



NEWS RELEASE

United States
Department of Agriculture

Forest Service
Nez Perce National Forest
Route 2, Box 475
Grangeville, Idaho 83530

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On February 11, 2003, Nez Perce National Forest Supervisor Bruce Bernhardt made the decision to proceed with the Meadow Face Stewardship Pilot Project. Supervisor Bernhardt selected Alternative 4B, as described in the Meadow Face Stewardship Pilot Project Final Environmental Impact Statement, with modifications. This project implements a suite of management activities designed to restore aquatic and vegetative conditions in the Meadow Creek watershed tributary to the South Fork Clearwater River. The following activities will be implemented with this decision:

- Maintain 102 miles of road (12.5 deferred maintenance)
- Construct 12 miles of temporary road
- Decommission 91 miles of road
- Convert 5 miles of road to trail
- Construct 0.1 mile of new OHV trail
- Maintain dispersed campsites where roads are decommissioned
- Rehabilitate about 3 miles of stream
- Harvest timber up to 3735 acres
- Prescribe burn 7100 acres
- Replace 45 culverts
- Apply dust abatement to 5 miles of road
- Treat 200 acres of noxious weeds
- Restore native plant species in McComas Meadows
- Restore 550 acres of compacted soils
- Stabilize the Meadow Creek Slide
- Install improvements at McComas/ Blacktail Junction, Camp 58, and Quartz Ridge dispersed recreation sites
- Three site specific amendments of the Nez Perce Forest Plan

This project is the result of intense collaborative efforts undertaken by folks representing various interests. In September 1999, an independent group, Stewards of the Nez Perce Forest, formed to work with the Forest Service on this project. Citizens of local communities who promoted and sought involvement in stewardship projects initiated the group. The interests represented by members of the Stewards of the Nez Perce Forest included; local business, local landowners, environmental, big-game habitat and hunting and fishing, off-road vehicle use and general recreation, timber (logging and milling), grazing, heritage resources, and tribal concerns. The Stewards used a collaborative, consensus building approach early on in the planning process to develop project recommendations submitted to the Forest Service in July 2000. The Forest Service took the bulk of the recommendations forward as a proposed action and analyzed effects and alternatives under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The selected alternative provides for long-term watershed ecosystem management and maintenance, transportation and access systems, Endangered Species Act listed aquatic and terrestrial species habitat improvements, and soil and water resource restoration. This project implements a variety of management activities designed to restore aquatic and vegetative conditions in the watershed due to past management

activities. Currently, streams have greater sediment, higher temperatures and less habitat diversity than they did historically. Forest vegetation is denser and the species composition has changed from fairly open ponderosa pine to heavier concentration of fir species at the lower elevations. The age and size class distribution has also changed from historic conditions. These changes in vegetation have resulted in greater fire risk, increased susceptibility to insects and disease and less resistance to disturbance.

A small portion of the project will be implemented using stewardship contracting authority as authorized by Section 347 of the 1999 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriation Act of 1999. This authority would allow agency pilot projects, such as Meadow Face, to test concepts such as trading goods for services, designation by description, retention of receipts, best value contracting, multi-year contracting, less than free and open competition, and non-USDA administration of timber sales. This stewardship contract will allow the Forest Service to test 6 out of the 7 concepts, making it a valid pilot project. While the stewardship pilot project will implement only a subset of the identified project activities, other sources of funding and normal contracting methods, including timber sales, will be used to implement the remainder of the project activities over the six to ten year implementation period.

The Meadow Face Stewardship Pilot Project Record of Decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Appeals must be postmarked or received within 45 days of the date of publication of the legal notice. The anticipated date of publication of the legal notice in the Lewiston Tribune is February 22, 2003.

Appeals must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 215.14.

Copies of the Record of Decision will be mailed to those people who submitted comments during the analysis of the Meadow Face Stewardship Pilot Project. Additional copies are available upon request at the Clearwater Ranger District, P.O. Box 475, Grangeville, Idaho 83530.

For more information on this project, contact Darcy Pederson, District Ranger, or David Harper, Project Coordinator, at (208) 983-1963.

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