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Forest Service

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

Inyo and Sierra  
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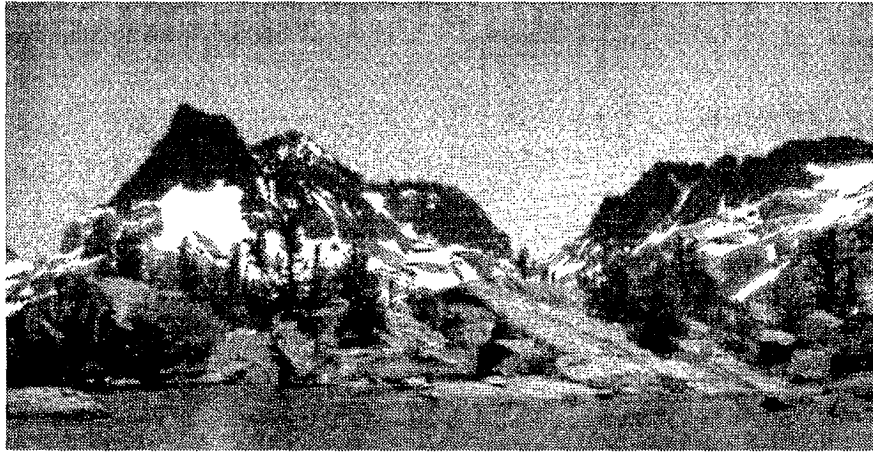
# **Management Direction for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses**

## **Final Environmental Impact Statement**

### **Record of Decision**

Non-significant Amendment to the Land and Resource  
Management Plans for the Inyo and Sierra National  
Forests





Island Pass, Ansel Adams Wilderness  
*Photo by Daniel Perrot*

**Lead Agency:** U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region

<b>Responsible Officials:</b>	Jeffrey E. Bailey, Forest Supervisor, Inyo National Forest	James L. Boynton, Forest Supervisor, Sierra National Forest
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Madera, Mono, Fresno, and Inyo Counties, California

Olive Lake, John Muir Wilderness, *Cover Photo by Mary Beth Hennessy*

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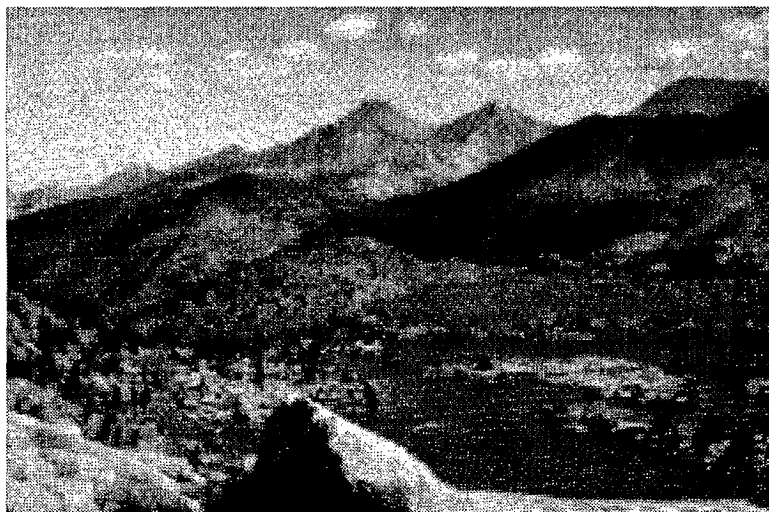
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Marie Lake, John Muir Wilderness



John Muir Trail South of Selden Pass,  
John Muir Wilderness



South Fork San Joaquin River, John Muir Wilderness

*Photos by Daniel and Laurie Perrot*

## Introduction

This document presents our decision for a joint Wilderness Management Plan (Plan) for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses and includes non-significant amendments to the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) for the Sierra and Inyo National Forests in California. The following pages summarize our reasons for choosing Alternative 1 Modified as the Selected Alternative.

An open, inclusive approach was used to make this decision. Our intent is to continue with this model as the Plan is implemented. Although we make this decision based upon the best information currently available to us, it is not without some uncertainty or risk. We fully expect that by placing an emphasis on monitoring, any needed course corrections or adjustments will be made.

Throughout the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the Selected Alternative we considered public input in developing a scientifically credible, resource sustainable, and legally sufficient plan. In our judgment, the decision we are making will more effectively meet legal requirements, improve environmental protection measures, and further reduce the potential for environmental harm from human activities in these wildernesses than the current wilderness plans and LRMPs. The Plan will also assure wilderness values and opportunities to the public well into the future.

## The Decision

The decision we are making today is to select Alternative 1 – Modified as presented in the FEIS. The Plan that has been developed from Alternative 1 – Modified replaces the existing wilderness plans for the Ansel Adams (formerly Minarets), John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses and we will be making non-significant amendments to the LRMPs for the Sierra and Inyo National Forests. Existing LMRP direction as amended by the *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA)*, will apply unless amended by this decision. The elements of the plan are listed below.

We have made our decision after careful review of the public comments on the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS) prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We also have reviewed the FEIS, the alternative maps, and the revised management direction.

## **Key Elements of the Decision**

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We have listed below the key elements of the management direction for these wildernesses. Please refer to the FEIS Chapter 2, Alternative 1 -- Modified for greater detail.

### **Commercial and Non-commercial Trailhead Quotas**

- Establishes a quota period of May 1 to November 1.
- Establishes quotas on all trailheads for all commercial and non-commercial users.
- Authorizes the establishment of destination quotas if trailhead quotas do not achieve desired wilderness conditions.
- Establishes a quota system that varies by trailhead and is either a single (combined public and commercial users) or multiple (separate public and commercial user[s]) quotas.
- Establishes a system of split quotas (borrowing from the next day) that will allow the accommodation of full party size, provides flexibility to the vacationing public, and reduces undesirable spikes in commercial use.
- Establishes a 5-year implementation process for introducing commercial quotas and for trailheads where non-commercial quotas are being lowered or did not previously exist. For trailheads with new quotas, year one will allow 150% of the quota identified in Alternative 1 -- Modified, with a gradual reduction of the quota to the actual level identified in Alternative 1 -- Modified at year 5. For trailheads where existing quotas are being lowered, the quota will start in year one with the existing quota and be reduced to the level identified in Alternative 1 -- Modified.

### **Commercial Services**

- Sets service day allocations based on the type of commercial services provided.
- Allocates a pool of temporary commercial service days both to accommodate identified needed commercial services and to permit some limited opportunities for growth of commercial services when determined necessary. This pool is limited to 3000 days (1500 east side and 1500 west side).
- Establishes criteria for considering approval of commercial services in areas where these uses shall remain low.

### **Wilderness Permits**

- Requires that all wilderness permits for both commercial and non-commercial users will be approved by the Forest Service and that the quota system is managed by the Forest Service.

- Requires that all users of commercial services go through the commercial provider to obtain their wilderness permit, thereby counting against the commercial quota.
- Continues with a year-round permit system for day use on Mt. Whitney and overnight use in all three wildernesses.

### **Managing Different Areas for Different Levels of Use**

- Manages for a range of uses and opportunities for solitude across the wilderness landscape.
- Establishes recreation use categories 1, 2, & 3 based upon maintenance of historic patterns of use (e.g. low, moderate, and high) unless limiting factors exist. Protects and enhances popular areas of use to avoid degradation, yet continues to allow use.
- Manages for a broad spectrum of recreation experiences in the wildernesses that are consistent with the values defined in the Wilderness Act. Provides for high levels of solitude across the wilderness landscape. Allows for high level of use in a small number of areas.

### **Day Use**

- Monitors day use on specific trailheads and sets a threshold of 20% over baseline levels, that may trigger the need for an analysis and public involvement process that would determine if concerns warrant further action and to search for solutions to alleviate day use concerns.

### **System and User-Created Trails**

- Adjusts trail maintenance levels to reflect recreation categories and desired conditions.
- Monitors user-created trails for resource impacts.
- Bars construction of new system trails, but permits consideration of incorporation of user-created trails to the official system when there is an overriding benefit to public use, enjoyment, and protection of wilderness resources and the appropriate analysis of this benefit has been completed.
- Considers physically closing and eliminating user-created trails and system trails that do not meet a public need or which cause unacceptable levels of resource impacts.
- Restricts commercial use to the existing system trails unless otherwise approved by the Forest Service.

### **Single Use Trails**

- Permits recreation packstock and hiker use on all trails except Mt. Whitney and Meysan Lake, which are closed to packstock.
- Provides for identification of trails unsuitable or not recommended for stock use. Commercial packstock operations will not be authorized on these trails.

### **Campsite Densities & Conditions**

- Establishes management direction for campsite densities and campsite conditions for each of the three recreation use categories.
- Designates campsites in popular destinations if necessary, in order to protect wilderness values.
- Establishes setbacks for campsites at 100 feet from water if terrain permits, but in no case closer than 50 feet.

### **Closures for Campfires**

- Establishes campfire closures above 10,000 feet in the northern portion and 10,400 feet in the southern portion of the wildernesses.
- Authorizes site-specific campfire closures as needed.
- Prohibits wood burning stoves, charcoal fires, packed-in firewood, or fire pans within areas closed to campfires.

### **Food Storage**

- Establishes food storage restrictions wilderness-wide to reduce bear/human conflicts and protect wildlife from dependency on human food.

### **Recreation Stock Forage**

- Establishes grazing utilization standards that apply to commercial and private stock parties.
- Adopts range readiness standards.
- Establishes commercial packstock forage use through special use permits for individual pack stations.
- Requires that stream bank trampling and chiseling will not exceed 20%.



- Special use permits for the commercial operators are to include conditions requiring them to cease using meadows when grazing standards are reached, and requires the permittees to be involved in the monitoring of grazing conditions.
- Provides for a full closure of those meadows to all packstock grazing (commercial and non-commercial) for the following season when over utilization of vegetation in meadows has occurred.

### Structures

- Retains only historic structures and those few structures necessary for the administration of these wilderness areas.

### Cultural Values

- Conforms to the Programmatic Agreement: Controlling Impacts on Historic Properties; Management of Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses, *Sierra and Inyo National Forests* (Programmatic Agreement) designed to manage and protect the historic resources of these wilderness areas.

## Rationale For Decision

The discussion below explains why we have selected Alternative 1 Modified from among the alternatives analyzed in the FEIS and highlights the key elements of our decision.

Alternative 1 Modified balances the tradeoffs between various components of resource protection and visitor use by: 1) aligning use levels and quotas with an overall strategy for managing visitor use to allow for a range of wilderness experiences with low density recreation dominating the landscape; 2) acknowledging and responding to resource concerns by implementing a process to monitor and assess field conditions; 3) considering patterns of use and varying impacts in the design of the visitor management strategy; and 4) determining an appropriate mix of commercial and non-commercial activities.

Throughout the planning process, it was quite clear that the interested public holds widely divergent views regarding the management of these wildernesses. It was also quite clear that wilderness visitors, non-commercial or commercial, on foot or on horseback, value many similar wilderness qualities and wish to see them safeguarded. We feel that the extensive public involvement and comment during this process has led to significant improvements in the final decision. While we recognize that there will still be differences of opinion among stakeholders, we believe that Alternative 1 Modified is the best approach that attempts to facilitate maximum resource protection while providing for a broad array of wilderness recreation experiences.

Management direction over time will be modified based on monitoring, documentation, and feedback. Active and constructive public participation is vital if we are to achieve our goals.

## Visitor Use Management

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### Recreation Strategy: Managing Different Areas for Different Levels of Use

It is our desire to manage these wildernesses in a manner that protects the landscape for the highest qualities of wilderness character consistent with the appropriate levels of public use. These lands provide wilderness experiences for a wide range of the public. By using three recreation categories, we will manage a very small number of areas as concentrated use areas, while the majority of the landscape will be managed for lower densities of recreation. The three categories for managing recreation use are displayed in the table at the end of this section. These categories allow for a range of recreational characteristics to coexist across the wilderness landscape.

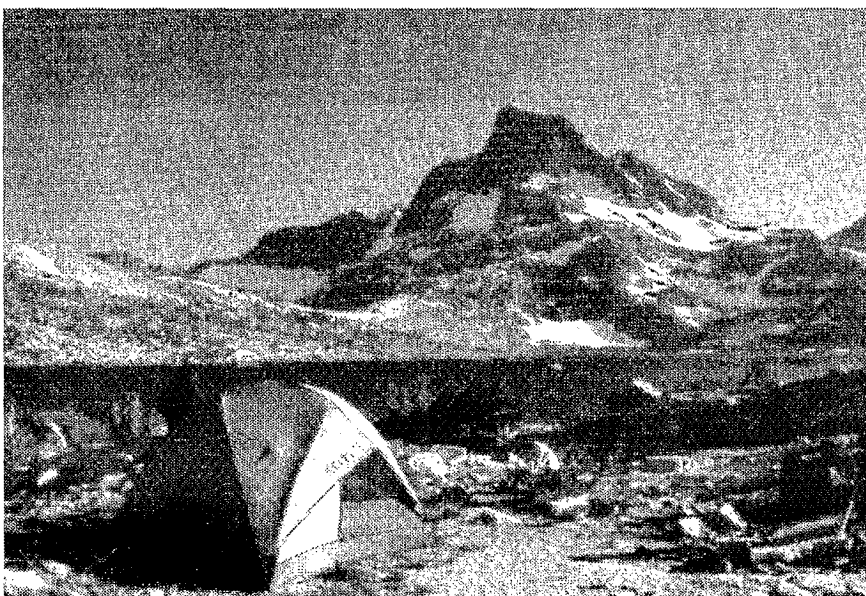
Many respondents to the RDEIS fear that using three recreation categories permits degradation of the wildernesses and contend that the Wilderness Act does not allow for such a strategy. We disagree. We believe this management strategy is the most effective way to balance the reasonable recreational desires of the public with the protection of all wilderness values. Managing in categories is not a new approach, it is not new direction, and it is not unique to these wildernesses. We believe it is supported by many years of common practice and wilderness research by academics, and by agency direction.

In the RDEIS we consciously designed Alternative 2 with one category to manage the wilderness the same way across the landscape. The use levels prescribed in Alternative 2 are higher in the low use areas than what we are prescribing in Alternative 1 Modified. Consequently, we chose Alternative 1 Modified so that we would not displace visitors to low use areas, and in the long run, cause degradation of those areas.

Areas of concentrated use constitute less than 3 percent of the 840,581 acres of the wildernesses in this plan. These corridors and destinations have remained popular for generations and we believe provide rare and unique opportunities for the American public. We also believe the visitor experience of these landscapes furthers the goals of the Wilderness Act by generating an understanding and appreciation of wilderness. We are committed to managing these areas intensively to prevent degradation from visitor use, to prevent displacement of visitors to lower use areas, to contain impacts caused by visitation, and improve the existing condition at these locations.

We have proposed standards to maintain the remaining 97 percent of the wildernesses in their current condition in order to curb the trend toward pristine areas gradually becoming more impacted. Standards for crowding at campsites, campsite density, and campsite conditions will vary by recreation category to insure that degradation and unacceptable impacts in any area of the wilderness does not occur. These new management standards are designed to maintain and enhance wilderness character, and we believe they will improve current conditions. The plan emphasizes ongoing monitoring and the ability of managers to take corrective actions if necessary.

The challenge of wilderness management is one of meeting public demand for recreation use while protecting wilderness values such as ecological integrity, and solitude etc. It has been our task to find an acceptable level of recreation impacts and to assess the trade-offs of resource protection, visitor freedom, and wilderness value. We are aware that each visitor holds a personal set of expectations and assumptions about what a wilderness experience is or should be. We believe that most everyone's desired experience can be provided across the landscape through the implementation of this recreation strategy. However, we have consciously decided that at times we will not meet peak public demand, when to do so would have unacceptable impacts on wilderness values.



Campsite at Thousand Island Lake, Ansel Adams Wilderness  
*Photo by Daniel Perrot*

**Table 1. Desired Condition of Recreation Categories**

	<b>Category 1</b>	<b>Category 2</b>	<b>Category 3</b>
<b>Social</b>	These areas provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and are predominately free from evidence of human activities. Encounters with other visitors while traveling or camping are very infrequent. This environment offers a very high degree of challenge, self-reliance, and risk.	Moderate to high levels of solitude while traveling and camping outside the primary trail corridors are likely. Primary trail corridors have highly maintained and constructed trails that support access to popular destinations and travel routes. Secondary trails allow for moderate dispersal of use and are maintained in a manner that will be consistent with a more pristine and primitive experience than primary trail corridors. Camping encounters are likely at trail junctions and scenic points and campsites may be within site or sound of each other.	In these areas, recreation use levels are maintained to provide moderate levels of solitude. High opportunities for solitude exist during the non-peak use season. During peak use season, opportunities for experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds and impacts of human activities are moderate. The probability of encountering other visitors is moderate to high on the trail and at campsites.
<b>Resource - general</b>	A highly unmodified natural environment characterizes the area. Ecological and natural processes are minimally affected by the action of users. Environmental impacts are low and restricted to minor losses of vegetation where camping occurs and along travel routes. Most areas recover from impacts on an annual basis. These short-term impacts are apparent to few visitors.	A highly unmodified natural environment characterizes the area. In a few areas, where moderate levels of use concentrate, natural conditions may be moderately affected by the actions of users. These impacts are mitigated with a moderate level of management presence. Impacts may persist from year to year and are apparent to a moderate number of visitors.	A mostly unmodified natural environment characterizes this area. Natural conditions may be affected by human use. Impacts to vegetation and soil often persist from year to year and are apparent to most visitors. Resource conditions are not allowed to degrade and management presence will be more necessary to insure non-degradation of the natural resources.
<b>Campsites</b>	Campsites are at low-density levels and show minor impacts that rarely persist year to year.	Concentration of campsites is moderately high at trail junctions and popular destination points. The number of sites accommodates moderate use with no new sites forming over time. Campsites may occasionally be within sight and sound of others. A barren core may exist on some sites and may persist from year to year.	Concentration of campsites is moderately high at destinations. The number of sites accommodates peak use in order to prevent the formation of new sites. A barren core may exist on some sites and may persist from year to year.
<b>Vegetation/Soil Conditions</b>	There is very little vegetation loss or alteration of duff and litter layer by human use.	Moderate soil compaction and loss of vegetation. Minimal erosion occurs on the disturbed sites.	Moderate soil compaction and loss of vegetation, litter, and duff is expected on many visitor created trails, camp areas, and areas used by livestock. Minimal erosion occurs on the disturbed sites and is mitigated to insure long-term impacts do not occur.

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
<b>Riparian Areas</b>	Riparian, lakeshore and stream channel conditions show no measurable degradation due to human uses.	Riparian, lakeshore and stream channel conditions show a temporary change, which could be expected to persist from year to year at a few sites. These impacts should be mitigated and prevented from occurring if evidence of potential long-term impacts occurs.	Riparian, lakeshore, and stream channel conditions show temporary changes, which could be expected to persist from year to year at some sites. Mitigation measures will be implemented to accommodate moderate levels of human recreation impacts.
<b>Managerial</b>	Management focuses on sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem. Signs may be present in very rare cases, for resource protection and for marking system trail junctions. Management actions may occasionally include direct, on site actions and site-specific regulations may be used in unusual cases where resources require higher levels of protection. Indirect methods of accomplishing management objectives will predominate with exceptions to ensure visitor use is maintained at low levels and to ensure that impacts are contained and do not persist.	Management emphasizes sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem. Signing is minimal, providing for resource protection and direction at major trail intersections. Management action may frequently include direct, on-site actions and site-specific regulations may be used to meet management objectives for resource protection.	Management emphasizes sustaining and protecting natural conditions. Management actions are often direct and management presence to mitigate visitor use impacts on resources is noticeable. Campsites may need to be identified and delineated. Site-specific closures to camping, campfires, and site specific regulations may be implemented. Signs are used for resource protection in these areas. Moderate density of social trails is present in destination camping areas. Maintain Forest Service presence to provide education contact and manage high levels of use.

### Commercial and Non-commercial Trailhead Quotas

Implementation of our strategy for trailhead quotas is necessary to reduce resource impacts caused by peak use periods and to help distribute use over time and space for a quality wilderness experience, and is consistent with the three recreation categories. We believe the trailhead quota system in Alternative 1 Modified accommodates the public need for a variety of recreational opportunities while providing reasonable and equitable access to all users. We feel it confines wilderness resource impacts to acceptable levels by taking into consideration the differential impacts of these uses and adopting a strategy that is responsive to varying local conditions.

Alternative 1 Modified establishes quotas at levels of use that we believe are compatible with maintenance of wilderness character. Quotas were examined by comparing recent actual commercial and non-commercial daily use levels by entry point with their impact on the physical, and to a lesser extent, social/experiential resources (such as the potential for crowding due to topography and use patterns). Quotas were evaluated and sometimes adjusted for non-commercial users and established at appropriate levels for commercial operators

consistently across the wildernesses. In areas where it was determined that by reducing the daily overnight use levels there would be a positive effect or correct an identifiable resource concern, appropriate adjustments were made to quotas.

High, short duration use levels by commercial operators, referred to as “spikes”, were determined to cause unacceptable impacts to the physical and social environment. A few of the impacts caused by spikes include the creation of new campsites since all existing sites may be occupied, enlarging of existing sites since large groups may be a cause of the spike event, and loss of solitude since greater numbers of people are encountered in travel and while camping when spikes occur.

Alternative 1 - Modified includes elements from several of the RDEIS alternatives with some additions to create a rationing system that is equitable for all users. We are concerned that the single quota proposed in Alternative 2 for all users on all trailheads would produce undesirable competition between commercial and non-commercial users. Alternative 1 - Modified attempts to avoid the unnecessary competition by creating a system of single and multiple quotas, which varies by trailhead. However, we do feel that a single quota has merit in areas of low use. Therefore, on some trailheads with low commercial use at an acceptable level, we will administer a system with a single quota. Trailhead quotas on commercial use were determined to be the best mechanism to address adverse impacts caused by spikes.

On trails where pack stations are physically located on National Forest System lands and have invested in infrastructure, we have established separate quotas for commercial and non-commercial users. And in a few cases where there are both pack stations and other outfitter guide opportunities, there are three separate quotas. We believe separate quotas for outfitter/guides helps respond to concerns raised by our commercial operators and allows us to recognize different wilderness use patterns, destinations, and impacts of traditional packstock operations and other types of institutional and guide services.

With Alternative 1 - Modified we attempted to set trailhead quotas at an appropriate level. However, since commercial trailhead quotas and some non-commercial trailhead quotas have not previously existed or are being reduced from current levels, we decided that we need to implement them over a period of 5 years in order to avoid undue disruption to the public and commercial operators business practices. We have established a 5-year “phase in” approach to the implementation of commercial quotas. We will not be phasing in existing quotas that are not changing. These quotas have been in place for a number of years, we know what the consequences are and the public has had the opportunity to adjust already.

During year one of implementation, all commercial trailhead quotas and for trailheads where non-commercial quotas did not previously exist the quota will be set at 150 percent of what is shown in the FEIS for Alternative 1 - Modified. During the 5-year phase-in period our goal is to reduce the extra 50 percent by one fifth per year to reach the levels identified in Alternative 1 – Modified (e.g. year two would be 140 percent, year three 130 percent etc.). Also, for trailheads where the non-commercial quota is being reduced, the quota will start in year one at the existing level and be reduced proportionally over the next five years to the level identified in Alternative 1 – Modified. During this 5-year phase-in period, we will monitor and assess if the public and commercial operators are adjusting to the quotas. We will also assess the

impacts of competition for trailhead quotas on the various commercial users. During this phase-in period we will determine through monitoring whether we are achieving our goal of improving wilderness resource values where we previously identified unacceptable impacts. If resource conditions are such that additional use will not be detrimental and the public is demanding access at a higher level, than the trailhead quotas can be reevaluated through the appropriate analysis process and set at a level that is achieving the desired wilderness conditions.

This monitoring and adjustment strategy will also help to determine if we need to change other trailheads to multiple commercial quotas (separate packer and other outfitter/guide quotas). It also provides the flexibility to address the question of competition and what those quota levels should be.

We will approve commercial use on a case-by-case basis for areas with no or very low existing commercial use, with defined criteria including no marketing of access to these areas or routine use. Although we want to allow for occasional commercial services when it is appropriate and needed to meet management objectives, we do not want commercial use to become a dominant use in these areas.

We do not want to affect the party size limits in this decision. We recognize in some locations where we established low quotas an unintended effect would be to restrict party size below existing limits. We also recognize that the public needs some level of flexibility for their vacation planning across the wilderness and we need the ability to reduce the very high spikes in use that are causing unacceptable impacts to the wilderness resources. Therefore, Alternative 1 - Modified employs a split quota strategy whereby the quota will be managed so that it is possible for all users of the quota system (both commercial and non-commercial users) to utilize the current day's quota and the next day's quota. Our goal is to avoid a loss of integrity to the quota system that continuous borrowing against the next day could create. Therefore, an administrative process will be developed that prevents continuous borrowing from the next day and the next day, etc. If, in the future, we determine that unacceptable impacts are occurring as a result of increases in the number of large parties or if spikes in use have not been reduced far enough to protect the wilderness resources, we may eliminate the flexibility provided by the split quota strategy.

The established quotas take into account visitors entering and exiting in the adjacent National Parks (Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon). The wilderness complex has been managed through close collaboration between the agencies and we do consider the connectivity between the National Parks and these wildernesses when managing the quota system.

The study conducted by the University of Arizona has given us more specific information on visitor use. We now have a clearer picture of visitor travel patterns and distribution within these wildernesses. Based on this study, we feel destination quotas are not necessary at this time. We have taken this information into account in the new trailhead quotas and have anticipated impacts at interior destinations. Destination quotas may be considered in the future should use patterns change, or unacceptable crowding at certain locations be documented as measured by standards for occupied campsites and/or campsite density, or unacceptable resource conditions at interior locations be observed.

In the RDEIS, Alternatives 1 and 2 would establish year-round quota periods. We received many comments from the public questioning the necessity of year-round quotas. We agree. Therefore Alternative 1 - Modified sets the quota period from May 1 through November 1. The quota period has been extended to ensure that use levels do not exceed the daily quota any time of the year. We have experienced use in the spring and fall that has exceeded summer quota levels. It is not acceptable to exceed quotas at any time of the year since they are needed to protect resource and wilderness values. However, we are confident that a quota is not currently needed for the winter season.

### **Commercial Services**

Alternative 1 Modified establishes a commercial use management system that meets the purpose and need as described in the RDEIS. It defines controls and allowances for commercial service providers. Changes in activities, commercial use patterns, and condition of the wilderness resource have dictated the re-evaluation of use levels, rationing methods, and the proportional allocations between private and commercial uses. This has been done throughout this wilderness plan revision process. We have arrived at a system of allocation by activity and a rationing method for commercial operations that provides the consistency requested repeatedly by the public, non-commercial and commercial users alike. The overall goal is to achieve an acceptable balance in recreational activities and uses.

We believe the environmental consequences of the allocation levels established in Alternative 1 Modified are acceptable and meet the intent of the Wilderness Act and other applicable laws. The other alternatives describe a range of other possible allocation levels, both higher and lower. We believe that the potential consequences of higher allocations are unacceptable. We feel that lower allocation alternatives do not provide enough of a gain in resource protection to warrant limiting wilderness recreational opportunities to such an extent. Growth in commercial use will be managed with set limits on additional service days. Expanded allocations will be authorized for commercial operators who further management objectives and meet identified needs. These allocations will be limited to a temporary commercial service day pool of 3000 (1500 eastside and 1500 westside). We feel the wilderness resource can absorb this additional use. The trailhead quota system will ensure adequate wilderness protections.

We believe that Alternative 1 Modified provides the best delivery system for managing commercial access while recognizing the needs of business operations. Commercial use will be required to fit into an entry quota mechanism that combines components of all the analyzed alternatives. By limiting the amount of daily commercial entry at trailheads, Alternatives 1, 1 Modified, and 2 would moderate the spikes in use occurring under the present system. Alternatives 3 and 4 do not adequately address these issues because they do not provide a commercial quota and do not curb spikes.

### **Permits**

Under Alternative 1 Modified, the Forest Service will approve all wilderness permits (in conjunction with other appropriate Federal Agencies). Significant public comments



suggested there was the appearance of unfairness in that the general public had to operate under a quota system while the commercial operators had the freedom to take clients without regard to quota. We believe it is important for the Forest Service to approve the wilderness permits in order to assure equity in access among users and for the proper administration of the quota system. It is our opinion that Forest Service administration of the permit system would provide for more reliable recreation use data that may help to determine recreation use impacts on the environment, and to assess the adequacy of the quota system.

Visitors using commercial services will be required to obtain their wilderness permits through the commercial operator. They will not be allowed to obtain a permit through the non-commercial quota if they are utilizing a commercial operator during their trip. Users who obtain a permit through the non-commercial side and then use a commercial operator undermine the balance that has been specifically designed to provide equitable access to all while protecting the wilderness resource. This is because the different quotas are intended to reflect the relative impacts associated with commercial operations, including the impacts of commercial stock use.

This decision does not identify the precise mechanism of how wilderness permits will be authorized for parties using commercial services. It is our intent that the Forest Service approves each commercial trip, record accurate trip information, have copies of all wilderness permits, and manage the commercial quota system.

We realize that achieving compliance with the permit system in the low use period of the year is difficult. It does provide data that gives us some indication of trends in wilderness use year round. We did not hear public comment suggesting eliminating the year round permit system. We did hear public comment that it was important to provide wilderness education to the public. The wilderness permit system is recognized as a significant means in which we make contact and provide education to wilderness users. The wilderness permit system also provides useful information during search and rescue efforts. Therefore, we believe it appropriate to continue with year-round permit system for day use in the Mt. Whitney area and overnight use in all three wildernesses.

### **Day Use**

We respond to two distinct concerns from the public in regards to day use. Some feel that high levels of day use degrade the wilderness experience and character, while others fear that restricting day use would be too heavy-handed of a management action. In Alternative 1 Modified, we commit to gaining a better understanding of day use levels and obtaining baseline data before adopting instructions regarding day use. When day use increases above 20 percent of the existing baseline data, we may conduct an analysis of actions that we might take to address issues caused by the increase in day use.

In the analysis for day use, we are committed to full and open public involvement throughout any decision-making process. We prefer to maintain maximum flexibility and hope to find creative solutions to management of day use instead of establishing a regulatory system.

### **System and User-Created Trails**

The trail system is a critical element of wilderness management. Trails serve as the arteries of public use and enjoyment of the wilderness system. We believe the current number and miles (989 miles) of system trails (network) is generally sufficient in providing public access to these wildernesses. This network of system trails compliments and is an integral part of the three recreation categories. We believe challenge and risk is a part of the wilderness experience, and constructing new trails would diminish this opportunity for visitors. We are striving to manage these areas for their wilderness character. Trails have a significant impact on the wilderness character of an area; both from the physical standpoint and from the attraction they create. Therefore, we have decided that construction of new system trails is not needed or appropriate at this time.

Through monitoring, we will inventory the network of user-created trails and determine their need and appropriateness. Those user-created trails that are causing resource impacts will be the highest priority to inventory and monitor. There may be cause in some cases to add specific user-created trails to the system or to decommission system trails that are no longer needed. In Alternative 1 - Modified we establish criteria for making these decisions in a consistent manner. Commercial use will be restricted to the existing system trails, unless otherwise approved by the Forest Service, in order to curb the creation and use of user created trails.

During the public comment period there was high concern expressed over the management and maintenance of the trail system. Alternative 1 Modified directs adjustments to the maintenance level (service level) for various portions of the trail system. The trail maintenance levels will be adjusted from current levels as necessary to implement the three-category recreation strategy. We will consider the stated goals and objectives of the selected alternative in assigning new service levels.

### **Single Use Trails**

In response to the DEIS some members of the public requested that some system trails should be designated for single use (e.g. hikers only). Alternative 2 in the RDEIS proposed the *designation of four single use trails. We considered this item in making our decision.* We do not feel, however, that single-use designation is necessary since hikers can find trails that are seldom used by stock in the existing trail network. We believe by the character of our trail network there are currently some trails that are not desirable or seldom used by stock users for a variety of reasons, including topographic constraints, slope, grade and material, and the hazardous nature of the trail for stock. We prefer a strategy of stock-user education regarding trail conditions so that they may choose to avoid unsuitable areas. Some of these trails will be identified as not suitable or recommended for stock use. Commercial stock use will not be authorized on trails not recommended for stock use. We believe that since these trails are not maintained at a higher level and with repetitive commercial use, the conditions of these trails will further degrade.

To be consistent with this approach, we will not upgrade any trails from maintenance level 1 and 2 solely for the purpose of facilitating stock use.

## **Resource Conditions**

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### **Campsite Densities and Conditions**

By establishing direction for campsite densities and conditions for each of the three recreation use categories, we will be avoiding crowding at destinations, and we will be ensuring that degradation and unacceptable impacts of the wilderness values does not occur at these locations. This will also provide a mechanism to monitor our success at achieving the desired conditions and enable us to adjust our management actions as necessary.

At popular high use destination areas, we may find it necessary to designate campsites in order to achieve the desired densities and conditions consistent with the recreation use categories and wilderness values.

There is broad public acceptance for the need to protect water quality, riparian ecosystems and those species that depend on them. It is our decision to adopt management direction requiring campsite setbacks of 100 feet from water where terrain permits but in no case closer than 50 feet. Science indicates that a 100 feet setback from water would provide the highest level of protection for water quality and riparian ecosystems. However, by imposing the 100 feet setback limit, the analysis indicates that 40 to 70 percent of campsites would be eliminated. We believe this would cause campsite use to move to other areas that may cause additional undesirable impacts. With our decision to have a campsite setback of 100 feet from water where terrain permits, but in no case closer than 50 feet, only 15 to 25 percent of campsites would be displaced, and we accept the impacts to both water quality and aquatic environment, as well as the impact created by displaced campsites. We recognize this decision will eliminate some favorite campsites that the public has historically used.

### **Closures for Campfires**

In addressing the issues of resource impacts, we received many public comments in support of elevational campfire closures at the same or lower levels than those described in Alternatives 1 and 2. However, for a couple of reasons we decided to select 10,000 feet in the northern portion and 10,400 feet in the southern portion of these wildernesses. One reason is that scientific literature supports the need for campfire restriction in pure whitebark pine stands, with a lower need in the mixed lodgepole/whitebark stands. The campfire closures are based upon the best estimation of whitebark pine forest elevation.

A second reason is the need for some consistency with the adjacent National Parks. These wildernesses share extensive boundaries with three adjacent national parks and the trail systems are interconnected at many points. Many visitors travel between adjacent National Parks and these wildernesses during their trips. The National Parks set three separate elevational closure levels: 9,600 feet in Yosemite, 10,000 feet in Kings Canyon, and 11,200 feet in Sequoia. While we recognize the importance of being consistent with the adjacent National Parks, we believe that more than two elevation limits in the planning area would be difficult to communicate effectively to the public, and with this in mind, we selected closures based upon whitebark pine elevation.

We recognize the need for site-specific closures in areas that are depleted of firewood and where damage is occurring from the cutting of limbs from live trees. Many concerns raised by the public appeared to be about areas below the proposed whitebark pine community and were thought to need site-specific campfire closures due to depleted wood supplies. We have chosen to close specific areas to campfires outside the elevational closures using the campsite monitoring protocol listed in the Monitoring Strategy.

We have chosen to prohibit packing in of charcoal or wood and to allow only gas stoves in the closed areas. Permitting firewood and charcoal to be packed in would allow fires without knowledge of where the fuels came from, causing confusion for visitors and rangers alike. Rangers trying to enforce the closure would have difficulty determining if a campfire is entirely made up of packed-in wood. Visitors may misunderstand the closures if they see campfires occurring in closed areas. This, we believe, could lead to compliance problems and equity issues, something we are trying to avoid.

### **Food Storage**

Our decision establishes a wilderness-wide food storage restriction to reduce bear and human conflict and protect wildlife from becoming dependent upon human food. We are concerned about the ever-increasing interactions between wilderness visitors and black bears. Black bears are a unique Sierra resource and it our desire they that remain wild in character. Therefore, our decision is to require visitors to store food properly to prevent wildlife and black bears in particular from gaining access to food, trash, or other non-native food sources. This direction will provide consistency between the policies of these wildernesses and the adjacent National Parks.

### **Recreation Stock Forage**

Our decision establishes measurable recreation stock forage utilization standards throughout the wildernesses. The standards maintain a high degree of visitor freedom for accessing the wilderness while providing for conservation measures for aquatic, riparian and meadow ecosystems.

Lowered packstock impacts to these high elevation meadows will minimize risk to the population viability of native flora and fauna. The standards provide an opportunity for commercial operators to assist in monitoring condition of meadow vegetation and thereby assisting in their knowledge of how much forage is available for their use. Through the administration of the commercial outfitters special use permit, we will require permittees to monitor for forage use and range readiness and to cease using meadows when grazing standards are reached. The standards also provide opportunities for commercial and private stock parties to practice and demonstrate sound utilization practices that help protect meadow ecosystems. When over utilization of vegetation in meadows has occurred, a full closure of those meadows to all packstock grazing (commercial and noncommercial) may be implemented for the following season.

To be consistent with the SNFPA, our decision seeks to prevent disturbance caused by packstock grazing to meadow-associated streambanks, and natural lake and pond shorelines, from exceeding 20 percent of the stream reach or 20 percent of the shoreline areas.

Under this alternative visitors will view and experience meadows having a natural appearance. Degraded meadows and stream channels will have obvious upward trends in condition and function. These standards are based on the best available science, and are reflective of the SNFPA Record of Decision.

## **Other Important Decisions**

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### **Structures**

In keeping with the Wilderness Act, Forest Service national policy, and the Programmatic Agreement for the Wilderness Plan (shortened title), our decision provides consistent guidelines across the wildernesses for evaluation and removal of those non-historic structures that are not needed for the administration of these wilderness areas.

The minimum tool concept will be used when considering approval for research, data gathering for non-wilderness purposes (i.e. water resource data) and use and improvement of structures.

Historic structures will be managed in accordance with the stipulations within the Programmatic Agreement and federal laws.

### **Cultural Values**

We recognize that these wildernesses have been used and, to some extent, managed by human beings for thousands of years. Human use is reflected in ancient and historic trails, archeological sites, historic structures of various kinds, and cultural values ascribed to natural features of the landscape, as well as to the landscape as a whole. Traditional human uses, including Native American uses and contemporary equestrian, recreational, and research uses, are also aspects of the cultural significance of the wildernesses.

Our decision on the Plan is consistent with the Programmatic Agreement and provides significant improvement in the amount of protection to cultural properties located in the wildernesses. Furthermore, the Programmatic Agreement provides methods for the Forest Service, affected Tribes, and other consulting parties to engage in dialogue on common issues and take necessary actions for the protection of cultural and historic resources.

## **Rationale for What's Not in The Decision**

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### **Forest Orders**

All existing Forest Orders pertaining to these wildernesses will be reviewed and updated based on the decisions contained herein. A list and schedule for updating these forest orders appears later in this Record of Decision. Our intent is that the NEPA compliance necessary for these forest orders is contained within this FEIS.

### **Dogs**

A few commenters expressed a desire to have dogs more closely controlled, more widely restricted, or entirely excluded in the wildernesses. From the public comments there was not an overwhelming response that additional controls were needed. In addition, we do not find the issue significant enough to restrict dogs at this time. Where we have identified that there is conflict, we have established restrictions on dogs. For instance, we have closed the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (an endangered species) habitat to dogs.

### **Noise**

Some respondents expressed concern over noise, generated both by low-level aircraft overflights and by human visitors to the wildernesses. The issue of low level aircraft overflights is being addressed at the regional, national, and interagency levels to reduce the numbers of military overflights, and we expect to see these efforts continue. We will continue to monitor localized impacts caused by low-level aircraft.

We choose to adopt an education strategy to address visitor-generated noise from the use of radios, televisions, cell phones, or amplified devices. Public comment indicated that education of wilderness users should be widely used to change behavior. We feel this subject lends itself to an education approach. If this proves ineffective, we may consider further measures in the future.

### **Party size (Except for Cross-Country)**

Party size has been the subject of strong interest and debate since this planning process started in 1992. In 1991, a significant party size change for the greater Central Sierra wilderness complex was published in the Federal Register through a rulemaking process. Prior to this, the maximum party size was twenty-five people with no limits on the number of stock, and prior to that there were no limits on party size. There was considerable public review of party size limits during that rulemaking process. Although there was litigation over the matter, only Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park was subsequently excluded from the rulemaking since the result would have been an increase in the party size for that Park, as opposed to a decrease for all the other Park Service and Forest Service units.

At the beginning of this process, we determined that we would not re-evaluate party size, in that such a regulation should be done consistently with contiguous administrative units as was completed just before this planning effort began in 1992. For this reason party size was not

included in the scope of this analysis. The 1997 DEIS, 2000 RDEIS and 2001 FEIS did not address party size.

While there were numerous public comments on party size, we have considered these public comments and decided not to include changes to the party size limit for those groups using trails as part of this decision.

### **Cross-country Party Size**

The 1997 DEIS proposed changes in cross-country party size. As a result of the public comments on the DEIS, we incorporated a change to cross-country party size in Alternative 2 of the 2000 RDEIS. The environmental consequences of this action were analyzed in Chapter 4.

After careful review, we choose not to make a change to cross-country party size at this time. Although many of the public comments were supportive of a change in party size, most were related to resource impacts rather than to concerns about crowding or degradation of solitude. We believe we are appropriately addressing many of the resource concerns with controls on commercial use such as limiting all commercial stock to authorized trails, and evaluating user-created trails for elimination or incorporation into the trail system.

It is our intent to impose as few limits on visitor freedom as possible once visitors are within the wildernesses. Although cross-country travel is becoming more popular, it is not at a level yet where we feel there is a need to restrict it.

### **Trailhead Facilities**

The RDEIS explains that trailhead facilities and associated environmental impacts are outside of the wilderness boundaries and therefore are not considered in this analysis. We believe existing direction in the LRMPs is sufficient to manage these areas. Site-specific NEPA analysis will be used as necessary to address individual trailhead facilities.

### **Production Livestock Grazing**

Congress has mandated that "there shall be no curtailment of grazing permits or privileges in an area simply because it is designated as wilderness" (sec 108, P.L. 96-560, H.R. Report 96-617, known as the Congressional Grazing Guidelines). Those active grazing allotments, or portions thereof, that reside within the planning area will be analyzed under each Forest's Allotment NEPA Schedule (Forest Service 1997) in accordance with the Rescission Act of 1995. We are making no decision here that will affect production livestock grazing. However, the cumulative effects of production livestock grazing on the wilderness resources are discussed in the Environmental Consequences in Chapter 4.

### **Fisheries Management**

In the SNFPA Record of Decision the Regional Forester stated "I will work with the State Department of Fish and Game to assess potential effects of non-native fish on species at risk such as mountain yellow-legged frog. This will include an evaluation of the need to

discontinue stocking and/or removal of non-native fish from deep lakes and adjacent resting pools.” In the meantime and until the Regional Forester advises us otherwise all fish stocking will continue to be managed under the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)(Sept 1995). We believe the SNFPA provides adequate direction and it is inappropriate to adopt additional direction while efforts are being made at the regional level to address this issue.

### **Non-Native Wildlife**

There are currently no non-native wildlife species within these wilderness areas. Based on national direction and the direction contained in the existing LRMPs as amended by the SNFPA, we will not allow introduction of non-native wildlife in these wildernesses.

### **Education**

We received numerous public comments on the importance and role of education of wilderness visitors. Some commented that we could solve most of the issues through education only. We agree on the importance of wilderness education and remain committed to using education, but we believe it is only one of many tools and only part of any solution. We already have a strong wilderness education program in place, including: information in handouts and on the internet, the wilderness permit and issuing process, trailhead displays, Leave No Trace (LNT) trainings, public education requirements of permittees, and other programs for visitor awareness of best wilderness practices. Education in and of itself is not an action that requires NEPA analysis and for this reason, an education component was not included in this decision. Wilderness education is and will always be an important part of our wilderness management.

### **Off-Highway Vehicles**

There have been comments and concerns about the effect of the RDEIS on the Dusy-Ershim 4-wheel drive trail. This trail is located outside of the wilderness boundaries and is so designated by the California Wilderness Act of 1984. However, management direction prescribed for wilderness adjacent to the trail may indirectly affect use of some wilderness sites accessed from the trail.

A few public comments express concerns with other aspects of forest wide OHV management; especially increasing motorized vehicle trespass into designated wilderness in a few specific areas. OHV use in the wildernesses is already prohibited by law and we are concerned with this issue. However, we feel that enforcement issues can be adequately addressed under current LRMP direction and no additional measures need be specifically added to the wilderness plan.

### **Fire Management**

Management of fire in these wilderness areas was originally considered in the 1997 DEIS. After the NOI was issued for the Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation & Collaboration, we removed fire management from this analysis. In his Record of Decision for the SNFPA the Regional Forester adopted a fire management strategy for the entire Sierra Nevada,



including these wilderness areas. Accordingly, each national forest covered by the framework is directed to develop Fire Management Plans. These plans will provide fire management direction for these wildernesses.

### **Air Quality**

The levels of activities within the wildernesses are not anticipated to cause violations of ambient air quality standards. This finding is based on the information presented in the FEIS. Although there are areas in the Sierra and Inyo NF that are identified as non-attainment for PM-10 and/or ozone, the activities outlined in this decision are not expected to further contribute to these problems.

Existing wilderness direction and general LRMP direction provide for maintaining and monitoring Class 1 and 2 airsheds. No further management direction is planned to address air quality in this decision.

### **Site-specific Project Decisions**

Further site-specific analyses and appropriate public involvement would be conducted when necessary to determine appropriate project decisions. These could include actions such as, reconstruction or relocation of trails changes to user-created trails, and adjustments to rangeland suitability, visitor use levels or outfitter guide allocations.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

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The Inventory and Monitoring Strategy is contained in Appendix H of the FEIS.

Information gained through monitoring and evaluation will be used to adjust management direction in the future where warranted.

The Forest Service will conduct an evaluation of the Plan in five years. At that time, the Forest Supervisors will review conditions on these three wildernesses to determine whether conditions have changed significantly. That review will include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the changes to the permit system, quotas, and commercial service day allocations.

Necessary changes in actions directed by the Plan, as identified through the monitoring and evaluation process, will be made on a continuing basis.

## **Application of Decision**

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### **Relationship of Management Direction to Existing Plans**

The Wilderness Goals and Objectives, Desired Future Condition and management direction (Standards and Guidelines) of the existing LRMPs are amended by this decision for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses only. This decision is otherwise consistent with the current LRMPs for the Inyo and Sierra National Forests and with the SNFPA.

### **Relationship to State and Local Plans and Proposals**

We have reviewed this decision and its relationship to other tribal, state and local plans and have determined that it is consistent with these.

### **Relationship to Other Lands**

The influences of activities on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service were considered in the assessment of cumulative impacts in the FEIS. This decision does not adopt new management direction for those federal lands. Likewise, this decision does not establish direction or regulation for state, tribal, or private lands.

## **Alternatives Considered**

*Each action alternative was designed around a theme for management that achieves the purpose and need for action and responds to one or more of the significant issues. In addition, each alternative proposes different desired conditions. Standards and guidelines are specified to achieve the desired conditions and reflect the alternative's theme.*

The following is a brief overview of the alternative themes. Alternatives 1 through 4 were originally described in the RDEIS and were carried forward into the FEIS. Alternative 1 Modified is described in detail in the FEIS. It incorporates elements of Alternatives 1 and 2 and additional modifications based upon the official public comment to the RDEIS.

## **Alternatives Considered in Detail**

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### **Alternative 1: RDEIS Proposed Action**

Alternative 1, which was the RDEIS Proposed Action, directs management activities with an emphasis on maintaining wilderness character, and providing a range of opportunities for recreation use while protecting natural resource conditions. Three categories are established

for managing recreation use to allow for different recreational characteristics. Categories 1 and 2 consist of large areas managed for low and moderate levels of use. Category 3 consists of areas of more concentrated visitor use that coincide with historical areas of high use. This approach attempts to concentrate use and impacts in areas of traditional high use and to manage the majority of the landscape for low and moderate levels of use. Impacts associated with recreational use are managed intensively within Recreation Use Category 3 management areas.

This alternative identifies indicators that are used to measure levels of change in resource and social conditions and defines standards that may trigger management intervention to maintain or enhance conditions over time.

This alternative maintains overall commercial use at current actual levels and is based upon the Needs Assessment. It does, however, propose additional restrictions on commercial operators, making this use more consistent with non-commercial use. While overall levels of use are maintained, some reductions will occur within certain areas of use. Resource managers may require use reductions in areas where monitoring of limiting factors indicates that such action is necessary to alleviate impacts.

This Alternative also addressed several other issues raised during the public comment period on the DEIS including campfire closures, campsite conditions, standards and guidelines for social and resource conditions, the wilderness permit system, trailhead quotas, winter use levels, and user-created trails, and recreational stock grazing issues.

## **Alternative 2:**

Alternative 2 emphasizes preserving the ecological integrity of the wildernesses while allowing for recreation use consistent with high opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. The wildernesses are managed consistently in regards to recreational use levels, allowing for no areas of concentrated recreation use or impacts. Use and impacts are distributed across the landscape. Natural conditions and processes will predominate and the landscape will appear to be untrammelled by human activities. Special provisions are limited to the least intrusive methods to meet the needs of the general public.

This alternative addresses a number of issues that some stakeholders expressed regarding the Proposed Action. These include opposition to wilderness zoning, equity between commercial and non-commercial use, use reduction in heavily used areas, greater opportunities for solitude, reductions in party size, and greater protection for natural resources. This alternative reduces allocations to commercial users, provides one consistent management scheme across the entire planning area, implements a split elevational closure for restricting campfires, reduces trailhead quotas based on limiting factors, reduces available campsite locations, reduces the allowable party size for cross-country travel, and designates four trails as hiker-only trails.

### **Alternative 3: No Action**

Alternative 3 is the no action alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Management in the wildernesses would continue under existing decisions and management direction in the existing LRMPs and wilderness plans.

### **Alternative 4:**

Alternative 4 manages the wildernesses to emphasize recreational uses. Recreational uses are maintained at levels that recognize historic traditions and uses. Management accommodates visitor use. Restrictions are minimized, allowing for unconfined types of recreation. The wildernesses are managed with standards for two categories of recreation use, trailed and trail-less. Human activity is apparent in both the social and ecological environment.

### **Alternative 1 - Modified:**

Alternative 1 - Modified uses strategies from both Alternatives 1 and 2 and some existing management direction from Alternative 3 as well as incorporating modifications suggested in public comments. It also includes some factual corrections to the RDEIS.

Alternative 1 - Modified directs management activities with an emphasis on maintaining wilderness characteristics, and providing a range of opportunities for recreation use while protecting natural resource conditions. Three categories are established for managing recreation use to allow for different recreational characteristics. Categories 1 and 2 consist of large areas managed for low and moderate levels of use. Category 3 consists of small confined areas of more concentrated visitor use that coincide with historical areas of high use. These categories were derived from Alternative 1 but adjusted in a few areas to more accurately reflect desired management. This approach attempts to concentrate use and impacts in areas of traditional high use and to manage the majority of the landscape for low and moderate levels of use. Impacts associated with recreational use are managed intensively within Recreation Use Category 3 management areas. Category 3 areas comprise about 3 percent of the planning area.

This alternative identifies indicators that are used to measure levels of change in resource and social conditions and defines standards that may trigger management intervention to maintain or enhance conditions over time.

This alternative maintains overall commercial use at current actual levels. It does, however, propose changes to commercial operations relating to gaining access to wilderness, making it more consistent with how non-commercial users gain access to wilderness areas. While overall levels of use are maintained, some reductions will occur within certain areas of use. Resource managers may require use reductions in areas where monitoring of limiting factors indicates that such action is necessary to alleviate impacts. This alternative establishes a pool of temporary service days (3,000) to allow for some expansion in commercial services.

Based on concerns raised during public comment on the RDEIS Alternative 1, changes were made affecting the following topics: campfire closures, campsite conditions, standards and guidelines for social and resource conditions, the wilderness permit system, trailhead quotas, winter use levels, user-created trails, and recreational stock grazing.

## **Alternatives Not Considered In Detail**

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Federal agencies are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the original scoping phase and the DEIS were used to develop the alternatives contained in the RDEIS.

Many ideas have been suggested and evaluated during the development of the current alternatives considered in detail. Various components were considered, such as additional mitigation measures, changes to quotas and allocations, no grazing, and adjustments to commercial use quotas. Addressing all of the possible permutations would create an unmanageably large number of alternatives that would not be helpful to the decision makers or the public. In addition, some components were determined to be outside the scope of the current wilderness plan revision process, were already represented by one or more of the alternatives considered in detail, or were determined to risk unnecessary environmental harm. Therefore, a number of alternatives were considered but dismissed from detailed consideration.

### **DEIS Alternative 2 – Emphasize Pristine Condition**

This alternative would have maximized the amount of area in pristine wilderness condition. Emphasis was placed on natural physical and biological processes. The environment would be self-sustaining and require minimal internal managerial intervention over the long-term. Human-caused ecosystem disturbances would be minimized by regulating the amount and type of human use permitted within the planning area. Users would experience a high degree of solitude. Opportunity classes are allocated to emphasize this pristine character.

Alternative 2 in the RDEIS replaced this alternative. The new alternative has nearly the same emphasis, but does not use the opportunity class system. This alternative has no system of zoning and applies standards and guidelines universally across the landscape.

### **DEIS Alternative 3 – Emphasize Recreational Opportunities**

In this alternative evidence of human activity would be apparent in both the physical and biological environment. Human intervention and use would be allowed to the extent permissible under wilderness laws and policies. Users would experience a high probability of encountering other parties. Opportunity Classes would be allocated to emphasize recreational activity.

Alternative 4 in the RDEIS replaced this alternative. The new alternative has nearly the same emphasis, but does not use the opportunity class system. Alternative 4 uses a system of trail and trail-less zoning to manage use.

#### **DEIS Alternative 4 – Current Use With Opportunity Classes**

This alternative proposed allocating opportunity classes to best approximate current use and management direction as prescribed by the LRMPs. An exact match was not possible because of the differences between the two LRMPs in wilderness management direction. This alternative would apply a consistent approach throughout the planning area by the application of opportunity classes and uniform management direction. Deviation from current LRMPs would vary depending on how closely each LRMP matches opportunity class standards and management direction.

This alternative was not considered in the RDEIS because the opportunity class system is not being used as a management system in this wilderness planning process.

#### **DEIS Alternative 5 – Forest Service Preferred**

This alternative offered a balance of recreational use with opportunities for solitude and pristine conditions. Human-caused ecosystem disturbances would be balanced with retention of a pristine wilderness condition. Opportunity classes would be allocated to offer the user a variety of wilderness experiences.

This alternative was not considered in detail because all of the components of the alternative were covered in one of the other alternatives in the RDEIS. Opportunity class was not considered since it is not being used in this wilderness planning process.

#### **Back Country Horsemen - Alternative 5, submitted in response to the RDEIS**

This alternative was reviewed by members of the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and compared to the existing range of alternatives displayed in the RDEIS as well as existing laws, regulations, Manual and Handbook direction and LRMP direction. The IDT determined that all of the elements of Back Country Horsemen's alternative were addressed in one of the alternatives or in existing direction. A detailed review of the analysis is available in the planning record.

## **The Environmentally Preferable Alternative**

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The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA require that the Record Of Decision specify "the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). This alternative has generally been interpreted to be the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA's Section 101 (CEQ's "Forty Most-Asked Questions," 46 Federal Register, 18026, March 23, 1981). Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also can mean the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances a balance of historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Alternative 1 - Modified of the FEIS, [which was described in the earlier section on "Alternatives Considered,"] is the environmentally preferable alternative.

Alternative 1 - Modified would allow the smallest amount of direct human-induced effects on the human environment. Even though Alternative 2 has a reduced amount of human use allowed, we did not consider it to be the environmentally preferable alternative because of the concern over the potential for spreading impacts to current low use areas.

## **Means To Avoid Environmental Harm**

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### **Mitigation Measures Adopted**

Extensive measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm are being adopted in the Plan. Some of these measures have been discussed previously. Mitigation measures are an integral part of the management direction. Singularly and collectively, they avoid, rectify, reduce, or eliminate potential adverse environmental impacts of wilderness management activities. Some more significant mitigation measures are included in the Programmatic Agreement between the State Historic Preservation Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Forest Service and other interested parties. Also, the direction for recreation stock forage management, for maintenance of water quality, and the elevational closures to campfires provide important mitigation measures.

## Monitoring And Evaluation

This Plan includes an inventory and monitoring strategy that will provide an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the management direction. The results of monitoring will be used to evaluate the assumptions used in developing the Plan, and may be the basis for future changes. The Plan may be amended if changes to the management direction are needed. Monitoring will also ensure that management direction is being correctly applied. The inventory and monitoring strategy identifies the following objectives for wilderness monitoring:

1. Monitor key variables to understand the conditions, risks and the threats to the wilderness resource. *Establish benchmark or reference monitoring. Develop reporting and documentation techniques and protocols.*
2. Monitor for change in conditions over time. Identify unacceptable adverse impacts. Determine when, where, and why changes are occurring.
3. Conduct inventory and monitoring with an integrated resource approach, to the best extent possible.
4. Provide information to improve management decisions, policies, and actions and evaluate for effectiveness. Inform decisions that have an affect on the wilderness resources.
5. Monitor management strategies and actions, and assess the benefits and costs, in time, money, and effectiveness and to the wilderness character.
6. Engage in collaboration amongst managers, scientists, public, and academic institutions. Communicate with local and regional and national agencies and all interested publics. Describe, communicate, and demonstrate the affects of management and use on the wilderness resource.



Temple Crag, John Muir Wilderness, Inyo National Forest  
*Photo by Glen Stein*



## **Findings Related To Other Requirements**

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The Forest Service manages the Inyo and Sierra National Forests in conformance with many Federal laws. In this section some of the more important laws pertinent to this programmatic-level decision are discussed.

### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

NEPA requires that Federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that *significantly affect the quality of the human environment*. This requirement is designed to serve two major functions: 1) to provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of a proposed action prior to its adoption; and, 2) to inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

The Sierra and Inyo National Forests have compiled and generated an enormous amount of information relevant to the effects of each of the alternatives considered in the FEIS. Such information builds on the data, analysis, and public involvement set forth in the documents prior to this FEIS, which include the 1997 DEIS and the 2000 RDEIS.

All substantive comments, written and oral, made on the RDEIS have been summarized and responded to in the FEIS. Over the course of analysis, this public involvement has lead to changes in the alternatives, including the Selected Alternative.

The environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the CEQ for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508).

First, the FEIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The five alternatives considered in detail represent only part of the total number of alternatives considered over the course of the 1997 Draft EIS, the 2000 Revised Draft EIS and this FEIS. Alternatives presented in the Final EIS encompass a broad range of responses to issues including: 1) commercial activities, 2) visitor use levels, 3) wilderness permits and quota period, 4) visitor use management (crowding), 5) campsite management, 6) campsite density, 7) cross-country party size, 8) day use levels, 9) elevational fire restrictions, 10) site-specific campfire restrictions, 11) campsite setbacks from water, 12) addressing user created trails, 13) trail management, and 14) forage use by stock.

Second, the FEIS reflects consideration of cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the planning area. Moreover, although non-Forest System lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their management have been considered in the Final EIS to a degree appropriate for a programmatic NEPA document at this scale.

Third, the FEIS makes use of the best available information. Application of a geographic information system (GIS) was used to evaluate spatial effects resulting from implementation of the alternatives. The best available science was used to help estimate environmental

consequences as evidenced from the bibliography. All of these tools, taken collectively, constitute use of the best available information.

Additional site-specific decisions will be made on projects in compliance with NEPA, ESA, and other environmental laws following applicable public involvement and appeal procedures.

### **National Forest Management Act (NFMA)**

This decision conforms with the 1982 planning regulations (36 CFR 219) that implement the National Forest Management Act. These regulations were recently changed (65 FR 67513). Transition language within the new regulations permit plan revisions and amendments, such as the amendments that are part of this decision, to be completed under the 1982 regulations. Since the rest of the LRMPs will continue to fall under the 1982 regulations, and since there is some uncertainty over the implementation of the new regulations, it is our decision to adopt these amendments under the 1982 regulations.

### **Diversity and Viability Provisions For Fish and Wildlife**

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to “specify guidelines for land management plans developed to achieve the goals of the [RPA] Program which provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives” (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B)). In accord with this diversity provision, the Secretary promulgated a regulation that provides in part: “[f]ish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area” (36 CFR 219.19, 1982 edition).

The recently completed SNFPA Record of Decision established land allocations and standards and guidelines to meet all of the diversity and viability provisions for fish and wildlife. This FEIS is consistent with that amendment. Therefore this decision will also provide the fish and wildlife habitat and other ecological conditions necessary to maintain well-distributed viable populations of vertebrate species in the planning area, and maintain the diversity of plants and animals.

### **Land and Resource Management Plan Amendments**

This decision will amend the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) on both the Sierra and Inyo National Forests to provide more specific, updated and consistent direction for management of the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses. It supercedes the 1979 wilderness plans for the John Muir and Minarets (Ansel Adams) Wildernesses.

**Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Non-Significant Amendment Number 7.**

For the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses only, the Goals and Objectives, Desired Future Condition, Management Direction and the Inventory and Monitoring Strategy contained in the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wilderness Plan supplement the management direction contained in the LRMP on pages 107 through 112, and the Monitoring Plan on page 257.

Also:

1. The following Management Direction on page 111 in the Inyo LRMP is removed:
  - Establish capacity limits for each wilderness and implement entry limits on specific trailheads to regulate use when use exceeds capacity.
  - Apply trailhead entry quotas to both commercial and noncommercial users.
2. The following Management Direction is added to the Inyo LRMP on page 111:
  - Through analysis determine if use limitations are necessary to protect wilderness resources. If determined necessary, apply appropriate methods to control commercial and non-commercial users.
3. The following is removed from Appendix A page 300 in the Inyo LRMP:
  - Under the section titled, "EXISTING PLANS INCORPORATED WITH DIRECTION TO REVISE OR UPDATE"
    - John Muir Wilderness Plan (1979)
    - Minarets Wilderness Management Plan (1979) (revise to include 1984 wilderness additions)

**Sierra National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment Number 3**

On the Sierra National Forest, for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses only the Goals and Objectives, Desired Future Condition, Management Direction and the Inventory and Monitoring Strategy contained in the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wilderness plan supplement the Standards and Guidelines contained in the Sierra LRMP on pages 4-30 through 4-31.

Also:

The following Standard and Guideline is deleted from the Sierra NF LRMP:

- S&G #339. Develop wilderness management plans utilizing limits of acceptable change.

### **Determination Of Significance (NFMA)**

We have determined that these Forest Plan Amendments are non-significant. This is "[b]ased on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines and other contents of the forest plans under 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and FSM 1922.5." It is important to distinguish between significance of the change to the forest plans and significance of the environmental impacts of the proposed action as defined by Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR 1500 to 1508.

Guidance, in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 – Chapter 5.32 identifies four factors to be used in determining whether a proposed change to forest plan is significant or not significant. The four factors are: timing; location and size; goals, objectives, and outputs; and management prescriptions. The following is a discussion of each of these four factors as they relate to these forest plan amendments.

#### ***Timing***

The change in the LRMPs will be effective after the Notice of Availability appears in the Federal Register. Actual implementation will be phased in over the next five years. The implementation schedule is displayed in the transition section of this record of decision. Changes in the LRMPs are being made after the planning period for the Inyo NF (the first decade of the existing plan).

#### ***Location and size***

These LRMP amendments only apply to the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes wilderness areas on the Sierra and Inyo National Forests. These wilderness areas total about 800,000 acres of approximately 1.1 million acres of wilderness out of the total of 3.3 million acres that make up these two national forests. This is less than one third of the total acres of both forests. These wilderness areas generally encompass only the higher elevations of these national forests.

#### ***Goals, objectives, and outputs***

These LRMP amendments do not alter the long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the forest plans. An increase in one type of output does not trigger an increase or decrease in another. There is not a demand for goods or services not discussed in the existing forest plans. The changes in outputs are not likely to be a significant change in the forest plan since the changes would not forego the opportunity to achieve an output in later years.

#### ***Management prescriptions***

The changes in the management direction are only for a specific portion of the Forests, and will not apply to future decisions outside the planning area. The amendments do not alter the desired future condition of the land and resources or the anticipated goods and services to be produced.

### **Endangered Species Act (ESA)**

Consultation requirements under Section 7 of the ESA, have been completed with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Fish and Wildlife Service reviewed the Biological Assessment for the proposed threatened and endangered species under their regulatory jurisdiction. Consistent with direction in "Memorandum of Agreement, Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Consultations and Coordination among Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and Fish and Wildlife Service, August 30, 2000", the Fish and Wildlife Service included candidate species in their Biological Opinion, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that this decision is "not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened and endangered species" occurring on the national forests. Copies of correspondence with the FWS are included in the planning record.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Forests have consulted extensively with Indian tribes, other users of the wildernesses, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation about means of identifying and mitigating adverse effects on historic sites, structures, trails, landscapes, Native American spiritual places, and other aspects of the cultural environment, including traditional uses of the wildernesses. This resulted in a Programmatic Agreement among the consulting parties that provides for ongoing studies and consultation over at least the next five years to identify impacts and implement mitigation measures. The Forests will implement its terms, which it is believed embrace all practicable measures to mitigate possible impacts on the cultural aspects of the wilderness environment.

### **Clean Water Act**

Full implementation of this decision is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfy all State water quality requirements. This finding is based on the standards and guidelines contained in the decision, the application of State approved Best Management Practices specifically designed to protect water quality, and the discussion of water quality and beneficial uses contained in the FEIS. Examples include: (1) camp site setbacks, (2) trailhead quotas, (3) commercial allocation of service days, (4) managing the commercial service pool, (5) managing user created trails, (6) rehabilitating campsites, (7) range utilization standards for stock, and (8) incorporation of established recovery plans. Additionally, project-level analyses for activities subsequent to the decision will be required to demonstrate compliance with Clean Water Act and State water quality standards.

### **Clean Air Act**

At the scale of a programmatic plan such as this, the overall level of activities proposed under this decision is not anticipated to violate ambient air quality standards. This finding is based on information presented in the FEIS. The Sierra and Inyo National Forests are in non-attainment for PM<sub>10</sub> while only the Sierra NF is in non-attainment for Ozone. Conformity determinations will be made at subsequent levels of planning and analysis where emissions can be more accurately quantified and reasonably forecasted, and local impacts assessed.

### **Flood Plains And Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)**

These Executive Orders require Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short- and long-term effects resulting from the occupancy and modification of flood plains, and the modification or destruction of wetlands. The LRMPs provide standards and guidelines for soil, water, wetlands, and riparian areas to minimize effects to flood plains and wetlands. They incorporate the Best Management Practices of the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook. The standards and guidelines apply to all floodplains and wetlands where less restrictive management might otherwise occur.

### **Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)**

Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," requires that Federal agencies make achieving environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The issue of environmental justice is analyzed within Chapters 3 and 4, "Socioeconomic," of the Final EIS. Rather than displaying effects only by subregions or counties, this section also displayed effects at a finer scale of the Sierra Nevada Region; specific social groups. Social groups are used to display how alternatives could affect people across the region. Social groups are groups of individuals that share common attitudes, beliefs, and values and whose use of the wilderness has common needs and/or attributes. The social group analysis section examined historic trends and potential future impacts in the following social groups: (1) commercial outfitters, (2) back country hikers, (3) day users, (4) recreational pack users, (5) American Indians, (6) minorities, (7) low-income individuals, (8) organizational wilderness users, and (9) assisted wilderness users.

A qualitative assessment of environmental justice considerations was conducted based on the information in the Final EIS described above. My conclusion is that the risk of such disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations from implementation of this decision would be very low.

### **Civil Rights**

The Forest Service manual defines civil rights as "the legal rights of United States citizens to guaranteed equal protection under the law" (USDA Forest Service Manual 1730). Civil rights impact analysis for environmental or natural resource actions is a necessary part of the social impact analysis package in environmental impact statement and is not a separate report (USDA FSH 1709.11).

The Forest Service is committed to equal treatment of all individuals and social groups in its management programs in providing services, opportunities, and jobs. Because no actual or projected violation of legal rights to equal protection under the law is foreseen for any individual or category of people, no civil rights impacts are reported in the FEIS.

## Implementation

We are providing the following transition language and schedule for the management direction that is in this ROD. Although the direction will become effective after publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, we are choosing to phase in this new direction. When changing management direction for such a large area, it is not possible to implement everything at once. We do not have the staff or resources to do this. Conversely, it is important not to allow non-conforming activities to continue for several years after the direction is changed. The transition period allows for an orderly adjustment that moves management of the wildernesses forward while minimizing costs and disruptions.

It is also important to recognize that implementation of the direction contained in the management plan may be affected by annual budgets and available workforce.

**Table 2. Transition Plan**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timing for Implementation</b>
NEPA for one year permits or extensions	2002
Commercial and New or reduced Non-Commercial Quotas (five year phase in period)	Beginning in 2002
Non-Commercial Quota (quota currently exists)	2002
Service Day Allocation changes	2002
Authorized/Designated Routes	2002
Monitoring Plan	2002
Specific Inventories	2002
Site Specific Fire Closures	2 yrs (known) Ongoing (unknown)
Evaluate Administrative Sites and Structures	5 yrs
Amend all permits with plan direction	2002
Packer Permit Reissuance/Modification	See separate schedule
Elevational Fire Closures	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
Setback from Water	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
Site Specific Meadow Closures	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
Grazing Start Dates	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
Food Storage	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
Bighorn Sheep Habitat Dog Restrictions	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
5 Year Plan Evaluation/Modification	At year 5 of implementation and every 5 years subsequent.
Trail Maintenance Level Adjustments (Trail Management Plans)	5 yrs
Range Suitability Analysis	10 yrs

The relationship of commercial permits to the new wilderness direction is described below. In summary,

- (1). *Current unexpired term permits.* The permits and operating plans will need to be modified to be consistent with the new Plan.
- (2). *Term permits that are expired, but which are now being extended annually.* These permits will be consistent with the new management direction when issued.

**Table 3. Inyo National Forest Commercial Pack Station Permits**

Permittee	Expiration Date	Schedule For Beginning NEPA Process	Target Completion Date
McGee Creek P.S. (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2001	2002
Rock Creek P.S. (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2004
Pine Creek PS (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2003
Bishop P. (2) Outfitters	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2003
Rainbow P.S. (2) (G.Allen)	12/31/00	2002	2004
Glacier Pack Train (1)	12/31/01 12/31/01	2003	2004
Cottonwood PS (1)	12/31/02	2004	2005
Mt. Whitney Pack (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2003
Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2001	2002
Frontier Pack Trains (1)	12/31/14	N/A	N/A
Reds Meadow P.S. (1)	12/31/05	2005	2006
Outfitter/Guide Permits	12/31/01	2001	2002

**Table 4. Sierra National Forest Commercial Pack Station Permits**

Permittee	Expiration Date	Schedule For Beginning NEPA Process	Target Completion Date
Clyde P. S.	12/04	2003	2004
D & F P. S.	12/06	2005	2006
High Sierra P. S.	12/08	2007	2008
Minarets P.S.	12/03	2002	2003
Lost Valley P.S.	12/08	2007	2008
Yosemite Trails P.S.	12/01	In progress	2003



## **Application to Other Contracts, Permits and Special Use Authorizations**

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The management direction provided by our decision applies to permits and special use authorizations signed by Forest Service responsible officials on or after the effective date of the revised plan. The attached management directions that require adjustments to current permits, and special use authorizations will be applied in those cases where statutory or regulatory authority exists if the change is necessary to achieve the overall desired conditions. Permits and special use authorizations which are determined by the responsible official to be consistent with the Plan, or which are adjusted to be consistent may proceed.

## **Future Decisions Not Subject To NEPA Compliance**

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Many of the decisions made in this ROD either did not require an EIS or were not subject to NEPA compliance. These decisions include but are not limited to such items as management of the wilderness permit process, administration of Special Use Permits and wilderness education.

## **Collaborative Stewardship**

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As part of implementation of this Plan, the Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers will increase their efforts in collaborative stewardship within the communities of the Sierra and Inyo National Forests. Collaborative stewardship means bringing people together to share in the decision-making in implementing the direction of this Plan.

The Plan, including management direction, and monitoring have some flexibility. Interaction among interested people can lead to mutually acceptable resolution of resource use issues. We are hopeful that such interaction and participation will lead to better knowledge of forest activity and fewer appeals and less litigation.

The Forest Service recognizes that the success of collaborative stewardship will depend on shared commitment by all involved parties, including the State and other Federal agencies. The agency will do its best to provide the opportunities for collaborative stewardship throughout these wildernesses and welcome everyone's participation in this cooperative program.

## Appeal Rights

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal in duplicate within 45 days of the date of published legal notice of this decision, as provided in 36 CFR 217.5(b) and 36 CFR 217.8(a)(3). The appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer:

Bradley E. Powell, Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
1323 Club Drive  
Vallejo, Ca. 94592

The notice of appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9).

Decisions on site-specific projects are not made in this document. Decisions on proposed projects will not be made until completion of environmental analysis and documentation for the specific project, in compliance with the NEPA.

## Contact Persons

If you would like more information on the Plan or the Final EIS, please contact the following officials:

Mary Beth Hennessy  
Inyo NF Project Manager  
873 N. Main St.  
Bishop Ca. 93514  
(760) 873-2448

or:

Martie Schramm  
Sierra NF Project Manager  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, CA 93612  
(559) 855-5360

## Signatures

/s/ Jeffrey E. Bailey 04/20/01  
JEFFREY E. BAILEY      Date  
Forest Supervisor,  
Inyo National Forest

/s/ James L. Boynton 04/20/01  
JAMES L. BOYNTON      Date  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest Service

Pacific  
Southwest  
Region

Inyo and Sierra  
National Forests

April 2001



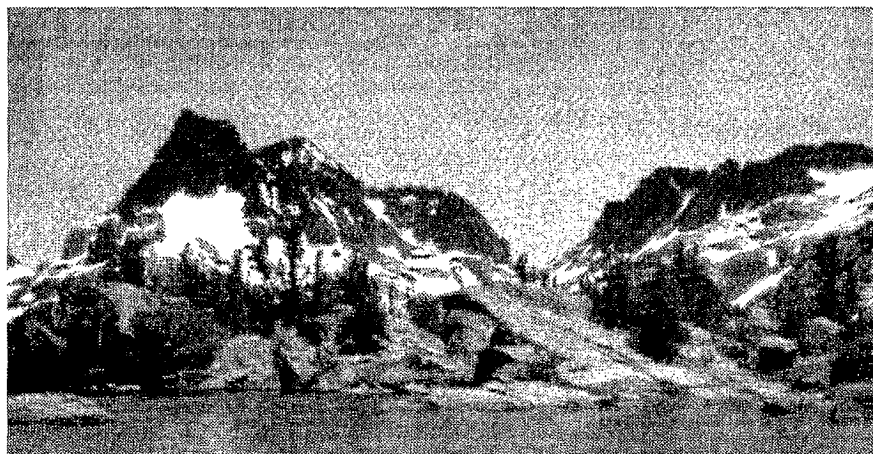
# **Management Direction for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses**

## **Final Environmental Impact Statement**

### **Record of Decision**

Non-significant Amendment to the Land and Resource  
Management Plans for the Inyo and Sierra National  
Forests





Island Pass, Ansel Adams Wilderness  
*Photo by Daniel Perrot*

**Lead Agency:** U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region

**Responsible Officials:** Jeffrey E. Bailey,  
Forest Supervisor,  
Inyo National Forest

James L. Boynton,  
Forest Supervisor,  
Sierra National Forest

Madera, Mono, Fresno, and Inyo Counties, California

Olive Lake, John Muir Wilderness, *Cover Photo by Mary Beth Hennessy*

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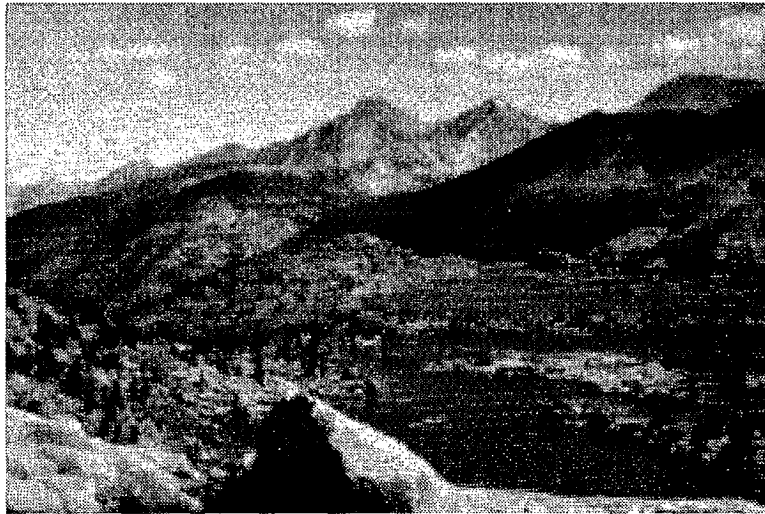
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Marie Lake, John Muir Wilderness



John Muir Trail South of Selden Pass,  
John Muir Wilderness



South Fork San Joaquin River, John Muir Wilderness

*Photos by Daniel and Laurie Perrot*

## Introduction

This document presents our decision for a joint Wilderness Management Plan (Plan) for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses and includes non-significant amendments to the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) for the Sierra and Inyo National Forests in California. The following pages summarize our reasons for choosing Alternative 1 Modified as the Selected Alternative.

An open, inclusive approach was used to make this decision. Our intent is to continue with this model as the Plan is implemented. Although we make this decision based upon the best information currently available to us, it is not without some uncertainty or risk. We fully expect that by placing an emphasis on monitoring, any needed course corrections or adjustments will be made.

Throughout the development of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and the Selected Alternative we considered public input in developing a scientifically credible, resource sustainable, and legally sufficient plan. In our judgment, the decision we are making will more effectively meet legal requirements, improve environmental protection measures, and further reduce the potential for environmental harm from human activities in these wildernesses than the current wilderness plans and LRMPs. The Plan will also assure wilderness values and opportunities to the public well into the future.

## The Decision

The decision we are making today is to select Alternative 1 – Modified as presented in the FEIS. The Plan that has been developed from Alternative 1 – Modified replaces the existing wilderness plans for the Ansel Adams (formerly Minarets), John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses and we will be making non-significant amendments to the LRMPs for the Sierra and Inyo National Forests. Existing LMRP direction as amended by the *Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment Record of Decision (SNFPA)*, will apply unless amended by this decision. The elements of the plan are listed below.

We have made our decision after careful review of the public comments on the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Statement (RDEIS) prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). We also have reviewed the FEIS, the alternative maps, and the revised management direction.

## **Key Elements of the Decision**

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We have listed below the key elements of the management direction for these wildernesses. Please refer to the FEIS Chapter 2, Alternative 1 – Modified for greater detail.

### **Commercial and Non-commercial Trailhead Quotas**

- Establishes a quota period of May 1 to November 1.
- Establishes quotas on all trailheads for all commercial and non-commercial users.
- Authorizes the establishment of destination quotas if trailhead quotas do not achieve desired wilderness conditions.
- Establishes a quota system that varies by trailhead and is either a single (combined public and commercial users) or multiple (separate public and commercial user[s]) quotas.
- Establishes a system of split quotas (borrowing from the next day) that will allow the accommodation of full party size, provides flexibility to the vacationing public, and reduces undesirable spikes in commercial use.
- Establishes a 5-year implementation process for introducing commercial quotas and for trailheads where non-commercial quotas are being lowered or did not previously exist. For trailheads with new quotas, year one will allow 150% of the quota identified in Alternative 1 – Modified, with a gradual reduction of the quota to the actual level identified in Alternative 1 – Modified at year 5. For trailheads where existing quotas are being lowered, the quota will start in year one with the existing quota and be reduced to the level identified in Alternative 1 – Modified.

### **Commercial Services**

- Sets service day allocations based on the type of commercial services provided.
- Allocates a pool of temporary commercial service days both to accommodate identified needed commercial services and to permit some limited opportunities for growth of commercial services when determined necessary. This pool is limited to 3000 days (1500 east side and 1500 west side).
- Establishes criteria for considering approval of commercial services in areas where these uses shall remain low.

### **Wilderness Permits**

- Requires that all wilderness permits for both commercial and non-commercial users will be approved by the Forest Service and that the quota system is managed by the Forest Service.



- Requires that all users of commercial services go through the commercial provider to obtain their wilderness permit, thereby counting against the commercial quota.
- Continues with a year-round permit system for day use on Mt. Whitney and overnight use in all three wildernesses.

### **Managing Different Areas for Different Levels of Use**

- Manages for a range of uses and opportunities for solitude across the wilderness landscape.
- Establishes recreation use categories 1, 2, & 3 based upon maintenance of historic patterns of use (e.g. low, moderate, and high) unless limiting factors exist. Protects and enhances popular areas of use to avoid degradation, yet continues to allow use.
- Manages for a broad spectrum of recreation experiences in the wildernesses that are consistent with the values defined in the Wilderness Act. Provides for high levels of solitude across the wilderness landscape. Allows for high level of use in a small number of areas.

### **Day Use**

- Monitors day use on specific trailheads and sets a threshold of 20% over baseline levels, that may trigger the need for an analysis and public involvement process that would determine if concerns warrant further action and to search for solutions to alleviate day use concerns.

### **System and User-Created Trails**

- Adjusts trail maintenance levels to reflect recreation categories and desired conditions.
- Monitors user-created trails for resource impacts.
- Bars construction of new system trails, but permits consideration of incorporation of user-created trails to the official system when there is an overriding benefit to public use, enjoyment, and protection of wilderness resources and the appropriate analysis of this benefit has been completed.
- Considers physically closing and eliminating user-created trails and system trails that do not meet a public need or which cause unacceptable levels of resource impacts.
- Restricts commercial use to the existing system trails unless otherwise approved by the Forest Service.

### **Single Use Trails**

- Permits recreation packstock and hiker use on all trails except Mt. Whitney and Meysan Lake, which are closed to packstock.
- Provides for identification of trails unsuitable or not recommended for stock use. Commercial packstock operations will not be authorized on these trails.

### **Campsite Densities & Conditions**

- Establishes management direction for campsite densities and campsite conditions for each of the three recreation use categories.
- Designates campsites in popular destinations if necessary, in order to protect wilderness values.
- Establishes setbacks for campsites at 100 feet from water if terrain permits, but in no case closer than 50 feet.

### **Closures for Campfires**

- Establishes campfire closures above 10,000 feet in the northern portion and 10,400 feet in the southern portion of the wildernesses.
- Authorizes site-specific campfire closures as needed.
- Prohibits wood burning stoves, charcoal fires, packed-in firewood, or fire pans within areas closed to campfires.

### **Food Storage**

- Establishes food storage restrictions wilderness-wide to reduce bear/human conflicts and protect wildlife from dependency on human food.

### **Recreation Stock Forage**

- Establishes grazing utilization standards that apply to commercial and private stock parties.
- Adopts range readiness standards.
- Establishes commercial packstock forage use through special use permits for individual pack stations.
- Requires that stream bank trampling and chiseling will not exceed 20%.

- Special use permits for the commercial operators are to include conditions requiring them to cease using meadows when grazing standards are reached, and requires the permittees to be involved in the monitoring of grazing conditions.
- Provides for a full closure of those meadows to all packstock grazing (commercial and non-commercial) for the following season when over utilization of vegetation in meadows has occurred.

### Structures

- Retains only historic structures and those few structures necessary for the administration of these wilderness areas.

### Cultural Values

- Conforms to the Programmatic Agreement: Controlling Impacts on Historic Properties; Management of Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses, *Sierra and Inyo National Forests* (Programmatic Agreement) designed to manage and protect the historic resources of these wilderness areas.

## Rationale For Decision

The discussion below explains why we have selected Alternative 1 Modified from among the alternatives analyzed in the FEIS and highlights the key elements of our decision.

Alternative 1 Modified balances the tradeoffs between various components of resource protection and visitor use by: 1) aligning use levels and quotas with an overall strategy for managing visitor use to allow for a range of wilderness experiences with low density recreation dominating the landscape; 2) acknowledging and responding to resource concerns by implementing a process to monitor and assess field conditions; 3) considering patterns of use and varying impacts in the design of the visitor management strategy; and 4) determining an appropriate mix of commercial and non-commercial activities.

Throughout the planning process, it was quite clear that the interested public holds widely divergent views regarding the management of these wildernesses. It was also quite clear that wilderness visitors, non-commercial or commercial, on foot or on horseback, value many similar wilderness qualities and wish to see them safeguarded. We feel that the extensive public involvement and comment during this process has led to significant improvements in the final decision. While we recognize that there will still be differences of opinion among stakeholders, we believe that Alternative 1 Modified is the best approach that attempts to facilitate maximum resource protection while providing for a broad array of wilderness recreation experiences.

Management direction over time will be modified based on monitoring, documentation, and feedback. Active and constructive public participation is vital if we are to achieve our goals.

## **Visitor Use Management**

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### **Recreation Strategy: Managing Different Areas for Different Levels of Use**

It is our desire to manage these wildernesses in a manner that protects the landscape for the highest qualities of wilderness character consistent with the appropriate levels of public use. These lands provide wilderness experiences for a wide range of the public. By using three recreation categories, we will manage a very small number of areas as concentrated use areas, while the majority of the landscape will be managed for lower densities of recreation. The three categories for managing recreation use are displayed in the table at the end of this section. These categories allow for a range of recreational characteristics to coexist across the wilderness landscape.

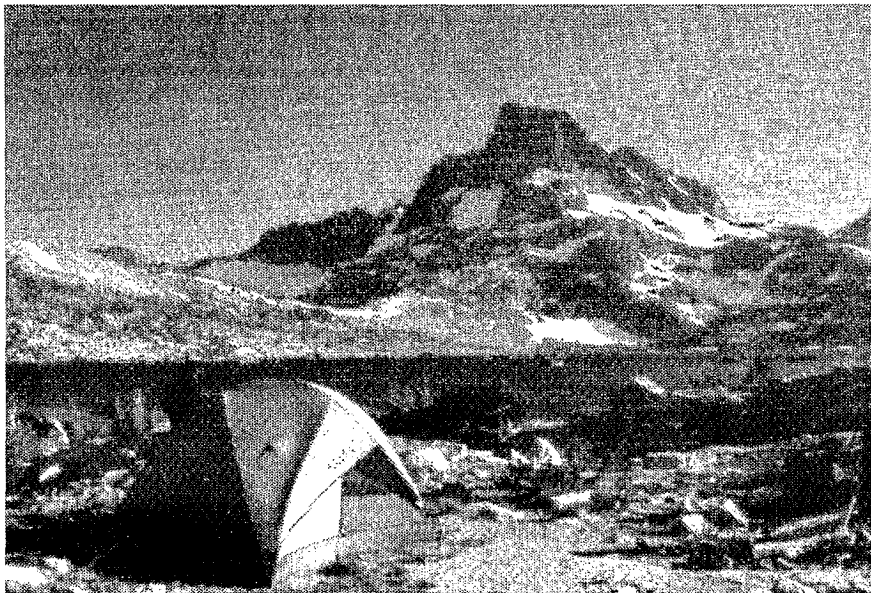
Many respondents to the RDEIS fear that using three recreation categories permits degradation of the wildernesses and contend that the Wilderness Act does not allow for such a strategy. We disagree. We believe this management strategy is the most effective way to balance the reasonable recreational desires of the public with the protection of all wilderness values. Managing in categories is not a new approach, it is not new direction, and it is not unique to these wildernesses. We believe it is supported by many years of common practice and wilderness research by academics, and by agency direction.

In the RDEIS we consciously designed Alternative 2 with one category to manage the wilderness the same way across the landscape. The use levels prescribed in Alternative 2 are higher in the low use areas than what we are prescribing in Alternative 1 Modified. Consequently, we chose Alternative 1 Modified so that we would not displace visitors to low use areas, and in the long run, cause degradation of those areas.

Areas of concentrated use constitute less than 3 percent of the 840,581 acres of the wildernesses in this plan. These corridors and destinations have remained popular for generations and we believe provide rare and unique opportunities for the American public. We also believe the visitor experience of these landscapes furthers the goals of the Wilderness Act by generating an understanding and appreciation of wilderness. We are committed to managing these areas intensively to prevent degradation from visitor use, to prevent displacement of visitors to lower use areas, to contain impacts caused by visitation, and improve the existing condition at these locations.

We have proposed standards to maintain the remaining 97 percent of the wildernesses in their current condition in order to curb the trend toward pristine areas gradually becoming more impacted. Standards for crowding at campsites, campsite density, and campsite conditions will vary by recreation category to insure that degradation and unacceptable impacts in any area of the wilderness does not occur. These new management standards are designed to maintain and enhance wilderness character, and we believe they will improve current conditions. The plan emphasizes ongoing monitoring and the ability of managers to take corrective actions if necessary.

The challenge of wilderness management is one of meeting public demand for recreation use while protecting wilderness values such as ecological integrity, and solitude etc. It has been our task to find an acceptable level of recreation impacts and to assess the trade-offs of resource protection, visitor freedom, and wilderness value. We are aware that each visitor holds a personal set of expectations and assumptions about what a wilderness experience is or should be. We believe that most everyone's desired experience can be provided across the landscape through the implementation of this recreation strategy. However, we have consciously decided that at times we will not meet peak public demand, when to do so would have unacceptable impacts on wilderness values.



Campsite at Thousand Island Lake, Ansel Adams Wilderness  
*Photo by Daniel Perrot*

**Table 1. Desired Condition of Recreation Categories**

	<b>Category 1</b>	<b>Category 2</b>	<b>Category 3</b>
<b>Social</b>	These areas provide outstanding opportunities for solitude and are predominately free from evidence of human activities. Encounters with other visitors while traveling or camping are very infrequent. This environment offers a very high degree of challenge, self-reliance, and risk.	Moderate to high levels of solitude while traveling and camping outside the primary trail corridors are likely. Primary trail corridors have highly maintained and constructed trails that support access to popular destinations and travel routes. Secondary trails allow for moderate dispersal of use and are maintained in a manner that will be consistent with a more pristine and primitive experience than primary trail corridors. Camping encounters are likely at trail junctions and scenic points and campsites may be within site or sound of each other.	In these areas, recreation use levels are maintained to provide moderate levels of solitude. High opportunities for solitude exist during the non-peak use season. During peak use season, opportunities for experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds and impacts of human activities are moderate. The probability of encountering other visitors is moderate to high on the trail and at campsites.
<b>Resource - general</b>	A highly unmodified natural environment characterizes the area. Ecological and natural processes are minimally affected by the action of users. Environmental impacts are low and restricted to minor losses of vegetation where camping occurs and along travel routes. Most areas recover from impacts on an annual basis. These short-term impacts are apparent to few visitors.	A highly unmodified natural environment characterizes the area. In a few areas, where moderate levels of use concentrate, natural conditions may be moderately affected by the actions of users. These impacts are mitigated with a moderate level of management presence. Impacts may persist from year to year and are apparent to a moderate number of visitors.	A mostly unmodified natural environment characterizes this area. Natural conditions may be affected by human use. Impacts to vegetation and soil often persist from year to year and are apparent to most visitors. Resource conditions are not allowed to degrade and management presence will be more necessary to insure non-degradation of the natural resources.
<b>Campsites</b>	Campsites are at low-density levels and show minor impacts that rarely persist year to year.	Concentration of campsites is moderately high at trail junctions and popular destination points. The number of sites accommodates moderate use with no new sites forming over time. Campsites may occasionally be within sight and sound of others. A barren core may exist on some sites and may persist from year to year.	Concentration of campsites is moderately high at destinations. The number of sites accommodates peak use in order to prevent the formation of new sites. A barren core may exist on some sites and may persist from year to year.
<b>Vegetation/Soil Conditions</b>	There is very little vegetation loss or alteration of duff and litter layer by human use.	Moderate soil compaction and loss of vegetation. Minimal erosion occurs on the disturbed sites.	Moderate soil compaction and loss of vegetation, litter, and duff is expected on many visitor created trails, camp areas, and areas used by livestock. Minimal erosion occurs on the disturbed sites and is mitigated to insure long-term impacts do not occur.

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3
<b>Riparian Areas</b>	Riparian, lakeshore and stream channel conditions show no measurable degradation due to human uses.	Riparian, lakeshore and stream channel conditions show a temporary change, which could be expected to persist from year to year at a few sites. These impacts should be mitigated and prevented from occurring if evidence of potential long-term impacts occurs.	Riparian, lakeshore, and stream channel conditions show temporary changes, which could be expected to persist from year to year at some sites. Mitigation measures will be implemented to accommodate moderate levels of human recreation impacts.
<b>Managerial</b>	Management focuses on sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem. Signs may be present in very rare cases, for resource protection and for marking system trail junctions. Management actions may occasionally include direct, on site actions and site-specific regulations may be used in unusual cases where resources require higher levels of protection. Indirect methods of accomplishing management objectives will predominate with exceptions to ensure visitor use is maintained at low levels and to ensure that impacts are contained and do not persist.	Management emphasizes sustaining and enhancing the natural ecosystem. Signing is minimal, providing for resource protection and direction at major trail intersections. Management action may frequently include direct, on-site actions and site-specific regulations may be used to meet management objectives for resource protection.	Management emphasizes sustaining and protecting natural conditions. Management actions are often direct and management presence to mitigate visitor use impacts on resources is noticeable. Campsites may need to be identified and delineated. Site-specific closures to camping, campfires, and site specific regulations may be implemented. Signs are used for resource protection in these areas. Moderate density of social trails is present in destination camping areas. Maintain Forest Service presence to provide education contact and manage high levels of use.

### Commercial and Non-commercial Trailhead Quotas

Implementation of our strategy for trailhead quotas is necessary to reduce resource impacts caused by peak use periods and to help distribute use over time and space for a quality wilderness experience, and is consistent with the three recreation categories. We believe the trailhead quota system in Alternative 1 Modified accommodates the public need for a variety of recreational opportunities while providing reasonable and equitable access to all users. We feel it confines wilderness resource impacts to acceptable levels by taking into consideration the differential impacts of these uses and adopting a strategy that is responsive to varying local conditions.

Alternative 1 Modified establishes quotas at levels of use that we believe are compatible with maintenance of wilderness character. Quotas were examined by comparing recent actual commercial and non-commercial daily use levels by entry point with their impact on the physical, and to a lesser extent, social/experiential resources (such as the potential for crowding due to topography and use patterns). Quotas were evaluated and sometimes adjusted for non-commercial users and established at appropriate levels for commercial operators

consistently across the wildernesses. In areas where it was determined that by reducing the daily overnight use levels there would be a positive effect or correct an identifiable resource concern, appropriate adjustments were made to quotas.

High, short duration use levels by commercial operators, referred to as “spikes”, were determined to cause unacceptable impacts to the physical and social environment. A few of the impacts caused by spikes include the creation of new campsites since all existing sites may be occupied, enlarging of existing sites since large groups may be a cause of the spike event, and loss of solitude since greater numbers of people are encountered in travel and while camping when spikes occur.

Alternative 1 - Modified includes elements from several of the RDEIS alternatives with some additions to create a rationing system that is equitable for all users. We are concerned that the single quota proposed in Alternative 2 for all users on all trailheads would produce undesirable competition between commercial and non-commercial users. Alternative 1 - Modified attempts to avoid the unnecessary competition by creating a system of single and multiple quotas, which varies by trailhead. However, we do feel that a single quota has merit in areas of low use. Therefore, on some trailheads with low commercial use at an acceptable level, we will administer a system with a single quota. Trailhead quotas on commercial use were determined to be the best mechanism to address adverse impacts caused by spikes.

On trails where pack stations are physically located on National Forest System lands and have invested in infrastructure, we have established separate quotas for commercial and non-commercial users. And in a few cases where there are both pack stations and other outfitter guide opportunities, there are three separate quotas. We believe separate quotas for outfitter/guides helps respond to concerns raised by our commercial operators and allows us to recognize different wilderness use patterns, destinations, and impacts of traditional packstock operations and other types of institutional and guide services.

With Alternative 1 - Modified we attempted to set trailhead quotas at an appropriate level. However, since commercial trailhead quotas and some non-commercial trailhead quotas have not previously existed or are being reduced from current levels, we decided that we need to implement them over a period of 5 years in order to avoid undue disruption to the public and commercial operators business practices. We have established a 5-year “phase in” approach to the implementation of commercial quotas. We will not be phasing in existing quotas that are not changing. These quotas have been in place for a number of years, we know what the consequences are and the public has had the opportunity to adjust already.

During year one of implementation, all commercial trailhead quotas and for trailheads where non-commercial quotas did not previously exist the quota will be set at 150 percent of what is shown in the FEIS for Alternative 1 - Modified. During the 5-year phase-in period our goal is to reduce the extra 50 percent by one fifth per year to reach the levels identified in Alternative 1 - Modified (e.g. year two would be 140 percent, year three 130 percent etc.). Also, for trailheads where the non-commercial quota is being reduced, the quota will start in year one at the existing level and be reduced proportionally over the next five years to the level identified in Alternative 1 - Modified. During this 5-year phase-in period, we will monitor and assess if the public and commercial operators are adjusting to the quotas. We will also assess the



impacts of competition for trailhead quotas on the various commercial users. During this phase-in period we will determine through monitoring whether we are achieving our goal of improving wilderness resource values where we previously identified unacceptable impacts. If resource conditions are such that additional use will not be detrimental and the public is demanding access at a higher level, than the trailhead quotas can be reevaluated through the appropriate analysis process and set at a level that is achieving the desired wilderness conditions.

This monitoring and adjustment strategy will also help to determine if we need to change other trailheads to multiple commercial quotas (separate packer and other outfitter/guide quotas). It also provides the flexibility to address the question of competition and what those quota levels should be.

We will approve commercial use on a case-by-case basis for areas with no or very low existing commercial use, with defined criteria including no marketing of access to these areas or routine use. Although we want to allow for occasional commercial services when it is appropriate and needed to meet management objectives, we do not want commercial use to become a dominant use in these areas.

We do not want to affect the party size limits in this decision. We recognize in some locations where we established low quotas an unintended effect would be to restrict party size below existing limits. We also recognize that the public needs some level of flexibility for their vacation planning across the wilderness and we need the ability to reduce the very high spikes in use that are causing unacceptable impacts to the wilderness resources. Therefore, Alternative 1 - Modified employs a split quota strategy whereby the quota will be managed so that it is possible for all users of the quota system (both commercial and non-commercial users) to utilize the current day's quota and the next day's quota. Our goal is to avoid a loss of integrity to the quota system that continuous borrowing against the next day could create. Therefore, an administrative process will be developed that prevents continuous borrowing from the next day and the next day, etc. If, in the future, we determine that unacceptable impacts are occurring as a result of increases in the number of large parties or if spikes in use have not been reduced far enough to protect the wilderness resources, we may eliminate the flexibility provided by the split quota strategy.

The established quotas take into account visitors entering and exiting in the adjacent National Parks (Yosemite and Sequoia-Kings Canyon). The wilderness complex has been managed through close collaboration between the agencies and we do consider the connectivity between the National Parks and these wildernesses when managing the quota system.

The study conducted by the University of Arizona has given us more specific information on visitor use. We now have a clearer picture of visitor travel patterns and distribution within these wildernesses. Based on this study, we feel destination quotas are not necessary at this time. We have taken this information into account in the new trailhead quotas and have anticipated impacts at interior destinations. Destination quotas may be considered in the future should use patterns change, or unacceptable crowding at certain locations be documented as measured by standards for occupied campsites and/or campsite density, or unacceptable resource conditions at interior locations be observed.

In the RDEIS, Alternatives 1 and 2 would establish year-round quota periods. We received many comments from the public questioning the necessity of year-round quotas. We agree. Therefore Alternative 1 - Modified sets the quota period from May 1 through November 1. The quota period has been extended to ensure that use levels do not exceed the daily quota any time of the year. We have experienced use in the spring and fall that has exceeded summer quota levels. It is not acceptable to exceed quotas at any time of the year since they are needed to protect resource and wilderness values. However, we are confident that a quota is not currently needed for the winter season.

### **Commercial Services**

Alternative 1 Modified establishes a commercial use management system that meets the purpose and need as described in the RDEIS. It defines controls and allowances for commercial service providers. Changes in activities, commercial use patterns, and condition of the wilderness resource have dictated the re-evaluation of use levels, rationing methods, and the proportional allocations between private and commercial uses. This has been done throughout this wilderness plan revision process. We have arrived at a system of allocation by activity and a rationing method for commercial operations that provides the consistency requested repeatedly by the public, non-commercial and commercial users alike. The overall goal is to achieve an acceptable balance in recreational activities and uses.

We believe the environmental consequences of the allocation levels established in Alternative 1 Modified are acceptable and meet the intent of the Wilderness Act and other applicable laws. The other alternatives describe a range of other possible allocation levels, both higher and lower. We believe that the potential consequences of higher allocations are unacceptable. We feel that lower allocation alternatives do not provide enough of a gain in resource protection to warrant limiting wilderness recreational opportunities to such an extent. Growth in commercial use will be managed with set limits on additional service days. Expanded allocations will be authorized for commercial operators who further management objectives and meet identified needs. These allocations will be limited to a temporary commercial service day pool of 3000 (1500 eastside and 1500 westside). We feel the wilderness resource can absorb this additional use. The trailhead quota system will ensure adequate wilderness protections.

We believe that Alternative 1 Modified provides the best delivery system for managing commercial access while recognizing the needs of business operations. Commercial use will be required to fit into an entry quota mechanism that combines components of all the analyzed alternatives. By limiting the amount of daily commercial entry at trailheads, Alternatives 1, 1 Modified, and 2 would moderate the spikes in use occurring under the present system. Alternatives 3 and 4 do not adequately address these issues because they do not provide a commercial quota and do not curb spikes.

### **Permits**

Under Alternative 1 Modified, the Forest Service will approve all wilderness permits (in conjunction with other appropriate Federal Agencies). Significant public comments

suggested there was the appearance of unfairness in that the general public had to operate under a quota system while the commercial operators had the freedom to take clients without regard to quota. We believe it is important for the Forest Service to approve the wilderness permits in order to assure equity in access among users and for the proper administration of the quota system. It is our opinion that Forest Service administration of the permit system would provide for more reliable recreation use data that may help to determine recreation use impacts on the environment, and to assess the adequacy of the quota system.

Visitors using commercial services will be required to obtain their wilderness permits through the commercial operator. They will not be allowed to obtain a permit through the non-commercial quota if they are utilizing a commercial operator during their trip. Users who obtain a permit through the non-commercial side and then use a commercial operator undermine the balance that has been specifically designed to provide equitable access to all while protecting the wilderness resource. This is because the different quotas are intended to reflect the relative impacts associated with commercial operations, including the impacts of commercial stock use.

This decision does not identify the precise mechanism of how wilderness permits will be authorized for parties using commercial services. It is our intent that the Forest Service approves each commercial trip, record accurate trip information, have copies of all wilderness permits, and manage the commercial quota system.

We realize that achieving compliance with the permit system in the low use period of the year is difficult. It does provide data that gives us some indication of trends in wilderness use year round. We did not hear public comment suggesting eliminating the year round permit system. We did hear public comment that it was important to provide wilderness education to the public. The wilderness permit system is recognized as a significant means in which we make contact and provide education to wilderness users. The wilderness permit system also provides useful information during search and rescue efforts. Therefore, we believe it appropriate to continue with year-round permit system for day use in the Mt. Whitney area and overnight use in all three wildernesses.

### **Day Use**

We respond to two distinct concerns from the public in regards to day use. Some feel that high levels of day use degrade the wilderness experience and character, while others fear that restricting day use would be too heavy-handed of a management action. In Alternative 1 Modified, we commit to gaining a better understanding of day use levels and obtaining baseline data before adopting instructions regarding day use. When day use increases above 20 percent of the existing baseline data, we may conduct an analysis of actions that we might take to address issues caused by the increase in day use.

In the analysis for day use, we are committed to full and open public involvement throughout any decision-making process. We prefer to maintain maximum flexibility and hope to find creative solutions to management of day use instead of establishing a regulatory system.

### **System and User-Created Trails**

The trail system is a critical element of wilderness management. Trails serve as the arteries of public use and enjoyment of the wilderness system. We believe the current number and miles (989 miles) of system trails (network) is generally sufficient in providing public access to these wildernesses. This network of system trails compliments and is an integral part of the three recreation categories. We believe challenge and risk is a part of the wilderness experience, and constructing new trails would diminish this opportunity for visitors. We are striving to manage these areas for their wilderness character. Trails have a significant impact on the wilderness character of an area; both from the physical standpoint and from the attraction they create. Therefore, we have decided that construction of new system trails is not needed or appropriate at this time.

Through monitoring, we will inventory the network of user-created trails and determine their need and appropriateness. Those user-created trails that are causing resource impacts will be the highest priority to inventory and monitor. There may be cause in some cases to add specific user-created trails to the system or to decommission system trails that are no longer needed. In Alternative 1 - Modified we establish criteria for making these decisions in a consistent manner. Commercial use will be restricted to the existing system trails, unless otherwise approved by the Forest Service, in order to curb the creation and use of user created trails.

During the public comment period there was high concern expressed over the management and maintenance of the trail system. Alternative 1 Modified directs adjustments to the maintenance level (service level) for various portions of the trail system. The trail maintenance levels will be adjusted from current levels as necessary to implement the three-category recreation strategy. We will consider the stated goals and objectives of the selected alternative in assigning new service levels.

### **Single Use Trails**

In response to the DEIS some members of the public requested that some system trails should be designated for single use (e.g. hikers only). Alternative 2 in the RDEIS proposed the designation of four single use trails. We considered this item in making our decision. We do not feel, however, that single-use designation is necessary since hikers can find trails that are seldom used by stock in the existing trail network. We believe by the character of our trail network there are currently some trails that are not desirable or seldom used by stock users for a variety of reasons, including topographic constraints, slope, grade and material, and the hazardous nature of the trail for stock. We prefer a strategy of stock-user education regarding trail conditions so that they may choose to avoid unsuitable areas. Some of these trails will be identified as not suitable or recommended for stock use. Commercial stock use will not be authorized on trails not recommended for stock use. We believe that since these trails are not maintained at a higher level and with repetitive commercial use, the conditions of these trails will further degrade.

To be consistent with this approach, we will not upgrade any trails from maintenance level 1 and 2 solely for the purpose of facilitating stock use.

## **Resource Conditions**

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### **Campsite Densities and Conditions**

By establishing direction for campsite densities and conditions for each of the three recreation use categories, we will be avoiding crowding at destinations, and we will be ensuring that degradation and unacceptable impacts of the wilderness values does not occur at these locations. This will also provide a mechanism to monitor our success at achieving the desired conditions and enable us to adjust our management actions as necessary.

At popular high use destination areas, we may find it necessary to designate campsites in order to achieve the desired densities and conditions consistent with the recreation use categories and wilderness values.

There is broad public acceptance for the need to protect water quality, riparian ecosystems and those species that depend on them. It is our decision to adopt management direction requiring campsite setbacks of 100 feet from water where terrain permits but in no case closer than 50 feet. Science indicates that a 100 feet setback from water would provide the highest level of protection for water quality and riparian ecosystems. However, by imposing the 100 feet setback limit, the analysis indicates that 40 to 70 percent of campsites would be eliminated. We believe this would cause campsite use to move to other areas that may cause additional undesirable impacts. With our decision to have a campsite setback of 100 feet from water where terrain permits, but in no case closer than 50 feet, only 15 to 25 percent of campsites would be displaced, and we accept the impacts to both water quality and aquatic environment, as well as the impact created by displaced campsites. We recognize this decision will eliminate some favorite campsites that the public has historically used.

### **Closures for Campfires**

In addressing the issues of resource impacts, we received many public comments in support of elevational campfire closures at the same or lower levels than those described in Alternatives 1 and 2. However, for a couple of reasons we decided to select 10,000 feet in the northern portion and 10,400 feet in the southern portion of these wildernesses. One reason is that scientific literature supports the need for campfire restriction in pure whitebark pine stands, with a lower need in the mixed lodgepole/whitebark stands. The campfire closures are based upon the best estimation of whitebark pine forest elevation.

A second reason is the need for some consistency with the adjacent National Parks. These wildernesses share extensive boundaries with three adjacent national parks and the trail systems are interconnected at many points. Many visitors travel between adjacent National Parks and these wildernesses during their trips. The National Parks set three separate elevational closure levels: 9,600 feet in Yosemite, 10,000 feet in Kings Canyon, and 11,200 feet in Sequoia. While we recognize the importance of being consistent with the adjacent National Parks, we believe that more than two elevation limits in the planning area would be difficult to communicate effectively to the public, and with this in mind, we selected closures based upon whitebark pine elevation.

We recognize the need for site-specific closures in areas that are depleted of firewood and where damage is occurring from the cutting of limbs from live trees. Many concerns raised by the public appeared to be about areas below the proposed whitebark pine community and were thought to need site-specific campfire closures due to depleted wood supplies. We have chosen to close specific areas to campfires outside the elevational closures using the campsite monitoring protocol listed in the Monitoring Strategy.

We have chosen to prohibit packing in of charcoal or wood and to allow only gas stoves in the closed areas. Permitting firewood and charcoal to be packed in would allow fires without knowledge of where the fuels came from, causing confusion for visitors and rangers alike. Rangers trying to enforce the closure would have difficulty determining if a campfire is entirely made up of packed-in wood. Visitors may misunderstand the closures if they see campfires occurring in closed areas. This, we believe, could lead to compliance problems and equity issues, something we are trying to avoid.

### **Food Storage**

Our decision establishes a wilderness-wide food storage restriction to reduce bear and human conflict and protect wildlife from becoming dependent upon human food. We are concerned about the ever-increasing interactions between wilderness visitors and black bears. Black bears are a unique Sierra resource and it our desire they that remain wild in character. Therefore, our decision is to require visitors to store food properly to prevent wildlife and black bears in particular from gaining access to food, trash, or other non-native food sources. This direction will provide consistency between the policies of these wildernesses and the adjacent National Parks.

### **Recreation Stock Forage**

Our decision establishes measurable recreation stock forage utilization standards throughout the wildernesses. The standards maintain a high degree of visitor freedom for accessing the wilderness while providing for conservation measures for aquatic, riparian and meadow ecosystems.

Lowered packstock impacts to these high elevation meadows will minimize risk to the population viability of native flora and fauna. The standards provide an opportunity for commercial operators to assist in monitoring condition of meadow vegetation and thereby assisting in their knowledge of how much forage is available for their use. Through the administration of the commercial outfitters special use permit, we will require permittees to monitor for forage use and range readiness and to cease using meadows when grazing standards are reached. The standards also provide opportunities for commercial and private stock parties to practice and demonstrate sound utilization practices that help protect meadow ecosystems. When over utilization of vegetation in meadows has occurred, a full closure of those meadows to all packstock grazing (commercial and noncommercial) may be implemented for the following season.

To be consistent with the SNFPA, our decision seeks to prevent disturbance caused by packstock grazing to meadow-associated streambanks, and natural lake and pond shorelines, from exceeding 20 percent of the stream reach or 20 percent of the shoreline areas.

Under this alternative visitors will view and experience meadows having a natural appearance. Degraded meadows and stream channels will have obvious upward trends in condition and function. These standards are based on the best available science, and are reflective of the SNFPA Record of Decision.

## **Other Important Decisions**

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### **Structures**

In keeping with the Wilderness Act, Forest Service national policy, and the Programmatic Agreement for the Wilderness Plan (shortened title), our decision provides consistent guidelines across the wildernesses for evaluation and removal of those non-historic structures that are not needed for the administration of these wilderness areas.

The minimum tool concept will be used when considering approval for research, data gathering for non-wilderness purposes (i.e. water resource data) and use and improvement of structures.

Historic structures will be managed in accordance with the stipulations within the Programmatic Agreement and federal laws.

### **Cultural Values**

We recognize that these wildernesses have been used and, to some extent, managed by human beings for thousands of years. Human use is reflected in ancient and historic trails, archeological sites, historic structures of various kinds, and cultural values ascribed to natural features of the landscape, as well as to the landscape as a whole. Traditional human uses, including Native American uses and contemporary equestrian, recreational, and research uses, are also aspects of the cultural significance of the wildernesses.

Our decision on the Plan is consistent with the Programmatic Agreement and provides significant improvement in the amount of protection to cultural properties located in the wildernesses. Furthermore, the Programmatic Agreement provides methods for the Forest Service, affected Tribes, and other consulting parties to engage in dialogue on common issues and take necessary actions for the protection of cultural and historic resources.

## **Rationale for What's Not in The Decision**

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### **Forest Orders**

All existing Forest Orders pertaining to these wildernesses will be reviewed and updated based on the decisions contained herein. A list and schedule for updating these forest orders appears later in this Record of Decision. Our intent is that the NEPA compliance necessary for these forest orders is contained within this FEIS.

### **Dogs**

A few commenters expressed a desire to have dogs more closely controlled, more widely restricted, or entirely excluded in the wildernesses. From the public comments there was not an overwhelming response that additional controls were needed. In addition, we do not find the issue significant enough to restrict dogs at this time. Where we have identified that there is conflict, we have established restrictions on dogs. For instance, we have closed the Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep (an endangered species) habitat to dogs.

### **Noise**

Some respondents expressed concern over noise, generated both by low-level aircraft overflights and by human visitors to the wildernesses. The issue of low level aircraft overflights is being addressed at the regional, national, and interagency levels to reduce the numbers of military over-flights, and we expect to see these efforts continue. We will continue to monitor localized impacts caused by low-level aircraft.

We choose to adopt an education strategy to address visitor-generated noise from the use of radios, televisions, cell phones, or amplified devices. Public comment indicated that education of wilderness users should be widely used to change behavior. We feel this subject lends itself to an education approach. If this proves ineffective, we may consider further measures in the future.

### **Party size (Except for Cross-Country)**

Party size has been the subject of strong interest and debate since this planning process started in 1992. In 1991, a significant party size change for the greater Central Sierra wilderness complex was published in the Federal Register through a rulemaking process. Prior to this, the maximum party size was twenty-five people with no limits on the number of stock, and prior to that there were no limits on party size. There was considerable public review of party size limits during that rulemaking process. Although there was litigation over the matter, only Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park was subsequently excluded from the rulemaking since the result would have been an increase in the party size for that Park, as opposed to a decrease for all the other Park Service and Forest Service units.

At the beginning of this process, we determined that we would not re-evaluate party size, in that such a regulation should be done consistently with contiguous administrative units as was completed just before this planning effort began in 1992. For this reason party size was not



included in the scope of this analysis. The 1997 DEIS, 2000 RDEIS and 2001 FEIS did not address party size.

While there were numerous public comments on party size, we have considered these public comments and decided not to include changes to the party size limit for those groups using trails as part of this decision.

### **Cross-country Party Size**

The 1997 DEIS proposed changes in cross-country party size. As a result of the public comments on the DEIS, we incorporated a change to cross-country party size in Alternative 2 of the 2000 RDEIS. The environmental consequences of this action were analyzed in Chapter 4.

After careful review, we choose not to make a change to cross-country party size at this time. Although many of the public comments were supportive of a change in party size, most were related to resource impacts rather than to concerns about crowding or degradation of solitude. We believe we are appropriately addressing many of the resource concerns with controls on commercial use such as limiting all commercial stock to authorized trails, and evaluating user-created trails for elimination or incorporation into the trail system.

It is our intent to impose as few limits on visitor freedom as possible once visitors are within the wildernesses. Although cross-country travel is becoming more popular, it is not at a level yet where we feel there is a need to restrict it.

### **Trailhead Facilities**

The RDEIS explains that trailhead facilities and associated environmental impacts are outside of the wilderness boundaries and therefore are not considered in this analysis. We believe existing direction in the LRMPs is sufficient to manage these areas. Site-specific NEPA analysis will be used as necessary to address individual trailhead facilities.

### **Production Livestock Grazing**

Congress has mandated that "there shall be no curtailment of grazing permits or privileges in an area simply because it is designated as wilderness" (sec 108, P.L. 96-560, H.R. Report 96-617, known as the Congressional Grazing Guidelines). Those active grazing allotments, or portions thereof, that reside within the planning area will be analyzed under each Forest's Allotment NEPA Schedule (Forest Service 1997) in accordance with the Rescission Act of 1995. We are making no decision here that will affect production livestock grazing. However, the cumulative effects of production livestock grazing on the wilderness resources are discussed in the Environmental Consequences in Chapter 4.

### **Fisheries Management**

In the SNFPA Record of Decision the Regional Forester stated "I will work with the State Department of Fish and Game to assess potential effects of non-native fish on species at risk such as mountain yellow-legged frog. This will include an evaluation of the need to

discontinue stocking and/or removal of non-native fish from deep lakes and adjacent resting pools.” In the meantime and until the Regional Forester advises us otherwise all fish stocking will continue to be managed under the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the Forest Service and the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG)(Sept 1995). We believe the SNFPA provides adequate direction and it is inappropriate to adopt additional direction while efforts are being made at the regional level to address this issue.

### **Non-Native Wildlife**

There are currently no non-native wildlife species within these wilderness areas. Based on national direction and the direction contained in the existing LRMPs as amended by the SNFPA, we will not allow introduction of non-native wildlife in these wildernesses.

### **Education**

We received numerous public comments on the importance and role of education of wilderness visitors. Some commented that we could solve most of the issues through education only. We agree on the importance of wilderness education and remain committed to using education, but we believe it is only one of many tools and only part of any solution. We already have a strong wilderness education program in place, including: information in handouts and on the internet, the wilderness permit and issuing process, trailhead displays, Leave No Trace (LNT) trainings, public education requirements of permittees, and other programs for visitor awareness of best wilderness practices. Education in and of itself is not an action that requires NEPA analysis and for this reason, an education component was not included in this decision. Wilderness education is and will always be an important part of our wilderness management.

### **Off-Highway Vehicles**

There have been comments and concerns about the effect of the RDEIS on the Dusy-Ershim 4-wheel drive trail. This trail is located outside of the wilderness boundaries and is so designated by the California Wilderness Act of 1984. However, management direction prescribed for wilderness adjacent to the trail may indirectly affect use of some wilderness sites accessed from the trail.

A few public comments express concerns with other aspects of forest wide OHV management; especially increasing motorized vehicle trespass into designated wilderness in a few specific areas. OHV use in the wildernesses is already prohibited by law and we are concerned with this issue. However, we feel that enforcement issues can be adequately addressed under current LRMP direction and no additional measures need be specifically added to the wilderness plan.

### **Fire Management**

Management of fire in these wilderness areas was originally considered in the 1997 DEIS. After the NOI was issued for the Sierra Nevada Framework for Conservation & Collaboration, we removed fire management from this analysis. In his Record of Decision for the SNFPA the Regional Forester adopted a fire management strategy for the entire Sierra Nevada,

including these wilderness areas. Accordingly, each national forest covered by the framework is directed to develop Fire Management Plans. These plans will provide fire management direction for these wildernesses.

### **Air Quality**

The levels of activities within the wildernesses are not anticipated to cause violations of ambient air quality standards. This finding is based on the information presented in the FEIS. Although there are areas in the Sierra and Inyo NF that are identified as non-attainment for PM-10 and/or ozone, the activities outlined in this decision are not expected to further contribute to these problems.

Existing wilderness direction and general LRMP direction provide for maintaining and monitoring Class 1 and 2 airsheds. No further management direction is planned to address air quality in this decision.

### **Site-specific Project Decisions**

Further site-specific analyses and appropriate public involvement would be conducted when necessary to determine appropriate project decisions. These could include actions such as, reconstruction or relocation of trails changes to user-created trails, and adjustments to rangeland suitability, visitor use levels or outfitter guide allocations.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

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The Inventory and Monitoring Strategy is contained in Appendix H of the FEIS.

Information gained through monitoring and evaluation will be used to adjust management direction in the future where warranted.

The Forest Service will conduct an evaluation of the Plan in five years. At that time, the Forest Supervisors will review conditions on these three wildernesses to determine whether conditions have changed significantly. That review will include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the changes to the permit system, quotas, and commercial service day allocations.

Necessary changes in actions directed by the Plan, as identified through the monitoring and evaluation process, will be made on a continuing basis.

## **Application of Decision**

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### **Relationship of Management Direction to Existing Plans**

The Wilderness Goals and Objectives, Desired Future Condition and management direction (Standards and Guidelines) of the existing LRMPs are amended by this decision for the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses only. This decision is otherwise consistent with the current LRMPs for the Inyo and Sierra National Forests and with the SNFPA.

### **Relationship to State and Local Plans and Proposals**

We have reviewed this decision and its relationship to other tribal, state and local plans and have determined that it is consistent with these.

### **Relationship to Other Lands**

The influences of activities on lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service were considered in the assessment of cumulative impacts in the FEIS. This decision does not adopt new management direction for those federal lands. Likewise, this decision does not establish direction or regulation for state, tribal, or private lands.

## **Alternatives Considered**

Each action alternative was designed around a theme for management that achieves the purpose and need for action and responds to one or more of the significant issues. In addition, each alternative proposes different desired conditions. Standards and guidelines are specified to achieve the desired conditions and reflect the alternative's theme.

The following is a brief overview of the alternative themes. Alternatives 1 through 4 were originally described in the RDEIS and were carried forward into the FEIS. Alternative 1 Modified is described in detail in the FEIS. It incorporates elements of Alternatives 1 and 2 and additional modifications based upon the official public comment to the RDEIS.

## **Alternatives Considered in Detail**

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### **Alternative 1: RDEIS Proposed Action**

Alternative 1, which was the RDEIS Proposed Action, directs management activities with an emphasis on maintaining wilderness character, and providing a range of opportunities for recreation use while protecting natural resource conditions. Three categories are established

for managing recreation use to allow for different recreational characteristics. Categories 1 and 2 consist of large areas managed for low and moderate levels of use. Category 3 consists of areas of more concentrated visitor use that coincide with historical areas of high use. This approach attempts to concentrate use and impacts in areas of traditional high use and to manage the majority of the landscape for low and moderate levels of use. Impacts associated with recreational use are managed intensively within Recreation Use Category 3 management areas.

This alternative identifies indicators that are used to measure levels of change in resource and social conditions and defines standards that may trigger management intervention to maintain or enhance conditions over time.

This alternative maintains overall commercial use at current actual levels and is based upon the Needs Assessment. It does, however, propose additional restrictions on commercial operators, making this use more consistent with non-commercial use. While overall levels of use are maintained, some reductions will occur within certain areas of use. Resource managers may require use reductions in areas where monitoring of limiting factors indicates that such action is necessary to alleviate impacts.

This Alternative also addressed several other issues raised during the public comment period on the DEIS including campfire closures, campsite conditions, standards and guidelines for social and resource conditions, the wilderness permit system, trailhead quotas, winter use levels, and user-created trails, and recreational stock grazing issues.

## **Alternative 2:**

Alternative 2 emphasizes preserving the ecological integrity of the wildernesses while allowing for recreation use consistent with high opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation. The wildernesses are managed consistently in regards to recreational use levels, allowing for no areas of concentrated recreation use or impacts. Use and impacts are distributed across the landscape. Natural conditions and processes will predominate and the landscape will appear to be untrammelled by human activities. Special provisions are limited to the least intrusive methods to meet the needs of the general public.

This alternative addresses a number of issues that some stakeholders expressed regarding the Proposed Action. These include opposition to wilderness zoning, equity between commercial and non-commercial use, use reduction in heavily used areas, greater opportunities for solitude, reductions in party size, and greater protection for natural resources. This alternative reduces allocations to commercial users, provides one consistent management scheme across the entire planning area, implements a split elevational closure for restricting campfires, reduces trailhead quotas based on limiting factors, reduces available campsite locations, reduces the allowable party size for cross-country travel, and designates four trails as hiker-only trails.

### **Alternative 3: No Action**

Alternative 3 is the no action alternative required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Management in the wildernesses would continue under existing decisions and management direction in the existing LRMPs and wilderness plans.

### **Alternative 4:**

Alternative 4 manages the wildernesses to emphasize recreational uses. Recreational uses are maintained at levels that recognize historic traditions and uses. Management accommodates visitor use. Restrictions are minimized, allowing for unconfined types of recreation. The wildernesses are managed with standards for two categories of recreation use, trailed and trail-less. Human activity is apparent in both the social and ecological environment.

### **Alternative 1 - Modified:**

Alternative 1 - Modified uses strategies from both Alternatives 1 and 2 and some existing management direction from Alternative 3 as well as incorporating modifications suggested in public comments. It also includes some factual corrections to the RDEIS.

Alternative 1 - Modified directs management activities with an emphasis on maintaining wilderness characteristics, and providing a range of opportunities for recreation use while protecting natural resource conditions. Three categories are established for managing recreation use to allow for different recreational characteristics. Categories 1 and 2 consist of large areas managed for low and moderate levels of use. Category 3 consists of small confined areas of more concentrated visitor use that coincide with historical areas of high use. These categories were derived from Alternative 1 but adjusted in a few areas to more accurately reflect desired management. This approach attempts to concentrate use and impacts in areas of traditional high use and to manage the majority of the landscape for low and moderate levels of use. Impacts associated with recreational use are managed intensively within Recreation Use Category 3 management areas. Category 3 areas comprise about 3 percent of the planning area.

This alternative identifies indicators that are used to measure levels of change in resource and social conditions and defines standards that may trigger management intervention to maintain or enhance conditions over time.

This alternative maintains overall commercial use at current actual levels. It does, however, propose changes to commercial operations relating to gaining access to wilderness, making it more consistent with how non-commercial users gain access to wilderness areas. While overall levels of use are maintained, some reductions will occur within certain areas of use. Resource managers may require use reductions in areas where monitoring of limiting factors indicates that such action is necessary to alleviate impacts. This alternative establishes a pool of temporary service days (3,000) to allow for some expansion in commercial services.

Based on concerns raised during public comment on the RDEIS Alternative 1, changes were made affecting the following topics: campfire closures, campsite conditions, standards and guidelines for social and resource conditions, the wilderness permit system, trailhead quotas, winter use levels, user-created trails, and recreational stock grazing.

## **Alternatives Not Considered In Detail**

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Federal agencies are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives, and briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating any alternatives that were not developed in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Public comments received in response to the original scoping phase and the DEIS were used to develop the alternatives contained in the RDEIS.

Many ideas have been suggested and evaluated during the development of the current alternatives considered in detail. Various components were considered, such as additional mitigation measures, changes to quotas and allocations, no grazing, and adjustments to commercial use quotas. Addressing all of the possible permutations would create an unmanageably large number of alternatives that would not be helpful to the decision makers or the public. In addition, some components were determined to be outside the scope of the current wilderness plan revision process, were already represented by one or more of the alternatives considered in detail, or were determined to risk unnecessary environmental harm. Therefore, a number of alternatives were considered but dismissed from detailed consideration.

### **DEIS Alternative 2 – Emphasize Pristine Condition**

This alternative would have maximized the amount of area in pristine wilderness condition. Emphasis was placed on natural physical and biological processes. The environment would be self-sustaining and require minimal internal managerial intervention over the long-term. Human-caused ecosystem disturbances would be minimized by regulating the amount and type of human use permitted within the planning area. Users would experience a high degree of solitude. Opportunity classes are allocated to emphasize this pristine character.

Alternative 2 in the RDEIS replaced this alternative. The new alternative has nearly the same emphasis, but does not use the opportunity class system. This alternative has no system of zoning and applies standards and guidelines universally across the landscape.

### **DEIS Alternative 3 – Emphasize Recreational Opportunities**

In this alternative evidence of human activity would be apparent in both the physical and biological environment. Human intervention and use would be allowed to the extent permissible under wilderness laws and policies. Users would experience a high probability of encountering other parties. Opportunity Classes would be allocated to emphasize recreational activity.

Alternative 4 in the RDEIS replaced this alternative. The new alternative has nearly the same emphasis, but does not use the opportunity class system. Alternative 4 uses a system of trail and trail-less zoning to manage use.

#### **DEIS Alternative 4 – Current Use With Opportunity Classes**

This alternative proposed allocating opportunity classes to best approximate current use and management direction as prescribed by the LRMPs. An exact match was not possible because of the differences between the two LRMPs in wilderness management direction. This alternative would apply a consistent approach throughout the planning area by the application of opportunity classes and uniform management direction. Deviation from current LRMPs would vary depending on how closely each LRMP matches opportunity class standards and management direction.

This alternative was not considered in the RDEIS because the opportunity class system is not being used as a management system in this wilderness planning process.

#### **DEIS Alternative 5 – Forest Service Preferred**

This alternative offered a balance of recreational use with opportunities for solitude and pristine conditions. Human-caused ecosystem disturbances would be balanced with retention of a pristine wilderness condition. Opportunity classes would be allocated to offer the user a variety of wilderness experiences.

This alternative was not considered in detail because all of the components of the alternative were covered in one of the other alternatives in the RDEIS. Opportunity class was not considered since it is not being used in this wilderness planning process.

#### **Back Country Horsemen - Alternative 5, submitted in response to the RDEIS**

This alternative was reviewed by members of the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and compared to the existing range of alternatives displayed in the RDEIS as well as existing laws, regulations, Manual and Handbook direction and LRMP direction. The IDT determined that all of the elements of Back Country Horsemen's alternative were addressed in one of the alternatives or in existing direction. A detailed review of the analysis is available in the planning record.



## **The Environmentally Preferable Alternative**

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The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA require that the Record Of Decision specify "the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). This alternative has generally been interpreted to be the alternative that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA's Section 101 (CEQ's "Forty Most-Asked Questions," 46 Federal Register, 18026, March 23, 1981). Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also can mean the alternative that best protects, preserves, and enhances a balance of historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Alternative 1 - Modified of the FEIS, [which was described in the earlier section on "Alternatives Considered,"] is the environmentally preferable alternative.

Alternative 1 - Modified would allow the smallest amount of direct human-induced effects on the human environment. Even though Alternative 2 has a reduced amount of human use allowed, we did not consider it to be the environmentally preferable alternative because of the concern over the potential for spreading impacts to current low use areas.

## **Means To Avoid Environmental Harm**

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### **Mitigation Measures Adopted**

Extensive measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm are being adopted in the Plan. Some of these measures have been discussed previously. Mitigation measures are an integral part of the management direction. Singularly and collectively, they avoid, rectify, reduce, or eliminate potential adverse environmental impacts of wilderness management activities. Some more significant mitigation measures are included in the Programmatic Agreement between the State Historic Preservation Office, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the Forest Service and other interested parties. Also, the direction for recreation stock forage management, for maintenance of water quality, and the elevational closures to campfires provide important mitigation measures.

## Monitoring And Evaluation

This Plan includes an inventory and monitoring strategy that will provide an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the management direction. The results of monitoring will be used to evaluate the assumptions used in developing the Plan, and may be the basis for future changes. The Plan may be amended if changes to the management direction are needed. Monitoring will also ensure that management direction is being correctly applied. The inventory and monitoring strategy identifies the following objectives for wilderness monitoring:

1. Monitor key variables to understand the conditions, risks and the threats to the wilderness resource. Establish benchmark or reference monitoring. Develop reporting and documentation techniques and protocols.
2. Monitor for change in conditions over time. Identify unacceptable adverse impacts. Determine when, where, and why changes are occurring.
3. Conduct inventory and monitoring with an integrated resource approach, to the best extent possible.
4. Provide information to improve management decisions, policies, and actions and evaluate for effectiveness. Inform decisions that have an affect on the wilderness resources.
5. Monitor management strategies and actions, and assess the benefits and costs, in time, money, and effectiveness and to the wilderness character.
6. Engage in collaboration amongst managers, scientists, public, and academic institutions. Communicate with local and regional and national agencies and all interested publics. Describe, communicate, and demonstrate the affects of management and use on the wilderness resource.



Temple Crag, John Muir Wilderness, Inyo National Forest  
*Photo by Glen Stein*

## **Findings Related To Other Requirements**

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The Forest Service manages the Inyo and Sierra National Forests in conformance with many Federal laws. In this section some of the more important laws pertinent to this programmatic-level decision are discussed.

### **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

NEPA requires that Federal agencies prepare detailed statements on proposed actions that significantly affect the quality of the human environment. This requirement is designed to serve two major functions: 1) to provide decision makers with a detailed accounting of the likely environmental effects of a proposed action prior to its adoption; and, 2) to inform the public of, and allow comment on, such efforts.

The Sierra and Inyo National Forests have compiled and generated an enormous amount of information relevant to the effects of each of the alternatives considered in the FEIS. Such information builds on the data, analysis, and public involvement set forth in the documents prior to this FEIS, which include the 1997 DEIS and the 2000 RDEIS.

All substantive comments, written and oral, made on the RDEIS have been summarized and responded to in the FEIS. Over the course of analysis, this public involvement has lead to changes in the alternatives, including the Selected Alternative.

The environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the CEQ for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508).

First, the FEIS considered a broad range of reasonable alternatives. The five alternatives considered in detail represent only part of the total number of alternatives considered over the course of the 1997 Draft EIS, the 2000 Revised Draft EIS and this FEIS. Alternatives presented in the Final EIS encompass a broad range of responses to issues including: 1) commercial activities, 2) visitor use levels, 3) wilderness permits and quota period, 4) visitor use management (crowding), 5) campsite management, 6) campsite density, 7) cross-country party size, 8) day use levels, 9) elevational fire restrictions, 10) site-specific campfire restrictions, 11) campsite setbacks from water, 12) addressing user created trails, 13) trail management, and 14) forage use by stock.

Second, the FEIS reflects consideration of cumulative effects of the alternatives by evaluating past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in the planning area. Moreover, although non-Forest System lands are outside the scope of this decision, effects from their management have been considered in the Final EIS to a degree appropriate for a programmatic NEPA document at this scale.

Third, the FEIS makes use of the best available information. Application of a geographic information system (GIS) was used to evaluate spatial effects resulting from implementation of the alternatives. The best available science was used to help estimate environmental

consequences as evidenced from the bibliography. All of these tools, taken collectively, constitute use of the best available information.

Additional site-specific decisions will be made on projects in compliance with NEPA, ESA, and other environmental laws following applicable public involvement and appeal procedures.

### **National Forest Management Act (NFMA)**

This decision conforms with the 1982 planning regulations (36 CFR 219) that implement the National Forest Management Act. These regulations were recently changed (65 FR 67513). Transition language within the new regulations permit plan revisions and amendments, such as the amendments that are part of this decision, to be completed under the 1982 regulations. Since the rest of the LRMPs will continue to fall under the 1982 regulations, and since there is some uncertainty over the implementation of the new regulations, it is our decision to adopt these amendments under the 1982 regulations.

### **Diversity and Viability Provisions For Fish and Wildlife**

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to "specify guidelines for land management plans developed to achieve the goals of the [RPA] Program which provide for diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple-use objectives" (16 U.S.C. 1604(g)(3)(B)). In accord with this diversity provision, the Secretary promulgated a regulation that provides in part: "[f]ish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area" (36 CFR 219.19, 1982 edition).

The recently completed SNFPA Record of Decision established land allocations and standards and guidelines to meet all of the diversity and viability provisions for fish and wildlife. This FEIS is consistent with that amendment. Therefore this decision will also provide the fish and wildlife habitat and other ecological conditions necessary to maintain well-distributed viable populations of vertebrate species in the planning area, and maintain the diversity of plants and animals.

### **Land and Resource Management Plan Amendments**

This decision will amend the Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMPs) on both the Sierra and Inyo National Forests to provide more specific, updated and consistent direction for management of the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses. It supercedes the 1979 wilderness plans for the John Muir and Minarets (Ansel Adams) Wildernesses.

**Inyo National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Non-Significant Amendment Number 7.**

For the Ansel Adams and John Muir Wildernesses only, the Goals and Objectives, Desired Future Condition, Management Direction and the Inventory and Monitoring Strategy contained in the Ansel Adams, John Muir, and Dinkey Lakes Wilderness Plan supplement the management direction contained in the LRMP on pages 107 through 112, and the Monitoring Plan on page 257.

Also:

1. The following Management Direction on page 111 in the Inyo LRMP is removed:
  - Establish capacity limits for each wilderness and implement entry limits on specific trailheads to regulate use when use exceeds capacity.
  - Apply trailhead entry quotas to both commercial and noncommercial users.
2. The following Management Direction is added to the Inyo LRMP on page 111:
  - Through analysis determine if use limitations are necessary to protect wilderness resources. If determined necessary, apply appropriate methods to control commercial and non-commercial users.
3. The following is removed from Appendix A page 300 in the Inyo LRMP:
  - Under the section titled, "EXISTING PLANS INCORPORATED WITH DIRECTION TO REVISE OR UPDATE"
    - John Muir Wilderness Plan (1979)
    - Minarets Wilderness Management Plan (1979) (revise to include 1984 wilderness additions)

**Sierra National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan Amendment Number 3**

On the Sierra National Forest, for the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wildernesses only the Goals and Objectives, Desired Future Condition, Management Direction and the Inventory and Monitoring Strategy contained in the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes Wilderness plan supplement the Standards and Guidelines contained in the Sierra LRMP on pages 4-30 through 4-31.

Also:

The following Standard and Guideline is deleted from the Sierra NF LRMP:

- S&G #339. Develop wilderness management plans utilizing limits of acceptable change.

### **Determination Of Significance (NFMA)**

We have determined that these Forest Plan Amendments are non-significant. This is "[b]ased on an analysis of the objectives, guidelines and other contents of the forest plans under 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(4), 36 CFR 219.10(f), and FSM 1922.5." It is important to distinguish between significance of the change to the forest plans and significance of the environmental impacts of the proposed action as defined by Council on Environmental Quality regulations at 40 CFR 1500 to 1508.

Guidance, in Forest Service Handbook 1909.12 – Chapter 5.32 identifies four factors to be used in determining whether a proposed change to forest plan is significant or not significant. The four factors are: timing; location and size; goals, objectives, and outputs; and management prescriptions. The following is a discussion of each of these four factors as they relate to these forest plan amendments.

#### ***Timing***

The change in the LRMPs will be effective after the Notice of Availability appears in the Federal Register. Actual implementation will be phased in over the next five years. The implementation schedule is displayed in the transition section of this record of decision. Changes in the LRMPs are being made after the planning period for the Inyo NF (the first decade of the existing plan).

#### ***Location and size***

These LRMP amendments only apply to the Ansel Adams, John Muir and Dinkey Lakes wilderness areas on the Sierra and Inyo National Forests. These wilderness areas total about 800,000 acres of approximately 1.1 million acres of wilderness out of the total of 3.3 million acres that make up these two national forests. This is less than one third of the total acres of both forests. These wilderness areas generally encompass only the higher elevations of these national forests.

#### ***Goals, objectives, and outputs***

These LRMP amendments do not alter the long-term relationships between the levels of goods and services projected by the forest plans. An increase in one type of output does not trigger an increase or decrease in another. There is not a demand for goods or services not discussed in the existing forest plans. The changes in outputs are not likely to be a significant change in the forest plan since the changes would not forego the opportunity to achieve an output in later years.

#### ***Management prescriptions***

The changes in the management direction are only for a specific portion of the Forests, and will not apply to future decisions outside the planning area. The amendments do not alter the desired future condition of the land and resources or the anticipated goods and services to be produced.

### **Endangered Species Act (ESA)**

Consultation requirements under Section 7 of the ESA, have been completed with the Fish and Wildlife Service. The Fish and Wildlife Service reviewed the Biological Assessment for the proposed threatened and endangered species under their regulatory jurisdiction. Consistent with direction in "Memorandum of Agreement, Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Consultations and Coordination among Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and Fish and Wildlife Service, August 30, 2000", the Fish and Wildlife Service included candidate species in their Biological Opinion, the Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that this decision is "not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of threatened and endangered species" occurring on the national forests. Copies of correspondence with the FWS are included in the planning record.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the Forests have consulted extensively with Indian tribes, other users of the wildernesses, the California State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation about means of identifying and mitigating adverse effects on historic sites, structures, trails, landscapes, Native American spiritual places, and other aspects of the cultural environment, including traditional uses of the wildernesses. This resulted in a Programmatic Agreement among the consulting parties that provides for ongoing studies and consultation over at least the next five years to identify impacts and implement mitigation measures. The Forests will implement its terms, which it is believed embrace all practicable measures to mitigate possible impacts on the cultural aspects of the wilderness environment.

### **Clean Water Act**

Full implementation of this decision is expected to maintain and improve water quality and satisfy all State water quality requirements. This finding is based on the standards and guidelines contained in the decision, the application of State approved Best Management Practices specifically designed to protect water quality, and the discussion of water quality and beneficial uses contained in the FEIS. Examples include: (1) camp site setbacks, (2) trailhead quotas, (3) commercial allocation of service days, (4) managing the commercial service pool, (5) managing user created trails, (6) rehabilitating campsites, (7) range utilization standards for stock, and (8) incorporation of established recovery plans. Additionally, project-level analyses for activities subsequent to the decision will be required to demonstrate compliance with Clean Water Act and State water quality standards.

### **Clean Air Act**

At the scale of a programmatic plan such as this, the overall level of activities proposed under this decision is not anticipated to violate ambient air quality standards. This finding is based on information presented in the FEIS. The Sierra and Inyo National Forests are in non-attainment for PM<sub>10</sub> while only the Sierra NF is in non-attainment for Ozone. Conformity determinations will be made at subsequent levels of planning and analysis where emissions can be more accurately quantified and reasonably forecasted, and local impacts assessed.

### **Flood Plains And Wetlands (Executive Orders 11988 and 11990)**

These Executive Orders require Federal agencies to avoid, to the extent possible, short- and long-term effects resulting from the occupancy and modification of flood plains, and the modification or destruction of wetlands. The LRMPs provide standards and guidelines for soil, water, wetlands, and riparian areas to minimize effects to flood plains and wetlands. They incorporate the Best Management Practices of the Soil and Water Conservation Handbook. The standards and guidelines apply to all floodplains and wetlands where less restrictive management might otherwise occur.

### **Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)**

Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations," requires that Federal agencies make achieving environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects of their programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations. The issue of environmental justice is analyzed within Chapters 3 and 4, "Socioeconomic," of the Final EIS. Rather than displaying effects only by subregions or counties, this section also displayed effects at a finer scale of the Sierra Nevada Region; specific social groups. Social groups are used to display how alternatives could affect people across the region. Social groups are groups of individuals that share common attitudes, beliefs, and values and whose use of the wilderness has common needs and/or attributes. The social group analysis section examined historic trends and potential future impacts in the following social groups: (1) commercial outfitters, (2) back country hikers, (3) day users, (4) recreational pack users, (5) American Indians, (6) minorities, (7) low-income individuals, (8) organizational wilderness users, and (9) assisted wilderness users.

A qualitative assessment of environmental justice considerations was conducted based on the information in the Final EIS described above. My conclusion is that the risk of such disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations from implementation of this decision would be very low.

### **Civil Rights**

The Forest Service manual defines civil rights as "the legal rights of United States citizens to guaranteed equal protection under the law" (USDA Forest Service Manual 1730). Civil rights impact analysis for environmental or natural resource actions is a necessary part of the social impact analysis package in environmental impact statement and is not a separate report (USDA FSH 1709.11).

The Forest Service is committed to equal treatment of all individuals and social groups in its management programs in providing services, opportunities, and jobs. Because no actual or projected violation of legal rights to equal protection under the law is foreseen for any individual or category of people, no civil rights impacts are reported in the FEIS.



## Implementation

We are providing the following transition language and schedule for the management direction that is in this ROD. Although the direction will become effective after publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register, we are choosing to phase in this new direction. When changing management direction for such a large area, it is not possible to implement everything at once. We do not have the staff or resources to do this. Conversely, it is important not to allow non-conforming activities to continue for several years after the direction is changed. The transition period allows for an orderly adjustment that moves management of the wildernesses forward while minimizing costs and disruptions.

It is also important to recognize that implementation of the direction contained in the management plan may be affected by annual budgets and available workforce.

**Table 2.** Transition Plan

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Timing for Implementation</b>
<b>NEPA for one year permits or extensions</b>	2002
<b>Commercial and New or reduced Non-Commercial Quotas (five year phase in period)</b>	Beginning in 2002
<b>Non-Commercial Quota (quota currently exists)</b>	2002
<b>Service Day Allocation changes</b>	2002
<b>Authorized/Designated Routes</b>	2002
<b>Monitoring Plan</b>	2002
<b>Specific Inventories</b>	2002
<b>Site Specific Fire Closures</b>	2 yrs (known) Ongoing (unknown)
<b>Evaluate Administrative Sites and Structures</b>	5 yrs
<b>Amend all permits with plan direction</b>	2002
<b>Packer Permit Reissuance/Modification</b>	See separate schedule
<b>Elevational Fire Closures</b>	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
<b>Setback from Water</b>	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
<b>Site Specific Meadow Closures</b>	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
<b>Grazing Start Dates</b>	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
<b>Food Storage</b>	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
<b>Bighorn Sheep Habitat Dog Restrictions</b>	Forest Order w/in 1 yr
<b>5 Year Plan Evaluation/Modification</b>	At year 5 of implementation and every 5 years subsequent.
<b>Trail Maintenance Level Adjustments (Trail Management Plans)</b>	5 yrs
<b>Range Suitability Analysis</b>	10 yrs

The relationship of commercial permits to the new wilderness direction is described below. In summary,

- (1). *Current unexpired term permits.* The permits and operating plans will need to be modified to be consistent with the new Plan.
- (2). *Term permits that are expired, but which are now being extended annually.* These permits will be consistent with the new management direction when issued.

**Table 3.** Inyo National Forest Commercial Pack Station Permits

Permittee	Expiration Date	Schedule For Beginning NEPA Process	Target Completion Date
McGee Creek P.S. (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2001	2002
Rock Creek P.S. (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2004
Pine Creek PS (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2003
Bishop P. (2) Outfitters	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2003
Rainbow P.S. (2) (G.Allen)	12/31/00	2002	2004
Glacier Pack Train (1)	12/31/01 12/31/01	2003	2004
Cottonwood PS (1)	12/31/02	2004	2005
Mt. Whitney Pack (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2002	2003
Mammoth Lakes Pack Outfit (2)	12/31/99 12/31/00	2001	2002
Frontier Pack Trains (1)	12/31/14	N/A	N/A
Reds Meadow P.S. (1)	12/31/05	2005	2006
Outfitter/Guide Permits	12/31/01	2001	2002

**Table 4.** Sierra National Forest Commercial Pack Station Permits

Permittee	Expiration Date	Schedule For Beginning NEPA Process	Target Completion Date
Clyde P. S.	12/04	2003	2004
D & F P. S.	12/06	2005	2006
High Sierra P. S.	12/08	2007	2008
Minarets P.S.	12/03	2002	2003
Lost Valley P.S.	12/08	2007	2008
Yosemite Trails P.S.	12/01	In progress	2003

## **Application to Other Contracts, Permits and Special Use Authorizations**

The management direction provided by our decision applies to permits and special use authorizations signed by Forest Service responsible officials on or after the effective date of the revised plan. The attached management directions that require adjustments to current permits, and special use authorizations will be applied in those cases where statutory or regulatory authority exists if the change is necessary to achieve the overall desired conditions. Permits and special use authorizations which are determined by the responsible official to be consistent with the Plan, or which are adjusted to be consistent may proceed.

## **Future Decisions Not Subject To NEPA Compliance**

Many of the decisions made in this ROD either did not require an EIS or were not subject to NEPA compliance. These decisions include but are not limited to such items as management of the wilderness permit process, administration of Special Use Permits and wilderness education.

## **Collaborative Stewardship**

As part of implementation of this Plan, the Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers will increase their efforts in collaborative stewardship within the communities of the Sierra and Inyo National Forests. Collaborative stewardship means bringing people together to share in the decision-making in implementing the direction of this Plan.

The Plan, including management direction, and monitoring have some flexibility. Interaction among interested people can lead to mutually acceptable resolution of resource use issues. We are hopeful that such interaction and participation will lead to better knowledge of forest activity and fewer appeals and less litigation.

The Forest Service recognizes that the success of collaborative stewardship will depend on shared commitment by all involved parties, including the State and other Federal agencies. The agency will do its best to provide the opportunities for collaborative stewardship throughout these wildernesses and welcome everyone's participation in this cooperative program.

## Appeal Rights

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with the provisions of 36 CFR 217 by filing a written notice of appeal in duplicate within 45 days of the date of published legal notice of this decision, as provided in 36 CFR 217.5(b) and 36 CFR 217.8(a)(3). The appeal must be filed with the Reviewing Officer:

Bradley E. Powell, Regional Forester  
USDA Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
1323 Club Drive  
Vallejo, Ca. 94592

The notice of appeal must include sufficient narrative evidence and argument to show why this decision should be changed or reversed (36 CFR 217.9).

Decisions on site-specific projects are not made in this document. Decisions on proposed projects will not be made until completion of environmental analysis and documentation for the specific project, in compliance with the NEPA.

## Contact Persons

If you would like more information on the Plan or the Final EIS, please contact the following officials:

Mary Beth Hennessy  
Inyo NF Project Manager  
873 N. Main St.  
Bishop Ca. 93514  
(760) 873-2448

or:

Martie Schramm  
Sierra NF Project Manager  
1600 Tollhouse Road  
Clovis, CA 93612  
(559) 855-5360

## Signatures

/s/ Jeffrey E. Bailey 04/20/01  
JEFFREY E. BAILEY      Date  
Forest Supervisor,  
Inyo National Forest

/s/ James L. Boynton 04/20/01  
JAMES L. BOYNTON      Date  
Forest Supervisor  
Sierra National Forest