Helicopter, conventional cable, and ground-based logging systems would be utilized for harvest operations. This includes 480 acres within the 733 acre Zimmerman fire, 798 acres within the 1470 acre Fish Fry fire, and 1,258 acres within the 11,521 acre Basin Creek Compartment #29. Openings of greater than 40 acres in size would result from this Proposed Action. Fuel reduction accomplished in conjunction with harvest includes grapple piling and prescribed burning. Watershed restoration activities are proposed within and in the vicinity adjacent to the harvest areas. This includes road obliteration with an estimated 2.90 miles of recontouring, 11.80 miles of ripping and seeding, and 8.70 miles of seeding, plus the removal of approximately 21 in-stream culverts. Placement of woody debris would occur along about 1.0 mile of stream channel, and approximately 11 acres of riparian revegetation is proposed. Replanting would occur on approximately 2694 acres of land (of which 96 acres are burned plantations), including both conifer seedlings for reforestation and native shrubs and herbaceous plants for wildlife habitat (approximately 187 acres). The timber harvest operations would require approximately 3.88 miles of new road construction, 6.58 miles of reconstruction, and an estimated 1.70 miles of temporary road construction. Road maintenance would occur on about 13.73 miles of existing road.

Approximately 498 acres proposed for harvest lie within the Mt. Henry #666 IRA. An estimated 3.60 miles (of the 3.88 miles) of road construction would

occur within this area.

The decision to be made is, what action (if any) should be taken in the Northeast Yaak Physiographic Area to:

- (1) Recover the fire-affected areas and move the area towards the desired conditions of the physiographic areas involved.
- (2) Provide goods and services to the local economy and U.S. citizens
- (3) Reduce the risk for high-intensity wildfire in the future
- (4) Develop and manage the road system to facilitate the removal of timber, post-harvest treatments, reduce sedimentation, restore stream channel equilibrium, and maintain or improve wildlife habitat.

The Kootenai Forest Plan provides guidance for management activities within the potentially affected area through its goals, objectives, standards and guidelines, and management area direction. The areas of proposed activities would occur within Management Areas 2, 12, 13, 14, and 19. Timber harvest would occur in all

Management Areas except Management Area 13, which would be redesignated. Road construction would occur in Management Areas 13 and 14. Below is a brief description of the applicable management direction.

Management Area 2—These areas are characterized by a natural appearing environment offering roadless recreation opportunities and are within an unsuitable timber base.

Management Area 12—These are areas that contain productive timber lands which are suitable for timber harvest, provided that big game summer habitat objectives are met.

Management Area 13—These are areas that contain special habitat characteristics which are allocated as Old-Growth. Local road construction is permitted, provided that they are restricted following use to protect snag characteristics.

Management Area 14—These are areas that contain productive timber lands which are suitable for timber harvest, provided that grizzly bear habitat objectives are met.

Management Area 19—These are areas that contain steep slopes requiring only activities which minimize surface disturbance and maintain a healthy vegetative cover.

For Management Area 2, which is classified as unsuitable for timber production, an amendment to the Forest Plan would be required to implement the ecosystem management-based proposal or any alternative which would harvest timber in these management areas.

The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives. One of these will be the "No Action" alternative, in which none of the proposed activities will be implemented. Additional alternatives will examine varying levels and locations for the proposed activities to achieve the desired conditions, as well as to respond to the issues and other resource values identified by the public.

The principle issues identified to date are related to:

- 1. The effects of the Proposed Action on the characteristics of Inventoried Roadless Areas and Management Areas designated as unsuitable for timber production.
- 2. The effects of the Proposed Action on water quality and fish habitat.
- 3. The effects of the Proposed Action on ecosystem health and the risk of catastrophic wildfires and insect or disease outbreaks.
- 4. The effects of the Proposed Action on Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species.

5. The effects of the Proposed Action on the socio-economics of the area.

Other issues commonly associated with salvage harvesting and road construction include: heritage resources, soils, and scenery management. This list may be verified, expanded, or modified based on public scoping for this proposal.

The EIS will analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the alternatives. Past, present, and projected activities on National Forest Lands will be considered. The EIS will disclose the analysis of site-specific mitigation measures and their effectiveness.

Public participation is an important part of the analysis. It will start with the initial scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7) which will begin with the publication of this notice. The public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the Proposed Action. Comments from the public and other agencies will be used in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to:

- 1. Identify potential issues.
- 2. Identify major issues to be analyzed in depth.
- 3. Eliminate minor issues or those which have been covered by a previous environmental analysis, such as the Kootenai Forest Plan EIS.
- 4. Identify alternatives to the proposed action.
- 5. Identify potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives (i.e. direct, indirect, and cumulative effects).
- 6. Determine potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been ongoing with regard to listed species. The Montana Department of Health and Welfare-Division of Environmental Quality, Montana Department of Fish and Game, and the Kootenai Salish Indian Tribe will also be consulted.

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS, which is expected to be filed with the EPA and available for public review in July, 1995. A 45-day comment period will follow publication of a Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The final