risk of uncharacteristic crown fires.

**Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** between the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife and USDA Forest Service Pacific Northwest Region (2012). This MOU provides guidance how to implement projects that occur within streams and wetlands.

**National Roadmap for Responding to Climate Change (USDA 2011):** This document provides guidance for National Forests to adapt and prepare for changing climates, with a management emphasis on restoring the functions and processes characteristic of healthy, resilient ecosystems through adaptive restoration. The Roadmap identifies the connection between restoration and developing the ability of ecosystems to withstand stresses and uncertainties associated with climate change.

**National Strategy and Implementation Plan for Invasive Species Management (USDA-FS October 2004)** The National strategy for invasive species management addresses in detail the Prevention and Management Strategy for prevention, early detection and rapid response, control and management, and rehabilitation and restoration.

**Okanogan County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) (Bloch et al. 2013a, 2013b):** This plan was collaboratively developed by local and state government representatives in consultation with federal agencies and other interested parties, and was last updated in 2012. The CWPP incorporates and supersedes the Methow Community Wildfire Protection Plan, using local interagency and public input to create a specific definition of Wildland urban Interface (WUI) that considers risks to developments within fire-prone environments in Okanogan County.

**Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Restoration Strategy (USDA 2012):** The Restoration Strategy provides a planning framework, based on principles of landscape-level restoration ecology, to restore the sustainability and resiliency of forested ecosystems on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. It was developed to provide land managers the ability to efficiently examine broad Forest landscapes, allowing managers to select high priority areas, design integrated restoration treatments, and consider historical and potential future reference conditions under different climate scenarios. One key premise of the Restoration Strategy is that maintaining and restoring forest vegetation conditions (structure, composition, and pattern) to levels within the

historical and future range of variability will provide for more sustainable and resilient forest ecosystems.

**Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest Forest-wide Site-Specific Invasive Plant Management Final Environmental Impact Statement (USDA-FS 2017).** This document provides site specific analysis, guidance and direction for noxious weed control including herbicide applications to infested lands for all of the analysis area. This document also provides an Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) approach for treating new infestation.

**Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests Weed Prevention Strategy and Best Management Practices (USDA-FS 2001a)** This document includes prevention measures necessary to help reduce noxious weed control including herbicide applications to infested lands for a portion of the analysis area.

**Pacific Northwest Invasive Plant Prevention and Management Record of Decision (2005 PNW ROD) (USDA-FS 2005):** This ROD amended the Forest Plan in 2005. The following goals and objectives from the ROD are relevant to this project: Protect ecosystems from the impacts of invasive plants through an integrated approach that emphasizes prevention, early detection, and early treatment. All employees and users of the National Forest recognize that they play an important role in preventing and detecting invasive plants (Goal 1); and minimizing the creation of conditions that favor invasive plant introduction, establishment and spread during land management actions and land use activities. Continually review and adjust land management practices to help reduce the creation of conditions that favor invasive plant communities (Goal 2).

**Travel Management – 36 CFR Part 212.5, Subpart A: Administration of the Forest Transportation System:** (1) The responsible official must identify the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel and for administration, utilization, and protection of National Forest System lands. In determining the minimum road system, the responsible official must incorporate a science-based roads analysis at the appropriate scale and, to the degree practicable, involve a broad spectrum of interested and affected citizens. (2) Identification of unneeded roads. Responsible officials must review the road system . . . that are no longer needed to meet forest resource management objectives and that, therefore, should be decommissioned or considered for other uses.

***“National Forest Roads and Trails Act of October 13, 1964, as amended (16 U.S.C. 532-538).***

Authorizes road and trail systems for the national forests. Authorizes granting of easements across NFS lands, construction and financing of maximum economy roads (FSM 7705), and imposition of requirements on road users for maintaining and reconstructing roads, including cooperative deposits for that work.

***Highway Safety Act of 1966 (23 U.S.C. 402).***

Authorizes state and local governments and participating federal agencies to identify and survey accident locations; to design, construct, and maintain roads in accordance with safety standards; to apply sound traffic control principles and standards; and to promote pedestrian safety.

***Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1978, as amended (23 U.S.C. 101a, 201-205).***Supersedes the Forest Highway Act of 1958. “

**USDA National Best Management Practices for Water Quality Management on National Forest System Lands [Volume 1] (USDA April 2012):** This document is the culmination of an

effort that has spanned many years. The program was developed to improve agency performance and accountability in managing water quality consistent with the Federal Clean Water Act and State water quality programs.

### **Watershed Assessments**

**Twisp River Watershed Analysis (USDA 1995a):** This analysis covers the Buttermilk Creek and Twisp River portions of the Mission Restoration Project area and determined that past management activities and successional progress have favored an increase of late-seral (shade tolerant) tree species and multiple canopy level stands with high risk associated with insects, disease, and eventually fire. The assessment determined that it would be beneficial to increase the number of stands dominated by early seral (tree) species and/or stand structures which are resistant to insects and disease that affect late-seral forest stands where Douglas-fir has replaced ponderosa pine as the dominant tree species. Manage vegetation to reduce stand susceptibility to disturbance caused by insects or disease in the matrix land allocation. Vegetation management recommendations are detailed in the Vegetation Management Report and Watershed Management Reports in project background files.

The Twisp River Watershed Analysis addresses roads generally by describing that “the long term trend will be for a slight decrease in overall open road density as some road segments are removed or permanently closed by watershed restoration projects.” It had a Watershed Wide Objective of decreasing sediment from past or present natural or human-caused disturbances.

No recommendations were made to resolve road access problems for grazing allotment management.

The analysis recommends performing surveys, monitoring and delineating habitat for sensitive grape fern (*Botrychium spp.*).

Objective #24 in the analysis addresses reduction of impacts to air quality and recommends scheduling prescribed burns in such a way to reduce smoke impacts to adjacent landowners and forest visitors. Recommended monitoring includes monitoring visibility to determine how management activities negatively impact air quality, and continue monitoring of air quality with the monitor located in Twisp, WA.

The trend in species change from ponderosa pine to Douglas fir is expected to continue if management practices remain the same. Suppression effectiveness would remain the same until fuel accumulation increases to more critical levels; given the right weather and an increase in dead surface fuels, future fires would be high severity and very difficult to suppress. Emissions from wildfire would increase and air stagnation episodes would occur more frequently during summer recreation periods as most critical fire weather occur during periods of stable high pressure which also stagnates the air. Manage vegetation to favor ponderosa pine tree component recovery. Outside of Wilderness this would include harvest to reduce site competition for ponderosa pine, stand manipulation to emphasize growth in the ponderosa pine component, and site preparation to achieve ponderosa pine regeneration.

**Libby Creek Watershed Analysis (USDA 1995b) and Lower Methow Watershed Analysis (USDA 1999):** These analyses cover the Libby Creek portion of the Mission project area and determined that management activities have influenced watershed vegetation pattern and structures to the point where species composition and some stand structural stages currently are out of balance with the historical range of variation. Vegetation management recommendations include restoring stand canopy structures and species composition to historic levels by reducing excess understory stocking; maintaining mature, large diameter trees in overstocked stands by



reducing excess understory stocking with timber harvest; thinning sub-merchantable trees; prescribed burning; reducing dwarf mistletoe infection in the understory (particularly Douglas fir); and confining infection primarily to large, mature trees which historically remained following periodic underburning.

The Lower Methow Watershed Assessment did not specifically identify roads individually as issues; rather it generally identifies “Management activity in riparian and floodplain areas may affect the timing and duration of downstream water flow.” Recommendations included “Management activities in riparian areas and floodplains should maintain hydrologic and riparian functions to minimize increases in peak/base stream flow.”

These watershed analysis directed monitoring and inventory of existing sites and developing and implementing an integrated pest, weed management plan for the watersheds while coordinating with the Okanogan County Noxious Weed Board and adjacent landowners.

One other smaller analysis within the larger, more recent Lower Methow Watershed Analysis, page 96, identified considering obliterating roads following both sides of Elderberry Canyon and Ben Canyon.

The analysis recommends performing surveys for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive plant species and habitats at risk of disturbance.

This analysis recommended continuing the program of working with landowners to implement prescribed fire in the watershed; identify and maintain areas in the watershed that are natural fuel breaks; survey the watershed for additional fuel break opportunities especially in regard to LSR areas; manage the watershed so that high fire affects are minimized, i.e. implement thinning prescribed burn projects or other means of restoring historical fire return intervals; manage fuel in Libby Creek so that high-severity fire events do not degrade large areas and destroy habitat for proposed threatened or endangered fish species; Libby Creek should be managed to develop park-like ponderosa pine character on southerly aspects, with areas of an all-age mosaic of Douglas fir and lodgepole pine on northerly aspects; and focus silvicultural and prescribed burning on boundary lands to create fuel breaks to reduce the risk of fire spread from NFS land to private and vice versa.

No recommendations were made to resolve road access problems for grazing allotment management or specific to air quality.

# Appendix H: Acronyms & Glossary

## Acronyms

AMP - Allotment Management Plan

APS – Average Patch Size

AUM - Animal Unit Month

BE – Biophysical Environment

BMP - Best Management Practices

BMU- Bear Management Unit

CCF - Hundred Cubic Feet (approximately 500 board feet)

CFR - Code of Federal Regulations

CWM – Coarse Woody Material

DBH - Diameter at Breast Height

DFB – Douglas-fir Beetle

DFDM – Douglas-fir Dwarf Mistletoe

DMT - Dwarf Mistletoe Infection

DNR - Washington State Department of Natural Resources

DRV – Desired Range of Variability

DSD - Detrimental Soil Disturbance

EA - Environmental Assessment

EIS – Environmental Impact Statement

EMDS - Ecosystem Management Decision Support

ESA - Endangered Species Act

ESR – Ecological Subregion

FEIS - Final Environmental Impact Statement

FRV - Future Range of Variability

FS - Forest Service

FSH – Forest Service Handbook

FSDMP – Forest Soil Disturbance Monitoring Protocol  
FSM - Forest Service Manual  
FVS - Forest Vegetation Simulator  
GIS - Geographic Information System  
HRV - Historic Range of Variability  
HUC - United States Geological Survey hydrologic unit code  
IDT - Interdisciplinary Team  
ILBT - Interagency Lynx Biology Team  
IRA - Inventoried Roadless Area  
LAU - Lynx Analysis Unit  
LFR – Ladder Fuel Reduction  
LOS - Late and Old Successional structure  
LOSM - Late and Old Successional, multi-storied structure  
LOSS – Late and Old Successional, single-storied structure  
LRMP - Land and Resource Management Plan  
LS - Late Successional structure  
LSOF - Late Successional Old Forest  
LTSP – Long Term Soil Productivity  
MA - Management Area  
MBF – Thousand Board Feet, a measurement of timber volume  
MIS - Management Indicator Species  
MOU - Memorandum of Understanding  
NEPA - National Environmental Policy Act  
NFMA - National Forest Management Act  
NFS - National Forest System  
NG - Northern Goshawk  
OG – Okanogan National Forest LRMP Old Growth, Mixed Conifer Old Growth  
OHV – Off highway vehicle  
OM – Organic Matter

ONF – Okanogan National Forest

PACFISH - Interim Strategies for Managing Anadromous Fish-producing Watersheds in Eastern Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Portions of California

PCT – Pre-commercial Thinning

PD - Patch Density

PL - Percent Landscape

RHCA - Riparian Habitat Conservation Area

SAI-KV – Reforestation and Sale Area Improvement trust fund authorized by the Knutson-Vandenberg act of 1930.

S&G - Standard and Guideline

SECC – Stem Exclusion Closed Canopy

SEOC – Stem Exclusion Open Canopy

SI - Stand Initiation

T&E - Threatened and Endangered

USDA - United States Department of Agriculture

USDI - United States Department of Interior

USFS - United States Forest Service

VQO - Visual Quality Objectives

VRR – Variable Retention Regeneration

WDFW - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

WUI - Wildland Urban Interface

YFMS – Young Forest multi-story

## **Glossary**

### **Accipiter**

A hawk of a group distinguished by short, broad wings and relatively long legs, adapted for fast flight in wooded country.

### **Affected Environment**

The area that would be affected or created by the alternatives under consideration.

### **Airshed**

An airshed is a part of the atmosphere that behaves in a coherent way with respect to the dispersion of emissions. It typically forms an analytical or management unit. Also: A geographic boundary for air quality standards.

**Alaska Native Corporation**

One of the regional, urban, and village native corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.

**Assessment**

An assessment is the identification and evaluation of existing information to support land management planning. Assessments are not decision making documents, but provide current information on select topics relevant to the planning area, in the context of the broader landscape.

**Best Management Practice (BMP)**

Management actions that are designed to maintain the integrity of a natural resource by preventative rather than corrective means.

**Best Management Practices for water quality (BMPs)**

Methods, measures, or practices selected by an agency to meet its nonpoint source control needs. BMPs include but are not limited to structural and nonstructural controls and operation and maintenance procedures. BMPs can be applied before, during, and after pollution-producing activities to reduce or eliminate the introduction of pollutants into receiving waters.

**Biological Evaluation (BE)**

Information prepared by or under the direction of the Forest Service concerning listed and Regional Forester's Sensitive Species that may be in the action area and the evaluation of potential effects of the action on such species and habitat.

**Biophysical Environment**

The aggregation and integration of biological and physical conditions and processes within ecosystems described in terms of moisture and temperature regimes and often represent groupings of plant associations.

**Biomass**

The total woody material in a forest. However, in the context of this analysis biomass is usually referring to un-merchantable, burnable material, both standing and on the ground.

**Broom**

A cluster of branches, radiating from a single point that results from damage in a tree from agents such as mistletoe.

**Brush**

A collective term that refers to stands of vegetation dominated by shrubby, woody plants or low-growing trees, usually of a type undesirable for livestock or timber management.

**Cambium**

Layer of living cells between the wood and the innermost bark of a tree. Each growing season the cambium adds a new layer of cells (by cell division) on the wood already formed, as well as a layer of inner bark on the cambium's outer face.

**Candidate Species**

(1) For U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service candidate species, a species for which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service possesses sufficient information on vulnerability and threats to support a proposal to list as an endangered or threatened species, but for which no proposed rule has yet been published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2) For the National Marine Fisheries

Service candidate species , a species that is: (i) The subject of a petition to list and for which the National Marine Fisheries Service has determined that listing may be warranted, pursuant to section 4(b)(3)(A) of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. 1533(b)(3)A)), or (ii) Not the subject of a petition but for which the National Marine Fisheries Service has announced in the Federal Register the initiation of a status review.

**Canopy**

A layer of foliage in a forest stand. Most often refers to the uppermost layer of foliage, but can be used to describe lower layers within a multistoried stand.

**Canopy Closure**

The degree to which the crowns of trees are nearing general contact with one another. Generally, measured as the percent of the ground surface that would be covered by a vertical projection of foliage in the crown of trees.

**CFR**

Code of Federal Regulations – A codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government.

**Characteristic fire behavior**

Fire frequency and effects in a given landscape that are within the historical natural fire regime's range for that landscape (Hardy et al. 1998).

**Closure**

Legal restriction on -- but not necessarily elimination of -- specified activities such as smoking, camping, or entry that might cause fires in a given area.

**Cohort**

Trees within a cohort share a common disturbance history; they are those initiated or released after a disturbance (natural or artificial). Tree ages with a cohort may span several decades.

**Collaboration or Collaborative Process**

A structured manner in which a collection of people with diverse interests share knowledge, ideas, or resources while working together in an inclusive and cooperative manner toward a common purpose. Collaboration, in the context of this document, falls within the full spectrum of public engagement described in the Council on Environmental Quality's publication of October 2007: Collaboration in NEPA – A Handbook for NEPA Practitioners.

**Commercial Thin**

A silviculture treatment that "thins" out an overstocked stand by removing trees that are large enough to be sold as saw timber. It is carried out to improve the health and growth rate of the remaining crop trees.

**Composition**

The abundance, or relative abundance of components, such as water, nutrients, and species, that makes up the ecosystem.

**Connectivity**

- 1). The arrangement of habitats that allows organisms and ecological processes to move across the landscape.
- 2). Patches of similar habitats that are either close together or linked by corridors of appropriate vegetation. The opposite of fragmentation.
- 3). Ecological conditions that exist at several spatially and temporal scales that provide landscape linkages that permit the exchange of flow, sediments, and nutrients; the daily and seasonal movements of animals within home ranges; the dispersal and genetic interchange

between populations; and the long-distance range shifts of species, such as response to climate change.

**Conservation**

The protection, preservation, management, or restoration of natural environments, ecological communities, and species.

**Conserve**

To protect, preserve, manage, or restore natural environments and ecological communities to potentially avoid federally listing of proposed and candidate species.

**Control a Fire**

The complete extinguishment of a fire, including spot fires. Fireline has been strengthened so that flare-ups from within the perimeter of the fire would not break through the line.

**Control Line**

All built or natural fire barriers and treated fire edge used to control a fire.

**Corridor**

A defined tract of land, usually linear, through which species must travel to reach habitat suitable for reproduction and other life-sustaining needs.

**Critical Habitat**

Specific areas within the geographical area occupied by a species on which are found those physical or biological features essential to conservation of the species.

**Crown**

The bole, branches, limbs and foliage of a tree between the lowest limb with foliage, live or dead, and the top of the tree.

**Crown Fire**

The movement of fire through the crowns or tops of trees or shrubs more or less independently of the surface fire. A fire is said to be crowning when the flames get up into the tops of trees and spreads.

**Cumulative Effect (cumulative impact)**

Effect on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

**DBH or dbh**

Diameter at Breast Height; 4.5 feet above ground level.

**Dead Fuels**

Fuels with no living tissue in which moisture content is governed almost entirely by atmospheric moisture (relative humidity and precipitation), dry-bulb temperature, and solar radiation.

**Decommission of Roads**

Involves the stabilization and restoration of roads to a more natural state. Activities used to decommission a road include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following: reestablishing former drainage patterns, stabilizing slopes, restoring vegetation, blocking the entrance to the road, installing water bars, removing culverts, reestablishing drainage-ways, removing unstable fills, pulling back road shoulders, scattering slash on the roadbed, completely eliminating the roadbed by restoring natural contours and slopes, or other methods designed to meet the specific conditions associated with the unneeded road.

**Defoliation**

The loss of foliage by a tree, usually as a result of feeding insect larvae.

**Delineated**

Indicate the exact position of; to represent accurately.

**Designated Area**

An area or feature identified and managed to maintain its unique special character or purpose. Some categories of designated areas may be designated only by statute and some categories may be established administratively in the land management planning process or by other administrative processes of the Federal executive branch. Examples of statutorily designated areas are national heritage areas, national recreation areas, national scenic trails, wild and scenic rivers, and wilderness areas. Examples of administratively designated areas are experimental forests, research natural areas, scenic byways, botanical areas, and significant caves.

**Desired Future Condition (DFC)**

Land or resource conditions that are expected to result if goals and objectives are fully achieved.

**Desired Range of Variability**

The overlap of the Historic Range of Variability (HRV) and Future Range of Variability (FRV)

**Dispersal**

The movement, usually one way and on any time scale, of plants or animals from their point of origin to another location where the subsequently produce offspring.

**Dispersed Recreation**

Recreation that takes place in primitive settings where few, if any, constructed facilities are provided. Trail use, rock climbing, boating, hunting and fishing are examples of dispersed recreation. Contrast with developed recreation.

**Disturbance**

A significant change in structure and/or composition caused by natural events such as fire, wind, flood, and human caused events. Any relatively discrete event in time that disrupts ecosystem, watershed, community, or species population structure and/or function and changes resources, substrate availability, or the physical environment.

**Disturbance regime**

A description of the characteristic types of disturbance on a given landscape; the frequency, severity, and size distribution of these characteristic disturbance types; and their interactions.

**Diversity**

The variety and relative extent of ecosystem types, including their composition, structure, and process within all or a part of an area.

**Duff**

The layer of decomposing organic materials lying below the litter layer of freshly fallen twigs, needles, and leaves and immediately above the mineral soil.

**Dwarf Mistletoe**

Parasitic plants that parasitize conifers, often redirecting tree nutrients and growth to parasitized portions of the tree.

**Ecological Conditions**

The biological and physical environment that can affect the diversity of plant and animal communities, the persistence of native species, and the productive capacity of ecological systems. Ecological conditions include habitat and other influences on species and the



environment. Examples of ecological conditions include the abundance and distribution of aquatic and terrestrial habitats, connectivity, roads, and other structural developments, human uses, and invasive species.

### **Ecological Integrity**

The quality or condition of an ecosystem when it's dominant ecological characteristics (for example

### **Ecosystem**

An arrangement of biotic and abiotic components and forces that move among them. A spatially explicit, relatively homogenous unit of the Earth that includes all interacting organisms and elements of the abiotic environment within its boundaries. An ecosystem is commonly described in terms of its: composition, structure, function, and connectivity.

### **Ecosystem Diversity**

The variety and relative extent of ecosystems.

### **Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS)**

Software tool composed of two parts. The first, NetWeaver, helps to derive attributes from photo interpreted data and compare current landscape conditions with historical and potential future reference conditions. The second part, called Criteria Decision Plus, supports relative weighting of multiple resources to show integrated priorities.

### **Ecosystem Services**

Benefits people obtain from ecosystems, including: provisioning services, regulating services, supporting services, and cultural services

### **Endemic**

A plant or animal native or restricted to a certain country or area; restricted or peculiar to a locality or region.

### **Environmental Analysis**

- 1). An analysis of actions and their predictable long and short-term environmental effects. Environmental analyses include consideration of physical, biological, social, and economic factors.
- 2). A general term that could refer to an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

### **Environmental Assessment (EA)**

EAs were authorized by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. They are analytical documents prepared with public participation to determine whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is needed for a project or action. If an EA determines an EIS is not needed, the EA becomes the document allowing agency compliance with NEPA requirements.

### **Environmental Document**

An environmental assessment (EA), environmental impact statement (EIS), finding of no significant impact (FONSI) categorical exclusion (CE), and notice of intent (NOI) to prepare an environmental impact statement.

### **Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**

EISs were authorized by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. Prepared with public participation, they assist decision-makers by providing information, analysis, and an array of action alternatives, allowing managers to see the probable effects of management decisions on the environment. Generally, an EIS is written for a large-scale action or geographical area.

### **Erosion**

The wearing away of the earth's surface by running water, wave action, moving ice and wind, or process of mass wasting chemical processes. Geologic erosion refers to natural erosion processes occurring over long (geologic) time spans. Accelerated erosion generically refers to erosion in excess of what is presumed or estimated to be naturally occurring levels, and which is a direct result of human activities.

### **Evan-aged stand**

A stand of trees composed of a single age class.

### **Extreme Fire Behavior**

"Extreme" implies a level of fire behavior characteristics that ordinarily precludes methods of direct control action. One or more of the following are usually involved: high rate of spread, prolific crowning and/or spotting, presence of fire whirls, a strong convection column. Predictability is difficult because such fires often exercise influence on their environment and behave erratically, sometimes dangerously.

### **Federally Recognized Indian Tribes**

An Indian or Alaska Native Tribe, band, nation, pueblo, village, or community that the Secretary of the Interior acknowledges to exist as an Indian Tribe under the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994, 25 U.S.C. 479a.

### **Fire Behavior**

The manner in which a fire reacts to the influences of fuels, weather, and topography.

### **Fire Intensity**

A general term relating to the heat energy released by a fire.

### **Fire Regime**

A fire regime is a generalization based on fire histories at individual sites. Fire regime is a description of patterns, or cycles, of fire occurrences, frequency, size, severity, and sometimes vegetation and fire effects as well, in a given area or ecosystem.

- Fire Regime I: Frequent fire return, low severity; 0-35 years
- Fire Regime II: Frequent fire return, stand replacement severity fire; 0-35 years
- Fire Regime III: Mixed fire severity; 35-100+ years
- Fire Regime IV: Stand replacement severity; 35-100+ years
- Fire Regime V: Stand replacement severity; 200+ years

### **Fire Season**

- 1) Period(s) of the year during which wildland fires are likely to occur, spread, and affect resource values sufficient to warrant organized fire management activities.
- 2) A legally enacted time during which burning activities are regulated by state or local authority.

### **Fire Weather**

Weather conditions that influence fire ignition, fire behavior, and suppression.

### **Flame Length**

The distance between the flame tip and the midpoint of the flame depth at the base of the flame (generally the ground surface); flame length is an indicator of fire intensity.

### **Focal Species**

Literally meaning "those species focused on", focal species are animal and plant species that provide an essential ecological function, or are indicative of essential habitat conditions. These species may provide an umbrella function for other species or represent large groups of other species. They may provide an efficient way to represent a planning goal – such as biodiversity protection. Focal species may include "indicator species", which can be defined as those that

tell something about the conditions in a particular habitat. A small subset of species whose status permits inference to the integrity of the larger ecological system to which it belongs and provides a meaningful information regarding the effectiveness of the plan in maintaining or restoring the ecological conditions to maintain the diversity of plant and animal communities in the plan area. Focal species would be commonly selected on the basis of their functional role in ecosystems.

**Forb**

A plant with a soft rather than permanent woody stem, that is not a grass or grass-like plant.

**Foreground (viewing distance)**

The portion of a scene nearest to the viewer. Ranging from 0-500m.

**Forest Land**

Land at least 10 percent occupied by forest trees of any size or formerly having had such tree cover and not currently developed for non-forest uses. Lands developed for non-forest use include areas for crops, improved pasture, residential or administrative areas, improved roads of any width and adjoining road clearing, and power line clearings of any width.

**Forest Plan Mixed Conifer Old Growth**

As defined by the Okanogan National Forest Land Resource Management Area Plan; a stand of at least 30 acres in size that contains at least 15 trees per acre of ponderosa pine trees that are 21 inches in diameter at breast height or larger together with large snags and coarse woody debris. However, it has become accepted that other species of similar girth would also qualify and it is recognized that the lack of snags and coarse woody debris should not disqualify an otherwise qualifying stand from Mixed Conifer Old Growth status.

**Fragmentation**

As related to forest management, fragmentation is a process that results in habitat conversion, habitat discontinuity, and eventually the isolation or insularization of the original habitat. The process of fragmentation occurs across a range of landscape patterns. At one extreme, it is represented by small disturbance patches, which disrupt the continuity of habitat. At the other extreme, widespread habitat conversion causes isolation of the remnant original habitat into patches.

**Fuel**

Combustible material. Includes vegetation such as grass, leaves, ground litter, plants, shrubs, and trees that feed a fire. (Also see surface fuels.)

**Fuel Loading**

The amount of fuels present expressed quantitatively in terms of weight per unit area (e.g., tons/acre).

**Fuel Model**

Simulated fuel complex (or combination of vegetation types) for which all fuel descriptors required for the solution of a mathematical rate of spread model have been specified.

**Fuel Moisture**

The quantity of moisture in fuels expressed as a percentage of the weight when thoroughly dried at 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Also referred to as fuel moisture content.

**Fuels Reduction**

Manipulation, including combustion or removal of fuels to reduce the likelihood of ignition and/or to lessen potential damage and resistance to control. Often includes thinning and/or prescribed burning.

**Fuel Type**

An identifiable association of fuel elements of a distinctive plant species, form, size, arrangement, or other characteristics that would cause a predictable rate of fire spread or difficulty of control under specified weather conditions.

**Full Time Equivalent Jobs**

The number of full-time equivalent jobs, defined as total hours worked divided by average annual hours worked in full-time jobs.

**Function**

The process through which composition and function interact, including predation, decomposition, and disturbances, such as fires and floods.

**Future Range of Variability (FRV)**

The future range of variability provides is a concept described by Gartner et al. (2008) and provides insights into how systems may adjust to changing climate. By comparing current vegetation patterns to both historical and future reference conditions, managers will gain valuable insights into how systems have changed and how they are likely to change over time. Understanding these changes is the key to determining management strategies that provide for sustainable and resilient forests.

**Geographic Area**

A spatially contiguous land area identified within the planning area. A geographic area may overlap with a management area.

**Geographic Information System (GIS)**

- 1). A database designed to handle geographic data.
- 2). A set of computer operations that can be used to analyze geographic data (also referred to as computerized mapping).

**Goal**

In planning, a concise statement that describes future condition to be achieved with no specific date by which it is to be attained. It is normally expressed in broad, general terms. Goal statements form the principal basis from which objectives are developed.

**Ground Fuels**

All combustible materials below the surface litter, including duff, tree or shrub roots, punky wood, peat, sawdust, and other materials that can support a glowing combustion without flame.

**Graminoid**

Of or related grasses.

**Girdling**

Complete removal of a strip of bark from around the entire circumference of the trunk of a tree. Girdling results in the death of the area above the girdle over time. Girdling is a slow process compared to felling and is often used only when necessary, such as in the removal of an individual tree from an ecologically protected area without damaging surrounding growth.

**Habitat**

The place where plant or animal naturally lives and grows.

**Historical natural fire regime**

A description of the frequency and impacts of historical fire conditions under which vegetation communities evolved and were maintained without fire exclusion (Hardy 2005).

**Historic Range of Variability (HRV)**

1). Historical range of variability refers to fluctuations in ecosystem composition, structure, and process over time, especially prior to the influence of Euro-American settlers (Morgan et al. 1994, Swanson et al. 1994, Fule et al. 1997, Landres et al. 1999, Agee 2003) Such variations include a diverse array of characteristics such as tree density, population sizes of organisms, water temperature, and sediment delivery. This concept can be applied at multiple spatial scales from the site to bio-geographic region, and at multiple temporal scales from decades or centuries to landform erosion to millennia for geologic processes (Swanson et al. 1994, Landres et al. 1999).

2). The bounded behavior of ecosystems prior to the dramatic changes in state factors that accompanied the settlement of North America, beginning with the discovery of the “New World”.

### **Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) – See Watershed**

### **Hypogeous**

A biological terms describing an organism's activity below the soil surface.

### **Inherent Capability of the Plan Area**

The ecological capacity or ecological potential of an area characterized by the interrelationship of its physical elements, its climatic regime, and natural disturbances.

### **Integrated Resource Management**

Multiple use management that recognizes the interdependence of ecological resources and is based on the need for integrated consideration of ecological, social, and economic factors.

### **Intermittent Stream**

A stream that normally flows in response to a seasonally fluctuating water table in a well-defined channel (flowing 10-90 percent of an average year). The channel would exhibit signs of annual scour, sediment transport and other stream channel characteristics, absent perennial flows. Intermittent streams typically flow during times of elevated water table levels and may be dry during significant periods of the year, depending on precipitation cycles. Intermittent streams do not maintain fish populations of aquatic insects that have larvae with multi-year life cycles. Contrast with ephemeral stream and perennial stream.

### **Issues**

Areas of unresolved conflict concerning management of the National Forest.

### **Ladder Fuels**

Fuels which provide vertical continuity between strata, thereby allowing fire to carry from surface fuels into the crowns of trees or shrubs with relative ease. They help start and continue crowning on a fire.

### **Ladder Fuels Reduction**

Post-harvest fuels treatment felling all remaining diseased, damaged, or suppressed conifers eight inches dbh and smaller.

### **Landscape**

A defined area irrespective of ownership or other artificial boundaries, such as spatial mosaic of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, landforms, and plant communities, repeated in similar form throughout such a defined area.

### **Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP)**

The document that guides the management of a particular national forest and establishes management standards for all lands controlled by that national forest. Also referred to as the forest plan or amended forest plan.

### **Large Fire**

- 1) For statistical purposes, a fire burning more than a specified area of land; e.g., 100 acres.
- 2) A fire burning with a size and intensity such that its behavior is determined by interaction between its own convection column and weather conditions above the surface.

**Large Sized Trees**

Those trees that are > 25 inches, diameter at breast height (dbh).

**Largest Patch Index (LPI)**

Quantifies the percentage of total landscape area represented by the largest patch. As such, it is a simple measure of dominance that shows relative size of the largest patch compared with reference conditions.

**Late and Old Structure Multistory (LOS-M)**

Two or more cohorts and strata present including large, old trees. Definition: Multi-ages stand with assortment of tree sizes and canopy strata present including large, old trees. Grasses, forbs, and shrubs may be present. The Okanogan National Forest definition for mixed conifer stands is 8 or more trees per acre at least 21 inches in diameter at breast height.

**Late and Old Structure Single Story (LOS-S)**

Single stratum of medium to large, old trees of one or more cohorts. Structure maintained through nonlethal burning or management. Description: Broken or continuous canopy of medium to large, old trees. Single or multi-cohort. Understory absent or consisting of some seedlings, saplings, grasses, forbs, or shrubs. The Okanogan National Forest definition for mixed conifer stands is 8 or more trees per acre at least 21 inches in diameter at breast height.

**Litter**

Top layer of the forest, scrubland, or grassland floor, directly above the fermentation layer. It's composed of loose debris including sticks, branches, twigs, and recently fallen leaves or needles, little altered in structure by decomposition.

**Long-term Effects**

Those effects, which would usually occur beyond the next ten years.

**Maintain**

In reference to an ecological condition: To keep in existence or continuance of the desired ecological condition in terms of its desired composition, structure, and processes. Depending upon the circumstance, ecological conditions may be maintained by active or passive management, or both.

**Management Action**

Any activity undertaken as part of the administration of the National Forest.

**Management Area**

An area with similar management objectives and a common management prescription. Each area has a "discrete" or unique identifier number. A land area identified within the planning area that has the same set of applicable plan components. A management area does not have to be spatially contiguous.

**Management Indicator Species**

A species selected for analysis in the Okanogan NF LRMP because its welfare is presumed to be an indicator of the welfare of other species using the same habitat.

**Management System**

A timber management system including even-aged management and uneven-aged management.

**Market Value**

The unit price of an output normally exchanged in a market after at least one stage of production. Market value is expressed in terms of prices as evidenced by market transactions.

**Mean Annual Increment of Growth and Culmination of Mean Annual Increment of Growth**

Mean annual increment of growth is the total increment of increase of volume of a stand (standing crop plus thinnings) up to a given age divided by that age. Culmination of mean annual increment of growth is the age in the growth cycle of an even-aged stand at which the average annual rate of increase of volume is at a maximum. In land management plans, mean annual increment is expressed in cubic measure and is based on expected growth of stands, according to intensities and utilization guidelines in the plan.

**Mean Patch Size (MPS)**

The average of all patches of the same class attribute.

**Medium Sized Trees**

A tree between 16 – 25 inches, diameter at breast height (dbh).

**Mesic**

Refers to moist to moderately moist soil conditions. Under mesic conditions, soil moisture is predictably adequate for plant growth during the growing season.

**Middleground (viewing distance)**

Ranging from 500m-5km. The distance at which it is hardest to achieve harmonization among different disturbances affecting the landscape.

**Mineral Soil**

Soil layers below the predominantly organic layers; soil with little combustible material.

**Mitigation**

Collective actions taken to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, eliminate, or compensate for the negative impact of a land management practice.

**Monitoring**

A systematic process of collecting information to evaluate effects of actions or changes in conditions or relationships.

**Multiple Use**

The management of all the various renewable surface resources of the NFS so that they are utilized in the combination that will best meet the needs of the American people; making the most judicious use of land for some or all of these resources or related services over areas large enough to provide sufficient latitude for periodic adjustments in use to conform to changing needs and conditions; that some land will be used for less than all resources; and harmonious and coordinated management by various resources, each with the other, without impairment of the productivity of the land, with consideration being given to the relative values of the various resources, and not necessarily the combination of uses that will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest unit output, consistent with the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960 (16 U.S.C. 528-531).

**Mycorrhizae**

A symbiotic association between a fungus and the roots of a vascular host plant. The term mycorrhiza refers to the role of the fungi in the plants' rhizosphere, its root system. Mycorrhizae play important roles in soil biology and soil chemistry.

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

NEPA is the basic national law for protection of the environment, passed by Congress in 1969. It sets policy and procedures for environmental protection, and authorizes Environmental Impact

Statements and Environmental Assessments to be used as analytical tools to help federal managers make land management decisions.

**National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)**

An act to establish a program for the preservation of additional historic properties throughout the Nation, and for other purposes.

**Native Knowledge**

A way of knowing or understanding the world, including traditional ecological and social knowledge of the environment derived from multiple generations of indigenous peoples' interactions, observations, and experiences with their ecological systems. Native knowledge is place-based and culture-based knowledge in which people learn to live in and adapt to their own environment through interactions, observations, and experiences with their ecological system. This knowledge is generally not solely gained, developed by, or retained by individuals, but is rather accumulated over successive generations and is expressed through oral traditions, ceremonies, stories, dances, songs, art, and other means within a cultural context.

**Native Species**

With respect to a particular ecosystem, a species that, other than as a result of an introduction, historically occurred or currently occurs in that ecosystem (Executive Order 13122, 2/3/99). An organism that was historically or is present in a particular ecosystem as a result of natural migratory or evolutionary processes; and not as a result of accidental or deliberate introduction into that ecosystem. An organism's presence and evolution (adaptation) in an area are determined by climate, soil, and other biotic and abiotic factors.

**Neotropical**

Of, relating to, or denoting a zoogeographical region comprising Central and South America, including the tropical southern part of Mexico and the Caribbean.

**Nephelometric Turbidity Unit (NTU)**

A standard for measuring the suspended solid matter in water determined by how much light is reflected by particles in the water.

**Objective**

In planning, a concise, time specific statement of measurable planned results that respond to pre-established goals. An objective forms the basis for further planning to define the precise steps to be taken and the resources to be used in achieving identified goals.

**Old Forest**

Patches characterized by a predominance of Large Sized Trees (>crown cover of trees greater than 25 inches dbh) as defined by the EMDS process.

**Old Growth**

A forest comprised of many large trees, large snags and numerous large down logs; having a multi-layered canopy of several tree species; the trees showing signs of decadence; the last stage in forest succession. Okanogan NF LRMP defines mixed conifer old growth as a stand of at least 30 acres in size with 15 trees or more with diameters at least 18 inches in diameter at breast height, two snags at least 12 inches at breast height and three logs and at least 12 inches in diameter per acre.

**Old Growth Habitat**

Habitat for certain wildlife that is characterized by overmature coniferous forest stands with large snags and decaying logs.

**Old-Growth Stand**



Any stand of trees generally containing the following characteristics 1) containing mature and overmature trees in the overstory and are well into the mature growth stage; 2) will usually contain a multilayered canopy of trees of several age classes; 3) standing dead trees and down material are present; and 4) evidences of man's activities may be present, but do not significantly alter the other characteristics and would be subordinate factor in a description of such a stand.

**Participant**

Activities that include a wide range of public involvement tools and processes, such as collaboration, public meetings, open houses, workshops, and comment periods.

**Patch**

An area (minimum of 10 acres) consisting of one or more contiguous polygons within a landscape with like vegetation attributes.

**Patch Density (PD)**

Limited but fundamental aspect of landscape pattern. It expresses the number of patches on a per-unit-area basis, which facilitates comparisons among landscapes of varying size.

**Percent Land (PL)**

The percentage of landscape composed of the class (e.g. Young Forest Multi-Story). This metric allows an understanding of how the amount of a class has changed from reference conditions.

**Perennial Stream**

Any watercourse that normally flows most of the year (greater than 90 percent of an average year) in a well-defined channel, although droughts and other precipitation patterns may influence the actual duration of flow. It contains fish or aquatic insects that have larvae with multiyear lifecycles, and water-dependent vegetation is typically associated with it. Contrast with ephemeral stream and intermittent stream

**Permittee**

A permit holder for activity on Forest Service lands, quite often a range use permit

**Persistence**

Continued existence.

**Plan or Land Management Plan**

A document or set of documents that provide management direction for an administrative unit of the NFS developed under the requirements of this part or a prior planning rule.

**Plan Area**

The NFS lands covered by a plan.

**Plant and Animal Community**

A naturally occurring assemblage of plant and animal species living within a defined area or habitat.

**Plant Association**

A grouping of plant species, or a plant community, that recurs across the landscape usually defined by the dominant trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs and the ability of tree species to become established. Plant associations are used as indicators of environmental conditions such as temperature, moisture, light, etc.

**Pole Size Trees**

A tree 5 – 9" dbh.

**Pre-commercial Thin**

Reducing the number of live tree stems to allow increased growth and vigor for the remaining trees, where the average size of targeted trees for removal is not likely of sufficient value to pay the cost of logging and hauling.

### **Prescribed Fire**

Any fire ignited by management actions under certain pre-determined conditions to meet specific objectives related to hazardous fuels reduction or habitat improvement. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and NEPA requirements must be met prior to ignition. Prescribed fires are ignited and managed within a "window" (see "Prescription" below) of very specific conditions including winds, temperatures, humidity, and other factors specified in the burn plan.

### **Prescription (fire)**

Measurable criteria that define conditions under which a prescribed fire may be ignited, which also guide selection of appropriate management responses and indicate other required actions. Prescription criteria may include safety, economic factors, air quality, public health, and other environmental, geographic, administrative, social, or legal considerations.

### **Prescription (silviculture)**

Either a general term used to describe a set of vegetation management activities (i.e. irregular shelterwood harvest or aspen release) ; or a site specific document, prepared by a certified silviculturist, where the stand is described; the specific management and silvicultural objectives are outlined; guidelines for identifying trees to be harvested are provided; and post-sale activities are listed.

### **Productivity**

The capacity of NFS lands and their ecological systems to provide the various renewable resources in certain amounts in perpetuity. Productivity is an ecological term, not an economic term.

### **Project**

An organized effort to achieve an outcome on NFS lands identified by location, tasks, outputs, effects, times, and responsibilities for execution.

### **Proposed Species**

Any species of fish, wildlife, or plants that is proposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the National Marine Fisheries Service in the Federal Register to be listed under Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act.

### **Range allotment**

A parcel of ground leased to livestock producers (permit holders or "Permittees") by the Forest Service.

### **Ranger District**

The administrative sub-unit of a national forest, supervised by a District Ranger who reports directly to a Forest Supervisor.

### **Reach**

A linear segment of a stream.

### **Recovery**

With respect to threatened or endangered species: The improvement in the status of a listed species to the point at which listing as federally endangered or threatened is no longer appropriate.

### **Recreation Opportunity**

An opportunity to participate in a specific recreation activity in a particular recreation setting to enjoy desired recreation experiences and other benefits that accrue. Recreation opportunities include non-motorized, motorized, developed, and dispersed recreation on land, water, and in the air.

### **Recreation Setting**

The social, managerial, and physical attributes of a place that, when combined, provide a distinct set of recreation opportunities. The Forest Service uses the recreation opportunity spectrum to define recreation settings and categorize them into six distinct classes: primitive, semi-primitive non-motorized, semi-primitive motorized, roaded natural, rural, and urban.

### **Regeneration**

The establishment of new seedlings in response to timber management or disturbance.

### **Regional Forester**

The official of the US Forest Service responsible for administering an entire region of the Forest Service.

### **Rehabilitation**

Commonly referred to as "rehab," the work necessary to repair damage or disturbance caused by wildland fire or suppression activities. Often includes restoration of firelines or dozer work, and projects such as erosion control, installation of water bars or culverts, re-seeding or other rehab of fire-damaged areas.

### **Resilience**

- 1). Resilience is defined as, "the capacity of an ecosystem to tolerate disturbance without collapsing into a qualitatively different state that is controlled by a different set of processes. A resilient ecosystem can withstand shocks and rebuild itself when necessary" (Walker et al. 2004)
- 2). The capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks.

### **Resources**

- 1) The natural resources of an area, such as timber, wildlife habitat, grasslands, watershed values, and recreational and other values.
- 2) Personnel, equipment, services, and supplies available, or potentially available, for assignment to fires or other incidents.

### **Resources Indicators and Measures**

Resource indicators are used in the analysis to measure change from existing condition for each of the alternatives. Resource indicators and measures are developed to address the purpose and need for the project, key issues identified during scoping, and resource effects tied to law, regulation, and policy. Not all resources will have ties to the purpose and need and key issues, but all resources will have indicators that appropriately and meaningfully measure the changes caused by the proposed action on the resource.

### **Responsible official**

The US Forest Service employee who has been delegated the authority to carry out a specific planning action.

### **Restoration**

The process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed. Ecological restoration focuses on reestablishing the composition, structure, pattern,

and ecological processes necessary to facilitate terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems sustainability, resilience, and health under current and future conditions.

### **Riparian**

Pertaining to areas of land directly influenced by water. Riparian areas usually have visible vegetative or physical characteristics reflecting this water influence. Three-dimensional ecotones of interaction that include terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that extend down into the groundwater, up above the canopy, outward across the floodplain, up to near slopes that drain to the water, laterally into the terrestrial ecosystem, and along the water course at variable widths.

### **Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCA)**

An area adjacent to a water course, wetland or pond where forest management is limited to practices that would be beneficial and would help meet riparian management objectives.

### **Riparian Management Objectives (RMOs)**

The objectives identified for a riparian area that guide any management activity within a riparian area.

### **Riparian Management Zone**

Portions of a watershed where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis, and for which plans include plan components to maintain or restore riparian functions and ecological functions.

### **Risk**

A combination of the likelihood that a negative outcome will occur and the severity of the subsequent negative consequences.

### **Road Maintenance Level**

A formerly established designation that describes the intensity of maintenance necessary for the planned operation of a road.

- Maintenance Level 1: This level is assigned to intermittent service roads during the time management direction requires that the road be closed or otherwise blocked to traffic. Basic custodial maintenance is performed to protect the road investment and to keep damage to adjacent resources to an acceptable level. Drainage facilities and runoff patterns are maintained.
- Maintenance Level 2: This level is assigned where management direction requires that the road be open for limited passage of traffic. Traffic is normally minor, usually consisting of one or a combination of administrative, permitted, dispersed recreation, or other specialized uses. Log haul may occur at this level. Roads in this maintenance level are normally characterized as single lane, primitive type facilities intended for use by high clearance vehicles. Passenger car traffic is not a consideration.
- Maintenance Level 3: This level is assigned where management direction requires the road to be open and maintained for safe travel by a prudent driver in a passenger car. Traffic volumes are minor to moderate; however, user comfort and convenience is not considered a priority. Roads at this maintenance level are normally characterized as low speed, single lane with turnouts and spot surfacing. Some roads may be fully surfaced with either native or processed material. The functional classification of these roads is normally local or minor collector.

### **Runoff**

The portion of precipitation that flows over the land surface or in open channels.

### **Rural**

Heavy modification.

**Sanitation**

Harvesting or removing trees with the intent to reduce or eliminate root disease and dwarf mistletoe infestations and their potential to spread.

**Sapling**

A tree less than 5 inches in dbh.

**Scenic Character**

A combination of the physical, biological, and cultural images that gives an area its scenic identify and contributes to its sense of place. Scenic character provides a frame of reference from which to determine scenic attractiveness and measure scenic integrity.

**Security Habitat**

Areas that are away from the influence of open roads, trails, and/or human disturbance.

**Sediment**

Material, both mineral and organic, that is in suspension, is being transported, or has been moved from its site of origin by water, wind, ice or mass wasting and has come to rest on the earth's surface.

**Sedimentation**

The tendency for particles in suspension to settle out of the fluid in which they are entrained, and come to rest against a barrier.

**Seral**

A biotic community that is a developmental, transitory stage in an ecological succession.

**Seral Species**

A species associated with a stage (sere) in the development of a biotic community.

**Shelterwood**

A timber harvest prescription that retains ten to seventeen trees of commercial size per acre.

**Site Preparation**

Activities applied to a stand to enhance site establishment of tree species that include but are not limited to felling small trees, underburning and herbicide treatment that removes vegetative competition and/or exposes mineral soil to facilitate natural seeding or planting

**Skyline**

**A harvest system using steel cable to bring logs to the road using a tower and winches.**

**Slash**

Debris left after logging (commercial harvest), pruning, thinning, or brush cutting; can include logs, chips, bark, branches, stumps and broken understory trees or brush.

**Small Sized Trees**

A tree between 10 – 15 inches dbh.

**Smoke Management**

Application of fire intensities and meteorological processes to minimize degradation of air quality during prescribed fires.

**Snag**

A standing dead tree or part of a dead tree from which at least the smaller branches have fallen.

**Soil Compaction**

A reduction of soil volume, which results in alteration of soil chemical, physical and biological properties and qualities.

**Stand**

A stand is a spatially continuous group of trees and associated vegetation having similar structures and growing under similar soil and climatic conditions. (Oliver & Larson, 1996)

### **Stand Development**

Is the part of stand dynamics concerned with changes in stand structure over time. (Oliver, 1996)

### **Stand Initiation**

Growing space is reoccupied following a stand replacing disturbance. Description: One canopy stratum (may be broken or continuous). One cohort of seedlings or saplings; grass, forbs, and shrubs may be present.

### **Stem Exclusion Closed Canopy**

New individuals are excluded through light or underground competition. Description: Continuous closed canopy, usually one cohort; poles, small or medium trees present. Suppressed trees, grasses, shrubs, and forbs may be absent in some cover types.

### **Stem Exclusion Open Canopy**

Underground competition limits establishment of new individuals. Description: One broken canopy stratum which included poles or small trees; grasses, shrubs, or forbs may also be present.

### **Stocking**

A description of the number of trees, basal area, or volume per acre in a forest stand compared with a desired level for balanced health and growth. Most often used in comparative expressions, such as well-stocked, poorly stocked, or overstocked

### **Stressors**

Factors that may directly or indirectly degrade or impair ecosystem composition, structure, or ecological process in a manner that may impair its ecological integrity such as an invasive species, loss of connectivity, or the disruption of a natural disturbance regime.

### **Structural Class or Stand Structure**

A classification of stand structures based on stand development that accounted for disturbance regimes typical of the inland northwest. Stratifying a landscape into these process-based structure classes allows subsequent analysis of landscape pattern and ecological processes, i.e. disturbance and succession.

### **Structure**

The physical arrangement in space of water, nutrients, and species, that makes up the ecosystem.

### **Successional Stage**

A stage or recognizable condition of a plant community that occurs during its development from bare ground to climax.

### **Suppression**

All the work of extinguishing or containing a fire, beginning with its discovery.

### **Surface Fuels**

Loose litter on the soil surface, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches that have not yet decayed; also grasses, forbs, low and medium shrubs, tree seedlings, heavier branch wood, downed logs, and stumps interspersed with or partially replacing the litter.

### **Sustainability**

1) The capability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Ecological sustainability refers to the capability of society to produce and consume or otherwise benefit from goods and services including contributions to jobs and market and non-market benefits; and social sustainability refers to the capability of society to support the network of relationships, traditions, culture, and activities that connect people to the land and to one another, and support vibrant communities. Sustainability is composed of desirable social, economic, and ecological conditions or trends interacting at varying spatial and temporal scales, embodying the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield. Ecological sustainability refers to the capability of ecosystems to meet their needs.

2) Meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainability is composed of desirable social, economic, and ecological conditions or trends interacting at varying spatial and temporal scales, embodying the principles of multiple-use and sustained yield.

### **Sustainable Recreation**

The set of recreation settings and opportunities on the National Forest System that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable for the present and future generations.

### **System Road**

A road wholly or partly within, or adjacent to, and serving National Forest System land and necessary for the protection, administration and use of the National Forest System and the use and development of its resources.

### **System Trail**

A National Forest System trail that is open to public travel and has been approved for inclusion in the National Forest Trail System.

### **Temporary Road or Trail**

A road or trail necessary for emergency operations or authorized by contract, permit, lease, or other written authorization that is not a forest road or a forest trail and that is not included in a forest transportation atlas (36 CFR 212.1). Temporary Roads would be constructed to the minimum standards necessary to access units for harvest activities while still providing adequate resource protection. These roads would be decommissioned following harvest activities and the ground put back into productive use.

### **Timber Harvest**

The removal of trees for wood fiber use and other multiple-use purposes.

### **Timber Production**

The purposeful growing, tending, harvesting, and regeneration of regulated crops of trees to be cut into logs, bolts, or other round sections for industrial or consumer use.

### **Timber Stand Improvement (TSI)**

Measures such as thinning, pruning, release cutting, prescribed fire, girdling, weeding, or poisoning of unwanted trees aimed at improving growing conditions for the remaining trees.

### **Turbidity**

The cloudiness or haziness of a fluid caused by individual particles (suspended solids) that are generally invisible to the naked eye, similar to smoke in air. The measurement of turbidity is a key test of water quality.

### **Unauthorized Road or Trail**

A road or trail that is not a forest road or trail or a temporary road or trail that is not included in a forest transportation atlas (36 CFR 212.1). Often, these roads were originally part of the

National Forest Road System constructed for access to timber sale areas as part of timber sale contract work. The roads may or may not have been planned for closure or decommissioning after use. Some of these roads may have been reconstructed or opened since their initial construction to use for project access (prescribed burning, wildfire suppression, silvicultural treatments, etc.) or illegally opened for various purposes by the public (firewood, hunting, etc.).

**Uncharacteristic fire behavior**

Fire frequency and effects in a given landscape that are departed from the historical natural fire regime's range for that landscape (Hardy et al. 1998).

**Uncontrolled Fire**

Any fire which threatens life, property, or natural resources.

**Underburn**

A fire that consumes surface fuels, from few to most shrubs, and causes limited mortality to medium and large diameter trees.

**Understory Re-initiation**

Initiation of new cohort as older cohort occupies less than full growing space. Description: Broken overstory canopy with formation of understory stratum; two or more cohorts. Overstory may be poles or larger trees; understory is seedling, saplings, grasses, forbs, or shrubs.

**Unit**

The area of a stand prescribed for treatment, whether commercial, non-commercial or both.

**Urban**

High degree of modification.

**Variable Retention**

Variable retention is a relatively new silvicultural system that retains forest structural elements for at least one rotation (when the stand is once again regenerated) in order to preserve environmental values associated with structural complex forests (Franklin. 1997).

**Viable Population**

The ability of a population to maintain sufficient size so that it persists over time in spite of normal fluctuation in numbers; usually expressed as a probability of maintaining a specific population for a specified period. A population of a species that continues to persist over the long-term with sufficient distribution to be resilient and adaptable to stressors and likely future environments.

**Watershed**

An area of land where surface water from rain and melting snow or ice converges to a single point, usually the exit of the basin, where the waters join another waterbody. Based on the Hydrologic Unit Code, which is a hierarchical sequence of numbers used by the United States Geological Survey to identify hydrological features, a watershed is in the context with 1st Region, 2nd Subregion, 3rd Basin, 4th Subbasin, 5th Watershed and 6th subwatershed.

**Watershed Condition**

The state of a watershed based on physical and biogeochemical characteristics and processes.

**Well Distributed**

A geographic distribution of habitats that maintains a population throughout a planning area and allows for interaction of individuals through periodic interbreeding and colonization of unoccupied habitats.

**Whip felling**



Post-harvest fuels treatment felling all remaining diseased, damaged, or suppressed conifers eight inches dbh and smaller.

**Windthrow**

When all or large portions of trees are blown down by wind, often in conjunction with rain, snow or icing events.

**Wildland Fire**

Any non-structure fire, other than prescribed fire, that occurs in a wildland area.

**Wilderness**

Any area of land designated by Congress as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System that was established in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-

1136).**Wildland/Urban Interface (WUI)**

The line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. Often incorrectly referred to as the "interzone" or "urban/wildland interface."

**Windthrow**

When all or large portions of trees are blown down by wind, often in conjunction with rain, snow, or icing events.

**Winter Logging**

During winter logging, snow is typically present and the ground is frozen so as to reduce impacts to soils and understory plants. Winter logging refers to the condition described, not a specific date.

**Young Forest Multistory**

Two or more cohorts present through establishment after periodic disturbances including harvest events. Description: Multi-aged (multi-cohort) stand with an assortment of tree sizes and canopy strata present but very large trees absent. Grasses, forbs, and shrubs may be present.