
File Code: 1570; 1950
Date: August 10, 2020

Tom Partin
AFRC
Sent via email to: tpartin@amforest.org

Dear Mr. Partin:

This letter is in response to your objection (#20-06-21-0001-218(B)) to the draft Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Boulder Park Ecological Restoration Project, Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger District, Colville National Forest. I have read your objection and reviewed the project record, the draft DN/FONSI, and the final Environmental Assessment (EA). My review of your objection was conducted in accordance with the regulation at 36 CFR 218 (2013).

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

On April 8, 2020 a legal notice was published in the Newport Miner announcing the public notice of a draft DN/FONSI and objection period for Boulder Park Ecological Restoration Project EA. In the draft DN/FONSI, the Responsible Official selected the Proposed Action, which authorizes the following:

- Approximately 9,010 acres of vegetation and fuels treatments;
- Eleven miles of new road construction;
- Twelve miles of temporary road construction;
- About 25 miles of road closures and decommissioning;
- Reconstruction or replacement of three (or more) bridges and trail reroute on the Batey-Bould Motorcycle Trail, and;
- Aquatic and terrestrial habitat improvement projects, including removal or replacement of 26 culverts and restoration of instream channel function on 15 acres.

OBJECTION ISSUE DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Specific to your objection, you raised issues regarding the need for additional treatment and concern over road decommissioning. I conducted my review of the record, final EA, and draft DN/FONSI. I found that no remedies or resolutions suggested would resolve the objections; therefore, the project will proceed as planned. Based on my review, I conclude the following:

- The draft decision clearly describes the actions to be taken in sufficient detail that the reader can easily understand what will occur as a result of the draft decision.
- The draft decision considered a range of alternatives that was adequate to respond to the Purpose and Need. The purpose and need and alternatives considered in the final EA



- reflect a reasonable range of alternatives, consistent with law, regulation and policy.
- The draft decision is consistent with or moves toward attainment of Forest Plan standards and guidelines.
 - The draft decision is consistent with policy, regulation, law, direction, and the final EA contains adequate evidence to support the decision. The record and final decision contain site-specific documentation regarding resource conditions, and the Responsible Official's draft decision document is based on the record and reflects a reasonable conclusion.

This concludes my written review of the project. By copy of this letter and the enclosed response document, the Responsible Official may sign the decision, then notify interested and affected persons in accordance with the regulation at 36 CFR 218.12 and 36 CFR 220.7(d). This written response is the final administrative review by the Forest Service or the Department of Agriculture [36 CFR 218.11(b)(2)].

Sincerely,

RODNEY D. SMOLDON
Forest Supervisor
Objection Reviewing Officer

Enclosure

cc: Carin Vadala; Christy Merritt; Marcy Rumelhart; Blake Pinter; Theresa Mathis; Debbie Anderson; Heidi Hopkins

**Boulder Park Ecological Restoration Project
Environmental Assessment (EA)
Newport Ranger District
Colville National Forest
Objection Statements and Responses
August 2020**

Objector	Objection Number
American Forest Resource Council (AFRC)	#20-06-21-0001-218(B)
Sierra Club Upper Columbia River Group, Alliance for the Wild Rockies and Paul Sieracki (SC)	#20-06-21-0002-218(B)

Violations of NEPA

Overview and Objector’s Suggested Remedies: These objection issues focus on the concern that the project violates the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Suggested remedy is to select the no action alternative or prepare an EIS that addresses the issues they raised in their objection.

Objector Statement #1: Objector states that the District failed to address substantive issues about the project’s design that they raised during the comment periods, stating that they believe that their comments were “entirely ignored” because the proposed action was only minimally changed after scoping, and that their citing of peer-reviewed literature was “met mostly with stony silence” and was not addressed. SC at 1-3. Objectors also note that the revised EA added 13 pages of text, but that the agency did not provide another opportunity to comment on this EA, which was prepared under a new Forest Plan, which leaves them to believe that this EA bolsters the agency’s predetermined decision and doesn’t respond to their objection issues raised in 2019. SC at 2.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official considered the objector’s scoping comments and subsequently did make changes to the proposed action based on those comments. I find that the draft Decision Notice (DN) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) appropriately describe this consideration of comments and the incremental changes that resulted. I find that the EA and supporting documentation used best available science and cited it appropriately.

The regulation 36 CFR 220.7(b)(2)(iii) states that “(i) The description of the proposal and alternative(s) may include a brief description of modifications and incremental design features developed through the analysis process to develop the range of alternatives considered.” The documentation of these incremental changes to a proposed action or alternatives may be incorporated by reference in accordance with 40 CFR 1502.21.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.4(h) states that “Material may be incorporated by reference into any environmental or decision document. This material must be reasonably available to the public and its contents briefly described in the environmental or decision document. (40 CFR 1502.21).”

The regulation at 36 CFR 218.2 defines comments as – “Specific written comments. Written comments are those submitted to the responsible official or designee during a designated opportunity for public participation (§ 218.5(a)) provided for a proposed project. Written comments can include submission of transcriptions or other notes from oral statements or presentation. For the purposes of this rule, specific

written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.”

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 discusses best available science and professional integrity and states that “Agencies shall insure that professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussion and analyses in environmental impact statements.”

The draft DN and FONSI at 1 and 7-8 describe that after initiating a 45-day objection period in August 2019, the Responsible Official made the determination to withdraw the draft decision notice so that the interdisciplinary team could improve their analysis considering no action, include more detail in the wildlife analysis, and ensure consistency with the revised Forest Plan which was signed at nearly the same time. The environmental assessment, maps and the draft decision notice were updated to reflect those changes. Draft DN and FONSI at 1. The associated incremental changes are described at draft DN FONSI at 7-8.

The response to Objection Statement #36 addresses in detail how the Forest integrated the 2019 revised Forest Plan into the decision-making process.

The Forest addressed the objectors’ concerns about the project’s design in the DN and FONSI Appendix B - Response To Public Comments. The interdisciplinary team considered a no new roads alternative in response to public scoping comments. EA at 4; draft DN and FONSI at 7. Meeting notes and public comments were considered by the responsible official and interdisciplinary team (IDT) and used to develop this proposed action. EA at 5.

The individual resource reports from the 2019 EA contain the environmental consequences of no action, this information was available for comment. The no action information was brought into the 2020 EA from the resource reports in order to provide clarity to the EA. The EA incorporated the reports by reference. Background information supporting the need for the proposal can be found in specialist reports which are incorporated by reference and available in the project file at the Newport-Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts office in Newport, WA, and are available on the website at the following location: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=52276>. See the Soil Resource Report at 10-11, and 20; Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report (Final) at 22 and 40; Wildlife Biological Evaluation at 6, 26, 27, 32, 38, and 39; Wildlife Specialist Report (Final) at 2, 9, 25, and 39; and Recreation Resource Report at 7. The draft Decision Notice states that the responsible official withdrew the draft decision and directed the team to review and improve clarify on forest plan consistency and the effect of not taking action through the comparison with the proposed action. Draft DN at 1, and 8.

The project responded to concerns brought up through scoping and comments in Appendix B Response to Comments, which provides information where research and species-specific fact sheets for wildlife can be found, as well as the references to cited document. Several responses contain citations of literature used in the response. See the Response to Comments at 22, 25, 28, 30-32, 62-63, 69, 79, and 103. The Literature Cited provides a list of references cited throughout the EA and specialist reports.

Objector Statement #2: Objector states the information presented in the proposed action is insufficient to prepare substantive comments, that the “scoping notice does not portray the existing condition of the various topics required to be addressed in the NEPA document, especially wildlife and old growth,” and also did not include adequate information on fish survey results or stand exam information. SC at 7.

Response: I find the District was not required to provide these items during scoping and instead provided the appropriate level of detail in the Environmental Assessment.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1501.7 states that “The process of scoping is an integral part of environmental analysis. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining the responsible official and lead cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons.”

Given scoping is guided to meet 40 CFR 1501.7, these items (existing condition of the various topics, especially wildlife and old growth) are not required in scoping. However, numerous documents were available to the public when the scoping period was initiated. Pre-scoping information included preliminary proposed units, draft silviculture project information, maps including wildlife and old growth areas, and stand exam information. See the project website at Pre-scoping tab. Additionally, the scoping information contained the proposed action and resource maps (Draft Aquatics Map, Draft Wildlife Map, and Draft Silviculture Treatments Map).

Objector Statement #3: Objector states that the EA violates the NEPA because it does not contain an analysis or comparison of alternatives, as required by 40 CFR 1508.9. SC at 4-5. Objector elaborates, stating that the District is “not free to make up regulations that violate NEPA” by not analyzing the no-action alternative and that the District failed to contrast the impacts of the proposed action with the current/expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented. SC at 4-5. Objector notes that the revised EA mentions “no action” 41 times, but that the public was not allowed to comment on the comparison, as allowed by NEPA. SC at 5.

Response: I find that the EA contains adequate comparison of no action.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7 states that “The EA may document consideration of a no-action alternative through the effects analysis by contrasting the impacts of the proposed action and any alternative(s) with the current condition and expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented.”

The response to Objection Statements #1 and #4 also address the no action alternative.

The EA states “The effects of not taking action are disclosed as a comparison with effects from the proposed action under each resource in the environmental effects section.” EA at 4. The EA contains tables that compare existing and estimated future conditions for no action in Table 8. EA at 13. Forested Vegetation addresses no action in relation to forest plan desired conditions for vegetation. EA at 19. Fire and Fuels compare the proposed action and no action in table 12. EA at 19-20. Resiliency to Wildlife address no action. EA at 21. No action with regard to fish is addressed in the EA at 26, while Table 14 is a comparison of project alternatives to wildlife issues or topics. EA at 27-24. Tables 15-17 summarize of effect to wildlife, under no action. EA at 29-46. Other resources documented the comparison of action to no action throughout the EA including: Botany - EA at 48; Hydrology - EA at 50; Grazing EA at 52 – 53; Sediment - EA at 53; Riparian Conditions - EA at 56; Fish Habitat Conditions - EA at 59; Soils - EA at 64; Heritage - EA at 65; and Response to Comments Table at 60.

As for the assertion that the public was not allowed to comment on the comparison of action to no action, the objection regulations specifically allow for objections based on new information (36 CFR 218.8(d)(6)); since the comparison of action to no action was “new information” the objector was allowed to and did object on that issue.

Objector Statement #4: Objector states that the EA still doesn't contain an analysis of direct, indirect or cumulative effects of no action, and that the Forest "basically inserted statements to the effect that, under the no action alternative, the actions that would have occurred under the action alternative would not have occurred" noting that "this is not an analysis." SC at 5.

Response: I find that the EA contains adequate analysis of direct, and indirect cumulative effects.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7 states that "The EA may document consideration of a no-action alternative through the effects analysis by contrasting the impacts of the proposed action and any alternative(s) with the current condition and expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented." The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) states that "May discuss the direct, indirect, and cumulative impact(s) of the proposed action and any alternatives together in a comparative description or describe the impacts of each alternative separately."

The EA contains more than just statements that the actions would not occur under no action. For example, under Forest Vegetation, it states the following: "If no action occurs, the project would move away from forest plan desired conditions for vegetation. Stand vigor as related to forest health and structure would decrease due to overstocking and potential stand-replacement fires. Structural stages or trending of stages toward HRV conditions would not occur because conversion of stands to shade tolerant species would continue (assuming little to no disturbance), also increasing the future hazard of insects, diseases, and stand-replacement fires. Some trending toward HRV may take place over the long term due to tree mortality from stand density disturbances such as fire, insects, and disease. Hardwoods would continue to be outcompeted by conifers and their abundance would decrease across the landscape. The wildland urban interface would continue to be at risk of insect, disease, or wildfire spread. The economic value of the green, dead and dying trees would not be captured. There would be no timber generated funding to help the local economy. Though the national forest does not necessarily plan treatments based on economic value, there would be no additional funding for stand improvement, wildlife, fisheries, recreation, and fuel reduction projects." EA at 19. This fully complies with the requirement to contrast the impacts of the proposed action with the current and expected future condition. There are numerous examples of this throughout the EA including for Fuels and Fire (EA at 21-22); Fish (EA at 26); Wildlife (EA at 29-46 – the table clearly displays and discusses what would happen if no action were taken); Invasive Plants (EA at 48); Watershed Function (EA at 50); Stream Temperature (EA at 52); Bacteria and Sediment (EA at 53); Streamflow (EA at 55); Riparian Condition (EA at 57 and 59); Soils (EA at 64); Heritage (EA at 65); and Economics (EA at 67).

Please see the responses to Objector Statements #1 and #3, which also address the no-action alternative.

Objector Statement #5: Objector states that the EA fails to include an adequate range of alternatives, and that their request for consideration of an alternative with features they presented was "ignored and dismissed without sufficient reasoning or discussion" in violation of NEPA. SC at 10. Objector suggests an alternative that focuses on road removal, introduction of fire in appropriate areas, sequestration of carbon, retention of unroaded areas, and preservation of existing goshawk post fledging areas, endangered species and subalpine habitats. SC at 10-14.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official considered an appropriate range of alternatives, including those suggested by the objector.

The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(2) states that an EA “shall briefly describe the proposed action and alternative(s) that meet the need for action. No specific number of alternates is required or prescribed.”

The EA at 4-5 discusses alternatives considered but eliminated from detailed study. The EA describes that the No New Roads Alternative would differ from the proposed action by having no new road construction or temporary road construction. It was determined that without the addition of some new and temporary roads the proposed restoration treatments would not take place. While this alternative would respond to some needs, the EA stated that it would not meet the purpose and need of increasing resiliency to disturbances or improving watershed function and aquatic systems and was not analyzed in detail.

The interdisciplinary team considered a no new roads alternative in response to public scoping comments. EA at 4, and draft DN and FONSI at 7. Comments that suggested other alternatives were considered in draft DN and FONSI Appendix B - Response To Public Comments at Comment #14, 42, 65, 102, 113, and 132.

Objector Statement #6: Objector states that the EA fails to analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of the existing condition of and proposed reconstruction/rerouting of the Batey-Bould Motorcycle Trail, leaving that portion of the purpose and need without justification. SC at 5.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official...

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA at 7 documents that for the Batey-Bould Motorcycle Trail, the proposed action would “Reconstruct or replace 3 or more bridges as safety concerns are identified (e.g., rotting structures, stream blockages) following aquatic, cultural and botany clearances.” In addition, “Sections of trail exhibiting unacceptable resource impacts (e.g., deep rutting, unauthorized reroutes) may be rerouted up to 75 feet from the existing trail following cultural and botany clearances and when within the RMA, hydrology clearance. The abandoned section of the trail would be restored to native forest productivity.”

The EA at 8-10 documents design elements that would be implemented in order to minimize impacts of and to the trail, while the EA at 69 discusses the potential for impacts to the trail. Aquatic impacts are addressed in the Aquatics Report at 34 and 40, while the Soil Report at 15 (erosion) and 17/18 (soil organic matter and watershed function) documents potential impacts. The Heritage Report documented “No Historic Properties Effected” in the Project File.

DN Appendix B at B-72 to B-73 documents that “As noted, we have documented safety concerns to users of the Batey-Bould Motorcycle Trail due to rutting of the trail tread. The Boulder Park project would address these issues as well as local trail impacts (sedimentation, compaction) to wet areas and stream crossings. All work would take place within or directly adjacent to the existing trail tread. We

expect the proposed trail improvements would reduce the potential for soil movement off-trail and improve local stream water quality.”

Objector Statement #7: Objector states that there are “are numerous violations of NEPA especially the lack of cumulative effects analysis and erroneous application of research paper recommendations.” SC at 6.

Response: I find that the EA contains the requisite analysis of direct, and indirect cumulative effects. I find the EA and DN Appendix A utilized the best available science in analysis in compliance with 40 CFR 1502.24.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) states that “May discuss the direct, indirect, and cumulative impact(s) of the proposed action and any alternatives together in a comparative description or describe the impacts of each alternative separately.” The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 discusses best available science and professional integrity and states that “Agencies shall insure that professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussion and analyses in environmental impact statements.”

Cumulative effects are discussed by each resource throughout the EA at 22-23, 26-27, 29, 50, 52-54, 60, 64-67, and 70. EA section 3.4 Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions discloses other known actions within or near the project area. EA at 70-71. Each effects analysis summarized in either the specialist reports or the EA discusses cumulative effects; none were found to be significant. Draft DN/FONSI at 12.

The draft DN and FONSI Appendix B Response to Comments provides information where research and species-specific fact sheets for wildlife can be found as well as the references cited document. Several responses contain citations of literature used in the response. Response to Comments at 22, 25, 28, 30-32, 62-63, 69, 79, and 103. The Literature Cited provides a list of references cited throughout the EA and specialist reports.

Objector Statement #8: Objector states that the desired conditions documented in the EA are “illegitimate” because the EA “failed to clarify the source of the EA’s desired conditions,” failed to define the term “resilience” and “forest health,” and adopted desired conditions as “management direction in the absence of NEPA procedures, which is illegal.” SC at 14-18. Objector also questions the science behind the desired condition. SC at 14-18. Objector requests that the District “disclose the metrics the agency uses to measure resiliency, so that objective measures of resiliency can be applied by a scientist or any rational person to the Boulder Park project area now, immediately after the project is completed, and at 10-year intervals hence.” SC at 18.

Response: I find the Responsible Official determined this project is compliant with pertinent Forest Plan direction and is not in violation of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) which requires that all projects implemented on National Forest System lands comply with approved Forest Plans (16 USC § 1604). I also find the Responsible Official documented consistency with FSH 1909.15 Chapter 10 with regard to measures in the EA being understandable, quantifiable and sensitive.

Desired future conditions for the Boulder Park Project come from the Colville National Forest Land Management Plan (Forest Plan) and are incorporated by reference as part of the purpose and need in the Draft DN and FONSI at 1 and 2. The Forest Plan is the guiding management direction for the Boulder Park Project, EA at 3.

Resilience is defined in the Colville National Forest Revised Management Plan Final Programmatic EIS Volume II at 888 as “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 (FSM 2000, Chapter 2020).” The EA at 21 further defines resilience as the ability of a forest or ecosystem to function after a fire that is characteristic of the local fire regime occurs. Resiliency to wildfire is a resource element analyzed in the Boulder Park project that has Acres of Fuels Treatment as its measure. EA at 20.

Forest Health is defined in the Colville National Forest Revised Management Plan Final Programmatic EIS Volume II at 874 as “The perceived condition of a forest derived from concerns about such factors as its age, structure, composition, function, vigor, presence of unusual levels of insects and disease, and resilience to disturbance. Perception and interpretation of forest health are influenced by individual and cultural viewpoints, land management objectives, spatial and temporal scales, the relative health in stands that comprise the forest, and the appearance of the forest at a point in time.”

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Violations of NEPA: The project complied with law, regulation and policy; no remedies or resolution is needed.

Legitimacy of the Collaboration Process

Overview and Objector’s Suggested Remedies: This objection issue focuses on the concern that the collaboration process used by the District was not truly collaborative and was influenced by industry groups. Objector’s suggested remedy is to choose the no action alternative and to use a Science Consistency Review Group instead of a collaborative to guide the development of the proposed action.

Objector Statement #9: Objector believes that use of the collaborative prioritizes local special interests over the interests of the public and believes that the collaborative groups who participated in development of the proposed action do not subscribe to the collaborative, democratic principles written by Dukes and Firehock, 2001. SC at 7-8. Objector believes that this constitutes “collusion among special interest groups” and skews the proposed action toward logging and road building. SC at 8-9.

Response: I find the District appropriately conducted scoping, and it executed the comment period consistent with the regulation at 36 CFR 218.25. I find the District appropriately worked openly with the public, and a diverse group of entities provided extensive viewpoints on the proposed action.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1501.7 states that “the process of scoping is an integral part of environmental analysis. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining the responsible official and lead and cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons.”

The regulation at 40 CFR 1506.6, and 36 CFR 218.25 provides the requirements for public involvement. Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 Chapter 11 provides more information regarding Agency policy for scoping and public involvement procedures. The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA.

The draft DN and FONSI at 5-7 and EA at 4 summarizes the scoping, public involvement, consultation, and collaboration the Responsible Official conducted with the public, agencies, and Tribes. The EA at 72-73 describes entities contacted. The response to Objection Statement #1 describes the scoping period

and the use of the project website with which to share information. The project scoping and comment Period was executed in accordance with applicable regulations. Project Record at 15-Scoping; Project Record at 16-Comment Period.

The draft DN and FONSI at 1 and 7-8 describe that after initiating a 45-day objection period in August 2019, the Responsible Official made the determination to withdraw the draft decision notice so that the interdisciplinary team could improve their analysis considering no action, include more detail in the wildlife analysis, and ensure consistency with the revised Forest Plan which was signed at nearly the same time. The environmental assessment, maps and the draft decision notice were updated to reflect those changes. Draft DN and FONSI at 1. The associated incremental changes are described at draft DN FONSI at 7-8.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Legitimacy of the Collaborative Process: The District complied with the requirements of the regulations for scoping and comment, and collaborated with interested and affected agencies, persons and Tribes. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Inadequate Emphasis on Restoration

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedies: This objection issue focuses on the concern that the project is not a true restoration project. Suggested remedies include selecting the no action alternative or preparing an EIS that addresses the analytical and scientific issues they identified.

Objector Statement #10: Objector finds it "extremely offensive" that the District refers to "this massive timber sale proposal as "ecological restoration," believing that true restoration would prioritize activities that remove impediments to natural recovery. SC at 9-10. Objector also believes that the proposed project would cause stand-level simplification and would reduce a stand's suitability for ground/understory nesting songbirds. SC at 10.

Response: I find that the District appropriately framed the project with a detailed Purpose and Need. I find that the EA and referenced documentation addressed concerns regarding nesting songbirds.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(1) requires that an EA briefly describe the need for action. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. Forest Service policy at FSH 1909.15 Chapter 10 guides the bounding of the cumulative effects analysis.

The EA at 1-3 describes the Need or Action and the management direction that frames the project. The draft DN/FONSI at 3 and 4 describe that commercial harvest is just one element of the Boulder Park Project that includes a host of restorative treatments such as: fuels reduction to reduce fuel loading and reintroducing a disturbance regime similar to historic conditions to both inside and outside of harvest areas; non-commercial thinning of younger trees to improve growth, health and species composition; removing 25 miles of road from the transportation system and closing/stabilizing 12 miles of road to help restore ecological processes; creating coarse woody material in streams; removing or replacing 26 culverts for better fish passage; restoring instream channel function on 15 acres; and trail bridge improvement where stream blockages occur and restoration of damaged trail sections.

The Wildlife Report at 55 provides a summary of effects to habitats of surrogate and landbird focal species, including effects to ground and understory nesting birds from the alternatives. The proposed actions were found to be consistent with the conservation strategies for landbirds of concern for the Northern Rocky Mountain Bird Conservation Region Wildlife Report at 67.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Inadequate Emphasis on Restoration: I find that the EA adequately described the restoration components that are included in the proposed action and adequately addressed impacts to forest stands and birds. No resolution or remedy is needed.

Climate Change and Carbon Sequestration:

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedies: These objection issues focus on the concern that the EA failed to adequately address climate change. Suggested remedies include selecting the no action alternative or preparing an EIS that addresses the analytical and scientific issues they identified. Additionally, objector suggests revising the Forest Plan to take a hard look at the science of climate change and/or revives the EA for this to include an analysis that examines climate change in the context of project activities and desired conditions.

Objector Statement #11: Objector believes that the EA failed to provide adequate information on climate change effects on project area vegetation, failed to inform the public that climate change is bringing about changes to forest ecology, composition and structure, failed to consider the effects of climate change on achieving the desired conditions (which they believe will be unattainable/sustainable), and failed to provide/use credible science/analysis as to how desired conditions would be achieved in the face of changing climates. SC at 23-27.

Response: I find that the District provided adequate information on climate change within the Decision Notice and Project Record.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The Washington Office's January 13, 2009, Memo on "Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis" documents that when relevant, the analysis should document the project's effects on climate change and the effects of climate change on the project.

Potential effects to climate change were discussed in the draft DN Appendix A. The draft DN Appendix A at A-2 describes the potential effects of climate change within the project area, such as fires, insect and disease outbreaks, and droughts. The EA at 18-20 describes the current disturbance regime and how that may be affected by climate change. The proposed action addresses all of these issues by working toward restoring a more resilient forest (EA at 1) and the document discusses the move toward a more resilient forest with the proposed action throughout particularly EA at 21. This proposed action is consistent with options proposed by the IPCC for minimizing the impacts of climate change on forests, thus meeting objectives for adapting to climate change. DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2 (McKinley et al. 2011).

Objector Statement #12: Objector states that the EA "ignores scientific opinion on forest management's negative effects on carbon sequestration and that "best available science supports the proposition that forest policies must shift away from logging if a priority is carbon sequestration. Forests should be preserved indefinitely for their carbon storage value." Objector concludes that "the Forest Service

ignores best available science indicating prescribed fire, thinning and logging are actually cumulative with the dominant forces of increased heat, drought, and wildfire.” SC at 27-30.

Response: I find that carbon sequestration and climate change were adequately addressed and that the District complied with this regulation by completing a review of current research on climate change.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The Washington Office’s January 13, 2009 Memo on “Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis” documents that when relevant, the analysis should document the project’s effects on climate change and the effects of climate change on the project. The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 discusses best available science and professional integrity and states that “Agencies shall insure that professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussion and analyses in environmental impact statements.”

The potential adverse effects on carbon sequestration are summarized in draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-1 and, based on the small harvest area, the amount of basal area retained, and the amount of carbon stocks in the soil, it was determined that the impact of this project to forest carbon levels would be minimal. The commercial harvest proposed in this project will not result in a loss of forested land; instead, the thinned forests will maintain a vigorous condition that supports long-term carbon storage. EA at A-2.

The EA and DN Appendix A utilized the best available science in the analysis in compliance with 40 CFR 1502.24.

Objector Statement #13: Objector states that the EA and Forest Plan FEIS fail to reexamine the assumptions relating to timber suitability, historic range of variability (HRV), resilience and sustainability as a result of recent fires, past regeneration success/failures (especially with regard to restocking/reforestation post-fire), and climate-risk science. SC at 30.

Kevin/Josh Response: I find that the District adequately analyzed and addressed historic range of variability (HRV) as required by the Forest Plan. I find the EA adequately discusses restocking and monitoring as required by NFMA.

The regulation under 16 USC § 1604 National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that all projects implemented on national forest system lands comply with approved Forest Plans.

The Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 9 documents that commercial and non-commercial harvest treatments would only occur on lands suitable to timber production or areas where multi-use purposes are met, in compliance with Forest Plan standard FW-STD-VEG-03.

The historic range of variability (HRV) analysis in the EA at 12-17 analyzed and addressed HRV as required by the Forest Plan. Reexamination of the Forest Plan (including timber suitability) is beyond the scope of this project; thus addressing an HRV analysis outside the bounds of what the Forest Plan directs would be inappropriate under this project. The EA at 12 and 15 address restocking and monitoring as required by NFMA.

Objector Statement #14: Objector states that “assumptions of the EA and Forest Plan FEIS relating to desired conditions are incorrect. NEPA requires a “hard look” at the best available science relating to future concentrations of greenhouse gases and gathering climate risk as we move forward into an increasingly uncertain and uncharted climate future. This has not been done. The Forest Plan and Boulder Park EA do not include a legitimate climate-risk analysis.” SC at 30, 41, 43, 44.

Response: I find the District adequately addressed future concentration of greenhouse gases and climate risk.

The Washington Office’s January 13, 2009 Memo on “Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis” documents that when relevant, the analysis should document the project’s effects on climate change and the effects of climate change on the project.

Climate change considerations as directed were completed in draft DN and FONSI document at 8 and in Appendix A at 1-3. Appendix B, Response to Comments considered concerns related to climate change at Comment Nos. 18, 22, 41, 42, 62, 85, 87, 92, 114, 134, 163, 166, and 167.

The response to Objector Statement #13 addresses reexamination of the Forest Plan.

Objector Statement #15: Objector states that “the Forest Service fails to analyze an alternative projecting climate science into the forest’s future. It fails to adequately consider that the effects of climate risk represent a significant and eminent loss of forest resilience already, and growing risk into the “foreseeable future.”” Objector also asked that the District “Please develop an alternative reflective of supporting carbon storage, wildlife and fisheries, not converting native stands to industrial plantations like the current alternative is doing.” SC at 30.

Response: I find the District adequately analyzed and considered the effects of climate change risk in light of the Proposed Action and no action alternatives.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(2) states that an EA “shall briefly describe the proposed action and alternative(s) that meet the need for action. No specific number of alternates is required or prescribed.” The regulation at 40 CFR 1500.2(e) requires the use of the NEPA process to identify and assess the reasonable alternatives to proposed actions that will avoid or minimize adverse effects of these actions upon the quality of the human environment.

The response to Objector Statement #14 also addresses the regulation and analysis related to climate change considerations.

The EA at 1 describes the project’s need to improve project area resiliency to disturbance processes such as wildland fire, insects, and diseases. The Proposed Action was designed to meet this Need. EA at 5-8. Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2 states that “ [. . .] reducing stand density, one of the goals of this proposed action, is consistent with adaptation practices to increase resilience of forests to climate-related environmental changes (Joyce et al. 2014). This proposed action is consistent with options proposed by the IPCC for minimizing the impacts of climate change on forests, thus meeting objectives for both adapting to climate change and mitigating GHG emissions (McKinley et al. 2011).”

Appendix B, Response to Comments considered concerns related to climate change at Comment #18, 22, 41, 42, 62, 85, 87, 92, 114, 134, 163, 166, and 167. These responses direct readers to Resource

Specialist determinations that describe effects related to resiliency to disturbances, including those associated with climate change.

Objector Statement #16: Objector states that the “Forest Service fails to analyze and disclose conditions we can realistically expect as heat trapped by increasing greenhouse gas concentrations steadily tightens its grip—and impacts on forests accrue locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.” SC at 31.

Response: I find the District adequately addressed future concentration of greenhouse gases and climate risk. The response to Objector Statement #14 addresses the regulation and analysis related to climate change considerations.

Objector Statement #17: Objector states that the EA fails to analyze how proposed management actions would be affected by likely climate change scenarios, nor does it quantify all human-caused CO₂ emissions for all project activities and recreational uses/activities. EA at 31-33, 36 and 45. Objector states that the EA fails to disclose how climate change has affected ecological conditions in the project area, and analyze these conditions under climate change scenarios.” Objector also states that “there exists no temporal cumulative effects analysis of the Colville NF’s carbon sequestration.” SC at 31-33, and 45.

Response: I find that the Forest adequately analyzed risks associated with climate change. It appropriately considered the carbon stocks and emissions associated with the project.

The 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The Washington Office’s January 13, 2009 Memo on “Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis” documents that when relevant, the analysis should document the project’s effects on climate change and the effects of climate change on the project.

The draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-1 and A-3 describes project-level carbon stocks associated with the project activities, while the draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2 describes the potential effects of climate change, such as fires, insect and disease outbreaks, and droughts. The proposed action addresses all these issues by working toward restoring a more resilient forest. EA at 1. This proposed action is consistent with options proposed by the IPCC for minimizing the impacts of climate change on forests, thus meeting objectives for both adapting to climate change and mitigating GHG emissions. Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2. Appendix B Response to Comments considered concerns related to climate change at Comment #18, 22, 41, 42, 62, 85, 87, 92, 114, 134, 163, 166, and 167. These responses direct readers to Resource Specialist determinations that describe effects related to resiliency to disturbances including those associated with climate change.

Objector Statement #18: Objector states that the “best scientific information strongly suggests that management that involves removal of trees and other biomass increases atmospheric CO₂. The Boulder Park EA doesn’t state that simple fact. The Boulder Park EA fails to present any modeling of forest stands under different management scenarios. The FS should model the carbon flux over time for its proposed stand management scenarios and for the various types of vegetation cover found on the Colville NF.” SC at 45.

Response: I find that the District appropriately considered the carbon stocks and emissions associated with the project.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The Washington Office's January 13, 2009 Memo on "Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis" documents that when relevant, the analysis should document the project's effects on climate change and the effects of climate change on the project.

Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-1-2 acknowledged that removal of trees does increase atmospheric CO₂ but described that this project is retaining 75% of existing basal area and the management actions will likely support increased tree productivity in the future leading to increased carbon uptake. Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2. Furthermore, it found that any initial carbon emissions from this proposed action will be balanced and possibly eliminated as the stand recovers and regenerates, because the remaining trees and newly established trees typically have higher rates of growth and carbon storage. Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2.

There is no Forest Plan standard or guideline related to carbon storage and modelling carbon flux over the project timeframe is not needed for this analysis.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Climate Change and Carbon Sequestration: Climate change and carbon were adequately addressed. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Roads/Travel Management:

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedies: These objection issues focus on the concern over road building/travel management. Suggested remedies include: choose the no action alternative; before preparing an EIS for this project, finish the ongoing process of revising the Forest Plan that includes and incorporates a science-based forestwide Travel Analysis Process (TAP) so that it is fully consistent with the Travel Management Regulations 212 Subpart A and related directives; prepare an EIS that incorporates the revised forest-wide TAP and includes alternatives that implement the minimum road system; re-write the analyses under each resource, assuming the road decommissioning (and any other road work depending upon undetermined funding sources) will not be performed, as suggested in the draft DN and FONSI; analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of roads (system or non-system) causing resource damage due to lack of current or foreseeable maintenance; analyze and disclose the amount of sediment to be caused by log hauling from project activities, and analyze and disclose the environmental impacts of this sediment on water quality and aquatic habitats; create a forestwide inventory of all existing and project-created "temporary" roads and all other non-system "templates" displayed as linear features on a GIS layer, with a corresponding spreadsheet that contains data on each segment—including its length, date created (if known), project decision authorizing its construction if applicable, date discovered, the project decision commitment (date and/or contingency) for when it is to be obliterated, method of closure, closure effectiveness, signs of motorized and non-motorized use, number and location of culverts and other water crossings that are not hydrologically neutral, any other notable ecological problems such as slumps or other erosion sites, weeds, etc. and finally, dates of most recent FS survey of the segment.

Objector Statement #19: Objector states that (a) the additional sedimentation cause from new roadbuilding will impact water quality, especially because there are already very high road densities in

the project area, and (b) fails to consider how roads impact water yield and peak flows. SC at 48-52 and 58.

Response: I find that in the Responsible Official documented an analysis of the effects to water quality from sedimentation associated with road actions, which provided an adequate description of the existing road related sedimentation issues and demonstrates that sedimentation to streams and wetlands would be the primary concern to water quality. The Project Record documented consideration of impacts related to water yield and peak flows.

The 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA at 13 describes how existing roads and new road construction affect watershed condition because more sediment can be contributed to streams by these roads and activities than any other land management activity. Roads and road construction can directly alter natural sediment and hydrologic regimes by changing streamflow patterns and amounts, sediment loading, transport, and deposition, channel morphology and stability, water quality and riparian conditions within a watershed. The EA at 53 provided a qualitative description of the existing road related sedimentation issues and demonstrates that sedimentation to streams and wetlands would be the primary concern to water quality.

The effects of new road construction are described through the project phases (existing, during, and post-project) as changes to road densities and stream crossings, which were used as proxy metrics for tracking increases and reductions to sedimentation. Aquatics Specialist Report at 7, 9, 13, 30-33; EA at 4, 5, 6, 53, 54, 55, and 63.

The EA Table 3 at 6 describes proposed new road construction for approximately 13 miles of temporary roads used for vegetation management activities that will be restored after use.

The Aquatic Specialist Report at 6 describes the Best Management Practices (BMPs) required in the Memorandum of Agreement between the Forest Service and the Washington State Department of Ecology. The National Core BMP Technical Guide would be used during project planning, design and implementation to comply with state water quality requirements and address the disclosed increases to sedimentation potential to streams.

Appendix A –Standard Practices at No. 4-Aquatics, describes the requirement to “Minimize disturbance of stream channels from temporary roads through a variety of methods (e.g., use during seasonally dry conditions, corduroy crossings with full restoration at close of harvest unit, existing structures). Sites should be protected to extent possible with mitigation, and returned to pre-disturbance condition as much as possible following guidance within the WDFW MOU and national BMP guide. Sale administration personnel would consult with district hydrologist prior to operations for implementation”. Reduction in sediment delivery to streams is implied but not clearly stated as in No. 1 Aquatics.

The EA at 55-56 describes the influence of roads on soil infiltration and natural flow paths and relates road related changes to peak flows and water yield to total road length and road density in the analysis area. Road density was used as a metric to analyze effects to watershed conditions and impacts to water quality. Aquatic Specialist Report Table 1 at 7. The EA at 56 states that “Reductions in the density and length of road can result in less runoff being intercepted and routed into streams”, therefore thus

reducing the degradation of road stream interactions in 6 miles of roads within riparian management areas.” The Aquatics Report at 9, 29, 31, and Water Quantity section 35-37 address impacts of the project to peak flow and water yield.

Objector Statement #20: Objector states that “the EA fails to explain how the FS is managing specifically consistent with that section of the Travel Management Rule, as well as other sections.” SC at 50. Objector also states that “The Boulder Park EA does not demonstrate how it is minimizing the road system in compliance with the Travel Management Regulations and related Directives” and that it “does not incorporate the required science-based transportation analysis, and so there was no assessment that identified unneeded roads” all of which is a violation of NEPA, the travel management regulations, and is contrary to best science. SC at 50.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official was consistent with the 36 CFR 212 Travel Management regulations. The environmental analysis completed by the interdisciplinary team included a travel analysis process as guided by Forest Service policy and regulation.

The regulation at 36 CFR 212.5 (Travel Management) requires identification and evaluation of the National Forest system roads. The FSH 7709.55 Travel Planning Handbook Chapter 20 guides the Travel Analysis process.

The EA at 4 section 1.3.2 Travel Analysis describes the completion of a Travel Analysis Process. A Travel Analysis Process (TAP) document informed the development of the proposed action. The draft DN and FONSI Appendix B - Response to Public Comments at Comment #152 describes project consistency with the requirements of 36 CFR 212.5. It summarizes that the IDT used a data-driven scientific approach to categorize roads based on risk to resources and net benefit of a road to project activities. Resource specialists were also given the opportunity to identify road prisms of concern that needed to be addressed. All roads of concern that were identified were then individually reviewed by the IDT team to recommend actions needed for each road.

The proposed action includes a detailed description and list of the road management actions that resulted from the Travel Analysis Process. EA at 6-7, Tables 3-5.

Objector Statement #21: Objector states that “The Boulder Park EA fails to disclose the temporal effectiveness or non-effectiveness of the road maintenance and upgrading, merely assuming that the proposed actions will forever mitigate the problems they now exhibit. Without the sufficient funding to maintain its road system in a timely manner, all the BMP implantation that can be mustered in the context of a project such as this will only be a short-term fix, and the road system will remain an ecological liability.” SC at 50.

Response: I find that the District described and disclosed the short-term and long-term effects of the proposed road maintenance actions.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

This objection issue was addressed at draft DN and FONSI, Appendix B in previous response to comment #89, 152, 153, 155, 157-160. The effectiveness of proposed road actions may be monitored through the

BMP monitoring protocols as identified in the draft DN and FONSI, Appendix B-Response to comments at comment #89 which states that “The USFS national core best management practices (BMPs) have incorporated WA State BMPs that will be followed through all implementation and planning activities through the life of the project. Please see the section on meeting forest plan stating we are consistent with forest plan standards and guidelines. Record of compliance would occur post-NEPA during the active period of the project implementation.”

The EA at 13 describes the short-term effects of implementing road maintenance actions to water quality, where road maintenance can also increase sediment routing to streams by creating areas prone to surface runoff, altering slope stability in cut and fill areas, removal of vegetation, and altering drainage patterns. The EA at 42 describes that long-term effects of road maintenance in combination with other restoration activities would decrease sediment levels in the watershed which may incrementally improve the existing water quality and fish habitat overall.

Objector Statement #22: Objector states that “the EA fails to recognize the ongoing ecological damage of roads—regardless of the adequacy of maintenance funding” and that the agency “neglects to fully analyze and disclose all the ongoing damage where project funding cannot address the full scope of insufficient maintenance issues. The EA violates NEPA.” SC at 51. Objector states that “The FS fails to recognize that “continual monitoring and maintenance” is necessary following project completion. It fails to properly analyze and disclose the impacts of its continuously failing, under maintained road system” and ignores the fiscal reality of the Forest’s budget for maintaining roads, as well as fails to provide the quantitative financial analysis data to back up their statement that the EA is reducing road maintenance costs. SC at 51-52. Objector also believes that the District failed to adequately respond to their comment on this topic. SC at 56.

Response: I find that the District disclosed the effects of the existing road conditions, and road maintenance actions, which was articulated in the project record and EA.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Road management to restore aquatic habitat and watershed conditions is described as a need for this project. The EA at 1 states that “There is a need to improve stream habitat connectivity and provide quality pool habitat for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. There is a need to remove or relocate road segments that are impacting riparian habitats and water quality (FW-DC-WR-04, FW-DC-WR-05, FW-DC-WR-06, MA-OBJ-RMA-02).”

The District described and disclosed the short-term and long-term effects of the proposed road maintenance actions to aquatic habitat; see the responses to Objector Statements #21 and #54, which address this topic.

Objector Statement #23: Objector appreciates the road decommissioning, but states that the District should “fully obliterate and recontour each decommissioned segment” which they believe is not clearly stated in the EA or draft decision. Objector also states that the EA “fails to disclose how many the miles of road decommissioning would be actively restored, and how much will merely be allowed to continue to recover naturally. That they’re an issue to begin with means there is ongoing ecological damage. Yet

the EA fails to analyze and disclose this damage, and we are particularly concerned with the areas to be passively restored.” SC at 51.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official adequately disclosed the effects from road decommissioning.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The draft DN and FONSI at 3-4 and the EA at Table 3 describes that under the Proposed Action, approximately 22 miles of closed roads and 3 miles of open roads will be removed from the Forest transportation system (decommission 25 miles). Actions associated with road decommissioning are described. EA Appendix A Standard Practices at No. 23. The EA at 3.2.1.1 Water Quality, 3.2.2 Riparian Condition, 3.2.5 Soil, 3.1.2.1 Fish, and 3.1.3 Invasive Plants disclosed the impacts from the proposed action road decommissioning directly and indirectly in the short and the long term, and cumulatively.

Objector Statement #24: Objector states that the “Boulder Park EA makes no commitments to bring all the roads up to BMP standards or otherwise fix the damage. The EA fails to consider the resulting impacts on water quality and fish habitat.” SC at 52.

Response: I find that the District described and disclosed the short-term and long-term effects of the proposed road maintenance actions. See the responses to Objector Statements #21 and #22 which address this topic.

Objector Statement #25: Objector states that the Forest failed to analyze in detail the impact of climate change on forest roads and forest resources. Objector states that the agency should consider the cumulative impacts that will result from the proposal, proposed road activities and climate change. SC at 54. Objector also states that the EA does not disclose the intensity or thoroughness of the “alleged surveys for inventorying sediment sources in the project area” and does not disclose the metrics used to estimate elevated, unnatural sources of sediment yield into streams. SC at 54.

Response: I find that the District adequately analyzed risks associated with climate change. It appropriately considered hydrologic impacts associated with the project. See the responses to Objector Statements #14, 15 and #17, which also address this topic.

The 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The Washington Office’s January 13, 2009 Memo on “Climate Change Considerations in Project Level NEPA Analysis” documents that when relevant, the analysis should document the project’s effects on climate change and the effects of climate change on the project.

The EA at 1 describes the project need to improve forest watershed function, and to increase project area resiliency to disturbance processes such as wildland fire, insects, and diseases. The Proposed Action was designed to meet this Need. EA at 5-8. The draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at A-2 states that this proposed action is consistent with options proposed by the IPCC for minimizing the impacts of climate

change on forests, thus meeting objectives for both adapting to climate change and mitigating GHG emissions.

Appendix B Response to Comments considered concerns related to climate change at Comment #18, 22, 41, 42, 62, 85, 87, 92, 114, 134, 163, 166, and 167. These responses direct readers to Resource Specialist determinations that describe effects related to resiliency to disturbances including those associated with climate change; see for example soils in the EA at 65.

The impacts of road management and maintenance actions water quality, sediment delivery and water discharge are addressed in the responses to Objector Statement #19 and #21.

Objector Statement #26: Objector states that the “Boulder Park EA does not disclose the Project Area Road Management Objectives, which are to be developed consistent with the Travel Management Regulations.” SC at 55 and 58.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official was consistent with CFR 212 Travel Management regulations. The environmental analysis completed by the interdisciplinary team included a travel analysis process as guided by Forest Service policy and regulation.

The 36 CFR 212.5 Travel Management Regulations Road system management requires identification and evaluation of the National Forest system roads. FSH 7709.55 Travel Planning Handbook Chapter 20 guides the Travel Analysis Process.

The EA at 4 section 1.3.2 Travel Analysis describes the completion of a Travel Analysis Process. A Travel Analysis Process document informed the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action includes a detailed description and list of road management actions. EA at 6-7; Tables 3-5. The EA Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment #152 describes Project consistency with requirements under 36 CFR 212.5.

The EA at 62 documents the miles of road by maintenance level (closed versus open) and the changes in mileage as a result of the project. The Travel Analysis Process document (Project Record) documents the changes in maintenance level for the roads that would be decommissioned.

Objector Statement #27: Objector states that the EA failed to demonstrate that the Forest has implemented or applied the minimization criteria in the route designation process and that the EA does not adequately reflect how the Forest applied the minimization criteria in its motorized trail and area designations, rendering the decision arbitrary and capricious and in violation of law, regulation and Executive Orders. SC at 55-56. Objector also states that the Forest failed to take a hard look at impacts from off-road vehicle trails and areas, arguing those impacts would significantly impact the human environment. SC at 55.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official documented consistency with CFR 212 Travel Management regulations. The environmental analysis completed by the interdisciplinary team included a travel analysis process as guided by Forest Service policy and regulation.

The regulation at 36 CFR 212.5 Travel Management Regulations Road system management requires identification and evaluation of the National Forest system roads. FSH 7709.55 Travel Planning Handbook Chapter 20 guides the Travel Analysis process.

The response to Objector Statement #20 and 26 addresses consistency with Travel Management Rule requirements. Impacts of OHVs are addressed throughout the EA at 48, 54, 55, 56, 57, 68, and 69.

Objector Statement #28: Objector states that the “EA doesn’t explain why there is so much mileage of county roads on national forest land, with no apparent private land to access.” SC at 56.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official appropriately considered comments submitted on the EA.

The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA.

The EA Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment No. 154 stated that this is outside of the scope of the Boulder Park analysis. The response to comments at B-44, B-49 and B-50 correctly notes that County roads are outside of the jurisdiction of the Forest Service.

Objector Statement #29: Objector states that the EA does not analyze the impacts of roads not kept in conformance to Best Management Practices and does not analyze impacts of roads that go without maintenance because they are unauthorized or non-system roads. SC at 56-57.

Response: I find that the District analyzed the existing condition related to unauthorized or non-system routes adequately.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(2)(b)(ii) states that the EA may document consideration of a no-action alternative through the effects analysis by contrasting the impacts of the proposed action and any alternative(s) with the current condition and expected future condition if the proposed action were not implemented.

The Hydrology and Fisheries Report describes the impacts of the existing condition associated with unauthorized, non-system routes throughout the document. Hydrology and Fisheries Report in Project Record Aquatics Report at 34, 36. The report analyzes the effects retaining the existing condition through the no action alternative and discloses impacts from retaining these unmanaged routes. Hydrology and Fisheries Report at 27-28 and 6-39. The proposed action includes the obliteration of unauthorized routes as identified through the TAP process (see Response to Objector Statement #20). Cumulative impacts resulting from the lack of management on unauthorized routes as identified in the cumulative effects analysis area of the Hydrology and Fisheries Report at 39-43 are analyzed under cumulative effects.

Objector Statement #30: Objector states that the EA doesn’t analyze or disclose the cumulative impacts of motorized travel violations due to inadequate law enforcement funding. SC at 56.

Response: I find the future estimate of law enforcement funding is outside the scope of this project; I also find that the District addressed the potential of unauthorized use of roads.

The EA did provide a discussion of potential illegal use of closed roads and potential use of skid trails post project for OHV use and others. In addressing this concern, the EA outlines a design element to

ensure roads are closed as required and includes a monitoring plan for 5 years to determine the effectiveness of road closures. EA at 10 and 11.

The response to comments, draft DN and FONSI Appendix B at B-85 directly addressed this concern, noting that “There is discussion within the EA of unauthorized use of closed roads, potential use of skid trails post-project for OHV use and others. The level of use is an interpretation and opinion of the commenter. Design elements (EA chapter 2) and Standard Practices (EA Appendix A) provide measures designed to prevent or reduce unauthorized motorized use post-project.”

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Roads/Travel Management: The project complies with the Travel Management Rule and the Forest Plan. No remedy or resolution is required.

Wildlife, Fisheries and Diversity

Overview and Objector’s Suggested Remedies: These objection issues focus on the concern about impact to fish and wildlife species and their habitat, old-growth, snags and down wood, and viability. Suggested remedies include: choosing no action; finishing Forest Plan Revision prior to preparing an EIS that demonstrates consistency with all forest plan management requirements, complies with NEPA and NFMA, insures vertebrate viability, and uses the best available science; completing formal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and incorporate the Biological Opinion into all alternatives of the EIS; conducting a Science Consistency Review in an iterative process of evaluating alternatives and validating that they are designed consistent with available scientific information; reinstating fisher to the sensitive species list; map/designate as off limits to logging moist and dry site old growth and recruitment stands for goshawk; consider the area as historic range for woodland caribou.

Objector Statement #31: Objector states that the decision would have adverse environmental impacts and that extraordinary circumstances would exist, that significant impacts would occur to northern goshawk, Canada lynx, marten and wolverine, and that as such, an EIS must be prepared. SC at 6 and 7.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official adequately considered the impacts to goshawk, Canada lynx, marten, and wolverine.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA summarizes impacts to northern goshawk, Canada lynx, and wolverine (EA at 27 to 46). The Canada lynx and wolverine are fully analyzed in the referenced Biological Evaluation (Biological Evaluation at 14, 15, 18, 21-35, and 39-45). The conclusion was that the proposed action may affect, but not likely adversely affect the lynx and wolverine (Biological Evaluation at 35 and 42 respectively). Informal consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service was conducted and a Letter of Concurrence received as detailed in the draft DN and FONSI at 14. The conclusion from the US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the Forest’s finding that the proposed action may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the lynx and wolverine (Letter of Concurrence at 6 and 8).

Objector Statement #32: Objector also states that the District did not develop the “promised HRV for old growth,” that old growth has not been mapped, that there was a lack of surveys for raptors, and a “*glaring lack of analysis of fisher habitat* because it was delisted from sensitive species consideration”

due to its impact on timber outputs. SC at 7. Objector also states that “District Range Gayne Sears stated in a public meeting that HRV of old growth stands would be developed for this project, she later reneged on that promise,” and believes that old growth will be affected, particularly from large wood placement into streams, such as in Unit 95. SC at 79, 80 and 83.

Response: I find the Responsible Official considered the status of the fisher in Appendix B Response to Comments at B-36. The survey log for wildlife species is found in Appendix B of the Wildlife Report.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The structure stage by vegetation type is assessed across the landscape primarily through data derived from LiDAR. Stand exam data, aerial photos, and field reconnaissance were used to confirm LiDAR observations. Structure data was also be obtained through district records of past activities or stand exams. Patches of potentially larger diameter trees were also identified using LiDAR. These will be checked during sale preparation activities (unit layout, marking), Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 11. The metrics for determining late structure is outlined in Table 9 of the EA at 14. Late-closed stand structure must meet the desired condition of containing biological legacies (2019 Forest Plan), initially referred to as old-growth during project planning (according to the North Idaho Zone definitions, Green et al. 1992), Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 16.

The Cusick Creek watershed is deficient in late-closed stand structure for all vegetation types except for the Douglas-fir dry and Western redcedar/Western Hemlock types. The LiDAR model shows most late, closed structure occurring within the most eastern portion of this watershed (previously set aside as Management Area 1 under the 1988 Forest Plan). Proposed units within this watershed may contain patches of large diameter trees that meet the definition of late-closed, with many of these patches being less than 1 acre in size. There are no known stands within Cusick Creek watershed that meet the desired condition of late closed with biological legacies. Some stands may be recommended for removal from proposed harvest or the silvicultural prescription may be written to promote these structures if any stands are found during reconnaissance that exhibit these characteristics, Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 18. The HRV tables in the EA at 16-17 show a reduction of approximately 2% of late-closed stand structure in the Douglas-fir dry vegetation types for both watersheds, although still within Historical Range of Variability.

Tables 14 and 15 in the Silviculture and Fuels Report at 27 - 28 display the predicted effects of the project relative to the historic range of variability (HRV) for stand structural stages. Late closed and late open stands would be maintained within the HRV for those structural stages. Stands meeting the North Idaho Zone Old Growth (NIZOG) definition are a subset of those structural stages.

The Silviculture and Fuels Report at 33 states that “Some areas of late closed structure exhibiting biological legacies were removed from harvest, specifically in Units 29, 50, 61 and 79. Other patches have been retained during project planning by leave tree marking.” These actions would ensure that any stands or within-stand patches that could meet the NIZOG definition would be reserved from harvest.

The report at 40 goes on to state; “Over the long term, commercially thinned stands would increase average diameters greater than 20 inches and would cumulatively add to the late structure on the landscape.”

Objector Statement #33: Objector states that the District failed to consider and use the best available science and failed to insure population viability in violation of NFMA, which also violates NEPA's requirements that the agency demonstrate scientific integrity. SC at 60.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official documented consistency with National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.) and the regulation at 36 CFR 219 with the analysis of consistency with the Forest Plan. The Responsible Official demonstrated compliance with scientific integrity consistent with the regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.) and the regulation at 36 CFR 219 require that actions taken by projects under specific Forest and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) are consistent with the applicable Forest Plan. The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

The EA at 3 section 1.3 Management Direction describes management direction required under the 2019 Colville National Forest Land Management Plan. The Biological Evaluation at Table 6, Botany Report at 3, and the Hydrology and Fisheries Report at Tables 2-3 each apply standards and guidelines to the alternatives as required by the Forest Plan and analyze impacts as directed by the Forest Plan. The draft DN and FONSI at 8-9 and 13 summarizes consistency of biological findings with Forest Plan desired conditions, guidelines and standards. The Biological Evaluation at 18 and the draft DN/FONSI at 13 each incorporated by reference “Terrestrial Species Viability Assessments for National Forests in Northeastern Washington,” which is a forestwide assessment of wildlife species viability.

The EA Appendix B Response Public Comments at Comment #195, 203, 205, 212, 215 responded to comments regarding best available science to inform impacts to biological resources.

Objector Statement #34: Objector states that the Boulder Park EA does not describe the quantity and quality of habitat that is necessary to sustain or restore the viability of these special status species (grizzly bear, caribou, lynx and other species), nor does it explain the methodology for measuring their habitats. SC at 61.

Response: I find the Responsible Official adequately considered the methodology of addressing impacts to these species.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Table 9 in the Biological Evaluation displays the presence of habitat and documentation of grizzly bear, caribou, lynx, and other listed species in the project area with rationale for each species addressed. Biological Evaluation at 20. Caribou were not found to have habitat or to be documented in the project area. Management framework, existing condition of habitat components, and effects determination were disclosed for lynx, grizzly bear, and other species determined to have habitat and/or documented

in the project area. Biological Evaluation at 21-42. Methodology including measures, indicators, limitations, and regulatory framework are disclosed in the Biological Evaluation at 17-19.

Objector Statement #35: Objector states that the Forest has failed to monitor population abundance/trends of old-growth associated wildlife and snag/down wood dependent wildlife, instead using HRV and/or DecAID as a proxy and also failed to evaluate methodologies such as DecAID and Youkey 2012 using an independent peer reviewed process. SC at 61 and 79. Objector states that the Forest does not maintain a forestwide old-growth inventory, which means that species associated with old growth forest habitats (and snags/down wood) are not adequately assessed and viability cannot be assured, in violation of NFMA. SC at 65 and 78-79.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official determined that this project complies with pertinent Forest Plan direction and is not in violation of the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

The regulation under 16 USC § 1604 National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that all projects implemented on national forest system lands comply with approved Forest Plans. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Old growth dependent species are discussed in the Wildlife Report at 56 – 58 and project activities would not occur within old growth stands (Wildlife Report at 57). The Wildlife Report at 57-59, contains a discussion of how Forest Plan direction for old growth dependent species would be met (Table 31, effects to the Medium to Large Tree and Open Forest Habitat Families). Compliance with Forest Plan direction was documented in the Wildlife Report at 67.

In addition, viability for old growth dependent species is ensured, as stated in Appendix B Response to Comments at B-100 which notes that “The Wildlife Specialist Report tiers to Youkey (2012) who estimated suitable habitat available for MIS across the Forest, identified risk factors, and identified conservation strategies to improve viability outcomes.” DecAID has been peer reviewed and provides forest inventory data for dead wood habitats on national forests in Oregon and Washington. Wildlife Report at 44-54.

Objector Statement #36: Objector states that even though the project will retain the largest trees, the EA fails to disclose the District’s intent is to log many of those future large (21+” dbh) trees before they ever become large snags and large down wood. SC at 62-63. Objector also states that “Additionally MA-1 areas would be eliminated in the revised Colville Forest Plan. Stating that this area is protected and providing habitat for late successional species viability is false, when the next entry could log it. The revised Colville Forest Plan dependence on a manufactured HRV to provide habitat for old growth associated species is pure speculation and not based in science.” SC at 87.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official was able to consider ongoing and reasonably foreseeable actions in context with the upcoming Forest Plan as it was undergoing revision.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) requires that all projects implemented on national forest system lands comply with approved Forest Plans. 16 USC § 1604. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA documents that the proposed action would be generally designed to conserve existing late closed forest structure, which would retain most large trees (over 20 inches DBH), particularly in dry forests. EA at 39. There are no reasonably foreseeable timber sales. EA at 70-71. Ongoing and foreseeable actions impacting large trees acknowledged in Wildlife Report at 59-61 and Biological Evaluation at 51-53. Objector is correct that MA-1 from the previous Forest Plan was not carried forward in the revised plan; there are no old-growth management areas located in the Boulder Park Project area. EA at 3. Please see the draft DN Appendix B response to comments at B-19 through B-21, Comment #40 for additional discussion.

Objector Statement #37: Objector states that the EA and Draft DN do not address scientific opinion (Committee of Scientists 1999) that contradicts the Forest’s assumptions about MIS habitat management (especially using habitat as a proxy), which is a violation of NEPA and does not assure viability of the species on the Forest. SC at 66.

Patty Response: I find that the District adequately addressed management indicator species and their habitat.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

As stated in Appendix B Response to Comments at B-98 “The Wildlife Specialist Report tiers to Gains et al. (2017) who estimated suitable habitat available for MIS across the Forest, identified risk factors, and identified conservation strategies to improve viability outcomes. The Boulder Park project would include conservation measures commensurate with these strategies.” Appendix B Response to Comments at B-100 notes that “The Wildlife Specialist Report tiers to Youkey (2012) who estimated suitable habitat available for MIS across the Forest, identified risk factors, and identified conservation strategies to improve viability outcomes.”

Objector Statement #38: Objector states that the Boulder Park EA failed to provide stand exams for the area being proposed for logging during the scoping period and later provided stand exams for only a few stands. SC at 7. Objector states that the EA fails to provide an analysis demonstrating consistency with the Forest Plan/Eastside Screens, citing the draft DN and FONSI Appendix B’s statement that most watersheds are below HRV for late structure. SC at 64-65. Objector states that the “Boulder Park EA does not explain how the logging will retain snags and green tree replacements in compliance with Eastside Screens standards, given OSHA regulations for maintaining workers’ safety,” as well as firewood cutting. SC at 68. Objector further elaborates that the EA does not demonstrate consistency with Scenario A by demonstrating maintenance of connectivity corridors and reduced fragmentation of LOS stands. SC at 74.

Response: I find the Responsible Official did demonstrate how snags and green trees would be retained.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) requires that all projects implemented on national forest system lands comply with approved Forest Plans (16 USC § 1604). The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The 2019 Forest Plan was not amended by the Eastside Screens; instead, the Forest Plan replaced the Eastside Screens, and as such, only guidance found in the Forest Plan is applicable. EA at 3. Regardless, a

discussion of connectivity can be found in Wildlife Report at 58. The EA at 17 shows that two vegetation types within two watersheds are below HRV for late structure. Units or parts of units with late seral components were dropped from treatment (Silviculture Fuels Specialist Report at 16 and 18) but in vegetation types within HRV for late closed stands, treatment is planned (Silviculture Fuels Specialist Report at 42).

Stand exam data as well as other silviculture supporting data was posted on the project's public website on February 7, 2018, which was two months before the scoping letter was signed and published on April 12, 2018.

Objector Statement #39: Objector states that past management activities have degraded wildlife habitat and that the EA did not disclose any qualitative or quantitative analysis of cumulative effects on wildlife population abundance, trends, habitat features (adverse and beneficial), linkage zones/corridors/connectivity and that there was no comparisons to baseline (pre-development) conditions, "except for the extremely narrow and inadequate HRV analyses." SC at 71, 75 and 76.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official considered cumulative effects in accordance with policy and direction. Complete resource reports were incorporated by reference (EA at 3).

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The regulation at 40 CFR 1508.7 defines cumulative actions. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.3(f) establishes parameters regarding cumulative effects considerations of past actions. It states, "The CEQ regulations, however, do not require agencies to catalogue or exhaustively list and analyze all individual past actions. Simply because information about past actions may be available or obtained with reasonable effort does not mean that it is relevant and necessary to inform decisionmaking." (40 CFR 1508.7).

Discussion of cumulative effects related to wildlife and their habitats can be found in the EA at 29-46; the Biological Evaluation at 30, 37, 40, 42-44; and in the Wildlife Report at 27-36, 52, 55-61, and 65.

Objector Statement #40: Objector states that "the EA fails to provide a meaningful analysis of cumulative impacts of recreational activities on elk. Wintertime is an especially critical time for elk, and stress from avoiding motorized activities takes its toll on elk and populations." SC at 88. Objector states that the EA contains no analysis of how weed populations and trends are affecting and will affect the forage the FS claims will be improved by the project," and cites back to their comments which requested specific analyses be conducted. SC at 88-89.

Response: I find that cumulative effects to elk were addressed in the Wildlife Report.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The Wildlife Report at 63-66; the report specifically addresses open routes and motorized travel, including snowmobiles (Wildlife Report at 63 and 65) and addresses invasive species (Wildlife Report at 64-66).

Objector Statement #41: Objector states that ungulate species should be analyzed separately and that the EA did not present a quantitative or qualitative analysis of security and thermal cover, did not analyze or disclose the effects of the proposed treatments, did not provide an analysis of the degree to which activities will have the effect of displacing elk and other ungulates onto private lands and the impacts on those private lands. SC at 88-89.

Response: I find that the effects to ungulate species were analyzed.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA at 3 states that complete reports were incorporated by reference. Direct and indirect effects were analyzed in the Wildlife Report at 64, and displacement of deer and elk was discussed in the Wildlife Report at 63 and 65. There is a Project Design Element in Table 11 at 17 in the Wildlife Report to provide adequate displacement areas for big game.

Objector Statement #42: Objector states that the EA fails to “adequately analyze and disclose cumulative impacts to grizzly bear from disturbance/displacement and project activities on land of other ownerships due to their unknown duration, location, and intensity” and fails to include an analysis of seasonal grizzly bear habitat components and fails to take a hard look at cumulative effects to the species. SC at 91 and 93. Objector also states that “There is no analysis in the EA regarding existing road densities located outside of and between BMUs, both at present and during project implementation.” SC at 92.

Response: I find the Responsible Official considered cumulative impacts to grizzly bears at the appropriate scale that included lands of other ownerships.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires all federal agencies, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), to insure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed threatened, endangered or proposed species, or adversely modify their habitat. A biological evaluation / assessment (BE/BA) must be completed for all Forest Service planned, funded, executed or permitted programs and activities to determine their possible effects to species listed under the ESA (FSM 2672.4). The BE/BA should include a risk assessment of the potential effects of the project to each T&E species according to procedures outlined in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2672.42.

The Biological Evaluation (BE) documents that the project area lies outside of the recovery zone and that grizzly habitat needs are not a necessary consideration on these lands, which are classed as Management Situation 5 for grizzly bears. Grizzly bears using the Boulder-Park Project Area could be disturbed and displaced by forest management activities associated with the project. These effects could be similar and cumulative to those resulting from and forest management projects on other ownerships in the Tacoma and Cusick Creek Watersheds. Biological Evaluation at 37. The cumulative effects analysis for grizzly bear is found in the EA at 30 and BE at 37. The BE at 31-32 documents that the diet of grizzly bears change with the season in accordance with available food sources, and also documents hiding cover, den sites and areas of seclusion needed by grizzly bears.

There is no direction to manage for specific levels of core habitat or road densities outside of designated recovery zones for grizzly bear. EA at 32. Road densities relative to grizzly bears were addressed in the Wildlife BE at 32, 38, and 43.

Objector Statement #43: Objector states that the EA failed to disclose the questionable effectiveness of road closures for the purpose of eliminating human access behind closures, and that the EA did not demonstrate that project implementation is consistent with the best available science, in violation of the ESA, NFMA and NEPA. SC at 93.

Response: I find that the EA provided a discussion of potential illegal use of closed roads and potential use of skid trails post project for OHV use and others. In addressing this concern, the EA outlines Design Elements to factor in the completion of contractor activity and a monitoring plan for 5 years to determine effectiveness. Design elements, EA at 10, No. 13, and Monitoring, EA at 11.

Objector Statement #44: Objector states that the proposed alternative will severely fragment fisher habitat and preclude reintroduction of repopulation in violation of NFMA. SC at 95. Objectors note that Unit 95 is proposed for mining large woody debris and is also target fisher breeding habitat, which will impact fishers by disturbance, removing large trees and incursion of skid trails. Objector believes that removing the species as a sensitive species will preclude reintroduction or repopulation, in violation of NFMA, given that there is one record of fisher in the general vicinity, stating that the Forest failed to explain why species that had historic ranges on the forest are not found in the project area or on Forest. SC at 95-96 and 98.

Response: I find the Responsible Official adequately documented the status of fisher on the Forest and documented why the species was not considered in detail.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Appendix B Response to Comments at B-50 explains the rationale regarding the analysis specifically for fisher: "The fisher has been extirpated from the Colville National Forest (Lofroth et al. 2010). Thus, it was recommended by members of the Interagency Fisher Biology Team that it not be used as a surrogate species for forest planning purposes...On the Colville National Forest, the recovery of the fisher will require more than managing habitat and will likely require a population reintroduction effort...Such an effort is beyond the scope of the Boulder Park analysis."

Objector Statement #45: Objector states that the project does not consider the best science for ensuring viable populations of pine marten and that the EA fails to assess the quantity and quality of habitat needed to sustain the species. SC at 100. Objector also states that the EA fails to conduct an analysis of the historic range of marten habitat on the forest, which results in failure to conduct a proper cumulative effects analysis for the species. SC at 100.

Response: I find that marten habitat was addressed in the EA and in the Wildlife Specialist Report.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Complete resource reports, including for wildlife, were incorporated by reference (EA at 3). As a component of marten habitat, the Boulder Park snag calculations in the project record quantifies the current distribution of snags and logs using the best available science. Other habitat components for the marten were assessed by incorporating by reference Youkey (2012) and addressing old growth areas under the Forest Plan (Wildlife Report at 57 and 58). PDCs for pile retention are also required, as the Wildlife Report noted that log piles provide access points for marten to hunt rodents; EA at 9 and 11; Wildlife Report at 48. The Wildlife Report at 48 also notes the down log sizes required for marten in mixed conifer forests, and in the effects section, documents potential impacts to logs and down wood from timber harvest and fuel treatment. Wildlife Report at 51-52.

Objector Statement #46: Objector states that the Forest should locate the alternate next site for northern goshawk and protect it from impacts. SC at 101-102. Objector believes that project will adversely impact the goshawk, that the EA did not provide the scientific references to justify its conclusions, that the proposed action will not meet the new standards for goshawk in the revised Forest Plan, and that the EA failed to take a hard look at the home range of the northern goshawk, as there was no quantitative or spatial analysis of territory condition. SC at 102-107.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official considered impacts to goshawks. The EA analyzes the impacts using best available science.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) requires that all projects implemented on national forest system lands comply with approved Forest Plans. 16 USC § 1604. The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

Complete specialist reports were incorporated by reference, including the Wildlife Report (EA at 3). Northern goshawk were analyzed with cited references. Wildlife Report at 23-31, and 51-54. The Project Wildlife Biologist's recommendations for the alternate goshawk nest are included the Project Design Elements for terrestrial wildlife. EA Table 6 at 10-11. The Wildlife Report states that within the mapped alternate nest stands, ensure more than 50 percent canopy closure is retained post-harvest. Wildlife Report at 17. Consistency with Forest Plan Guidelines is included in the analysis for the effects to Northern Goshawk. Wildlife Report at 22.

Appendix B Response to Comments considered references and concerns related to goshawks at Comment #17, 27, 44-51. The response to comment #46- 51 at B-25 through B-29 considers references provided by commenters, while the response to comment #45 at B-24 responds to concerns regarding consistency with the Forest Plan.

Objector Statement #47: Objector states that the agency failed to utilize goshawk survey methodology consistent with the best science, citing "Northern Goshawk Inventory and Monitoring Technical Guide" by Woodbridge and Hargis 2006 that they believe should have been used and that the EA proposes scientifically indefensible monitoring for the existing nest territories. SC at 105 and 107-108. Objector also questions the size of the nest stand for goshawk. SC at 107.

Response: I find the Responsible Official considered the best available science as cited by the objectors.

The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA. The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

Appendix B Response to Comments considered references and concerns related to goshawks at Comment Nos. 17, 27, 44-51, 55. The response to comment #46- 51, and #55 considers references provided by commenters that are associated with effects to goshawks.

Complete resource reports, including wildlife, were incorporated by reference (EA at 3). The Wildlife Report at 23 states that “We surveyed the Boulder-Park Project Area for active goshawk nests in 2017 - 2019 based on protocol established by Woodbridge and Hargis (2006).”

Objector Statement #48: Objector states that the fringed myotis, little brown myotis, and Townsend’s big-eared bat were not mentioned in 2019, but appear in the 2020 EA. Objector states that the EA does not state if surveys have been conducted, and fails to present a “scientifically informed analysis of direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts on these species. Viability is not properly addressed with metrics of populations, amount of habitat, trends, or stressors. SC at 109.

Response: I find that the EA and specialist report analyzed and disclosed impacts to the fringed myotis, little brown myotis, and Townsend’s big-eared bat.

36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The Wildlife Specialist Report evaluated the little brown myotis, and Townsend’s big-eared bat under the analysis criteria as sensitive species (Wildlife Report at 20), and evaluated the fringed myotis as a surrogate species (Wildlife Report at 39). The Wildlife Report at Table 19 analyzed direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts to the sensitive bats for the proposed action and no action alternative. The Wildlife Report determined that the no action alternative may impact individuals or habitat, but would not likely to cause a trend to federal listing or loss of viability for these sensitive species, and that the proposed action would have beneficial effects. Determination rationale considering best available science is included with the determinations. Wildlife Report at 30. The EA at Table 16 summarized the findings of the Wildlife Report for these sensitive species. The Wildlife Report at Table 24 and Table 31 evaluated impacts to essential habitats for the fringed myotis as a surrogate species. The EA at Table 17 summarized the findings of the Wildlife Report for this surrogate species.

Objector Statement #49: Objector states that the EA failed to disclose the direct, indirect and cumulative effects to specific species; failed to describe monitoring and modeling of specific species; and failed to use best science to assess the impacts to specific species including the following: forest hawks; flammulated owl; great gray owl; Franklin’s grouse; dusky grouse; Lewis’ woodpecker; white headed woodpecker; beaver; black-backed woodpecker and northern three-toed woodpecker. SC at 109-121.

Response: I find the EA documented the direct, indirect and cumulative effects to relevant species; monitoring and modeling of relevant species; and the use best science to assess the impacts to relevant species including the following: forest hawks; flammulated owl; great gray owl; Franklin’s grouse; dusky grouse; Lewis’ woodpecker; white headed woodpecker; beaver; black-backed woodpecker and northern three-toed woodpecker.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Complete specialist reports were incorporated by reference, including the Wildlife Report (EA at 3). Disclosure of effects are found in Wildlife Report at 22-43, and 55-61.

Objector Statement #50: Objector states that the EA failed to disclose the agency's strategy and best science for insuring viable populations of pileated woodpecker/primary cavity excavators; failed to quantify the expected snag loss; and failed to ensure snags would be created, as disclosed in the wildlife report. SC at 122-128.

Response: I find that the potential impacts to snags was discussed qualitatively and that a distribution analysis of snags and logs was conducted (showing a lack of large snags and logs).

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA at 33 summarizes impacts to sensitive cavity excavators, including Lewis' woodpecker and white-headed woodpecker and to species that require snags and down wood, including pileated woodpecker and other cavity nesting species. The Wildlife Report cites Youkey (2012) who identified risk factors and identified conservation strategies to improve viability outcomes. Large diameter trees, snags, downed logs would be retained to extent feasible. Snag retention is listed as a Standard Practice (Wildlife Report at 16), and snag creation is listed as a design element in both the EA at 11 and the Wildlife Report at 18. The EA at 11 specifically states that if post-harvest snag levels do not meet those described in the Forest Plan, then live green trees would be top to create snags. In addition, roads would be closed reducing the loss of snags to firewood cutting (draft DN and FONSI Appendix B at 106-107; Wildlife Report at 30, 42, and 51.

The Wildlife Report at 44 (Table 22) and at 45 (Table 23) display the Forest Plan desired conditions for snags and down logs, which is based on the best available science (see the citations provided at 45). The Wildlife Report at 51 and 52 describes how the Forest would meet these levels in harvest units, since all snags 10+ inches and all logs 14+ inches would be retained, in addition to any smaller material needed to meet Forest Plan desired conditions for dead wood habitats.

Objector Statement #51: Objector states that the Forest failed to assess impacts to woodland caribou and wolverine, given they are a listed/proposed species, and that consultation should have been required. SC at 128 and 133-136. Objector believes the EA contains or incorporates insufficient updated scientific information to be able to make a viability conclusion for wolverine and that the wildlife report has no description of the quantity or quality of habitat necessary to sustain the viability of wolverine. SC at 133-136. Objectors also state that the EA fails to disclose the cumulative impacts of recreational activities on wolverine. SC at 136.

Response: I find the EA disclosed potential impacts to woodland caribou and wolverine.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires all federal agencies, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), to insure that

their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed threatened, endangered or proposed species, or adversely modify their habitat. A biological evaluation / assessment (BE/BA) must be completed for all Forest Service planned, funded, executed or permitted programs and activities to determine their possible effects to species listed under the ESA (FSM 2672.4). The BE/BA should include a risk assessment of the potential effects of the project to each T&E species according to procedures outlined in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2672.42.

The Biological Evaluation Table 9 at 20 stated that the project area is located west of the Pend Oreille River and more than 10 miles outside of the Selkirk Mountains Woodland Caribou Recovery Area. The project area is considered to be outside the range of this caribou herd. It determined the project area does not provide habitat, and none have been documented in the area. Therefore, the BE did not further analyze potential impacts to this species.

Potential effects to the North American wolverine were analyzed in detail in the Biological Evaluation at 37-40. It found that based on the project effects, the alternatives as proposed are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of wolverines. BE at 40. The draft DN and FONSI at 12 states that on April 26, 2019 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that this project as described in the Biological Evaluations may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the Canada lynx, grizzly bear, bull trout and their critical habitat, critical habitat, and wolverine (a proposed species). The concurrence letter is in the project record.

Objector Statement #52: Objector states that the EA failed to disclose the impacts to older, multi-storied stands used by lynx; failed to disclose recreational impacts on lynx; failed to address connectivity between lynx analysis units (LAUs); and failed to consult on lynx. SC at 128-132.

Response: I find the EA disclosed impacts to lynx.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) requires all federal agencies, in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), to insure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed threatened, endangered or proposed species, or adversely modify their habitat. A biological evaluation assessment (BE/BA) must be completed for all Forest Service planned, funded, executed or permitted programs and activities to determine their possible effects to species listed under the ESA (FSM 2672.4). The BE/BA should include a risk assessment of the potential effects of the project to each T&E species according to procedures outlined in Forest Service Manual (FSM) 2672.42.

The Biological Evaluation addresses lynx, lynx habitat, the analysis framework, recreational impacts, and connectivity (Biological Evaluation at 14, 17-19, and 22-31). Consultation with US Fish & Wildlife was completed with a Letter of Concurrence dated April 26, 2019 received from the US Fish and Wildlife Service for lynx and their habitat. Draft DN and FONSI at 14.

Objector Statement #53: Objector states that the EAs analysis of “surrogate species” is “underwhelming,” stating that there is no analysis of direct, indirect or cumulative effects to a number of these species (such as Cassin’s finch, Columbia spotted frog, or McGillivray’s warbler) and that there is no science cited on the biology of these species. SC at 136-140.

Response: I find that the project record documented the analysis of direct, indirect and cumulative effects to surrogate species including bull trout, Westslope cutthroat trout, and redband/rainbow trout.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

Findings and citations regarding the bull trout, Westslope cutthroat trout, and redband/rainbow trout are described in the EA at 26-27, BA at 57, and Aquatics Report at 43-47. The biology of bull trout and Westslope cutthroat trout is cited with reference to scientific literature in the project record, including in the BA at 28 and Aquatics Report at 18.

Objector Statement #54: Objector states that the EA failed to adequately disclose the whether or not fish surveys documented if there were pure strains of cutthroat trout above barriers to brook trout in streams currently blocked from the main stream from fish barriers; failed to disclose the affected environment of area streams/water bodies; failed to disclose populations and trends of fish species, as well as demonstrating viable populations will be retained; failed to acknowledge the limitations of Forest plan direction/INFISH; failed to include an analysis of trends toward attaining Riparian Management Objectives; failed to disclose sediment amounts/impacts; failed to assess road-related impacts to water quality and fisheries, especially where culverts will be left on closed roads (and fails to contain a monitoring/maintenance plan for those culverts); failed to disclose the impacts if stream restoration projects did not occur because of lack of funding; failed to provide a scientific analysis/justification for logging and burning in riparian management areas; failed to address grazing's impacts on affected streams in the project area; failed to disclose location/acreage of thinning units in RMAs; failed to justify the need to thin trees in riparian areas; and failed to disclose cumulative impacts from other ownerships on fish and aquatic resources. SC at 7; 141-159.

Response: I find that the EA adequately documented impacts to fish species and riparian habitat.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. An affected environment section is not required in an EA in accordance with the regulation at 36 CFR 220.7.

The Aquatics Report at 21 characterizes the distribution of native cutthroat trout and notes that distribution above barriers may occur as isolated populations. The report discloses the affected environment of area streams/water bodies in the Aquatics Report at 8-26, 29, and 32, and discloses the populations and trends of fish species qualitatively in the Aquatics Report at 18, 21, 42-45, and 47. Fish population data is referenced in the Aquatics Report at 19. The Aquatics Report at 21 documents that pure interior redband trout have not been found in the Pend Oreille subbasin.

The project record provides some supporting evidence to demonstrate that viable fish populations will be retained, including the Aquatics Report at 43-45 and BA at 38 and 57. The Project Record provides quantified and qualified estimates and other descriptions of the scale or proportion of given fish populations and fish habitat expected to either change or not change as a result of the proposed action. The Project Record acknowledges potential adverse effects from brook trout competition upon cutthroat trout relating to the proposed fish passage barrier removals (Aquatics Report at 21, 22).

The Aquatics Report at 43 concludes the proposed action effect determination for cutthroat trout is "May Impact Individuals or Habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or

loss of viability to the population or species. This determination is a conservative estimate of the effects on a very site-specific and short duration scale related to the potential effects to individuals during the replacement of the culverts...” In addition, the report notes that “Past present and reasonably foreseeable future actions that could create cumulative effects on trout include...aquatic organism passage...” and “Culvert replacement with Aquatic Organism passages have been completed in the past will continue in the future. Fish species passage and habitat connectivity will be improved.” Aquatics Report at 43.

The EA and project record disclose impacts if stream restoration projects did not occur, by way of assessment of the no action alternative. EA at 24, 26, and 63; Aquatics Report at 28, 31, 35, 36, 38, and 39. The Aquatics Report at 22 speaks to the prior Forest Plan direction/INFISH, acknowledging the origins of RMOs are from the dated INFISH-amended former Forest Plan, and explains why these prior numbers for RMOs are still relevant. The 2019 Colville Forest Plan Management Area Direction MA-STD-RMA-07 Road and Trail Construction-Fish Passage (Aquatics Report at 48) acknowledges stream crossing design criteria for peak flows. The EA at 53 addresses the potential for peak flows to exceed existing undersized stream crossings under the no action alternative, and the EA at 56 documents the increased landscape resilience to peak flows under the proposed action. The Aquatics Report at 22 describes existing (2017) fish habitat conditions as a site-specific baseline related to RMOs. The project record describes the effects of the proposed action as supporting a future trend toward attaining Riparian Management Objectives, including the EA at 25, 58, 59, and the Aquatics Report at 38, 45, and 46.

The EA and project record disclose the sediment amounts/impacts qualitatively in the Aquatics Report at 28, 30, 31, 35-37, 39-44, 46, and 47; the BA at 33-35, 37, 38, 57, and 68; and the EA at 25-27, 50, 51, and 53-61. The EA and project record assesses road-related impacts to water quality and fisheries in the Aquatics Report at 28, 30, 31, 36, 37, 39-44, 46, and 47; the BA at 33-35, 37, 38, and 57, and the EA at 25-27, 50, 51, 53-56, and 58-61. The EA and project record describes a monitoring and maintenance plan for culverts that will be left on closed roads under the proposed action, including the EA at 6-7 and 10.

The EA and project record provided scientific analysis/justification for harvest and burning in riparian management areas and justified the need to thin trees in riparian areas, including documentation found in the EA at 44, 51, and 58, and in the Aquatics Report at 30, 38-40, and 48. The Aquatics Report at 40 states that “The impacts of the proposed harvest, thinning, and prescribed fire activities to effective groundcover are anticipated to be slight and temporary...” The Aquatics Report at 48 cites the 2019 Colville Forest Plan Management Area Direction MA-STD-RMA-03 and MA-GDL-RMA-01, which specifies that silvicultural practices will only occur in RMAs where necessary to attain desired conditions for aquatic and riparian resources and in a manner that does so.

The EA and project record address grazing’s impacts on affected streams in the project area in the EA at 26, 49, 52, 53, and 60, and in the Aquatics Report at 9, 17, 40-42, 49, and 50. The EA and project record disclose the acreage of thinning units in RMAs in the Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 10, and their location is encompassed by the proposed actions as depicted in maps found in Appendix B. The EA and project record disclose the cumulative impacts from other ownerships on fish and aquatic resources in the EA at 26, 27, 54, 60, and 64, and in the Aquatics Report at 42-44.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Wildlife, Fisheries and Diversity: The EA and project record documented the potential impacts to fish and wildlife species and their habitat, old-growth, snags and down wood, and viability. No remedies or resolution is needed.

Fire

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedy: These objection issues surround the objector's concern over the fire/fuels analysis. Their suggested remedies include selecting the no action alternative or preparing an EIS that includes corrects the analytic and scientific deficiencies they noted in their objection.

Objector Statement #55: Objector states that the EA does not properly analyze and disclose the natural historic range vs. current conditions regarding patch size, edge effect, and amount of interior forest old growth in the Colville NF. SC at 78.

Response: I find the EA addressed and analyzed the Historical Range of Variability as well as current conditions in several contexts and at the proper scales.

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.) and the regulation at 36 CFR 219 require that actions taken by projects under specific Forest and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) are consistent with the applicable Forest Plan. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The HRV analysis describes the historical condition of the forests in the project area. EA at 12. The Silviculture and Fuels Specialist Report at 18 states that "Currently, the forested landscape in this project area is fairly homogenous with uniform canopy cover (aerial photos, LiDAR structure). There are some natural openings where meadows occur or where the terrain is rocky or of low site productivity."

The Silviculture and Fuels Specialist Report at 18 goes on to state that "Historic forests had a higher composition of widely distributed large, old trees over a much broader area due to low, mixed, and high severity disturbances. Many of these trees were resistant to fire and survived extended droughts (e.g. ponderosa pine, western larch, and to an extent, Douglas-fir and white pine). Old trees of fire intolerant species were more common as fire frequency decreased and in wet microsites (Hessburg et al. 2015). Stine et al. 2014 also notes that historic dry and moist forests in Oregon and Washington may have had fewer than 70 trees per acre for small, medium, and large trees." The report notes that "Research on the historical patch size and arrangement of forest structure in western forests is ongoing. Recent characterizations of mixed-severity fire regimes in the region confirm that complex landscapes were maintained with many small patches and few large patches (Perry et al. 2011)." Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 18 and 19.

Patch size by vegetation type is described in the 2019 Colville National Forest Land Management Plan and repeated in the Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 19. The resource report notes that "Historical photos of this area from 1935 show more open forests with large patches of early structure stages. By 1935, patch size and arrangement were likely affected by fires, grazing, homesteading, and some timber harvest."

Literature points to the fact that historical forests were more open than current conditions. Stand density measures are used in the Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 19 and 20 and repeated in the EA to assess the current growth, probability of mortality, and health and vigor of stands. The methodology section of the Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 11 describes how these metrics assist in designing treatments to reduce stand densities and lower mortality rates due to disturbance.

Objector Statement #56: Objector states that the EA skews the analysis toward considering fire as a threat instead of a natural process and fails to disclose the effects from recent fires. Objector states that the EA failed to provide scientific analysis that support the prediction that uncharacteristic fire effects would occur if logging is not conducted, and has poor logic and scientifically unsupported claims that logging would significantly reduce the incidence and severity of fire. Objectors state that the EA alleges that logging is good for wildlife species because it will make the area safe from what the species evolved with fire. SC at 159-166.

Response: I find the EA adequately and fairly documented the effects of fire and timber harvest of the Boulder Park Project. Any methodologies used have been identified and explicit reference to the scientific and other sources relied upon for conclusions have been made.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

Part of the purpose and need of the project is to make the landscape more resilient and compatible with characteristic disturbance processes such as wildland fire, insects, and diseases, and provide habitat diversity for wildlife. EA at 1. Approximately 98 percent of the project area is within Fire Regime Condition Class 2 which is moderately altered from its historical range. Proposed treatment areas in the project area would shift stands from an FRCC 2 to FRCC 1. EA at 22.

To estimate existing conditions and predict future stand conditions, data from stand exams were analyzed using: Forest Vegetation Simulator (FVS) Growth and Yield Model, Northern Idaho/Inland Empire Variant; and the Fire and Fuels Extension (FFE) to the Forest Vegetation Simulator. FVS was also used to simulate prescribed fire in harvest units. Through these runs, the Forest analyzed prescribed fire effects on 1000 hour fuel loadings, canopy base height, and crown bulk density. The use of FVS modeling aids us in determining proper treatments throughout the project. The values are meaningful in determining the potential effects of prescribed burning post-harvest and are indicators of future fire behavior and potential for fire control effectiveness. Peer-reviewed scientific articles, literature, books, white papers, and in some cases, references to unpublished data were used to support proposed activities. Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 12.

Improvement to wildlife habit over the long term for forage production, habitat trees, nesting/fawning habitat, and potential winter range expansion is cited as part of the indirect effects of prescribed fire both inside and outside of harvest areas. Silviculture and Fire Resources Report at 36.

Objector Statement #57: Objector states that the EA failed to explain the fire implications of no treatment to the remaining acres in the project area (or disclose actions taken to reduce fuels on private land) and does not provide a “genuine analysis and disclosure of the varying amounts and levels of effectiveness of fuel changes attributable to: the varying ages of the past cuts, the varying forest types, the varying slash treatments, etc.” SC at 166 and 177.

Response: I find the EA documented the potential direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the alternatives with regard to fuels treatments and discussed actions occurring on other lands.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) directs the agency to analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives.

The EA discloses that unless similar fuels treatments are initiated and maintained on adjacent ownerships, proposed fuel reduction treatments on National Forest System lands may have less effect in reducing the threat of a severe surface or crown fire on private ownerships within or adjacent to the project area. EA at 21. Additionally, the EA states there are no other known timber sales that are active or planned within this area at this time across all other ownerships. Approximately 1,560 acres of harvest on non-Forest Service lands have occurred in the last ten years on other ownerships (Washington DNR and other private landowners). These harvests were mostly in the form of created openings such as clearcuts or other regeneration treatments, EA at 22.

The no action alternative would not treat stands adjacent to wildland urban interface to reduce the risk of insect, disease, or wildfire spread. No prescribed burning or mechanical fuels treatments would be implemented to reduce hazardous fuels or create stand conditions resilient to fire occurrence. Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 25 and 26. The report documents that “Within the last ten years there have been approximately 293 acres of lop and scatter fuels reduction work and 222 acres of mechanical fuels reduction work within previous commercially harvested units in the project area. These previous treatments will have an additional benefit to the proposed fuels treatments and their effectiveness in this project. There are no known fuels treatments on state or private lands.” Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 40.

Objector Statement #58: Objector states that the EA fails to disclose or acknowledge the scientific information that indicates severe fires burning over large acreages are normal for these forests, and that fire intensity and severity are dependent much more upon weather than fuels. SC at 170.

Response: I find the Responsible Official used the best available science in analyzing the alternatives.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) directs the agency to analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives.

The Silviculture and Fuels Report document that ninety percent of the Boulder Park analysis area is in Fire Regime I (low severity) and Fire Regime III (moderate/mixed severity) where stand replacement severity occurs frequently in small patches (1 – 5 acres) or infrequently in larger patches (5 – 15 acres). Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 21 and 22. Ten percent of the analysis area is in Fire Regime IV where wildfire usually only enters these areas during drought years (100+ years), and can burn with high intensity. Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 22.

The report documents that “Recent characterizations of mixed-severity fire regimes in the region confirm that complex landscapes were maintained with many small patches and few large patches” and that opening sizes of the Boulder Park vegetation types are historically less than 40 acres with only the subalpine fir/lodgepole pine vegetation type (a very minor component of the treatment acres) exhibiting patch sizes of 1,000 acres or more with these larger patches historically created during extreme fire weather events. Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 19.

Comments expressing concern regarding particular references were considered in Appendix B response to comments at comment #9, 55, 107, 108, and 144.

Objector Statement #59: Objector states that the EA did not disclose logging's impact on the rate of fire spread and did not disclose how fire regime is changing due to climate change, concluding that the EA reflects "an overriding bias favoring vegetation manipulation and resource extraction." SC at 175-176.

Response: I find the EA documented the effects of harvest on fire rate of spread and provided the information needed for project scale effects determinations due to a changing climate.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) directs the agency to analyze the direct, indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed action and alternatives.

The response to objection statements #11-18 (in particular #17) also addressed considerations of climate change.

The analysis measures effectiveness of vegetation treatments both in the short and long term and uses elements that includes resilience to disturbance (e.g., wildfire, insects, disease). EA at 12. Fuel modeling was used to simulate prescribed fire and measure the effectiveness of fuels treatments in harvest areas. The use of modeling analyzed prescribed fire effects on 1000-hour fuel loadings, canopy base height, and crown bulk density in determining proper treatments and potential effects of prescribed burning post-harvest. Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 12. Also, the analysis concluded a potential reduction in crown fire from underburning hazardous fuel areas and commercial treatment areas, as surviving fire tolerant tree species will become more fire resilient and may begin to self-prune lower branches as a fire response. Silviculture and Fuels Resource Report at 36.

One of the goals of the proposed action is reducing stand density which is consistent with adaptation practices to increase resilience of forests to climate-related environmental changes. The EA and response to comments documents that the proposed action is consistent with options proposed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for minimizing the impacts of climate change on forests, thus meeting the objective for adapting to climate change. Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at 2. By reducing the threat of high-severity wildfire, the proposed action would create conditions more advantageous for supporting forest health in a changing climate and reducing emissions over the long term. Draft DN and FONSI Appendix A at 3.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Fire: The EA and project record documented the analysis of fire and fuels, as well as the potential impact of proposed treatments. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Soil Productivity

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedy: These objection issues focus on the objector's concern that the soil resource would be impacted. Suggested remedies include: choose the No Action Alternative; finish the ongoing process of revising the Forest Plan to create soil standards based on the best available science that set measurable, quantitative limits on changes to physical, chemical and biological properties of soils, and also set measurable, quantitative limits on reductions of soil productivity; prepare an EIS; explain how the soil survey data translate to determinations of the amount of DSC in each activity area; disclose the amount of statistical error that exists for each type of DSC measurement and each type of DSC estimation, providing a statistically sound explanation how accurate those values are, and disclosing the percentage error expected of the existing and estimated values for DSC, and disclosing the odds of each activity area meeting the 20% DSC standard based on the particulars of each unit and logging plan; disclose the cumulative level of DSC over all acres of the

project area caused by past management and disclose these numbers for each subwatershed; disclose the link between current and cumulative soil DSC in project area watersheds to the current and cumulative impacts on water quantity and quality, incorporating the best available science; and disclose the full extent of soil restoration needs in these watersheds made known.

Objector Statement #60: Objector states that “DSC is merely a proxy for soil productivity. The FS lacks science to validate the SQS methodology for use as a soil productivity proxy.” SC at 62 and 179.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official considered this comment in the draft DN and FONSI Appendix B Response to Comments at B-92-94. Although the comment was considered outside the scope of analysis, the response provided discussion as to relevance or rationale as to how or why was outside the scope of analysis.

The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA. The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

The Draft DN and FONSI Appendix B-Response to Comments (p. B-92-93) addressed this objection and referred the reader to the soil report on pages 5-6 for a discussion of the reliability and validity of the soil surveys and the methodology used for the soil analysis.

Objector Statement #61: Objector states that the Boulder Park EA: fails to disclose that soil standards are based on the feasibility of limiting soil damage using typical log extraction methods rather than setting quantitative limits on losses of soil productivity based on ecological sustainability; fails to state the applicable Forest Plan requirements and demonstrate project compliance with them; fails to disclose the detrimental soil condition amounts per activity area and compliance with soil desired conditions FW-CD-SOIL-02 and FW-DC-SOIL-03; fails to analyze and disclose the effects of noxious weeds on land and soil productivity; fails to disclose the reliability of FS survey data; fails to disclose the full extent of soil restoration needs in project area watersheds; fails to consider and disclose validity of FS analysis methodology; fails to include a cumulative effects analysis for soils that considers detrimental soil conditions outside of project activity areas (including in dispersed campsites); fails to disclose best available science; and fails to include Design Elements/mitigation methods that are demonstrated to be effective in restoring soils to meet soil quality standards, or for preventing new detrimental soil damage. SC at 178-179.

Response: I find that the District responded to these comments and considered the concerns when they were submitted previously. The District disclosed methodologies and insured professional integrity in analysis and the EA and project record adequately documented effects to soil resources.

The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses.

This objection statement was responded to when it was submitted as a comment, and considerations are documented in DN/FONSI Appendix B Response to Comments at comment #176-180 (Appendix B at B-92 through B-95). The response includes: consistency with Forest Plan requirements were explained in

the response and Soil Report at 1-2; methodologies and analysis parameters were considered and explained in the response and Soil Report at 5-6 and 13; the Proposed Action and soil design elements were explained; and questions were answered.

The Soils Report at 1, 11 and 15 incorporated by reference the soil standards as defined by R6 Soil Quality Standards and Guidelines (SQS) and Forest Plan forest wide desired conditions (Soils Report p. 11-15,). Table 3 of the Soils Report at 7 described quantitatively how the proposed activities did not exceed Regional Soil Quality Standards. The Soil Report at 7 and 24-25 found no Detrimental Soil Conditions to be over the 20 percent disturbance level for activity areas. This finding documented consistency with the Forest Plan desired conditions, and informed the parameters for subsequent analysis. The Soils Report at 18-19 described the cumulative effects analysis boundaries, methodology, and findings.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Soil Productivity: The EA and project record adequately documented effects to soil resources; no remedy or resolution is needed.

Noxious Weeds

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedy: These objection issues focus on the concern over invasive plant spread from the project. Suggested remedies include selecting the no action alternative or preparing an EIS to address the analytic and scientific issues identified in their comments.

Objector Statement #62: Objector states that project activities will worsen noxious weed spread and that the EA failed to present a numerical estimates of noxious weed infestations in the project area and failed to conduct on-the-ground surveys. Objector also states that the EA did not analyze or disclose the impacts of noxious weeds on wildlife habitat in old growth areas and did not disclose the impacts herbicide treatments on native species. SC at 193.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official appropriately considered impacts of project alternatives to the spread of invasive plants.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The Boulder Park Invasive Plants Report at 1 disclosed the existing condition via the effects of the No Action Alternative of invasive species in the Project Area. The EA at 3.1.3 Invasive Plants discloses potential impacts from the Proposed Action to the spread of invasive species. The Wildlife Biological Evaluation at 33-34 and 36 disclosed the Proposed Action impacts, including the use of herbicides (from previously authorized programmatic NEPA), on wildlife forage throughout the project area. The Botany Report at 2.3 Design Elements disclosed protection measures that would be required for previously authorized herbicide treatments near sensitive species. It disclosed the cumulative impact on sensitive botanical species from the spread of invasive species. Botany Report at 9.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Noxious Weeds: Potential impacts from invasive species were addressed; no remedy or resolution is needed.

Cumulative Effects/Scientific Integrity

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedies: These issues focus on the totality of the cumulative effects analysis and the use of best science and scientific integrity of the data/models used. Suggested remedy is to choose the no action alternative or prepare an EIS that addresses their concerns.

Objector Statement #63: Objector states that EA improperly truncated the cumulative effects analysis area and failed to address cumulative effects because Forest Plan monitoring has not occurred as prescribed, and as such, the totality of impacts from implementing the Forest Plan cannot be measured. SC at 193-196. Objector states that there are no project monitoring items that would check compliance with the revised Forest Plan direction. SC at 195.

Response: I find that the EA documented the potential for cumulative effects for the project alternatives. Monitoring activities were developed to inform the appropriate, project-level scale.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(1) requires that an EA briefly describe the need for action. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects. Forest Service policy at FSH 1909.15 Chapter 10 guides the bounding of cumulative effects analysis.

The proposed action was developed to meet the desired future condition of Forest Plan management areas. EA at 1. The EA at section 2.2.2 Monitoring, described that monitoring activities would be taken during and following the proposed actions to determine if treatments follow the proposed actions, incorporate design criteria, meet the purpose and need, and are effective.

The cumulative effects analysis parameters were defined by each resource as summarized in the EA at section 3, environmental impacts of the proposed action and section 3.4 3.4 Past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions. No cumulative effects were found to be significant. Draft DN/FONSI at 12. The EA Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment #46 responded to prior, similar assertions and documented how post-harvest monitoring would be addressed.

Objector Statement #64: Objector states that the EA lacks scientific integrity because it “fails to demonstrate the reliability of the data used for its analyses; fails to demonstrate the validity of its models, fails to apply any established scientific standard for determining best available science, and fails to disclose the limitations of its models and other analysis methodology.” SC at 197-205.

Response: I find that the EA did not lack professional integrity and that the best available science in the analysis and project design was used.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to “insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses in environmental impact statements.” Although Forest Service regulations do not provide the same standard for environmental assessments, Forest Service guidance recommends that forests show consideration of the best available science and insure scientific integrity of the discussions and analyses in a NEPA project document by identifying the methods used in the analysis, referencing scientific sources relied on, discussing responsible opposing views, and disclosing incomplete or unavailable information. Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination: Clarification of May 2nd, 2007 Advice on Documenting “Best Available Science.”

The responses to Objector Statements #1, #7, #12, #33, #34, #37, #46, #47, #56, #58, #60, #61, and #65, each address consistency of the EA and Project Record with the regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 and guidance associated with Best Available Science. Comments regarding professional and scientific integrity and best available science are considered throughout DN and FONSI Appendix B Response to Comments.

Objector Statement #65: Objector states that the EA “does not properly analyze and disclose the impacts of livestock grazing in the project area and fails to disclose scientifically valid quantitative data of the monitoring of its livestock grazing program to validate analyses for affected resources within project area and cumulative effects analysis area” in particular noting that the EA does not analyze the suitability of or the cumulative effects of livestock grazing in the Cusick-Gardner and Ruby Creek allotments. SC at 206-208. Objector also states that the EA “does not disclose if livestock grazing on allotments is consistent with existing permits or if impacts are within the range projected in NEPA documents which authorized the grazing.” SC at 208-210.

Response: I find the EA analyzed and disclosed the impacts of livestock grazing in the project area.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1502.24 directs agencies to “insure the professional integrity, including scientific integrity, of the discussions and analyses in environmental impact statements.” While the citation applies to Environmental Impact Statements, the same principle can be applied to environmental assessments. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed action.

The range section in the EA discloses the effects of livestock grazing. EA at 49-50. The EA specifically notes that less than one percent of the Ruby Creek allotment occurs within the project area, while the Cusick-Gardner allotment is located primarily within the planning area and supports 42 cow-calf pair during the grazing season. The EA at 71 notes that the Cal-Tac grazing allotment overlaps with the project area, but is currently vacant and as such, cannot contribute to cumulative effects. There are no other activities listed in the EA at 70-71 that would contribute to cumulative effects, as summarized in the EA at 50.

Cumulative effects are specifically addressed in the EA at 50, noting that other actions would not affect the amount of grazing that would occur within the allotment, as grazing levels would remain the same and transitory range would return to forestland over time.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Cumulative Effects/Scientific Integrity: The potential for cumulative effects was addressed and the use of best science was also documented. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Sensitive Plants

Overview and Objector’s Suggested Remedy: This objection issue focuses on the concern over impacts to sensitive plants. Objector’s suggested remedy is to choose the no action alternative.

Objector Statement #66: Objector believes that the Forest failed to explain how sensitive plants would be directly or indirectly affected and failed to cite science supporting the proposed management of whitebark pine. SC at 205-206.

Response: I find that the District documented the analysis of direct, and indirect cumulative effects to sensitive plants including whitebark pine.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed action.

The DN/FONSI at 8 describes that since the 30-day comment period, proposed thinning treatments related to enhancement of whitebark pine habitat were removed from the list of proposed actions (approximately 288 acres) since those treatments are already authorized by a 2015 decision authorizing whitebark pine restoration treatments on the Colville National Forest.

The EA at 38 and 46 summarized that whitebark pine, a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act, is documented within the project area, although proposed treatments occur outside of occupied habitat. The project would have no effect to the small stand of whitebark pine trees planted in the vicinity of Olson Peak. No high elevation, late structural stage stands would be harvested. EA at 46. The EA Table 16 summarizes findings of direct, indirect, and cumulative effects to sensitive plants. The Biological Evaluation: Botanical Resources analyzes effects to other sensitive plants (project record).

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Sensitive Plants: Potential impacts to whitebark pine and other sensitive plants were addressed. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Economics

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedy: This objection issues focuses on funding sources. Objector's suggested remedy is to choose the no action alternative.

Objector Statement #67: Objector states that the funding sources for all non-commercial activities need to be identified and requests that the following itemized costs be disclosed: new system roads, new temporary roads (including machine trails and excavated skid trails), project-related road maintenance, road decommissioning, all other road-related work, NEPA and associated pre-decisional costs, sale preparation and administration, project-related weed treatment, prescribed fire application, other project mitigation, post-project monitoring, environmental analyses and reports, public meetings and field trips, publicity, consultation with other government agencies, responding to comments and objections, collaborative meetings. SC at 211.

Response: I find this EA and DN adequately addressed the economics of the project.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed action.

The economic analysis conducted for the project is summarized in the EA at 67. The specialist report relative to economics is available in the project file, Boulder Park Ecological Restoration Project, Economic Analysis Report. It utilized the Transaction Evidence Appraisal (TEA) method to determine Cost/Benefit Ratio (gross value/associated costs) and Net Present Value (NPV). Economic Analysis Report at 1. Both indices are best estimates of a projects overall value based on estimated inputs and costs.

Data and worksheets are also available in the project file which display how the inputs and costs were derived, and include costs such as log haul, road maintenance and temporary roads, along with other non-timber costs such as burning, culvert replacement, prescribed fire application, and road decommissioning. Other costs are estimated as a cost (non-discounted) per thousand board feet (mbf) and include planning (\$6.60/mbf), sale preparation (\$10.36), and sale administration (\$8.05). Project Record, Supporting Documentation, Boulder Park Economic Analysis Spreadsheet. Many of the costs requested to be incorporated by the objector into the economic analysis are outside the scope of the Boulder Park project as they are considered “sunk” costs by the agency, which include public engagement, consulting with other government agencies, collaboration and the costs of responding to their objection.

Objector Statement #68: Objector states that the “EA fails to account for fire suppression for which taxpayers are expected to foot the bill, without having any say in the matter.” SC at 211.

Response: I find the EA addressed economics and that future fire suppression is outside the scope of this analysis. The potential for unforeseen events such as wildfire is speculative and it is beyond the scope of the Boulder Creek analysis to predict the occurrence of wildfire and the costs of fire suppression.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Economics: The economic feasibility of the project was addressed in compliance with the Forest Plan and agency policy. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Inventoried Roadless Areas/Uninventoried Roadless Areas

Overview and Objector’s Suggested Remedy: This objection issue focuses on the concern over uninventoried roadless areas. Objector’s suggested remedy is to choose the no action alternative or prepare an EIS.

Objector Statement #69: Objector states that the “Boulder Park EA fails to provide an analysis considering uninventoried roadless areas,” and that the District must analyze and disclose impacts to these areas so that the public can understand if irreversible/irretrievable impacts to the suitability of these areas and consideration for recommended Wilderness in the future. Objector states the District must also acknowledge the science that recognizes these areas for their ecological integrity. SC at 211-212.

Response: I find the EA addressed Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) as required.

The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed action.

The EA at 72 states that “There are no Inventoried Roadless Areas within the project area. None of the ongoing or reasonably foreseeable future actions would have cumulative effects that would change the opportunities for roadless area character or scenic integrity.”

As noted in the EA at 2-5, the planning area is comprised of four management areas, none of which are designated as Wilderness or recommended as Wilderness in the revised Forest Plan, Appendix H at 236. The term “uninventoried roadless area” is not found in the revised Forest Plan; instead, the Forest Plan

recognizes Inventoried Roadless Areas, Wilderness and Recommended Wilderness. The Forest Plan Record of Decision already documented Recommended Wilderness; no other analysis is required at the project-level at this time.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Inventoried Roadless Areas/Uninventoried Roadless Areas: The District documented that there were no potential impacts to Inventoried Roadless Areas; the term “uninventoried roadless areas” is not found in the Forest Plan. No remedy or resolution is needed.

Support for the Action Alternative/Improvements to the Proposed Action

Overview and Objector’s Suggested Remedy: These objection issues focus on how the objector believes the project can be improved. Objector’s suggested remedies are to analyze all potential areas that can and need to be treated; broaden the use of group selection; and close, rather than decommission roads.

Objector Statement #70: Objector support the action of mechanically treating 10,000-12,000 acres within the project area, as outlined in the scoping document, instead of the proposed 9,010 acres. AFRC at 2.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official properly considered the objector’s scoping comments and subsequent concerns.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1501.7 states that “the process of scoping is an integral part of environmental analysis. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining the responsible official and lead and cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons.” The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA.

The EA at Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment #27 responded to a comment expressing the same concern. It stated that “The focus of the Boulder Park projects is to improve forest resiliency, watershed function, and contribute to local economic health and stability. The Boulder Park project does strive to maximize treatment areas and uses a variety of tools to promote diversity within and among stands. The number of treatment acres decreased from the early scoping process due to road access concerns and feasibility, and wildlife needs (e.g., goshawk nesting habitat).”

Objector Statement #71: Objector believes the Forest missed an opportunity to further improve forest health and should have proposed more group selection to provide early seral habitat for big game species. AFRC at 3.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official properly considered the objector’s scoping comments and subsequent concerns and properly disclosed impacts of the alternatives to big game.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1501.7 states that “the process of scoping is an integral part of environmental analysis. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining the responsible official and lead and cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons.” The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA. The regulation at 36 CFR 220.7(b)(3) requires that an EA include a discussion of the environmental effects of the proposed project and any alternatives, including disclosing the direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

The EA at Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment No. 8 responded to a comment requesting more group selection treatment. The effects of the alternatives to big game (elk and deer) habitat and foraging opportunities are analyzed in the Wildlife Report at 62-66. Effects from group selection treatments are disclosed in the Wildlife Report at 64. Effects are summarized in the EA at 28 and 33. The Wildlife Report at Table 31 and the EA at Table 17 disclose the effects of the project alternatives to essential habitats for surrogate species, including the impacts of the alternatives to open forest: early successional group. EA at 42.

Objector Statement #72: Objector supports reducing system roads, but is concerned that 25 miles of road will be decommissioned, recommending that these roads be closed/stabilized instead. AFRC at 3-4.

Response: I find that the Responsible Official properly considered the objector's comments and subsequent concerns. I find that the Responsible Official was consistent with the 36 CFR 212 Travel Management regulations. The environmental analysis completed by the interdisciplinary team included a travel analysis process as guided by Forest Service policy and regulation.

The regulation at 36 CFR 212.5 Travel Management Regulations requires identification and evaluation of the National Forest system roads. The FSH 7709.55 Travel Planning Handbook Chapter 20 guides the Travel Analysis process.

The regulation at 40 CFR 1501.7 states that "the process of scoping is an integral part of environmental analysis. Scoping includes refining the proposed action, determining the responsible official and lead and cooperating agencies, identifying preliminary issues, and identifying interested and affected persons." The regulation at 36 CFR 218.25(b)(1) requires that the responsible official consider comments submitted on an EA.

The EA at Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment #13 responded to this comment from the objector. It described background and details about this element of the Proposed Action. The EA at 4 Section 1.3.2 Travel Analysis describes the completion of a Travel Analysis Process. A Travel Analysis Process document informed the Proposed Action. The EA Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment #152 describes project consistency with requirements under 36 CFR 212.5. It summarizes that the ID team used a data-driven scientific approach to categorize roads based on risk to resources and net benefit of a road to project activities. Resource specialists were also given the opportunity to identify road prisms of concern that needed to be addressed. All roads of concern that were identified were then individually reviewed by the IDT team to recommend actions needed for each road. The proposed action includes a detailed description and list of the road management actions that resulted from the Travel Analysis Process. EA at 6-7; Tables 3-5.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Support for the Action Alternative/Improvements to the Proposed Action: Any changes to the proposed action at this point would be outside the scope of the analysis and would require either another comment period and/or another objection period. No remedies or resolutions are needed.

Revised Forest Plan

Overview and Objector's Suggested Remedy: This objection issue focuses on the concern over the revised Forest Plan. Objector's suggested remedy is to choose the no action alternative or prepare an EIS.

Objector Statement #73: Objector states that the Boulder Park EA exemplifies the concerns they raised during Forest Plan Revision, including failure of Forest Plan Direction, failure of the Forest Plan to address the root cause of ongoing ecological damage on the forest, which are roads; and failure to assure abundant populations of native fish and wildlife, including failure to assure minimum viable populations. SC at 3-4 and 76.

Response: I find that the EA documents compliance with the Forest Plan

The regulation at 36 CFR 219.15 requires that actions taken under Forest and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plans) are consistent with the Forest Plan.

Concerns raised during the Forest Plan Revision are outside of the scope of the Boulder Park Ecological Restoration Project. Management direction for each management area (MA) is provided by the Forest Plan, which describes the goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, and management prescriptions (Forest Plan chapters 2 and 3). The emphasis of each MA within the project area is listed in Table 1. EA at 3.

Objector Statement #74: Objector states that the Boulder Park EA fails to state the applicable standards and guidelines from the revised Forest Plan; fails to address scenic integrity requirements of the revised Forest Plan; is oblivious to the needs for changes to the revised Forest Plan; fails to analyze the degree to which the Forest has meet the goals, objectives, standards and guidelines over the 30 plus years the Plan has been implemented; fails to disclose which management actions are proposed for Management Area MA-1; and that "it is not possible for the public to know if the project is consistent with a Plan that has not yet been finalized." SC at 5-6.

Response: I find the Responsible Official determined this project compliant with pertinent Forest Plan direction and is not in violation of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 which requires that all projects implemented on National Forest System lands comply with approved Forest Plans.

The EA at 3 describes management direction required under the 2019 Colville National Forest Land Management Plan. Additionally, the proposed action addresses how the purpose and need meets desired future condition, objectives and standards of the forest plan management areas. EA at 1 and 3.

Scenic integrity is addressed in section 3 of the EA. The EA describes how under the proposed action Scenic Integrity Objectives for the project area are improved, and describes how without the proposed treatments there would be no immediate change in the quality of Scenic Integrity; however, over time the lack of treatments may lead to reduced Scenic Integrity through conifer encroachment and fewer management created openings that area popular for dispersed camping. EA at 69. The Recreation Resource Report identifies Forest Plan Guideline SCE-01 as a Forest Plan Desired Condition. Recreation Resource Report at 13.

Forest plan compliance is discussed in the EA and specialist reports. Standards and guidelines are included in the EA as design elements found in chapter 2, Table 6. EA at 8- 11. Standard practices are documented in Appendix A.

The Biological Evaluation at Table 6, Botany Report at 3, and the Hydrology and Fisheries Report at Tables 2-3 each apply standards and guidelines to the alternatives as required by the Forest Plan. The draft DN/FONSI at 8-9 and 13 summarizes consistency of findings with Forest Plan desired conditions, guidelines and standards.

The DN and FONSI at Appendix B - Response Public Comments at Comment #130 documented that the only management action proposed in areas formerly managed as MA-1 (under the 1988 Forest Plan designation) would be the use of prescribed fire. Logging is not proposed within any core habitat areas prescribed by the 1988 Forest Plan for old growth associated species (including areas formerly managed as MA-1). Response to Comments Table at 19 -22.

The responses to Objector Statements #1 and #36 address the integration of the project design, analysis, and public involvement in light of the revised Forest Plan.

Final Remedies/Resolutions for Revised Forest Plan: The EA and project record document compliance with the revised Forest Plan. No remedy or resolution is needed.