30–40% of their economic value by the end of 1996. Part of the salvage sale proceeds will finance the regeneration, watershed improvement, recreation and wildlife habitat elements of the project.

Regeneration: To promptly return to production those lands within the suited base that contribute to the allowable sale quantity.

Watershed Projects: To improve watershed conditions to meet beneficial uses (fish habitat and domestic water supply).

Recreation: To improve recreation user access.

Wildlife: To enhance habitat components for sensitive species.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action has the following components:

1. Salvage harvest fire-killed and imminently-dead trees on approximately 4,850 acres. Harvest by helicopter only. Construct seven helicopter landings. Reconstruct about 5.5 miles of road in four segments to facilitate log haul; no road construction is proposed. Specifically, on road #337, reconstruct 1/4 mile of road by increasing the radius on 1 switchback; road #340, reconstruct 21/4 miles of road by increasing the radius on two switchbacks and realigning multiple tight radius turns; road #355, reconstruct 11/2 miles of road by increasing the radius on one switchback, and improve the running surface where degraded by large rocks; road #359, reconstruct 1¹/₅ miles of road by improving stream crossings, improving several tight radius turns, and improving the running surface by better drainage. The proposal would not harvest within the South Fork Salmon River wild and scenic study corridor. It would not harvest within PACFISH Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, which include riparian corridors, wetlands, landslides, and landslideprone areas, where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis. The proposal would not harvest on land having a combination of high erosion hazard and high sediment delivery to streams. Harvesting would comply with the Draft Bull Trout Conservation Agreement. Site specific integrated prescriptions to provide for snags/large woody debris retention, visual quality, cultural resource protection, and TES plant and animal needs would be developed consistent with the Forest Plan, landscape assessment and current policy/research.

2. Regenerate productive forest suited acres within the project area by planting conifer seedlings or ensuring natural regeneration. 3. Repair and improve drainage conditions on seven existing roads. Specifically, apply gravel, line inslope ditches, improve cross-drainage, stabilize cuts and fills, improve stream crossings, and/or stabilize gullies on segments of the: Hays Station Road (#337), Warren-Profile Gap Road (#340), China Glen Road (#357), Smith Knob Road (#355), Warren Wagon Road (Forest Highway 21), and Pony Meadows Road (#359).

4. Convert the Bear Lake Road (#1211) to a non-motorized trail.

5. Establish a trailhead at the end of Hays Station Road (#337).

6. Construct nest platforms for great gray owls in the Pony Meadows area.

7. Close to all vehicle traffic a nonsystem road from Warren Summit going west to just above Pony Meadows.

Methodologies, rationale, and findings associated with the Chicken landscape assessment and site specific environmental analysis are to be reviewed by a proposed Federal interagency science panel with panel members selected from Forest Service research and system branches, and other Federal agencies. Recommendations made by this panel could be used by line officers in directing the environmental analysis, formulating alternatives, disclosing environmental consequences, developing a monitoring plan, and making the final decision. This may include the option of not moving ahead with any or part of the proposed action or action alternatives if conclusive information shows that the action would be damaging to anadromous fish.

Forest Plan Amendment

The Payette National Forest Plan has specific management direction for the South Fork Salmon River management areas. The Proposed Action is designed to improve watershed conditions and fish habitat, and is consistent with the objectives and goals of the Forest Plan. However, amendment to standards and guidelines in the Plan may be needed to:

1. Allow postfire activities including salvage logging of fire-killed and imminently dead trees as proposed in the Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project where the cumulative effect of all proposed projects results in a net improvement in potential sediment delivery to the South Fork Salmon River.

2. Allow postfire activities as described in the Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project to proceed without an Order 2 soil survey. Soil information of sufficient detail to address NEPA issues and required effects disclosure will be provided. 3. Allow plantation stocking levels below Forest Plan standards and guidelines to reflect natural stand conditions.

4. Allow helicopter logging one-way flying distances beyond the Forest Plan standard and guideline of 1.5 miles but within 2.5 miles of existing roads.

5. In Management Area 16, allow postfire salvage logging by helicopter as proposed in the Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project.

Preliminary Issues

The Forest Service has identified seven preliminary issues raised by the Proposed Action:

1. Effects on water quality in the South Fork Salmon River and its tributaries and their beneficial use for spring/summer chinook salmon, bull trout, and other fish species habitat. The lower South Fork is a Stream Segment of Concern and a Water Quality Limited Segment (State of Idaho, Division of Environmental Quality).

2. Impacts of not implementing the Forest Plan recovery strategy for the South Fork Salmon River before implementing new timber entry.

3. Effects on sensitive wildlife species including white-headed woodpecker and goshawk.

4. Effects on wilderness characteristics within the Secesh and Cottontail Point/Pilot Peak Roadless Areas.

5. Effects on human use and access due to closing roads to reduce sediment.

6. Effects on the ability of the project areas to provide long term growth and yield of timber. Where the Chicken Fire burned hot, it left no live trees. Where fire burned at low or moderate intensities, it left a mixture of dead, live, and damaged trees. Trees with crowns and trunks scorched are at risk of dying from fire damage or insect infestation. Grasses and shrubs can invade disturbed sites faster than trees can naturally reforest.

7. The economic efficiency of proposed projects, and effects on socioeconomic and social systems around the Payette National Forest.

Possible Alternatives

The Forest Service has identified three alternatives to the Proposed Action: a no action alternative, an alternative that would not salvage harvest in the roadless areas, and an alternative that salvage harvests by helicopter additional acres on more sensitive soil types. As the public raises additional issues and provides more information, the Forest may develop additional alternatives.