more biodiversity in the La Cueva analysis area.

- Supplying more forage producing understories for wildlife in summer and winter range and livestock where early seral conditions have been inhibited by tree density and/or dense canopy cover.
- Providing foraging areas for both wildlife and livestock away from springs and riparian areas in order to improve the condition of these special
- Regenerating pure aspen stands which would create more habitat diversity and perpetuate a major vegetative component within the analysis area.
- Regenerating ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir trees in their natural range. These forest types provide quality habitat to the hairy woodpecker, turkey, elk and Abert's squirrel.
- Selectively removing some trees infested with mistletoe or damaged by spruce budworm to keep insect and disease populations at a level which does not predispose stands to potential catastrophic damage. Providing a supply of firewood, vigas, aspen products and saw timber to help meet the demand for wood products on the Camino Real Ranger District for a period of five to seven years.

Prescribed fire would be introduced in selected areas fro the purpose of:

- Introducing low intensity fires back into the ecosystem to move the VSS Class distribution towards the desired condition and to perpetuate plant species adapted to periodic episodes of
- Stimulating mature oak to produce palatable, tender shoots for wildlife browse species.
- Creating a mosaic of tree sizes and densities, where clumps of even-aged trees with interlocking branches are dispersed throughout some stands.
- Reducing fuel loading in areas inaccessible to fuelwood gathering to reduce the potential for a catastrophic

Road reconstruction and new construction, including a road down the ridge between La Cueva and Flechado Canyons, would provide access to areas where the VSS class distribution can be moved towards the desired condition, where forage is needed, where various types of wood products could be extracted and where fuel loading is high. These roads would be closed to highway vehicles once proposed activities have ceased.

The redesignation of the La Cueva Canyon Trail as a non-motorized trail would improve the quality of life for residents who have houses at or near the La Cueva trailhead and reduce conflicts

between these homeowners and the motorized recreationists who use the

The construction of a motorized trial connecting with the new road along the ridge between La Cueva and Flechado would serve as a replacement for the La Cueva Canyon trail which would be removed from the motorized trail system (See previous paragraph), maintaining the same opportunities for motorized use in the analysis area.

All existing and newly constructed roads would be effectively closed after management activities have been completed within the analysis area. This is in keeping with the Carson Forest Plan which has a guideline which specifies that road management/wildlife integration should be managed to provide 60 percent big game habitat effectiveness by leaving approximately 1.0 mile/square mile of roads open to public use in big game summer range.

Preliminary issues include effects on habitat effectiveness along the ridge separating La Cueva and Flechado canyons where a new road is proposed; the long-term effects on wildlife along the ridge where the new road will be designated as a motorized trail; the effects on the function of existing old growth proposed for timber harvesting; and the effects on soil productivity and water quality where a motorized trail is proposed. These issues will be refined and developed in detail as scoping proceeds. Comments on this issues and suggestions for additional issues are welcome in response to this Notice of

A preliminary scoping meeting was held prior to the development of the desired condition statement and proposal. Several months later, approximately 150 letters were send out to the public and other federal and state agencies for their comments on the proposal and a field trip was held. An interdisciplinary team has been selected to do the environmental analysis, prepare and accomplish scoping and public involvement activities. Comments on the nature and timing of scoping and public participation activities would be beneficial to the team in preparation of the scoping plan. Additional public notice will be given of specific planned activities when the scoping and public involvement plan is developed.

Preliminary alternatives may include continuation of present management in the area (no action); redesignating the La Cueva trail as non-motorized without building a new trail; relocating part of the La Cueva trail; confining harvesting and road building to the northern most part of the analysis area; creating the

desired diversity on the ridge top(s) without harvesting or road building; and not treating any existing old growth stands. The interdisciplinary team will be developing the range of alternatives to be considered and comments on the range of alternatives to be considered will be beneficial. Additional opportunities to comment on alternatives will be provided as the process proceeds.

It is anticipated that the environmental analysis and preparation of draft and final environmental impact statement will take about one year. The draft environmental impact statement can be expanded in the summer of 1995 and the final environmental impact statement can be expected in the winter 1995.

A ninety day comment period pursuant to 36 CFR 219.10(b) will be provided for the public to make comments on the draft environmental impact statement. The comment period will begin when the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability appears in the **Federal Register**. This comment period will be in addition to scoping and other public participation opportunities that will be provided throughout the process. A record of decision will be prepared and filed with the final environmental impact statement. A ninety day appeal period pursuant to 36 CFR 217.8(a) will be applicable.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. To be the most helpful, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be specific as possible and may address the adequacy of the statement or the merits of the alternatives discussed (see Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR

1503.3)

In addition, Federal court decisions have established that reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC 435 US 519, 553 (1978). Environmental objections that could have been raised at the draft stage may be waived if not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement. City of Angoon v. Hodel, (9th Circuit, 1986) and Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980).